



GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Warwick  
University 2005

July 2nd - 5th

Annual Reports  
Resolutions  
and Papers



The  
United  
Reformed  
Church

# **General Assembly 2005**

**July 2nd - 5th Warwick**



*The*  
United  
Reformed  
Church

**Annual Reports,  
Resolutions & Papers**



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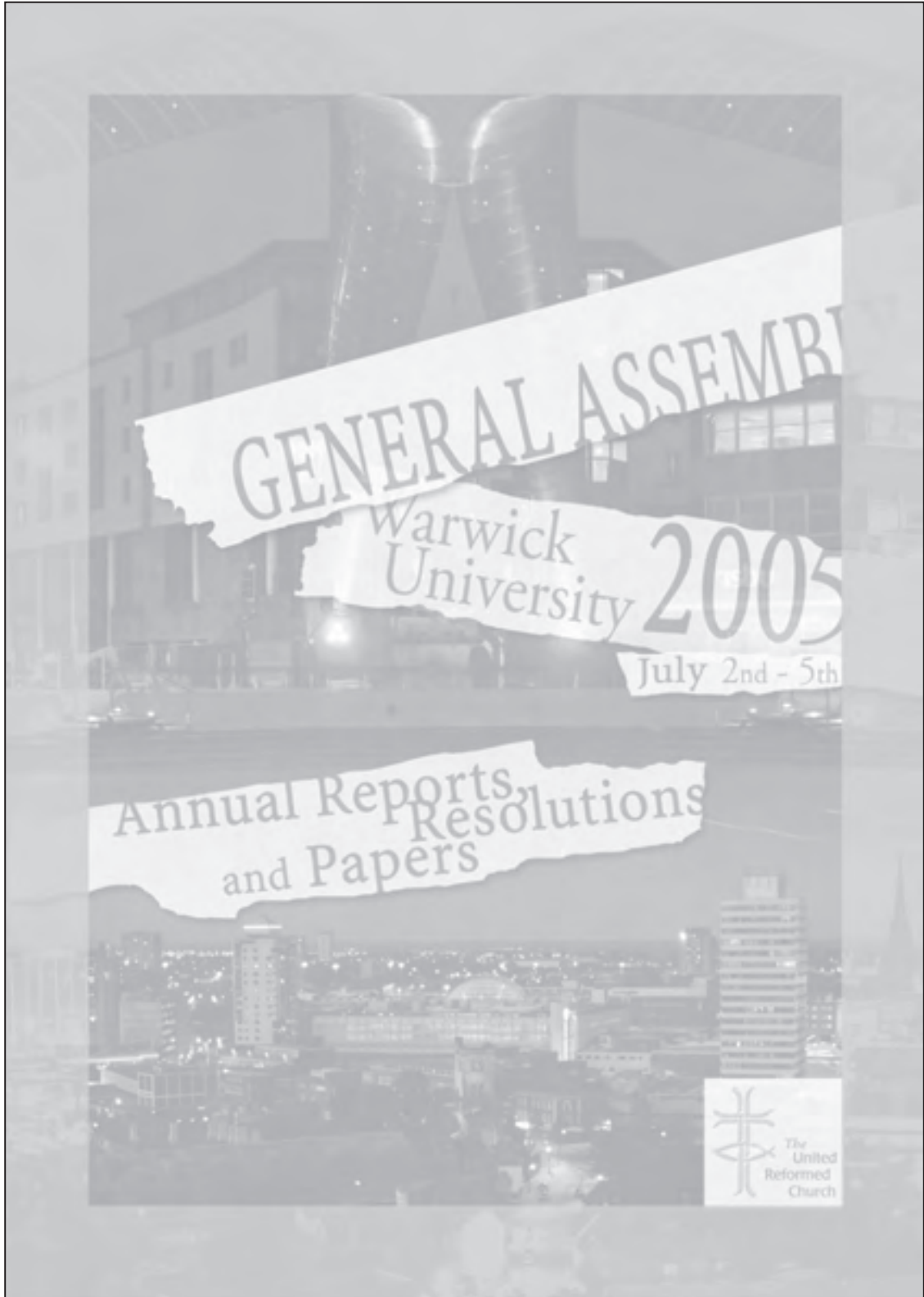
**NOTE** The General Assembly in 2000 decided that from 2001, committees will report in alternate years, except where for legal or administrative reasons annual reports are required.

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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**

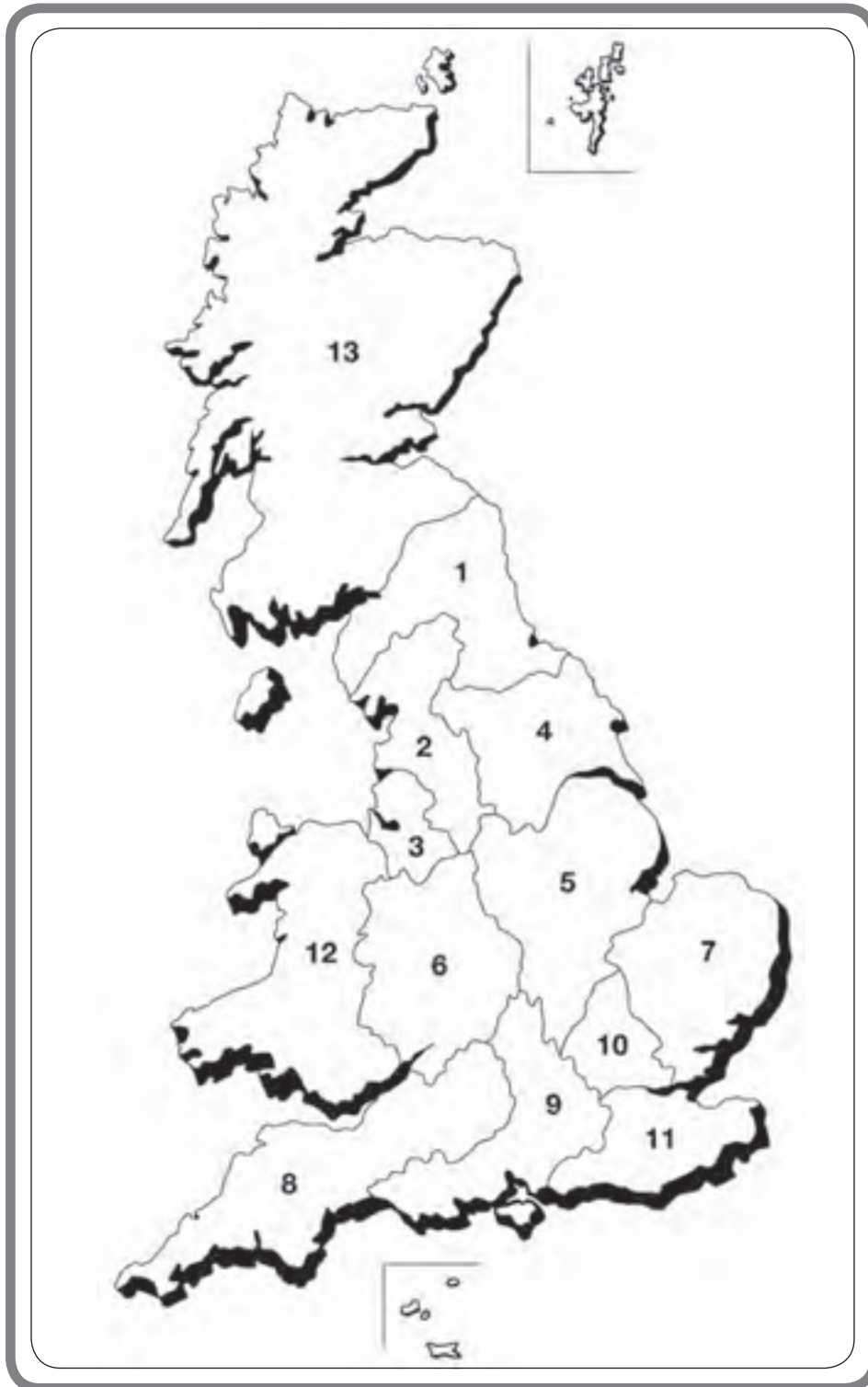
12a. In any case of urgency or upon motion made on a notice duly given, any one or more of the Standing Orders may be suspended at any meeting so far as regards any particular business at such a meeting, provided that three-fourths of the members of the Assembly present and voting shall so decide.

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.



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# 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

# Northern Synod

## 1 Boundaries and structures

1.1 Our last report to Assembly coincided with Assembly visitors reporting on the life of our Synod. Among their main findings was a recommendation that we should talk with North Western Synod to consider a change of boundaries. Those talks came to fruition in March this year when the ten churches of Cumberland District left Northern Synod to join North Western's new Cumbria District.

1.2 For us the result is a more compact Synod whose boundaries virtually coincide with those of the Government Region, and of the ecumenical intermediate body, North East Christian Churches Together. As a context for mission it is good both to draw on the Northumbrian heritage of faith, and to recognise the strong sense of regional identity and pride that is prevalent in the North East today.

1.3 To provide a focus for that mission in each locality we resolved at our Spring Synod in 2004 to set up Mission Partnerships, in the form of clusters of churches who were challenged to work out a mission strategy and come to a realistic assessment of the resources needed to support it. This was part of the *Enabling Mission* process that also involved the suspension of our District Councils, which we recognised were not always well placed to help local churches further their mission. The new style Mission Partnerships have allowed churches to work together in imaginative ways, though the promised light touch and flexibility have sometimes been more challenging than anticipated.

1.4 One District Council remains, however – for the South East Northumberland Ecumenical Area functions as a District of the United Reformed Church as well as a Methodist circuit. The joyful inauguration service at the beginning of last September, at which the Moderator of Assembly was guest preacher, was the culmination of conversations going back several years. The new Area consists of 25 churches, including six Local Ecumenical Partnerships, and already resources are being shared in ways that would not previously have been possible. In another corner of the county, in rural Tynedale, conversations are now in progress about setting up another United Area – and this time the process should be far quicker!

## 2 Focus for Mission

2.1 The suspension of Districts has brought a Synod dimension to significant pieces of work. The St Cuthbert's Centre on Holy Island was originally set up by Northumberland District, but Synod was eager to accept the recommendation of last year's wide-

ranging review that it should now "own" the project. Indeed, we would hope that this special place and ministry might be seen as belonging to the whole Church, and a contribution to our common search for a spirituality for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

2.2 Ingleby.net, on Teesside, at the other end of the Synod, is an example of how we work today with ecumenical partners to discover new ways of being faithful to our mission. Welcomed by Assembly as a Mission Project last year, it operates on what purports to be the largest housing estate in Europe, where material affluence can go hand in hand with spiritual deprivation.

2.3 And closer to the centre, a few miles up-river from Newcastle upon Tyne, Horsley Village Church has been developed into a lively centre for Christian witness, and through its artists' workshops and related activity is now a source of enrichment for the whole community.

## 3 Context for Mission

3.1 And people are looking for new ways of experiencing and expressing and sharing faith. Our education and training officers had a cunning scheme in the summer of 2003 to encourage people to read a Christian book. They wrote to churches inviting them to sign up for groups to read Michael Moynagh's *Changing Church, Changing World* – and offering a free copy to those who responded. Realists, they would have been content with twenty replies. Within a month they had fifty; and by the time the groups gathered, more than 150 people were taking part in a mass read-in which culminated in a couple of lively sessions with the author in the spring.

3.2 A further dimension to this growth and activity is afforded through our growing relationship with the Presbyterian Church of Mozambique. Last summer we welcomed eight visitors to our Synod, and later in the year eight of our members were their guests in Maputo and Gaza Province. The depth of relationships forged through these visits has left us humbled, for we know how much it means that we should be considered as family by people whose family ties are so central to their whole life. How we now develop this global partnership, so that both Churches continue to be strengthened by it, is a particular challenge for us just now.

3.3 Northern Synod knows what it means to be part of a changing Church. Through change, we seek to remain part of a faithful Church.

# National Synod of Scotland

**1** We choose to illustrate the life of the Synod by describing the work of two of its Committees: **Church and Society**, and **Education**. The work of these Committees demonstrates two distinctive emphases of the work of the national synod, namely its involvement in the civic and educational life of Scotland.

## **2 Church and Society**

**2.1** Scotland is a nation with its own separate legal system, its own education system and its own local Government system, so the civic life of Scotland has a plethora of historic institutions which stand apart and distinct from Westminster and London. As a place where the Church of England has no congregations, where the Anglican church is a free church, and where both the terms 'national' and 'parish' refer to the Presbyterian Church, its church scene also has its own ambience. A National Synod for the United Reformed Church in Scotland seemed logical and necessary, but the formation of the Synod of Scotland as a National Synod almost coinciding with the beginning of the Scottish Parliament was a piece of felicitous timing.

**2.2** The Parliament with fiscal and legislative powers has no second chamber to scrutinise bills or new initiatives and it quickly developed a system whereby public consultation on most issues became part of the process. The people of Scotland, in a sense, are the second chamber. The new Scottish Synod through its Church and Society Committee has participated in this process and responded to many consultations. The following list illustrates the breadth of subjects:

- sectarianism
- MSP numbers
- prostitution tolerance zones, review of summary justice
- Criminal Justice Scotland Bill re physical punishment of children (here we worked with the Children's Advocate and the Children are Unbeatable umbrella group)
- repeal of Section 2A (equivalent to Clause 28 in England)
- Exemptions Order (Scotland) for the rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- registration of civil partnerships proposals
- tackling anti-social behaviour strategies
- licensing law reform
- a national sexual health strategy
- family law reform
- Gaelic Language Bill
- a report on changing the law relating to prostitution.

The Committee continues to be helped greatly by various practitioners in the fields of law, education, medicine and social work, as well as others with specialist knowledge to help them arrive at informed conclusions.

**2.3** The Committee brought a resolution, through Synod, to the General Assembly on the Ethics of the New Warfare.

**2.4** The Committee has sought guidance and information on theologies of marriage from the General Assembly Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee. It has kept a watching brief and worked with others over the prolonged crisis in the fishing industry (primarily a Scottish industry) and it has also raised concerns about the future delivery of Special Educational Needs services in Scotland in a changing system.

**5.5** Church and Society issues require working with others and in its short life the Committee has developed working relationships with a variety of bodies.

- it supports Eco-Congregations (Scotland)
- has representation on an annual dialogue with Scottish Members of the European Parliament
- provides a committee back-up for the Synod Racial Justice Co-ordinator.
- It is briefed and assisted by the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office and is represented on that body's Ecumenical Advisory Group.
- It participates in the Action of Churches Together in Scotland Church and Society Network.
- It is represented on the Scottish Churches Rural Forum, Scottish Churches Housing Action and on the Church of Scotland's Church and Nation Committee
- It is accountable to the Synod, Area Councils, to other Synod committees and to the churches. It liaises with the General Assembly Church and Society Committee, and has always enjoyed representation on that committee.

## **3 Education**

**3.1** The Education committee has responsibility for the breadth of lifelong learning within the Synod. This broad remit aims not only to respond to the educational needs of a wide range of people in our churches but also to create opportunities, wherever possible, for people – whether they be lay or ordained, preparing for service or already engaged

in it, undertaking training or simply learning for its own sake – to learn together. This is an important strategy for us in enriching the learning of all through the distinctive experiences and perspectives of a wide range of learners. In learning together, folk are challenged to move beyond the assumptions and limitations of their particular role group. It helps to encounter the elitist tendencies that can accompany moving forward in learning. There are of course situations where learning is targeted at people with particular interests and needs to be met and there are considerable organisational difficulties inherent in offering integrated learning programmes. Nonetheless, we are seeking to move steadily towards learning together for the whole people of God.

3.2 Since unification, the Synod ministers not formerly in the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom have begun to take up in significant numbers the great opportunities offered through the General Assembly Education for Ministry 2&3 programme. Some are using grants for short learning programmes and a growing number are taking up higher degrees or other advanced study. Sabbaticals have brought recreation experiences and have been used creatively. To those in the wider United Reformed Church who may have neglected the continuing education financial provision, we offer the encouragement of a synod which is enjoying the fruits of being part of a Church with a real commitment to lifelong learning for its ministers.

3.3 New to us also has been the development of a silence and retreats programme. We embarked on this with perhaps a measure of suspicion that this would be thought to be a little alien to our experience and even our tradition. It has proved a vital and well supported aspect of our synod life with regularly an attendance in the region of 30 participants. Retreats have covered a diverse range of themes from a musical retreat on St Cecilia's Day to a celebration of the stories of Hans Christian Andersen, from Weaving the threads of banners and of life's tapestry to the Gardens of the Bible, the world of poetry and the National Trust for Scotland.

3.4 We are in now into (and hopefully by the time of General Assembly will have completed) the process for the appointment of a Youth and Children's Work Development Officer. We are conscious of the challenge involved in reaching out to young people in our communities with open minds and hearts, of engaging with young people on their ground and of nurturing the participation of young people. We look forward to having a dedicated people resource to support us in this work.

3.5 A learning day on Church Related Community Work with Steve Summers, the CRCW Development Worker, is a first step in introducing this form of ministry into the life of the synod and we hope that this will soon encourage congregations with their communities to identify potential projects, will stimulate vocations to this ministry and will stimulate other forms of engagement with local communities with their needs and their potential.

3.6 The ecumenical educational scene in Scotland took a serious blow with the dissolution of the Scottish Churches' Open College. We are glad to report however that we are seeing the first shoots of renewed conversation and sharing in planning and programmes amongst some of the churches in Scotland in continuing ministerial education and in lay training.

3.7 In its educational work, the synod works in partnership with the Scottish United Reformed and Congregational College.

#### **4 Personnel**

Two very recent changes in Synod personnel are the appointment of the Revd John Humphreys as Moderator, and Dr James Merrilees as Synod Clerk. The retiring Synod Moderator, Revd John Arthur, was warmly valedicted at the March 2005 Synod after five (personally very difficult) years. We celebrated his forty two years' ministry in Scotland in a number of varied pastorates, and latterly as General Secretary of the Congregational Union of Scotland.

# Southern Synod

1 Southern Synod is like many of the others. The 175 churches are served by a team of gifted, dedicated and, in the majority of cases, part-time staff. Some offer administrative support and are mostly based in the Synod's office at East Croydon United Reformed Church. They are Hilary Colechin (PA to the Development Officer and to the YCWT), Catherine Kingdom (Finance Officer), Guy Morfett (Trust Secretary), Janette Pollard (Moderator's PA and Office Manager), Rosemary Shirley (Ecumenical Officer's PA), and Glenys Sibley (PA to the Synod Clerk and Trust Secretary and Receptionist).

2 These staff undergird the work of four people who work more directly amongst the churches and Districts of the Synod: Des Colechin (Development Officer), Howard Nurden (Youth and Children's Work Trainer), Bryan Shirley (Ecumenical Officer) and Peter Southcombe (Regeneration Officer).

3 The value of such appointments cannot be over stated. They enable, encourage and stimulate the life and witness of the local churches, and are particularly valued in these days of such radical change in both church and society.

4 The *Development Officer* has given great amounts of time to training issues. Continuing Ministerial Education – ONET days, Sabbaticals, POET supervision – is high on his agenda. Alongside that he provides Elders Training, largely based on the Course for Elders published by United Reformed Church. This has also proved invaluable in preparing people for the ministry of Local Church Leadership.

5 The *Youth and Children's Work Trainer* has a particular emphasis upon a scheme called Turn The Tide. Synod makes funds available for the nurturing of children's and youth work in local churches, especially through the appointment of children's and/or youth ministry workers. Howard facilitates churches in making application to a group that awards grants where there are discernible commitments to mission amongst younger people, together with the willingness to think ecumenically.

6 The *Ecumenical Officer* combines involvement in four county ecumenical instruments with significant endeavour towards fulfilling the intentions of the Methodist and United Reformed Church Pastoral Plan, not least in the creation of United Areas where appropriate.

7 The *Regeneration Officer* has a far-reaching role in the life of faith communities across the southeast, striving for the greater integration of church and community, through a whole range of projects. He has remarkable facility for unearthing funding (including both UK and European government money) for initiatives that enable congregations to root their Christian witness in practical involvement in the day-to-day life of communities that need renaissance.

8 At the end of 2005 another programme reaches its end. For some years each of the Synod's Districts has enjoyed the benefit of a District Evangelism and Mission Enabler – Lou Ashford, Dr Sas Conradie, Martin Hayward and Ann Pierce. This has been much valued work and the Synod's Mission and Strategy group are currently deciding how to ensure that it is built upon as wisely as possible.

9 All this work is undertaken so that the churches that the Synod serves might be more fruitful and effective as they participate in God's abundant-life-giving mission. We are grateful for the skill and devotion of these members of staff, and of those whose back-room work makes it all possible. We do not take for granted the resources that enable us to work in this way.



## Change Past, Present and Future

1 Born in a stable, dying on a cross, raised to new life, Jesus Christ came to bring about change. Change is thus a normal and necessary part of the life of our Synod, our churches and indeed the whole people of God.

### 2 Change past

#### 2.1 Personnel

There has been a great deal of change in the Synod over the past 3 years. Our Synod team has changed very considerably. **Stephen Thornton** retired and **Martin Manley** has taken on the role of Training Officer. **Andrew Micklefield**, our previous YCWTD0 is now training for ordination in the Anglican Church, he has recently been replaced by **Ruth White**. **Graham Rolfe** completed his term as Synod Clerk and **Peter Pay** has now taken on the role. We have appointed **Nikki Andrews** as Secretary for Youth and Children's ministry. Our Mission Enabler **Dick Wolff** is shortly due to complete his term. Our former Treasurer **Nigel Grice** decided to leave to develop his career elsewhere. We have also added the services of a Human Resource Consultant in conjunction with Thames North. We give thanks for the ministry of those who have moved on or retired and invite your prayers for the new job holders.

#### 2.2 Finance

The Wessex trust now handles all the financial activity that was previously part of the work of the Synod. This has greatly simplified reporting and book-keeping.

#### 2.3 Committees

We have also recently rearranged our committee structure in terms of both scope and representation. This has enabled us to rationalise the range of committees, improve cooperation between them, cover matters not previously represented and ensure that the Districts are more fully empowered.

#### 2.4 Churches

Our local Churches have been changing too. There are local 'Collaborative Zones' in one district and 'Areas of Shared Ministry' in another, both helping to address the way we deploy our ordained and other ministry. Ecumenical collaboration is becoming ever more positive. In addition to 39 of 148 current churches working within Local Ecumenical Partnerships, others are amalgamating, often on to one site, in one case retaining two sites.

#### 2.5 Buildings

We have completed a number of building projects. In particular a completely new building at Somerford in Christchurch, Dorset shared with the Church of England on land leased from the Winchester Diocese. We have also completed major renovations and reconstruction at Fleet, Avenue St Andrew's in Southampton, Ringwood and Marlow. In addition there have been a number of other smaller projects and considerable work on improving disability access. With a new Manse policy introduced four years ago, we have made significant progress in bringing our ministerial housing up to the standard of the Assembly Guidelines.

### 3 Change present

#### 3.1 'Going for Gold'

In 2003, the Synod allocated £1 million to an ambitious scheme aimed at supporting mission projects proposed by local churches. Churches presented their proposals according to defined criteria which included projections for making the project self-funding beyond the 5-year funding grant. Twenty five projects were awarded grants.

Twelve projects fall under the Life and Witness Committee:

- 3 'making buildings work for mission'
- 3 general community work
- 4 more narrowly targeted community work
- 1 course-based work in wider community
- 1 Cell Church development

The other thirteen projects are under the Youth & Children's Work Committee:

- 7 youth and children's workers
- 4 family worker posts
- 1 community worker
- 1 specialist worker, for looked after children

Projects range from working with the community, children, youth and families, to working with more specialist groups such as gypsies or looked after children.

There is some very exciting and innovative work happening across the projects. At the latest count, there are twenty one people in post. Others are currently being recruited. We see this scheme as an opportunity for the Synod directly to support local church mission opportunities which they might not otherwise be able to start.

We have set up a procedure to monitor and review the projects, at least annually, not just to ensure the funds are being appropriately spent but also to identify opportunities for ongoing support and to ensure we learn and share the lessons from this ground-breaking initiative. First year reviews are currently taking place and are proving valuable, celebrating and sharing good practice whilst exploring and highlighting room for improvement.

### 3.2 Fairtrade

In common with other Synods and indeed other organisations and communities, Wessex Synod is now a Fairtrade Synod with more than 50% of our Churches fully 'Fairtrade'. We look forward to all our Churches achieving Fairtrade status.

## 4 Future Change

### 4.1 Synod Strategy

The Synod is in the process of agreeing a Synod Strategy for the future deployment of resources, both human and material. The strategy will be considered by our November Synod meeting. The strategy is focussed on

the Five Marks of Mission. Once agreed, there will be a thorough review of all our activities and expenditure to ensure they complement the strategic priorities.

### 4.2 Resource Sharing

A strategy becomes more essential as we look forward to 'Catch the Vision' and to inter-Synod resource sharing which will reduce the funds we have available in the future. We are strongly committed to the resource sharing process as God's mission and the resources and buildings that enable it should not depend simply on whether a particular Synod happens to have sufficient funds.

We are committed to further change as we seek to follow the way of Christ, work with our ecumenical partners and fulfil our part of God's mission in Wessex.



**Resolution 1****Detention without trial**

**General Assembly notes with concern the actions of Her Majesty's Government in introducing 'detention without trial' for UK citizens and passport holders and calls for the rapid repeal of the relevant legislation.**

*Proposer: Revd Andrew Francis  
Seconder: Miss Sara Crabb*

1.1 For many years the UK has had various legislative powers to detain foreign nationals without trial. In January 2005 the Home Secretary introduced the possibility of 'detention without trial' for both UK citizens and UK passport holders. Various of these

proposals became law in March 2005. At its meeting in March 2005 the South Western Synod of the United Reformed Church recognized all such detention to be wrong and asks that General Assembly debate the issue and take appropriate action.

**Resolution 2****Saying sorry**

**General Assembly resolves to appoint someone who would apologise officially on behalf of the United Reformed Church to those people who have been sexually abused by members of the United Reformed Church.**

1.1 During 2004 East Midlands Synod embarked on a series of training days for ministers and church members to consider the report on sexual abuse produced by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland called 'Time for Action- a new dawn for survivors'. Following one such day, members from Oadby church in Leicester wanted to take this issue further. They considered that the United Reformed Church should be a church which

- listens to and respects people who are survivors of abuse
- is ready and willing to say sorry when its own members have been the abusers,

- recognises when it has failed to be a safe church.

Although the Charter for a Safe Church covers many related points it does not specifically express this concern.

So the East Midlands Synod agreed to bring this resolution to Assembly. This resolution is not about issuing a press release but about engaging with those who have been sexually abused. It does not envisage a new or a paid appointment, but it will need someone who has both skills and understanding.

**Resolution 3****Age Discrimination**

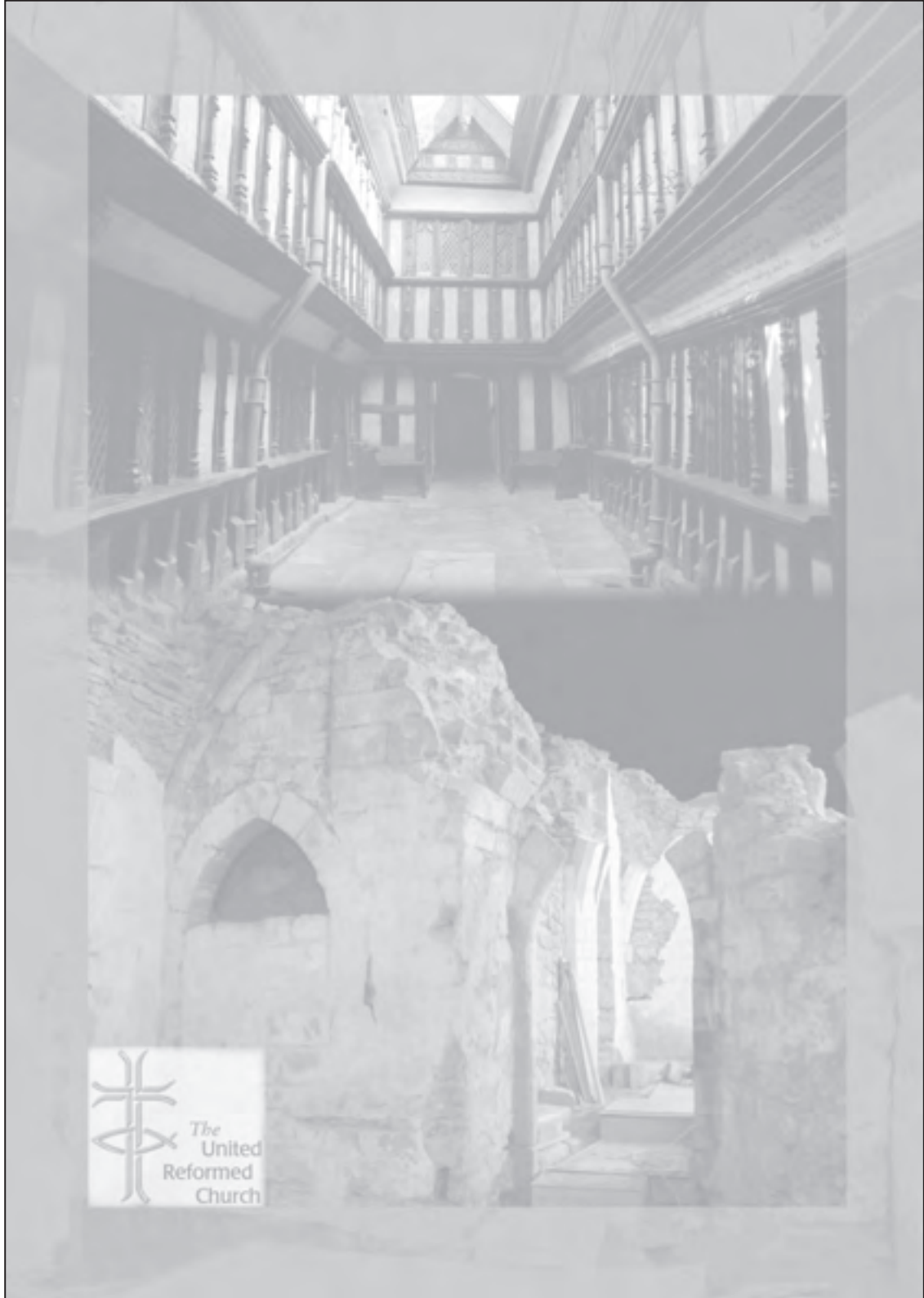
**General Assembly notes the intention of the Equal Opportunities Committee to review the current Equal Opportunities policy and instructs the committee to give particular attention to issues relating to age discrimination and the implementation of Assembly Policy in this area.**

*Proposer: The Revd Martin Hazell  
Seconder: Mr Douglas Hogge*

1.1 Thames North Synod welcomes the review by the Equal Opportunities Committee and believes that the EU Directive on retirement age, which comes into effect in November 2006, challenges present employment practice within the United Reformed Church of requiring employees, and stipendiary

ministers, to retire at the age of 65. During a debate at Synod, it was noted that since 1994 (amended to include 'age' in 1998) the United Reformed Church has had a policy of not discriminating on the basis of age and this resolution asks the committee to help the church find ways of more fully implementing this policy.

# Churches - Changes and Synod Moderators' Report



# Churches - Changes

## Resolution 4

## New Churches

**General Assembly receives the Churches listed below as local churches of the United Reformed Church.**

### *NORTH WESTERN SYNOD*

## **Trinity Church Cottam Hall**

Cottam, a village on the edge of Preston with one shop and a Catholic church, had become the centre for major new housing development. The United Reformed Church, joined with the Methodists and Church of England to seek a spiritual heart for the new community. With the help of local clergy and lay people, a constitution was drawn up and signed on 16 July 2003 for Trinity Church Cottam Hall and a Church Council formed, the first being held on 11 September

the same year. In July 2004, a United Reformed Church minister, the Revd Lena Talbot, was inducted as the minister to serve the three denominations. An average congregation numbers about thirty, with many more on special occasions. Worship is held in the local school or in the manse, while thought is given to the hopes for a church building. The vision is a place of renewal, worship and sharing for the whole community.

### *EASTERN SYNOD*

## **Great Notley, Essex**

(Baptist, Church of England, Methodist, United Reformed Church)

Great Notley Garden Village is a new housing development of around 10,000 souls built on greenfield land south of Braintree. Braintree was a small market town (charter 1199) but is now one of the fastest growing towns in the United Kingdom. Former industrial sites have been replaced by modern housing. The nearby 'Freeport Designer Village' is one source of employment, but many people commute to London, or work at Stansted Airport.

For five years the fellowship met in a portacabin, however, the fellowship is now required to move and hire rooms for worship. Planning to construct a purpose built church and associated rooms is well advanced and it is hoped that building will commence during 2005.

The following denominations: Baptist, Roman Catholic, Church of England, Methodist, and United Reformed Church are contributing to the cost of the new building, and the Baptist, Church of England, Methodist and United Reformed Church are represented in the fellowship.

Worship is held twice on Sundays, with 40 to 45 adults and 5 to 15 children attending the main morning service. During the week a number of house groups are held for bible study and fellowship. Several Alpha courses have been held, with two adults currently undergoing preparation for confirmation. The fellowship is active in reaching out to the village, and seeks to make contact with those moving into the village. International outreach is supported through organisations such as Christian Aid and the Christmas Child Appeal, while closer to home the local Woman's Refuge is supported with gifts at Easter and Christmas.

For several years the fellowship was led by a pastor living locally and appointed from the Methodist denomination. There is also support from the local Anglican priests. Great Notley LEP is currently seeking United Reformed ministry in conjunction with the ecumenical church at Coggeshall.

It is the unanimous decision of a meeting of the fellowship that they be recognised and accepted as a local church within the United Reformed Church. This request is supported by all the other denominations involved in the fellowship and the Chelmsford District of the United Reformed Church.

## EAST MIDLANDS SYNOD

**Gamston, Nottinghamshire**

On Advent Sunday, 28th November 2004, The Church at Gamston, a Local Ecumenical Partnership between the Methodist and United Reformed Church, officially began its life when 20 people were welcomed into membership.

This service was the culmination of over 10 years work at Gamston, the first monthly service was held in October 1994.

The church meets at 10am on Sundays in the Community Centre and its informal worship style attracts a wide range of people, from all denominations and none, Both denominational partners and the local Anglican church have also worked in partnership to create a Voluntary Aided Church Primary School on the Gamston estate.

The Church at Gamston is very grateful for the help from the Mission Council Grants & Loans Group for its funding towards our Community Worker.

**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.**

## THAMES NORTH

**Broadway United Reformed Church, Hammersmith**

The history of the Broadway United Reformed Church, Hammersmith, reaches back to the mid 1640s when a chapel was built for those who did not wish to attend the Church of the Establishment. Since that date a history of dedicated Christian fellowship made up its life, and had its heyday in the creation of Friendly Societies at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Although, together with many other churches, the number of members attending declined after the First World War, the fellowship continued its tradition of adventurous discipleship.

Broadway United Reformed Church, Hammersmith left their premises in Shepherds Bush Road some 25 years ago and were invited to worship in St Paul's Anglican Church and eventually they had a Sharing Agreement. This was dissolved when St Paul's came under new management. From an initiative by the Revd John Cooke the Methodist Superintendent they were then welcomed into Rivercourt Methodist Church, Hammersmith. From this welcome there has arisen co-operation between the United Reformed Church and Methodist Churches in the Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham.

During the past few years they have not only had a valuable part to play in a ministry to Hammersmith but also a very real Ministry with their money. This was always the case because it was from the original Broadway Congregational Church that the Congregational Friendly Society was run and this had a very real impact in the Borough in less affluent times.

Over the past few years their money and property has enabled mission to be developed in the Synod and other good causes. The culmination of this work was the re-siting of the Macbeth Stone. The Reverend Robert Macbeth was a minister of the Church (from 1853 to 1892) who did great work in teaching and study for those less able and the stone to commemorate his life and work was re-sited in 2003 and officially opened by the Mayor of Hammersmith in the Macbeth Centre in Robert Macbeth Street which is a centre solely to promote Adult Learning.

From this time and also as a result of the Catch the Vision Process they moved towards a more settled life within Rivercourt Methodist Church and on the 2nd May 2004 they moved forward into a Covenant with Rivercourt and on the journey towards a new ecumenical adventure it was therefore felt right to close Broadway URC.

Sadly, on 3rd August 2004 Stella Fowler who at 88 years of age and still the Church Secretary after over 25 years' service died. We give thanks for her life and service to her Lord Jesus Christ.

While the remaining members of Broadway United Reformed Church move onwards in their ecumenical work, the Church was formally closed on the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2005 with thanksgiving for the work, service and witness to the people of Hammersmith.

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## MERSEY SYNOD

### **ECCLESTON URC**

In 1934 a decision was taken by members of Ormskirk Street (Congregational) church to build a Sunday school in Eccleston, a village on the outskirts of St Helens and to whose new developments several members of the town centre church had moved. The Sunday school began in the home of a member and by 1935 sufficient funds had been raised and a piece of land obtained to begin the building. Miss Constance Pilkington opened this on 22nd February 1936, and the next day was constituted as a church. For the first six years of its life it was in a joint pastorate with Haresfinch, but by 1946 was able to support its own full time minister, The Revd Geoffrey Beck. During his ministry work with young people flourished. During the years 1956 – 1962 Eccleston was served by the hymn writer Revd A F Bayly and at this time the church resolved to build a separate sanctuary. The build began in 1968 and was officially opened on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1969 by Lord Pilkington. In September 1981 Eccleston joined with Newtown and Haresfinch to become the Trinity Group.

This was dissolved in 1987 and new joint pastorate of Eccleston and Newtown created. This arrangement continued until Eccleston took the decision to close because of seemingly insurmountable building problems, some of which had been ongoing in the original building for most of its life. This had proved a great strain on both resources and morale. The church officially closed in June 2004 when many former members and some ministers joined with the congregation to give thanks to God in celebration of the life of the church and the place it had held in the community. Over its life the church had provided a home for many diverse church and community groups including Brownies and Guides, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts. During the comparatively short life of the church three of its members have trained for full time stipendiary ministry. The church can be proud of its record. Most of the members have now found homes in other churches within St Helens and District. The land will still serve the community as it is to be used for retirement homes, something that is in very short supply within the area.

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## SOUTH WESTERN SYNOD

### **Foxhole United Reformed Church, Paignton**

Our church at Foxhole was founded in 1954, the brainchild of the Revd Lionel Willoughby and the members of Dartmouth Road Congregational Church, Paignton. It was felt that a Christian witness was needed on what was, at that time, a large council estate. Our Anglican friends had already made a move in that direction and together it was felt that two churches together could serve both the estate and the Lord Jesus Christ.

From the very beginning, the church was youth orientated. At one time there were over 120 children in the junior church. The church also ran a Girls' Brigade together with a junior section of a Boys' Brigade

Company. Later on a Pilot Company was started. As well as this, a women's meeting and a Bible study group were formed.

Our church was always served well by its ministers who worked long and hard for the cause. Although earlier the church had become part of the life of the estate, in later years the people of Foxhole came to see the church as little more than a place that had rooms to hire. Another real problem was the attention that the building received from vandals. The decision was thus taken to close and the final thanksgiving service was held on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2004.

Although compared with other churches, ours had only a short life, we can be sure that it served our Lord well and became a centre of Christian life and witness.

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## WEST MIDLANDS SYNOD

### **Salem, Great Bridge 1835–2004**

The Church was established 1<sup>st</sup> January 1835 as an inter-denominational experiment in response to a prayer meeting. These Christian folk, including Baptists and Methodists, were convinced of the need for ministry and mission in a developing industrial area. At first they rented a room, then obtained some land off Sheepwash Lane where they built a schoolroom and

then a chapel in 1839. Ministers were sought through the Staffordshire Union, but were often shared with Oldbury, Tipton, Wednesbury, or West Bromwich. There were seasons of success, reflected in the building of the Centenary Hall to cope with a Sunday School of 500 pupils. Decline of the area and the chapel, in the post-war period resulted in the demolition of the old chapel in 1960, with use of the (new) hall for worship and meetings, which continued until the strength was no longer equal to the task and the Church Meeting voted for closure by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2004.

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**WEST MIDLANDS SYNOD**

## **Silverdale, Newcastle-u-Lyme, 1867–2004**

A need to establish a Congregational presence within a thriving mining community was part of the Mission concept discussed at a conference held in Hanley Tabernacle. Following this an evangelist was stationed in Silverdale. The first meeting place was a cottage in Bridge Street; this became known as the Independent Chapel. Singing was popular and the Church became renowned for its choir. The Sunday School flourished and it was apparent that the cottage had become too

small. The congregation moved to a building known as the 'Welsh Chapel' and then there was another move to the Temperance Hall. Soon after, the present Church building and Schoolrooms were planned and the building erected under the inspired leadership of the Revd Bell. For many years afterwards it was known as 'Bell's Chapel'. Following a significant drop in attendance figures and spiralling running costs, the Church meeting voted for closure. The closing service was held 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2004.

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**EASTERN SYNOD**

## **South Ockendon, Essex**

Early in the 19th century, a group gathered together for fellowship, having become disenchanted with the established church. In 1812, a chapel was built. A feature of those early days was the church's concern for the education of poor children.

By 1945, a strong fellowship witnessed to the village. At this time the local population suddenly increased, with a large number of 'pre-fab' houses. The church seized the opportunity and the congregation increased. Boys Brigade and Girls Brigade were formed and the Sunday School was large. During the 1950's, 'Belhus Estate' – between South Ockendon and Aveley – was chosen as a site for 'London Overspill' development, and the population mushroomed.

Following the sad death in service of the Revd Arnold Sykes, the Revd Lawrence Jones was called. The church decided that its position in the old village was a constraint to mission, and set in motion a move to the new estate. After the Revd John Hickmore was called in 1963, the final outstanding financing was found, and the church moved to its new building – Christ Church. The Revd John Huxtable led the inaugural service. During John Hickmore's ministry the church thrived, using all the facilities the new building offered for work in the community.

However, the 'Overspill' planners had not foreseen the problems when people are taken from an inner city environment and placed in a rural community. These community problems were having an effect on the church. After John Hickmore left in 1969, there was a plan to form South Ockendon, Aveley and Orsett

into a Group served by two ministers. The Revd Helen Ashton was called, but unfortunately a second minister was not forthcoming and after a short but demanding ministry, Helen moved on.

The Revd John Hussey was called in 1972 to a shared pastorate with Aveley, as Orsett had decided to remain Congregational. During his ministry until 1978, there was stability and growth, with youth and community activities thriving.

In 1985, after two long vacancies around the three year ministry of the Revd Drummond Gillespie, the shared pastorate was discontinued. The Revd Jack Roche was called to South Ockendon. There was, by then, an ageing and declining membership and criminal and anti-social behaviour by the local youth was becoming a serious problem for morale as well as for building maintenance. Nonetheless, the church maintained its Boys and Girls Brigade work, including a very successful marching band. There was also a significant ministry to the immediate locality, the most deprived ward in the Borough.

Throughout the 1990's vandalism intensified and the small but determined congregation struggled to meet the cost of security and ever rising insurance premiums. Lack of leaders left a dwindling group to run Brigade work. Following Jack Roche's departure in 2000, the decision was made to close. The last service was held on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2001 where thanks were given to God for His work amongst the community in the area.



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## **SOUTH WESTERN SYNOD**

### **St Thomas United Reformed Church, Exeter 1901-2004**

St Thomas Congregational Church was founded in 1901 by Albert Edward Dunn, a deacon at Southernhay Congregational Church and a local solicitor. He later became Mayor of Exeter and MP for Cambourne. A chapel was built on a site rented from Exeter City Council. After a somewhat shaky start, by 1905 there were 42 members on the roll. In 1908 a gym was started on the premises, but boxing was not permitted. In 1913 two of the deacons were women, still fairly unusual at that time. By 1922 the church had 85 members.

The finances of the chapel were often uncertain. In 1908 the minister had to resign when the church could no longer support him financially. Eventually, with help from the Devon Congregational Union, another minister was appointed. In 1924 the City Council asked if the church would buy the land on which their buildings stood. This the congregation did, but it was a struggle and by 1930 finances were once again in a critical state. The manse was let and it was suggested to the incoming minister that he might remain unmarried until the church was better off. Once again, the Devon Congregational Union stepped in and became the trustees. Despite this, the various organizations within the church, including the Women's Bright Hour, were all flourishing.

In 1946 St Thomas, together with two other mission churches in the city, were brought into a group under the guidance of the Southernhay Congregational Church. Southernhay gave help in the form of a deacon when the group had no minister. Thirty years later, St Thomas URC and Southernhay URC were brought together in one joint pastorate. In 1979 the Pilots Company closed after 33 years service. It had been one of the first to be formed within the Congregational Church.

In 1987 some of the church buildings were sold to pay for the refurbishment of the church and in 2001, centenary celebrations were held. However, the financial pressures that had so often been a cause for concern increased and in 2004, the congregation decided that their work at the St Thomas site was done and that it was time to move on. The church meeting took the decision to unite with Southernhay URC and the final service was held on December 19<sup>th</sup> 2004. This was a very joyful occasion with former members and ministers attending when thanks were given for over a hundred years of loyal service and witness. The service of the members of the congregation continues, for some at Southernhay and for some at St Thomas Methodist Church. We thank God for all they have given and all they will continue to give.

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## **YORKSHIRE SYNOD**

### **Swinton United Reformed Church**

The Church (formerly the Congregational Church) was built originally in 1824, but a new and larger one was built on its present site in 1900. The Church is built of stone with a seating capacity of approximately 200 people. It used to have a balcony but this was partitioned off to form a barrier against draughts, and made into a storeroom. In its hey day, the Church had a large congregation and also boasted a good Sunday School, a strong youth group, badminton club, a drama group and snooker club. The numbers sadly, have steadily declined to a membership of 14 with a regular attendance at worship of 8. There are good relationships with the other churches in Swinton through Churches Together, the Bible Society and Christian Aid. Until a few years ago, Brownies and Mothers and Toddlers groups

met regularly in the Hall but both had difficulty in finding leaders so therefore discontinued. In January 2002, to help the church members in their Spiritual journey, Swinton became part of a group pastorate with two Churches 12 miles away in Doncaster, but a recent buildings survey revealed that some parts of the Church buildings were unsafe. Unfortunately owing to illness and ageing membership, there had been difficulty in adequately maintaining the buildings. The Church members give grateful thanks to their Minister and the Churches in the group pastorate who have given both spiritual and physical support, but after much thought and prayerful discussion, felt that there was no alternative but to close the Church and to find new places in which to worship. The final service took place on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

## LIVING OUR CALLING

*The story is told that before his death, Rabbi Zusya said, "In the coming world, they will not ask me: 'Why were you not Moses? Why were you not David? Why were you not Abraham?' No. In the world to come, they will ask me: 'Why were you not Zusya?'"*

### 1 Introduction

1.1 The gospel of Jesus Christ is good news of great joy for all people. It is a liberating message, for individuals and groups alike. Indeed, we are told that the good news is ultimately for the whole cosmos. Reconciliation, new life, possibility and promise, love supreme over every other power: these are what we Christians exist to proclaim. We, of all people, should exude confidence and hope.

1.2 As Moderators, we are privileged to experience the church in that way in many of the places we go. Our own spirits are fed time and again as we meet with people exploring their vocations, participate in planning new ventures, play our part in mission outreach activities, attend training events, and share in the celebrations around church anniversaries, building dedications, LEP inaugurations, ordinations and inductions.

1.3 But we are also aware of another side of church life. In too many places the fire has gone out. Some of our congregations survive by sheer force of will, with the dutiful few determined to keep the show on the road against all odds. Sometimes they are tired and despondent. Sometimes they seem driven, stubbornly insisting that things will go on as they always have, no matter what. Sometimes they are angry, perceiving the district (or the Moderator!) as the enemy when change is suggested or challenging questions are raised.

1.4 In between those two extremes a lot of people are asking searching questions about who we should be and what it means to be church. Where is it all going? What is God's will for our future? If only we had some clear answers about the eventual outcome for the institutional church, we would know what to do now. In the Moderators meeting, we have faced these questions in one form or another in nearly every meeting. Whether it is structures we are discussing, or ecumenical engagement, or leadership training, or even the introduction of ministers to pastorates, it would make all the difference if we knew what it was all meant to look like a generation or two from now. Of course, there is no red telephone "hotline to God", not even in the best-equipped synod

office. We too look through a glass darkly as we ponder the church we love and the challenges it faces. In this report we wish to share some thoughts and observations about life in the United Reformed Church that may help point us toward the future.

### 2 The context in which we ponder

2.1 Many people have left the church and many more have never felt the least interested in discovering what we're about. Historians now talk about the collapse of Christianity in Western Europe, and our own statistics paint a worrying picture of the future. For every congregation that is growing, there are several that are seriously vulnerable. As we read the signs of the times, the one thing that is certain is that "business as usual" is not a faithful option.

2.2 There are some certainties to lay on the table from the outset of such a discussion. The **worshipping** body of believers is the truest expression of church we know, whether it be in congregations of hundreds or cell groups of a few. However temporary other aspects of our institutional life may prove to be, it is our vocation to worship God. **Scripture** continues to take our breath away with its insight and relevance. Whatever else we do as Christians, and however diverse our understandings, it is essential that we continue delving into the Bible together. **Tradition** matters too. We are not encountering any of our challenges for the first time; there is much wisdom to be gained in reflecting on the experience of those who have gone before us. We believe in the **community** we share in the grace of God and the importance of sustaining one another in Christian living. We know that to encounter the Spirit of the living God is to be empowered for participation in God's **mission** in the world around us, not focussed solely on our own comfort and need.

2.3 With these basics firmly in mind, any flexibility we can bring to forms and structures may bring some much needed renewal and rediscovery. Energy and vitality should not be the exception among us, but the rule, because both are signs of the presence of the God we serve. Where we are tired and discouraged, something is wrong. We need to take a step back to reconsider.

### **3 The old ways have had their day**

3.1 Too often, faced with diminishing returns, our response is to keep doing the things we've always done, but do them better. We redouble our efforts and crack the whip harder in our elders and church meetings. It doesn't work. The results we see do not match the amount of effort that has gone into them. What could be more hopeless than to keep trying the same old things, hoping that this time the outcome will be different?

3.2 We need to give ourselves permission to let things go. Even the best programmes run their course and then finish. We cannot start anything new if all our energy is consumed in perpetuating existing programmes. If we cannot find new leadership, or we are overstretched trying to maintain what an earlier generation (possibly with many more hands available) established, liberation may mean saying, "Enough!"

3.3 This is a pressing issue for ministry. Districts group their churches to cope with reducing numbers of ministers, but it is not easy for people to adjust their expectations of what the minister will do. With the best will in the world, people only see the bit that matters to them. Only the minister sees the whole picture. Serious work is needed on what constitutes a part-time ministry where people have been accustomed to full-time service. There are some things the minister will no longer be able to do.

3.4 Granted, there are people who will be affected by these decisions. The groups we run and the programmes we provide are often a lifeline for needy people. We will have to take a deep breath and realise that we cannot be all things to all people. We tend to be an activist church: we need to stop and take stock. Where the work is still truly ours to do, the energy and the personnel will be provided. Otherwise, there may be a gap. It was God's mission before it was ours. If our strength is no longer equal to the task, or if we find ourselves going through the motions wearily with nothing but duty to motivate us, we need to trust that God can find other means of accomplishing that particular ministry. It is a common story that the new volunteer does not appear on the horizon until the old guard has stood down, risky as it feels to resign.

3.5 The leaders in our churches will know how heavy it feels having to work harder and harder banging the drum to get the rest of us to respond. When appealing to our Christian commitment no longer works, they resort to other sorts of manipulation. It is no fun, for them or for us. Time, therefore, to ask some questions. Does this piece of work really need to be done? Does it need to be done in this way? Is there another solution? Or could we agree to let it go?

3.6 Our churches have certain legal obligations that do require our adherence: health and safety, food hygiene, the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, proper charity accounts, disability access. Duty will continue to be a Christian virtue if we are to continue our institutional life responsibly. But duty should not be the driving factor in all our discipleship.

### **4 Other things that don't work**

4.1 We Moderators are good at grand schemes. It gives us great satisfaction to see everybody pulling in the same direction – and it certainly makes our job easier! However, it's time for some honesty. Grand schemes from on high very seldom work. Programmes that work splendidly in one place will be useless in another. Ten-year plans are usually not worth the paper they're written on, because human organisations are dynamic and they change. New factors come into play, the variables shift, and suddenly the strategy that seemed so right last year needs retuning.

4.2 We are still in favour of strategies! But we want to acknowledge that the value of them probably lies in the process of creating them. People praying and reflecting together, exploring the options, reporting on where they've come from and what they see as priorities for the way ahead. A mission statement is a snapshot. It should never be allowed to become a straitjacket. God seems to derive almost perverse pleasure in surprising us, upsetting our expectations, calling us in new directions. Whatever plans we agree must allow us to remain light enough on our feet that we can respond to new opportunities and abandon dead-end paths.

4.3 Many of us have engaged in SWOT analyses of our situations: identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Subtly different but with a whole new focus is the "forcefield analysis": what are the forces pushing us forward? What is holding us back? This is searching for the energy and where it's moving. Sometimes that will be a way of discovering where the Spirit is inviting us to go.

### **5 Opening new doors**

5.1 What might you do if you didn't have to keep doing what you're doing now? What interests you? Where do you find life and energy? What would you really enjoy having the chance to try?

5.2 Perhaps it is part of our Puritan inheritance to be suspicious of fulfillment as a motivation. This suspicion needs challenging. If it is true that God calls us to service, then there are two approaches. One is duty and guilt. The other is enticement, energy, excitement. We've tried the first route and we're hitting dead ends on all sides. What about giving the second a try?

5.3 Suspicion says that we cannot trust those ideas that inspire the passion in us. How can emotion be the basis for lasting Christian commitment? Emotion is notoriously fickle, isn't it? That's the question. Is it? Look at any really significant initiative in the life of your congregation and you will probably find yourself face to face with somebody's passion. Look at our common history – the founding of hospitals and colleges, social witness of every description, political involvement, the sending of missionaries to every corner of the world, the transformation of paternalistic missionary activity into the global partnership we now enjoy – none of them would have happened out of duty alone. They happened because of fire burning in people's bones.

5.4 Loren Mead of the Alban Institute (a think-tank on congregation life) says that Christian discipleship is about embodying good news, each of us and each of our churches in a particular way. Vocation is the way a certain bit of bad news won't leave us alone until we get up and do something about it. Mead points to the glorious breadth of good news in the Jesus story: the blind, the deaf, the lame, the lepers come to mind immediately as recipients, but close behind them are the hungry, the lost, the guilty. Women, children, gentiles, excluded ones. There is plenty of bad news to go around, and as many ways of bringing good news as our imaginations will allow. God is glorified in all of them.

5.5 When we become involved bringing good news to bear in the face of the bad news that most deeply offends us, the energy flows. Suspicious minds worry about our dedication if what motivates us is feelings: let them consider the way the resources come in, the lengths people will go to, the sacrifices they'll make, for a vocation they truly experience as theirs.

5.6 Some of us will remember Clare Short's address to the General Assembly in 2002. She said that if our churches became involved in campaigning for the eradication of extreme poverty in the world, we would no longer have any problem recruiting new members. Especially among the young, she predicted: we wouldn't be able to keep them away.

## **6 Ownership**

6.1 Energy flows where people are personally invested in something they really believe in. They must discover it for themselves. No matter how wonderful my vision may be, it will not work for you unless it becomes your vision too.

6.2 Our congregations know there is change ahead. As Moderators, our experience is that people are relieved when we speak openly about this and give people the chance to voice their worries and fears – and their hopes. It can be liberating simply to name a truth that everyone has been avoiding, because it opens the door to the new thinking that can lead to new solutions.

Effective change comes from within a group of people. It really cannot be imposed from outside. Where external circumstances force changes faster than a congregation can accept them, the result is resentment, anger and a desire for separatism. Where congregations embrace their challenges and bring fresh thinking to bear, the result can be amazing creativity and revitalization.

We human beings are remarkably inventive and resourceful, especially with faith on our side. Enabling this requires a special kind of servant leadership. Congregations often tell Moderators that they want a new minister to come with ideas and vision. The reality is that ministers who come in with their own blueprints for change often come to grief. Everything depends on finding the solution that is right for that congregation, and there are no shortcuts. Listening to people, and helping them listen to each other, is foremost among the skills required. This isn't a passive business. It sometimes involves confrontation and the pastoral ability to hold a people while they face deep pain. But it can be immensely exciting and rewarding.

6.3 Our church is founded on the principle that when believers gather together, earnestly seeking the mind of Christ, the Spirit leads them. What style of decision-making best enables God to speak to us? As Moderators we probably attend more meetings of the councils of the church than anyone else, and we have questions about whether vigorous debate followed by a majority vote is always the best way. We were intrigued to hear at one of this year's Mission Council that some of our partner churches have been experimenting with alternative forms of decision-making. They start from the premise that serious change requires consensus. Consensus does not mean that everybody is absolutely of one mind. Nor does it mean that you lock people in a room and don't let them leave until all their disagreements have been resolved. It means that everyone accepts one answer as the way ahead for the group even if it would not be their personal choice, and agrees to support it. There are techniques that enable groups of people to find their way to consensus, and we would encourage some experimentation in the councils of the United Reformed Church.

## **7 In summary**

7.1 "Business as usual" is not a faithful option. Cranking up the effort at approaches that have been proven not to succeed is self-defeating. Adopting someone else's solution practically never works, no matter how well it worked for them. We need bold new thinking at every level of our church life. "Catch the Vision" has energized our church across our three nations, and this Assembly will be crucial in galvanizing us for corporate change. We need to match that energy with the renewal that comes from local enthusiasm, ownership and risk-taking as we re-discover our place in God's mission.

7.2 We should train ourselves to watch for where the energy flows among us, what fosters it and what dampens it, and see what we can learn about the Holy Spirit's work among us. Ultimately, God will not be concerned that our church didn't achieve what the Anglicans or the Roman Catholics or the Methodists or Baptists achieved. Our responsibility is to discover our own vocation as a church and live it joyfully within the greater work of God.

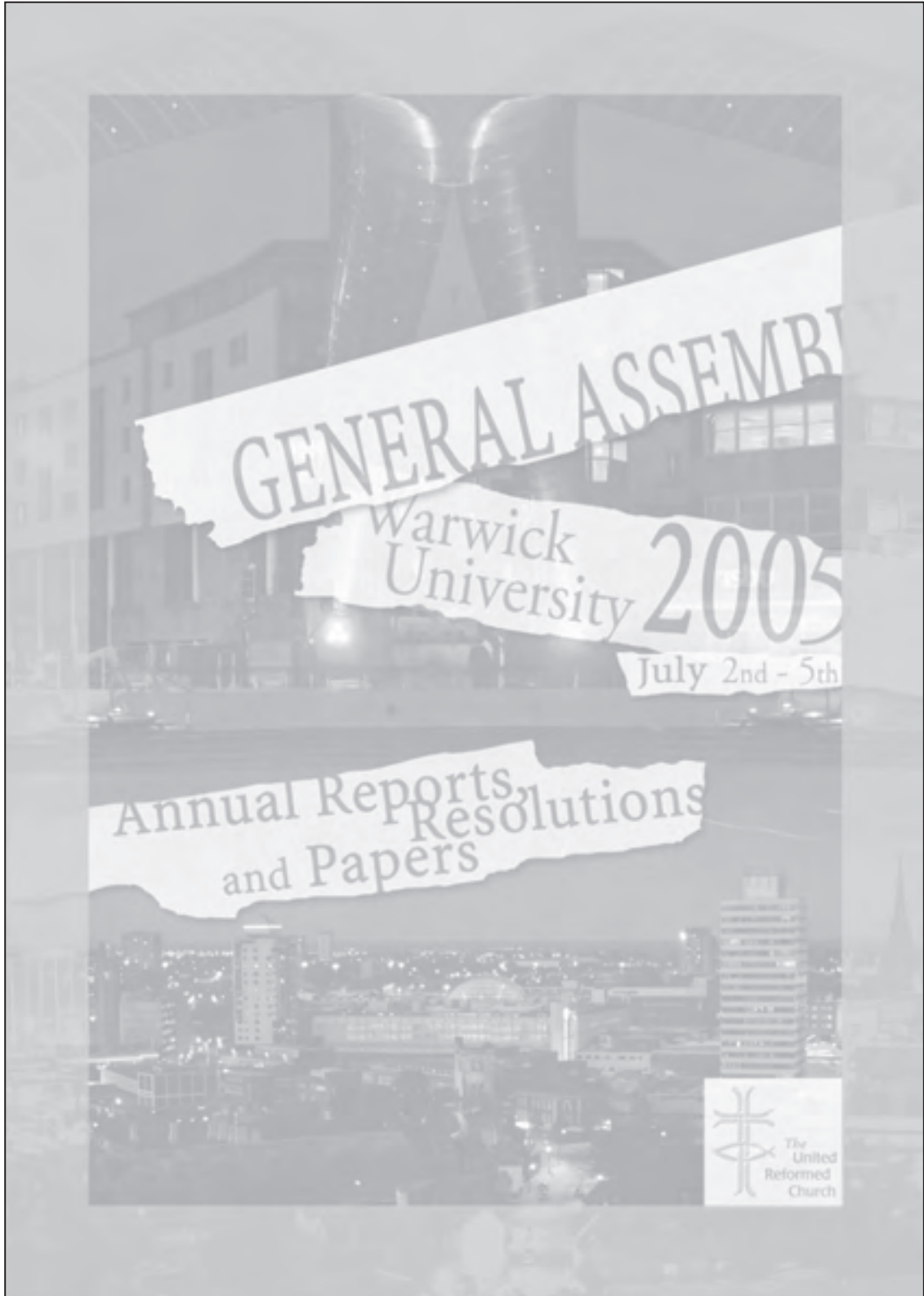
## 8 Personalia

John Arthur became Moderator of the Synod of Scotland at the Uniting Assembly in April 2000, although he had been an observer on our meeting for some time before that. We wish to pay tribute to him in the personal ministry he has exercised to turn the union from a dream into a reality. We wish him every blessing in retirement, and welcome the Revd John Humphreys as his successor.



*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 comprehensive view of the activity and policy of the Church, to decide priorities and to encourage the outreach of the Church to the community. Its service is directed towards the Assembly, but its concern is with the whole Church and all its members: so it seeks 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.

**Synod-appointed representatives to Mission Council in March 2005 were:**

Northern Synod	Revd John Durell, Revd Colin Ofor, Mrs Susan Rand
North Western Synod	Miss Kathleen Cross, Mrs Janet Eccles, Mr George Morton
Mersey Synod	Revd Martin Hardy, Mrs Wilma Prentice, Mr Donald Swift
Yorkshire Synod	Mr Roderick Garthwaite, Revd Pauline Loosemore, Mrs Val Morrison
East Midlands Synod	Mrs Ann Ball, Mrs Barbara Turner, Mrs Irene Wren
West Midlands Synod	Mrs Melanie Frew, Revd Anthony Howells, Mr Bill Robson
Eastern Synod	Mr Mick Barnes, Revd Victor Ridgewell, Mrs Joan Turner
South Western Synod	Mrs Janet Gray, Revd Roz Harrison, Revd Richard Pope
Wessex Synod	Revd David Bedford, Mrs Glenis Massey, Revd Clive Sutcliffe
Thames North Synod	Revd John Macauley, Revd Dr Roger Scopes, Revd Jane Wade
Southern Synod	Revd Lesley Charlton, Dr Graham Campling, Mr David Howell
National Synod of Wales,	Mrs Janet Gray, Revd Stuart Jackson, Mr W. Stuart Jones
National Synod of Scotland	Miss Irene Hudson, Revd Alan Paterson, Vacancy

## 1 Finding your way around this report

1.1 The length of this report and the range of its concerns reflect Mission Council's broad remit, which is to co-ordinate the work of General Assembly from one year to the next. It may be helpful to note that Mission Council passes resolutions in different capacities:

- a) on behalf of General Assembly: Mission Council is authorised to take decisions which are considered to be urgent or time-sensitive, and which need action between meetings of Assembly. These decisions are reported to the following Assembly, as in paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2.
- b) on its own behalf:
  - i) Mission Council has a number of advisory groups (e.g. Ethical Investments, Grants and Loans, Staffing Advisory, Section O) which report to its meetings, and which may bring resolutions. These groups have access to General Assembly only through Mission Council, hence the reports at paragraphs 5.1 to 5.4, and the **resolutions 7 to 13**.
  - ii) Mission Council can initiate work, and set up short-term task groups to look at certain matters in detail. These often result

in resolutions which (if Mission Council accepts them) are brought to General Assembly for decision. Though, for example, the 'Catch the Vision' process comes to this year's General Assembly as a separate report, it began life in a discussion in Mission Council nearly three years ago. **Resolution 6** in the present report (the 'Declaration of a Safe Church: a Charter for Action' in paragraph 4.1) comes under the category of action initiated by Mission Council.

- iii) As Assembly committees report to General Assembly only in alternate years (except where for legal or administrative reasons annual reports are required) committees may submit emergency resolutions or those requiring ratification of a previous Assembly's decision in the year in which they do not normally report. **Resolutions 14, 15 and 17** come under this category (report paragraphs 4.7 and 4.9).
- iv) From time to time Assembly committees bring business to Mission Council which overlaps with the responsibilities of other committees. In such cases any resulting

resolutions come to Assembly in the name of Mission Council. **Resolution 16** (report paragraph 4.8) arises from a joint concern of the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry, and Equal Opportunities committees.

## 2 Our meetings

2.1 During the year Mission Council met twice residentially and once for a one-day meeting. The Moderator led Mission Council in a number of biblical reflections on its task, while worship was led by the Moderator's chaplain, the Revd Alistair Smeaton. Guest theological reflectors were the Revd Gabriel Ellis-Farquhar from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and Ms Francis Brienan, Mission Enabler for CWM Europe.

2.2 'Catch the Vision' was the principal and governing topic on Mission Council's agenda during its three meetings. The General Secretary has challenged Mission Council to think about the calling of the Church and its opportunities for mission and service in the next decade. Contributions from Baptist and Roman Catholic guests on 'ministry today and tomorrow', and from ministers of local churches involved in mission initiatives in city centre, and through cell churches, have helped Mission Council focus on a 'vision' which is both informed by the broad experience of life within the United Reformed Church, and rooted in local realities.

2.3 Reports were received of a solidarity visit to Palestinian Christian communities in Israel's West Bank, and of the Moderator's own visit to partner churches in the United States during the significant period of its Presidential elections.

2.4 In January, Mission Council said farewell to Dr Andrew Bradstock who resigned as Secretary for Church and Society on being appointed Director of the Christian Socialist Movement.

2.5 Mission Council was supportive of the temporary appointment of a Campaign Officer for 'Make Poverty History', for part of 2005.

## 3 Actions taken on behalf of General Assembly

### 3.1 Appointments

3.1.1 Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, appointed:

- a) the Revd John Lloyd Humphreys to serve as Moderator of the Synod of Scotland from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2005 until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2012.
- b) the Revd Roberta Rominger to serve as Moderator of Thames North Synod from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2005 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2010.
- c) the Revd Neil Thorogood to serve as Director of Pastoral Studies at Westminster College, Cambridge, from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2005 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2012.

- d) Miss Michelle Marcano to the post of Human Resources and Facilities Manager at Church House from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2004.

### 3.2 Resolutions on behalf of General Assembly

3.2.1 Subject to the granting of a Charity Commissioners order, Mission Council approved the change of use of the Yardley Hastings Centre and the executing of a lease by the URC Trust to the East Midlands Synod Trust for that process.

3.2.2 Mission Council endorsed the decision of the Synod of Wales to approve the text of the Declaration from the Commission of the Covenanted Churches in Wales.

3.3.3 Anticipating a General Election in 2005, and on the initiative of the Church and Society Committee, Mission Council passed a resolution calling upon all political parties in the run-up to the General Election to clear the confusion of the public over the different categories of immigrant, refugee and asylum seeker. Political parties were also urged to stop stirring up the racial conflict caused by their competitive hardening attitude and by the proposed tougher legislation towards asylum seekers.

Mission Council, further, called upon Her Majesty's Government to review urgently and frequently which countries are safe for the return of asylum seekers; to minimize the detaining of families in removal centres; and to work urgently to eliminate trafficking of people to this country.

## 4 Other Actions

4.1 The report '*Time for Action: on sexual abuse and the church*' (published by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland) was first discussed by Mission Council in 2003, when it considered ways in which recommendations from the report could be implemented within the life and structures of the United Reformed Church. After further work, Mission Council brings to General Assembly the 'Declaration of a Safe Church: a Charter for Action' (**Resolution 6**). This seeks to ensure that high standards of protection and care are implemented throughout the Church, so that everyone (but particularly children and vulnerable adults) can have confidence in the United Reformed Church in all its activities and relationships being a safe Church. It is Mission Council's intention that training material will be made available so that local churches, other groups and committees within the Church, can be helped to implement the Declaration.



## Declaration of a Safe Church A Charter for Action

This church accepts that sexual harassment and abuse is a serious problem which occurs in the family of the church as well as in wider society, and recognises that sexual harassment and abuse is always unacceptable and must be stopped.

We are all made in the image of God and Christ came that we should have life in all its fullness. Therefore everyone has the right to find nourishment for their Christian pilgrimage in a safe place. This means that:

- i. dignity should be respected
- ii. abusive behaviour will not be tolerated
- iii. every effort will be made to offer support to those who need it
- iv. allegations will be taken seriously.

This church is rightly the place of loving pastoral care and concern which, by its very nature, makes it possible for inappropriate behaviour to go unrecognised and unacknowledged. It is, therefore, the responsibility of everyone in this church to challenge inappropriate sexual behaviour.

This church will:

- i. inform itself about support agencies available locally, publicise them and learn from them
- ii. in all areas of its life, by teaching and example, emphasise that sexual harassment and abuse is a sin. This sin must be repented of on an individual and community level before healing can begin
- iii. take the necessary steps to investigate all allegations of sexual harassment or abuse and ensure that appropriate action is taken
- iv. put in place a reporting mechanism to receive any allegation or complaint and take appropriate action.

Every church will operate this Charter For A Safe Church.

4.2 Mission Council agreed to disband its Resource Planning Advisory Group, being satisfied that the Group's remit had been incorporated into the 'Catch the Vision' process, and the agendas of three Assembly committees.

4.3 Mission Council set the basic ministerial stipend for 2005 at £19,176.

4.4 Mission Council approved the continuation of the post of Rural Officer/Consultant, the work and the funding to be shared equally by the Methodist and United Reformed Churches. The approval would be subject to satisfactory budget arrangements being made between the two churches.

4.5 Mission Council agreed the appointment of a Secretary for Church and Society on a temporary basis until not later than Assembly 2007. It was agreed that the job description should as a matter of urgency include a commitment to ecumenical negotiations about the future of Church and Society work.

4.6 Mission Council noted that a consultative process had taken place between churches, other faith communities and the Department of Trade and Industry. The Department had concluded that it would not require ministers of religion to become 'employed persons', but would expect an agreed standard of good practice to be implemented by all churches and faith communities. This related to such areas as the provision of sick leave, paternity leave, etc. Though most of the DTI's requirements are already within the United Reformed Church's 'Plan for Partnership', some matters need further work: e.g. procedures for handling ministers' grievances; mid-range disciplinary matters; and regular performance appraisal. Mission Council agreed that the Ministries Committee and others should consider these matters in time for an initial response to be made to the DTI during 2005. Any change in procedures requiring General Assembly's approval will be brought to the Assembly in 2006.

4.7 **Resolution 14** seeks Assembly's ratification for the decision of the 2004 Assembly to introduce the principle of non-stipendiary Church-Related Community Workers (CRCWs). If this is passed, **Resolution 15** will be proposed. This second resolution makes consequential changes to the Plan for Partnership, which sets out the arrangements for various payments to Ministers and CRCWs. The changes are not of a constitutional nature and therefore can be agreed by a single vote at this Assembly.

4.8 Mission Council (in **Resolution 16**) seeks Assembly's endorsement of a proposal to address a concern both of the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Committee, and the Equal Opportunities Committee: that Nominations Committee, in appointing panels and boards in the name of General Assembly for specific tasks, (the panels usually consisting of small numbers of people with specific expertise or experience), should nonetheless set a target for the participation of equal numbers of men and women, and at least 10% representation from minority ethnic groups.

4.9 Mission Council asks General Assembly's authority to act in its name (in **Resolution 17**) so that it can make such changes to the Church's Equal Opportunities Policy as are necessary (on the advice of the legal adviser) in order to comply with changes in the law.

## **5 Reports of Advisory Groups to Mission Council**

### **5.1 Resource Sharing Task Group**

5.1.1 In last year's report to General Assembly (paragraph 4.1.3) it was reported that eleven synods had resolved to work towards greater sharing between synods. It can now be reported that all thirteen synods have made a commitment towards the target set for 2013, and the work of the Task Group and the Consultations continues in that direction.

5.1.2 It is important to point out that there has been a significant change of emphasis in the approach to resource sharing, from what has been described as "trading money" to an approach which is "needs driven". To achieve this, synods in the early summer of 2004, met in duo formation and subsequently in quartets to discuss synod budget proposals for 2005.

5.1.3 All the meetings were conducted in good spirit and synod representatives were able to recognise major differences and, in some cases similarities between synods not only financially but in ways of best practice. All synods were able to examine and compare budgets and highlight areas of difference and consistency of approach in many cases. All those involved felt the exercise to be worthwhile and ultimately at the conclusion of the process, agreed:

- each synod would continue to contribute towards resource sharing;
- each would identify core costs;
- prioritise expenditure;
- work to the schedules provided.

5.1.4 It has been agreed the same format will be followed in respect of budget preparations for 2006 and, work is already underway to ensure meetings are arranged and take place.

5.1.5 There is still much work to be done in seeking to harmonise synod policies on a number of issues related to sources of income. This work will continue under the leadership of the Revd Elizabeth Caswell. New appointments to the Task Group will be made in due course.

5.1.6 The Revd Roger Whitehead retires from the Task Group this year. He has made a significant contribution over many years to the Task Group and the consultation process and his knowledge and experience will be missed. Mr David Butler, Secretary to the Task Group and the Consultations, also retires after many years valuable service. He has been the driving force behind the whole concept of resource sharing and his knowledge and experience will be greatly missed. The United Reformed Church are indebted to both Roger and David for their service.

### **5.2 Ethical Investment Advisory Group**

5.2.1 On behalf of Mission Council, its Ethical Investment Advisory Group (EIAG) continues to meet periodically. The Group includes representatives of the two major central URC capital funds (the URC Trust and the Ministers' Pension Fund), the Finance Committee, the Church and Society Committee and our Anglican and Methodist colleagues.

5.2.2 During the year, EIAG has kept abreast of work on a wide variety of topics ranging from alcohol via stem cell research to proposals for disinvestment from Israel/Palestine. An article in *Reform* raised the profile of the subject and the Group is always keen to hear from church members of their concerns.

5.2.3 This year, EIAG has also returned to the subject of Nestlé and this is discussed in the Church and Society report to Assembly.

5.2.4 EIAG's capacity for original work is severely constrained by available staff resources. Therefore, the relaunch of the Church Investors Group is particularly welcome. More than a dozen British denominations are active members of this Group, which is now equipped to provide much better background information and advice on the highly complex issues behind investment policy decisions. The United Reformed Church's Financial Secretary, Avis Reaney, is a member of the Steering Group.

5.2.5 This year, there are two matters Mission Council wishes to bring to Assembly for incorporation into a revised ethical investment policy. The current guidelines were adopted by the 2002 Assembly, which also said they were not a "final position". These 2002 guidelines added pornography to the products to be avoided and amended guidance on how to decide whether a minority activity of a diverse company was large enough to justify avoiding investment in the company as a whole. EIAG subsequently indicated they intended to provide further clarification.

#### **Pornography**

5.2.6 The current guidance has a separate clause on pornography urging that URC bodies avoid investment in "those companies whose business is the promotion of pornography".

5.2.7 Pornography is easier to recognise than to define. However, it is obvious that current social attitudes in Britain allow, and arguably encourage, a more sexually candid media to flourish than in previous times. Members of the United Reformed Church are unlikely to be shocked to find images in the arts, advertising and on television which would not have been authorised a generation ago.

5.2.8 Nevertheless, however widespread and familiar, pornographic material fits awkwardly alongside Paul's instructions to Christians to live in a way that honours the body (e.g. 1 Thessalonians 4) and to fill our thoughts with "all that is true, all that is noble, all that is just and pure, all that is lovable and gracious, excellent and admirable" (Philippians 4.8). As the Anglican equivalent of EIAG commented in their consideration of this issue:

Sex is a gift from God. Representation of its mystery should be identified with spiritual values such as joy, caring, compassion and dignity. Exploitation, crudity, violence and oppression transgress the Christian vision of humanity that is created in the image of God.

5.2.9 For such reasons Mission Council sees investment in pornography as inconsistent with the theology of the United Reformed Church. We are therefore glad the Assembly thought it right to add pornography to the product areas to avoid.

5.2.10 EIAG suggests companies promoting pornography should be taken to mean those which (a) publish "top shelf" pornographic magazines; or (b) own pornographic television channels; or (c) manufacture explicit sexual material in video or other forms marketed as "adult entertainment"; or (d) are wholesale distributors of such material.

5.2.11 Consistent with the United Reformed Church's approach to other objectionable product areas, Mission Council proposes that companies should be avoided as investments when the share of their business in pornography is significant. We suggest parallel measurement criteria should apply as for other non-weapon product areas included in the policy and that pornography should be addressed in the same clause of the guidelines as these.

### Defining "Significant"

5.2.12 Concern has been expressed to EIAG at Assembly and otherwise about the current interpretation of "significant" in deciding when a company is sufficiently involved in an objectionable product to be discouraged as an investment opportunity.

5.2.13 The 2002 guidelines were accompanied by a suggestion that although EIAG would be happy to advise on a case by case basis, they would generally take as a starting point 30% of a company's business as being the threshold for "significant". In other words, if a company had less than 30% of its business in objectionable products, it would generally still be consistent with the Assembly policy to invest in it.

5.2.14 Mission Council is well aware of how complex the whole area of ethical investment is and would still wish to avoid a rigid definition of significance that might then be applied with little regard to individual circumstances. However, we would now propose that the United Reformed Church reduces its benchmark to the region of 10-20% of a company's business. We believe this threshold, while still higher than some United Reformed Church members would wish, is sufficiently low to show we are serious about our policy. It recognises that there is a balance to be struck where the majority of a company's business is desirable and only a small part objectionable. It is also realistic about the possibility of unravelling the detailed structure of complex companies, with many business lines and subsidiary operations, and identifying tiny percentages of their activities.

5.2.15 A further important advantage of this definition of "significant" is that it would bring the United Reformed Church more into line with the criteria used by other Free Churches. The increasing ecumenical co-operation on ethical investment policy issues makes it desirable that we work with similar criteria as our sister denominations. While no two Churches have exactly the same approach, in broad terms the equivalent figure used by the Methodist Church is usually around 20%, and by the Salvation Army 10%.

5.2.16 In the light of this advice from EIAG, Mission Council proposes (**Resolution 7**) that the Church's formal policy statement be revised to read as follows:

It is the policy of the United Reformed Church to recommend that trustees and all those with investment responsibilities connected with the Church should avoid any investment in:

- (a) companies directly engaged in the manufacture or supply of weapons of destruction;
- (b) companies a significant part of whose business is in the supply of alcoholic drinks or tobacco products or military equipment (other than weapons of destruction); or the provision of gambling facilities; or the publication or distribution of pornography.

The definition of these activities, or of what constitutes a significant part of a company's business, requires judgement and the Ethical Investment Advisory Group (EIAG) of Mission Council is available to offer advice. In general, EIAG will deem "significant" to mean where the share of turnover derived from the activity concerned is more than around 10-20% of the company's total turnover.

This policy can only be advisory as the responsibility for specific investment decisions remains with each body of trustees.

### 5.3 Section O Advisory Group

5.3.1 During the year the Section O Advisory Group continued its detailed consideration of the Section O Process of Ministerial Discipline. In particular, the Advisory Group has responded to concerns expressed about the role of the Mandated Group which has the responsibility of investigating the case against the minister and presenting it at the Hearing before the Assembly Commission. As a result the Advisory Group is recommending significant changes in the manner of selection of the Mandated Groups in order that they may be strengthened for their task. These are set out in **Resolution 8** and involve a series of amendments to Section B of Part II. That resolution also proposes an important amendment to Section E of Part II designed to improve the procedure in a Section O case which remains adjourned because the minister is appealing against the decision made against him/her in a criminal case.

5.3.2 Section O remains under the overall control of General Assembly and all changes to it, large and small, require Assembly approval. This is stated in Part I, which also contains other fundamental provisions, such as the criteria to be applied when judging a case, the right of appeal, the exclusive nature of the Process and the fact that decisions made in accordance with the Process are final and binding. Recognising the importance of these matters and also of course the serious consequences of removal from the Roll for a minister, the core provisions of Part I must remain subject to the rule that any changes take two years to implement. Having said that, however, the Advisory Group considers that the remainder of the existing Part I can be moved into Part II, to which changes can be made by a single Assembly. **Resolution 9** brings a proposal to replace the existing Part I with a reduced Part I, the text of which is set out in the resolution. If passed, this will be referred to Synod and, hopefully, come to next year's Assembly for ratification. The consequential changes to Part II will also be brought forward next year.

5.3.3 During the year the Church's legal advisers were asked to prepare a procedure (to be known as the 'Ministerial Incapacity Procedure') to enable the Church to take effective action in respect of those ministers regarded as unfit to exercise ministry on account of medical, psychological or other similar or related reasons where the minister cannot be considered blameworthy or at fault in any conventional sense. The Advisory Group has been working closely with the lawyers as this has progressed and has been advised that the new procedure should be divided into two parts in similar manner to the Section O Process, i.e. Part I subject to the "two year" rule and Part II which can be changed by resolution of a single Assembly. In the course of the ongoing work on this, the Section O Advisory Group has consulted the Mission Council

Advisory Group, the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee and the Synod Moderators and has reported to Mission Council.

5.3.4 Consequently Mission Council now brings to the 2005 Assembly Part I of the new Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (**Resolution 10**). If the resolution approving this is passed, it will be referred back to Synods and presented at next year's Assembly for ratification. The Rules of Procedure are being prepared and will be placed before Assembly next year as Part II and thus the aim is to bring the whole of the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure into operation in 2006.

5.3.5 The introduction of the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure will involve changes to the Structure and to the Section O Process since, although the two procedures are entirely separate, there will be some inter-relationship between them, where the evidence indicates a possible need to refer a case from one procedure to the other (**Resolution 11**).

5.3.6 Two resolutions come to Assembly for ratification: both were agreed by General Assembly in 2004: **Resolution 12** ratifies changes to Section O, Part 1 (2004 Assembly Resolution 11); and **Resolution 13** ratifies changes to the Structure regarding the resignation of ministers (2004 Assembly Resolution 13).

5.3.7 During the year the Section O Advisory Group has maintained a dialogue with the Synod Moderators on a variety of issues of common concern, but particularly about their role in the Section O Process and about the importance of the work of the Mandated Groups. A need for continual training for the Mandated Groups has been identified and the Advisory Group has established an ongoing training programme. The close liaison between the Section O Advisory Group and the Moderators will continue.

5.3.8 Mr Brian Evans, the present Secretary of the Assembly Commission, completes his term of service at Assembly this year and we express our grateful thanks to him for his work in this demanding position and also for his wise counsel on the Section O Advisory Group. We welcome the Reverend Alison Hall as his replacement.

### 5.4 Grants and Loans Group

5.4.1 The following is an extract from the report of this Group to Mission Council:

5.4.2 "The Grants and Loans Group (GLG) has now been in existence for nearly 5 years, having incorporated the work of the former Church Buildings Fund (CBF), Advisory Group on Grants and Loans (AGOGAL) and the Council for World Mission (CWM) Self Support Fund. The Group has continued the policy of giving grants only to Synods and Churches with the greatest need.

5.4.3 The budget allocation for grants in 2004 was approximately £96000 from the Church Buildings Fund. This was used primarily to assist churches in the provision of facilities for the disabled. By the end of the year grants of £101745 were paid. Further loans of £130000 have been approved from this fund. For Mission Projects the budget allocation was £115000, of which £111942 was spent by the year end.

5.4.4 Applications for grants for facilities for the disabled continue to be received but these are expected to reduce further in 2005. This should enable other projects within the scope of the 2005 budget to be considered.

5.4.5 Mission Project Fund: During 2004, four applications were received and three were approved. Reports back from projects which have been supported by this fund reflect the initiative, determination and commitment of people seeking to be the 'church' in our existing society.

5.4.6 Theological reflections: The Grants and Loans Group believes that the monies it makes available from Assembly funds is of real benefit both to local churches and their communities, and without it many projects would not get off the ground. Examples of the work supported are: -

- Community development work in the South Aston area of Birmingham
- An elderly day care centre and visiting service in Balsall Heath, Birmingham
- Community work in Nechells in inner Birmingham
- Youth work in Derriford and Abingdon
- Youth and Community work in Newquay
- Neighbourhood Renewal in Southmead, Bristol
- Supporting ministry in Brecon and Boulevard United Reformed Church
- Pastoral work of Westborough United Reformed Church

One of the applications contained the following statement:

'Until we take church out of the religious box we have put it in, we will have nothing to say to a waiting and watching world. Conversion/ becoming a Christian, whilst utterly essential, happens differently for everyone and at vastly different speeds. God needs to see that we are serious about caring for and discipling new Christians before he will give them to us.'

5.4.7 The Grants and Loans Group believes that it is now recognized that church and faith communities have an important part to play in the growth and sustaining of community life. They hope that the monies that can be given in grants and loans will help churches to develop more fully their roles in the local communities.



**Resolution 6****Declaration of a Safe Church  
– a Charter for Action**

(report paragraph 4.1)

**General Assembly**

- a) accepts the Declaration of a Safe Church
- b) instructs all General Assembly committees to operate within it;
- c) urges synods, district councils and local churches to affirm the declaration, resolve to apply it in all aspects of their life and work; and synods to report their response to Mission Council by March 2006.

**Resolution 7****Revised Ethical Investment Policy**

(report paragraphs 5.2.5– 5.2.16)

General Assembly recommends that trustees and all those with investment responsibilities connected with the United Reformed Church should avoid any investment in:

- a) companies directly engaged in the manufacture or supply of weapons of destruction;
- b) companies a significant part of whose business is in the supply of alcoholic drinks or tobacco products or military equipment (other than weapons of destruction); or the provision of gambling facilities; or the publication or distribution of pornography.

General Assembly notes that the definition of these activities, or of what constitutes a significant part of a company's business, requires judgement and the Ethical Investment Advisory Group (EIAG) of Mission Council is available to offer advice. In general, EIAG will deem "significant" to mean where the share of turnover derived from the activity concerned is more than around 10-20% of the company's total turnover.

General Assembly recognises that this policy can only be advisory as the responsibility of specific investment decisions remains with each body of trustees.

**Resolution 8****Changes to Section O Part II**

(report paragraph 5.3.1)

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

**Paragraph B.1.1**

Replace the word 'three' with the word 'four'.

**Paragraph B.2**

Replace the existing Paragraph B.2 with the following:

**B.2** 'The Mandated Groups charged with the responsibilities ascribed to them under these Rules of Procedure shall be constituted in the following manner:

**B.2.1** Two members thereof shall be appointed by each District Council on a standing basis from a Synod Panel itself appointed and maintained by each Synod, there normally being on such panel at least one, and preferably two, persons from each District within the Synod.

**B.2.2** The two remaining persons shall be appointed on to the Mandated Group for that case by the Deputy General Secretary from the Joint Panel in accordance with the procedure set out in Paragraph B.3.'

**Paragraph B.3**

Replace the existing Paragraph B.3 with the following:

**B.3.1** 'Mission Council shall constitute and maintain a Standing Panel ('the Joint Panel') consisting of a maximum of twenty-six persons, of whom two shall be nominated by each Synod and selected preferably on account of some legal or tribunal or similar experience or expertise.

**B.3.2** The function of those serving on the Joint Panel shall be to participate as members of Mandated Groups, in cases arising either under Paragraph B.6.1 (District Council) or Paragraph B.9.1 (Synod) (in both of which cases two members of the Joint Panel will be required to serve) or under Paragraph B.9.3 (General Assembly or Mission Council on its behalf) (in which case all four members of the Mandated Group will be drawn from the Joint Panel).

**B.3.3** The Deputy General Secretary, in consultation with such other officers of General Assembly as s/he considers appropriate, shall select persons from the Joint Panel to serve on Mandated Groups as required and shall liaise with those persons and with the person calling in the Mandated Group and such other persons as may be necessary.'

**Paragraph B.4**

After the words 'Synod Panel' add the words 'or the Joint Panel'.

**Paragraph B.5.1**

On every occasion when the expression 'Standing Mandated Group' appears, delete the word 'Standing'.

Replace the words '...the Standing Mandated Group...' (the first time they appear) with the words '...either of the Panels...'

Replace the words '...the Moderator of the Synod shall appoint another member of the Synod Panel...' with the words '...then, if the disqualified person is a member of the Synod Panel, the Moderator of the Synod shall appoint another member of that Panel and, if the disqualified person is a member of the Joint Panel, the Deputy General Secretary shall appoint another member of that Panel...'

Replace the words '...the remaining members of the Standing Mandated Group...' with the words '...its remaining members...'

**Paragraph B.6.1**

The existing **B.6.1** to become **B.6.1.1** and a new **B.6.1.2** to be added as follows:

**B.6.1.2** 'The person calling in the Mandated Group shall in so doing take the following steps (with the participation at the appropriate time of the Deputy General Secretary):

- (i) s/he shall notify those two persons who, as members of the Synod Panel, will form part of the Mandated Group by virtue of Paragraph B.2.1 that they are called upon so to participate, advising them of the identity of the minister but giving no further information at that point;
- (ii) s/he shall request the Deputy General Secretary to appoint two persons onto the Mandated Group from the Joint Panel, advising him/her of the identity of the minister but giving no further information at that point;
- (iii) whereupon the Deputy General Secretary shall select two persons from the Joint Panel to form part of the said Mandated Group, notifying them of their participation and advising

- them of the identity of the minister but giving no further information at that point and shall notify the person responsible for calling in the Mandated Group of the names of the persons who will serve;
- (iv) in the event that any of the proposed appointees on to the Mandated Group is unable or unwilling to act, the process(es) of appointment from the Synod Panel and/or the Joint Panel shall continue until a Mandated Group consisting of four members has been duly constituted;
- (v) as soon as the above steps have all been taken, the person calling in the Mandated Group shall issue to each member thereof a written statement setting out the reasons for the calling in of the Mandated Group, the names of possible informants and any other sources of information at that time available. To avoid prejudice, that statement must not contain any assumptions or inferences or any personal reflections or opinions.'

#### Paragraph B.8.1

After the word '**concludes**' insert the words '**unanimously or by a majority**'.

#### Paragraph B.9

Make the following changes at Paragraph B.9:

**B.9.1** Replace the word '**...three...**' with the word '**...four...**'.

**B.9.2** Replace the existing B.9.2 with the following:

**B.9.2** '**In connection with any such steps under Paragraph B.9.1 as are required to be taken by a Synod, if at any time the Moderator of the Synod, in consultation with such officers of the Synod as s/he considers appropriate, believes that there is or may be a disciplinary issue in respect of any minister in membership of that Synod, s/he shall forthwith in the name of the Synod appoint two persons from the Synod Panel for that Synod to form part of the Mandated Group for the particular case, at the same time informing the minister that this step has been taken and requesting the Deputy General Secretary to appoint two persons onto the Mandated Group from the Joint Panel, whereupon the procedure for the constitution of the Mandated Group shall follow that laid down in Paragraph B.6.1.2. The Mandated Group so appointed shall be deemed to be called in and vested with authority in like manner to a Mandated Group called in under Paragraph B.6.1.**'

**B.9.3** Replace the words '**...a Mandated Group for the particular case drawn from the Panel of Synods other than that of the Synod out of which the case arises...**' with the words '**...a Mandated Group of four persons for the particular case all drawn from the Joint Panel...**'

Replace the words '**...the Standing Mandated Group of a District Council...**' with the words '**...a Mandated Group...**'.

**B.9.4** Replace the words '**..B.10 and B.11..**' with the words '**..B.10, B.11 and B.12**'.

Delete the Paragraph which begins with the words '**In Paragraph B.5.1...**'.

Replace the paragraph beginning '**In Paragraph B.7.1...**' with:

**'In Paragraph B.7.1, in the case of a Mandated Group appointed in the name of General Assembly the words 'Deputy General Secretary' shall replace 'Moderator of the Synod'.**

#### Paragraph E.7.4

At the end of the paragraph add the words – '**...unless the Minister shall have lodged with the Secretary of the Assembly Commission, within twentyeight days of the passing of the sentence in the criminal case, written evidence that s/he has lodged an appeal against the decision of the criminal court, whether it be against the conviction itself or the sentence imposed.**'



**Paragraph E.7.6**

Add a new Paragraph E.7.6 as follows:

**E.7.6 'If the Minister has given to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission the written evidence of appeal in the criminal case referred to in Paragraph E.7.4, it shall be his/her responsibility to notify the Secretary of the Assembly Commission of the outcome of his/her appeal in the criminal case as soon as s/he becomes aware of it and to supply to the said Secretary a duly certified court record or memorandum of the decision on the said appeal, whereupon the Section O Process shall be reactivated and the case brought to a hearing as soon as possible. Meanwhile the Minister shall respond promptly to any requests for information from the Secretary of the Assembly Commission as to the progress of the appeal in the criminal case. If the Minister fails to comply with the provisions of this Paragraph, the said Secretary may him/herself seek and obtain the required information as to the progress and outcome of the appeal in the criminal case.'**

**Paragraph E.8.5**

Add a new Paragraph E.8.5 as follows:

**E.8.5 'Any failure, unnecessary delay or obstruction on the part of the Minister in complying with the requirements of Part II, Paragraph E.7.6.'**

**Paragraph H.4**

Add a new Paragraph H.4 as follows:

**H.4 'Within one month of the conclusion of each case as provided in Part I, Paragraph 17, the Mandated Group shall prepare a written report of its conduct of the case and submit it to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission, who shall, in order to preserve confidentiality, remove from the report the name and address of the minister, the name of the minister's church(es) and any other information which might lead to the identification of any individuals involved in the case. The sole purpose of the report shall be to help those charged with the ongoing review of the operation of the Section O Process to monitor the performance of Mandated Groups and thus to ensure that all appropriate training and assistance is provided and the highest standards are maintained.'**

**Resolution 9 Replacement of the existing Section O, Part I**

(report paragraph 5.3.2)

**General Assembly agrees to replace the whole of the existing Part I of Section O with the following:**

SECTION O

Process for dealing with cases of Ministerial Discipline

**PART I - Substantive Provisions**

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

1. 1.1 Under the provisions of this Section O an Assembly Commission (as defined in Section A of Part II) shall operate under the authority of the General Assembly for the purpose of deciding (in cases properly referred to it) the questions as to whether a Minister has committed a breach of discipline and, if the Assembly Commission should so decide, whether on that account his/her name should be deleted from the Roll of Ministers or alternatively whether a written warning should be issued to him/her. The Assembly Commission may also decide to make a recommendation/referral in accordance with provisions of Paragraph 1.3. Under the Section O Process the Assembly Commission is also able to make recommendations (other than recommendations under Paragraph 1.3) and offer guidance but only within the limits prescribed in Section F of Part II.

- 1.2 Subject only to Paragraph 1.3, once the disciplinary case of any Minister is being dealt with under the Section O Process, it shall be conducted and concluded entirely in accordance with that Process and not through any other procedure or process of the Church.
- 1.3.1 If it considers that the situation concerning a Minister involved in a case within the Section O Process relates to or involves a perceived incapacity on the part of that Minister which might render him/her unfit to exercise, or to continue to exercise, ministry on account of medical, psychological or other similar or related reasons, the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission may make an Order in accordance with the Rules of Procedure referring the case back to the Synod Moderator/Deputy General Secretary who called in the Mandated Group with a recommendation that the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (as defined in Section A of Part II) be initiated in respect of the Minister concerned, whereupon the Ministerial Disciplinary proceedings shall stand adjourned pending the outcome of such recommendation.
- 1.3.2 The Rules of Procedure contained in Part II shall provide for the service of the above Order (and any accompanying documentation if appropriate) on the Synod Moderator/Deputy General Secretary and under those Rules that person shall be required, within the time therein specified, to notify the Secretary of the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission in writing whether the recommendation has been accepted or rejected.
- 1.3.3 If the recommendation has been accepted, the notification shall specify the date on which the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure was initiated, whereupon the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission shall make a further Order declaring the Ministerial Disciplinary case to be concluded, subject only to the continuation of the Minister's suspension until the issue of his/her suspension has been resolved in accordance with the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure.
- 1.3.4 If the recommendation has been rejected, the notification shall state the reasons and the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission shall forthwith reactivate the Ministerial Disciplinary case.
2. The Assembly Commission, the Commission Panel, the Appeals Commission and all aspects of the Section O Process shall at all times remain under the jurisdiction and control of the General Assembly which has the authority through the exercise of its functions as contained in Paragraph 2(5) of the Structure to amend, enlarge or revoke the whole or any part of the Section O Process, save only that, so long as it remains in force, the decision reached in any particular case (whether or not on appeal) and any orders made in accordance with this Section O Process shall be made in the name of the General Assembly and shall be final and binding on the Minister and on all the councils of the Church.
3. 3.1 Subject only to Paragraph 3.2, the Ministerial Disciplinary Process shall not be initiated in respect of any Minister if his/her case is currently being dealt with under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure.
- 3.2 The Ministerial Disciplinary Process may be initiated in respect of a Minister as a result of a recommendation issuing from the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure, in which case there may be a short transitional overlap between the commencement of the Ministerial Disciplinary case and the conclusion of the case within the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure.
4. 4.1 In considering the evidence and reaching its decision, the Assembly Commission or (in the case of an appeal) the Appeals Commission shall in every case have full regard to the Basis of Union and in particular Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto which states the responsibilities undertaken by those who become Ministers of the United Reformed Church and the criteria which they must apply in the exercise of their ministry.
- 4.2 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.

5. 5.1 A Minister may appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission to delete his/her name from the Roll of Ministers under Section F of Part II or to issue a written warning under that Section by lodging a Notice of Appeal in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, stating the ground/s of such appeal.
- 5.2 The Mandated Group of the Council which lodged the Referral Notice in any case may in the name of that Council appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission not to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll of Ministers by lodging a Notice of Appeal in accordance with the Rules of Procedure stating the ground/s of such appeal. In any case, where no written warning is attached to the decision not to delete, the Notice may state, if the Mandated Group so desires, that the appeal is limited to the question of the issue of a written warning to the Minister.
- 5.3 No-one other than the Parties has any right of appeal from the decision of the Assembly Commission.
6. Procedural matters arising under the Section O Process shall in every case be dealt with in accordance with the Rules of Procedure as contained in Part II.
7. 7.1 Save only as provided in Paragraph 7.2, this Part I of the Section O Process is subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 All such changes to the Section O Process as are made by Mission Council under Paragraph 7.2 shall be reported to the next meeting of the General Assembly.

## **Resolution 10 Introduction of a new procedure to be known as the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure**

(report paragraph 5.3.3-5.3.4)

### **General Assembly**

- a) **resolves to introduce a procedure (to be known as the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure) designed for dealing with cases involving Ministers of Word and Sacrament who are regarded as being unfit to exercise ministry on account of medical, psychological or other similar or related reasons and**
- b) **approves Part I of that Procedure in the form set out below and**
- c) **notes the intention to introduce Part II thereof to coincide with the intended ratification of this resolution at the General Assembly of 2006:**

**SECTION [ to be inserted ]**

### **PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH CASES OF MINISTERIAL INCAPACITY**

#### **PART I – SUBSTANTIVE PROVISIONS (governed by General Assembly Function 2(5))(xi) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church)**

**Note:** The words and expressions marked \* are defined in the Rules of Procedure contained in Part II of this Procedure.

1. Under the provisions of this Ministerial Incapacity Procedure\* a Review Commission\* and, in the event of an appeal, an Appeals Review Commission\* shall operate under the authority of the General Assembly for the purpose of considering and deciding upon cases properly referred to it in which Ministers, whilst not perceived to have committed any breach of ministerial discipline, are nevertheless regarded as being unfit to exercise, or to continue to exercise, ministry on account of medical, psychological or other similar or related reasons.
2. The Review Commission, the Standing Panel\* the Appeals Review Commission, and all aspects of the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure shall at all times remain under the jurisdiction and control of the General Assembly which has the authority through the exercise of its functions as contained in Paragraph 2(5) of the Structure\* to amend, enlarge or revoke the whole or any part of this Ministerial Incapacity Procedure, save only that, as long as it remains in force, the decision reached in any particular case (whether or not on appeal) and any orders made in accordance with the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure shall be made in the name of the General Assembly and shall be final and binding on the Minister and on all the councils of the Church.
3.
  - 3.1 Subject only to the provisions of Paragraph 3.2, when the case of any Minister is being dealt with under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure, it must be conducted and concluded entirely in accordance with that procedure and not through any other procedure or process of the Church.
    - 3.2.1 If it considers that, in a case within the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure, an issue of Ministerial Discipline is or may be involved, the Review Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Review Commission may make a Referral Order\* in accordance with the Rules of Procedure\* referring the case back to the council of the Church which initiated it with the recommendation that the Ministerial Disciplinary Process\* should be initiated in respect of the Minister concerned, whereupon the proceedings under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure shall stand adjourned pending the outcome of such recommendation.
    - 3.2.2 The Rules of Procedure contained in Part II shall provide for the service of the Referral Order (and any accompanying documentation if appropriate) on a person properly representing the council of the Church referred to in Paragraph 3.2.1 and under those Rules that person shall be required, within the time therein specified, to notify the Secretary of the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission in writing whether the recommendation has been accepted or rejected.
    - 3.2.3 If the recommendation has been accepted, the notification shall specify the date on which the Ministerial Disciplinary Process was initiated, whereupon the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission shall make a further Order declaring the case within the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure to be concluded, subject only, if the Minister has already been suspended under that Procedure, to the continuation of his/her suspension until the issue of the Minister's suspension has been resolved in accordance with the Ministerial Disciplinary Process.
    - 3.2.4 If the recommendation has been rejected, the notification shall state the reasons and the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission shall forthwith reactivate the case within the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure.
  - 4.1 Subject only to Paragraph 4.2, the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure shall not be initiated in respect of any Minister if his/her case is currently being dealt with under the Ministerial Disciplinary Process.
  - 4.2 The Ministerial Incapacity Procedure may be initiated in respect of a Minister as a result of a recommendation issuing from the Ministerial Disciplinary Process, in which case there may be a short transitional overlap between the commencement of the case within the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure and the conclusion of the Ministerial Disciplinary case.
5. Although the operation of the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure is not based upon the conscious breach by the Minister of the promises made at ordination, the Review Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Review Commission shall, in considering the evidence and reaching its decision, in every case have full regard to the Basis of Union\* and in particular Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto which states the responsibilities undertaken by those who become Ministers of the United Reformed Church and the criteria which they must apply in the exercise of their ministry.

6. The Review Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Review Commission shall have the authority to make orders and decisions in the terms specified in the Rules of Procedure.
7. The Minister who is the subject of a case, but no-one else, may appeal against any decision of the Review Commission but not against an order of an interim nature only. An appeal must be made in writing within the time limit specified in the Rules of Procedure and in accordance with those rules and the grounds of appeal must be stated in the notice.
8. Procedural matters arising under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure shall in every case be dealt with under the Rules of Procedure.
9. 9.1 Save only as provided in Paragraph 9.2, this Part I of the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure is subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure.  
  
9.2 Mission Council acting in the name of General Assembly has authority by a single resolution of that Council to make as and when necessary and with immediate effect such changes to any part of the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure as are, on the advice of the legal advisers to the United Reformed Church, required to bring that procedure into line with the general law of the land consequent upon any changes in legislation and/or case law.  
  
9.3 All such changes to the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure as are made by Mission Council under Paragraph 9.2 shall be reported to the next annual meeting of the General Assembly.

## **Resolution II Amendments to the Structure to introduce the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure**

(report paragraph 5.3.5)

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

### **Paragraph 2(3)(A)(xix)**

Add a new Paragraph 2(3)(A)(xix) as follows:

**‘where the district council considers that a minister is not or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union and perceives the issue as relating to the incapacity of the minister on account of medical, psychological or other similar or related reasons, to initiate the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure of the United Reformed Church in respect of that minister and to follow the procedure laid down therein with regard to the suspension of the minister during the continuance of the incapacity proceedings’.**

The existing district council Functions (xix) and (xx) to become (xx) and (xxi).

### **Paragraph 2(3)(C)**

Replace the existing 2(3)(C) with the following:

**‘No appeal shall lie against a decision by the district council to initiate the Ministerial Disciplinary Process in accordance with Function (xviii) above or the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure in accordance with Function (xix) above in respect of any minister’.**

### **Paragraph 2(3)(E)**

Add a new Paragraph 2(3)(E) as follows:

**‘As soon as any minister becomes the subject of a case under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure, 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.’**

**Paragraph 2(4)(A)(viii)**

Replace the words **'the Disciplinary Process referred to in Function (xv) below'** with the words **'the Ministerial Disciplinary Process referred to in Function (xiv) below or the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure referred to in Function (xv) below'**.

**Paragraph 2(4)(A)(xv)**

Add a new **Paragraph 2(4)(A)(xv)** as follows:

**'In the absence of any reference into the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure by the appropriate district council and where, either on its own initiative or on a reference or appeal brought by any other party, the synod considers that a minister is not or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union and perceives the issue as relating to the incapacity of the minister on account of medical, psychological or other similar or related reasons to initiate the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure in respect of that minister and to follow the procedure laid down therein with regard to the suspension of the minister during the continuance of the incapacity proceedings'**.

The existing synod Functions (xv) and (xvi) to become (xvi) and (xvii) and alter the reference in the renumbered (xvi) from **'para. 2.3(xix)'** to **'para. 2(3)(A)(xx)'**.

**Paragraph 2(4)(C)**

Replace the existing Paragraph 2(4)(C) of the Structure with the following:

**'No appeal shall lie against a decision by the synod to initiate the Ministerial Disciplinary Process in accordance with Function (xiv) above or the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure in accordance with Function (xv) above in respect of any minister'**.

**Paragraph 2(4)(E)**

Add a new Paragraph 2(4)(E) as follows:

**'As soon as any minister becomes the subject of a case under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure, 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.'**

**Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xi)**

Add the words **'..... and Part I of the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure referred to in Function (xxiv) below'**.

**Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xviii)**

Replace the words **'the Disciplinary Process referred to in Function (xxiii) below'** with the words **'the Ministerial Disciplinary Process referred to in Function (xxiii) below or the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure referred to in Function (xxiv) below'**.

**Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xxii)**

Replace the existing paragraph with the following:

**'to provide for the setting up of an Appeals Commission in accordance with the Ministerial Disciplinary Process for the hearing of appeals under that Process.'**

**Paragraphs 2(5)(A)(xxiv), (xxv) and (xxvi)**

Add new Paragraphs 2(5)(A) (xxiv), (xxv) and (xxvi) as follows:

**Paragraph 2(5)(xxiv)**

**'to make and (if necessary) to terminate all appointments to the Standing Panel and to any administrative office under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure and to exercise general oversight and supervision of the operation of that Procedure (save only that decisions in individual cases taken in accordance with that Procedure are made in the name of the General Assembly and are final and binding).'**

**Paragraph 2(5)(xxv)**

**'to provide for the setting up of an Appeals Review Commission in accordance with the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure for the hearing of appeals under that Procedure.'**

**Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xxvi)**

**'In the absence of any reference into the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure by the appropriate district council or synod and where either on its own initiative or on a reference or appeal brought by any other party, the General Assembly (or Mission Council acting on its behalf) considers that a minister is not or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union and perceives the issue as relating to the incapacity of the minister on account of medical, psychological or other similar or related reasons, to initiate the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure in respect of that minister and to follow the procedure laid down therein with regard to the suspension of the minister during the continuance of the incapacity proceedings. (The case of any minister who is a moderator of synod shall necessarily be dealt with under this provision).'**

Renumber the existing Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xxiv) as (xxvii).

Identify the Paragraph immediately after the General Assembly Functions as **2(5)(B)**.

**Paragraph 2(5)(C)**

Add a new Paragraph 2(5)(C) as follows:

**'As soon as any minister becomes the subject of a case under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure, 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 5(1)**

Replace the existing Paragraph 5(1) with the following:

**'No right of Appeal shall lie against the decision of any council of the Church (acting with due authority) to initiate a case within either the Ministerial Disciplinary Process or the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure, and once a case is properly within either of such procedures it shall be resolved in accordance therewith and not under Paragraph 5(2) below. Any decision reached in accordance with either the Ministerial Disciplinary Process or the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure has the status of a decision of the General Assembly and is final and binding.'**

**Section C – Rules of Procedure on Appeals**

Replace the existing Paragraph 10 with the following:

**'The provisions of this Section "Rules of Procedure on Appeals" shall not apply to cases which are being determined within either the Ministerial Disciplinary Process or the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure.'**

## **Resolution 12      Ratification of changes to Section O, Part I approved in 2004 (Resolution 11 of 2004)**

(report paragraph 5.3.6)

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

**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.'**

## **Resolution 13      Ratification of changes to the Structure regarding the resignation of ministers (Resolution 13 of 2004)**

(report paragraph 5.3.6)

**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 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)**.

**Resolution 14                      Ratification of a Constitutional Change to  
the Basis of Union (Resolution 7 of 2004)**

(report paragraph 4.7)

**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):**

**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 or area Council and in a context it has approved."***

**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;"***

**Resolution 15                      Non-Stipendiary Church-Related  
Community Workers**

(report paragraph 4.7)

**General Assembly resolves to make the following changes to the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration:**

- a) Amend section 5.4.3 to read:  
***'Non-stipendiary ministers and non-stipendiary CRCWs'***
- b) Amend section 9.2.1 to read:  
***'An interest free loan is available to ordinands for the stipendiary ministry at the time of their ordination; to stipendiary CRCWs upon commissioning; and to former non-stipendiary ministers and non-stipendiary CRCWs at the time they transfer to stipendiary service (see Appendix A).'***

## **Resolution 16      Target representation on Panels and Boards**

(report paragraph 4.8)

**General Assembly instructs the Nominations Committee to monitor appointments to the Assessment Board, the Commission Panel for the Disciplinary Process and the Panel for the appointment and review of Synod Moderators in order to further its Equal Opportunities objectives and sets the following targets for the lists of nominations to each of these bodies presented in the annual report to Assembly:**

- a)      **An equal number of men and women.**
- b)      **At least 10% representation from minority ethnic groups.**

## **Resolution 17      Authorisation to make changes to the Equal Opportunities Policy consequent to changes in the law**

(report paragraph 4.9)

**General Assembly resolves that Mission Council, acting in the name of General Assembly, shall have the authority by a single resolution of that Council to make as and when necessary and with immediate effect such changes to any part of the Equal Opportunities policy as are, on the advice of the legal advisers to the United Reformed Church, required to bring that policy into line with the general law of the land consequent upon any changes in legislation and/or case law.**

## **Resolution 18**

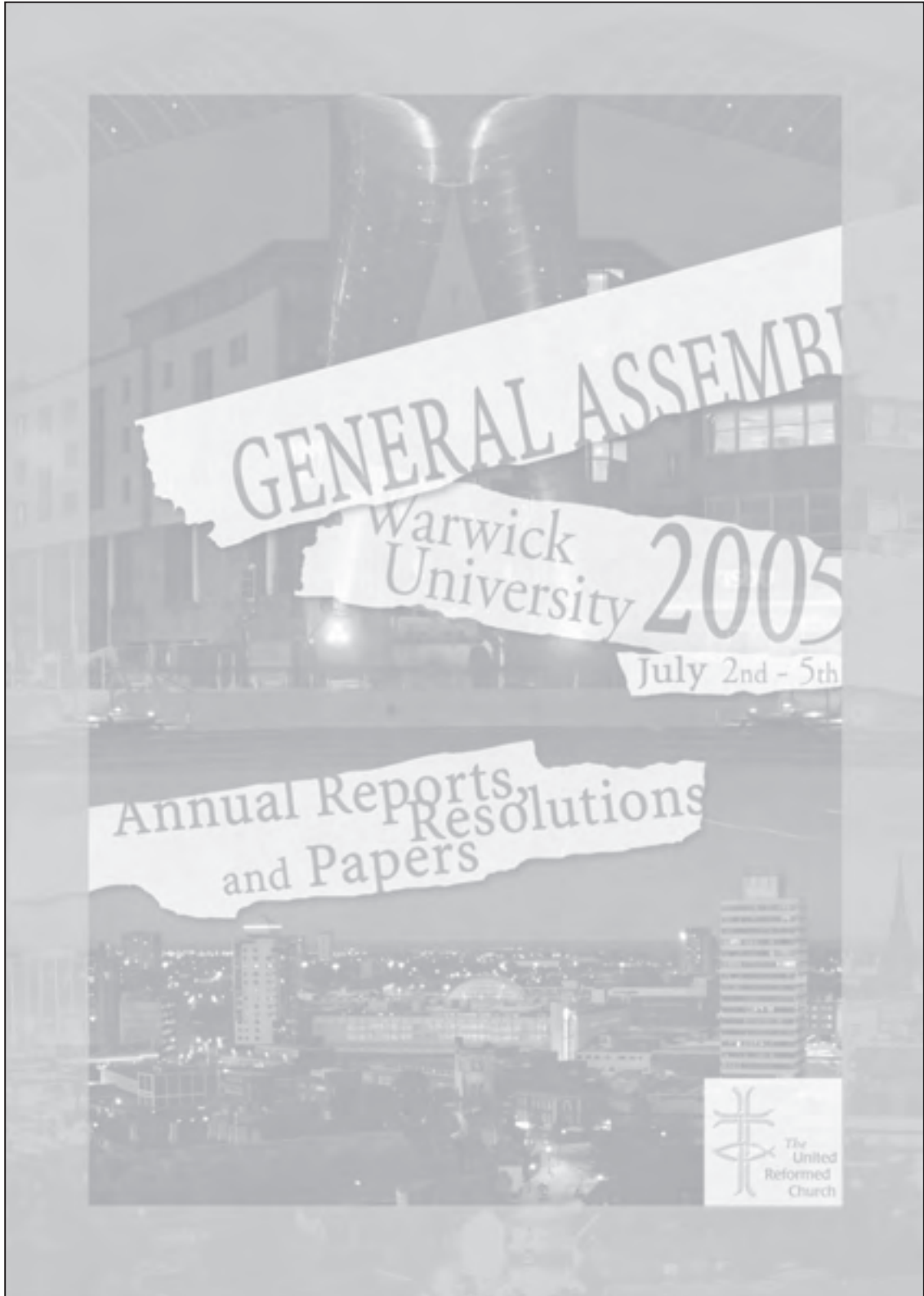
## **2006 Budget**

**General Assembly accepts the budget for the year 2006 as set out in the Book of Accounts.**



*The*  
United  
Reformed  
Church

# Committees



# Assembly Arrangements

**This Committee plans and budgets for General Assembly.**

**Committee Members**

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

**1 General Assembly 2007**

The Committee brings a resolution that the Assembly of 2007 should be held at the University of Manchester (Fallowfield Campus) from 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> July.  
**[Resolution 19]**

**2 The way we are**

The Committee has met three times since General Assembly 2004. The number of meetings and the brevity of this report belie the time and consideration that has been given to the form and content of General Assembly both now and in the future. The location of General Assembly is booked up to three years ahead in order to secure a venue sufficient to accommodate the number attending. Both the numbers of people and, to some extent, the facilities at each venue, restrict the opportunity for various ways of working; the shortage of time too, imposes a constraint. An interim move was made at General Assembly 2004 by returning District Council representation to a ratio closer to our 1972 origins. This will not have been without its disadvantages.

**3 The way we could be**

More radical proposals are contained within the Catch the Vision report. General Assembly consisting of 250 people meeting for a longer time every two years would provide many exciting opportunities: better fellowship, deeper relationships, more time for prayerful consideration of each issue and greater individual responsibility leading to truly corporate decisions led by the Spirit.

**4 Acknowledgements**

General Assembly involves immensely detailed planning. The Committee is grateful for the work of the staff of Communications and Editorial, without whom we would have no Book of Reports or the visual material at Assembly itself. The Committee is also indebted to Revd Wilf Bahadur who maintains a close watch on the detailed logistics during Assembly – and to the many people from the Synod who give up their time to steward at Assembly. The Committee particularly wishes to thank Ann Barton in her first year as Secretary – a role that encompasses much more than the simple title implies.

**Resolution 19**

**General Assembly 2007**

**Assembly agrees that the General Assembly in 2007 will meet at the University of Manchester (Fallowfield Campus) from 7th to 10th July.**

# Church and Society

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

## ***Committee Members***

**Convener:** *Revd Martin Camroux*      **Secretary:** *Dr Andrew Bradstock (until February 2005)*  
**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 Church Education Committee), Mr George Morton (CTBI Environmental Issues Network).*

## **1 MakePovertyHistory**

1.1 So 2005 has now arrived, the year we've been gearing up for as campaigners, the year we hope will see world leaders take the kind of action to tackle global poverty we've been pressing them to take for so long. To capitalise on the extraordinary opportunities that this year presents – including the report of the Commission for Africa, the UK hosting a G8 summit and assuming the presidency of the EU – agencies, faith movements, trades unions and others have come together under the banner **MakePovertyHistory** to ensure that the most effective mobilisation possible is mounted.

1.2 January saw the church launch of **MakePovertyHistory** in London, and with some 700 people attending churches certainly *were* able to say loudly that they wanted action this year. The United Reformed Church helped to organise that event, and among the church leaders taking part was the Moderator of General Assembly, Sheila Maxey. With some 600 women clergy and religious from all denominations, Sheila also took part in the 'Vicar of Dibley' march to Downing Street in January, and, with Roberta Rominger, was among the small delegation that went to lobby the Prime Minister at No 10 with Dawn French.

1.3 The Commitment for Life report outlines other ways in which the United Reformed Church is getting involved with **MakePovertyHistory**, but we have well and truly built upon the resolutions on the Millennium Development Goals and the 2005 mobilisation passed by the last two Assemblies, and thrown ourselves fully into this potentially world-changing initiative. Church and Society has been delighted to support

the six-month appointment of Helen Warmington as the United Reformed Church's Campaign Officer for **MakePovertyHistory**.

## **2 Currency Transaction Tax**

2.1 One organisation which has been particularly looking forward to 2005 is the Tobin Tax Network to which the United Reformed Church and FURY are affiliated. With a focus this year on finding new money for development, the Network believes that the time for a currency transaction levy – a considerably modified version of the tax originally proposed by Professor James Tobin in the 1970s – has come. Accordingly it is mounting a specific project this year entitled 'Winning the Argument in 2005'.

## **3 Ethics of the New Warfare**

3.1 Progress continues to be made on this project which Church and Society was asked to pursue by Assembly 2003. With our colleagues in the Methodist Church we have brought together a team of people with specialist knowledge, experience and interest in the subject and they are now meeting to plan the project in greater detail and decide what form the 'outcome' will take.

## **4 Party conferences**

4.1 In September the Moderator of General Assembly joined with her Baptist, Methodist, Quaker and Salvation Army colleagues to visit all three party conferences. The aim of these visits is to enable leaders of the free churches to meet parliamentarians for informal conversations, to share matters of common concern and discuss ways each can help and support the other. As well as pre-arranged meetings with senior parliamentarians, opportunities were taken to attend

debates in the conference halls, hear speeches by party leaders, attend fringe meetings and prayer breakfasts and meet members of the Christian groupings associated with the parties. As in previous General Election years the United Reformed Church has worked with our ecumenical partners to assist churches in local constituencies to organise hustings meetings for candidates.

## 5 **Assets for Life**

5.1 The pack produced jointly with the Church Related Community Work programme and launched at Assembly 2004 is proving an invaluable resource for churches seeking to become more effectively involved in serving their local community.

## 6 **JustShare**

6.1 This coalition of churches and faith-based agencies which the United Reformed Church helped to create in 2001 continues to take the debate about globalisation and social justice to the City. JustShare's programme includes public debates, boardroom discussions and 'street-level' events around May Day, which last year included a 'sermon for the City' preached from the steps of the Royal Exchange followed by an open forum. Another sermon is planned for 2005 and it is hoped that the event will become an annual fixture.

## 7 **The United Reformed Church and the Free Church Education Committee**

7.1 The Free Churches have a long history of involvement in public education. In most cases this has meant a concentration of effort in the areas of debate and dialogue about the content of education, the purposes of education and its role in society, rather than in running schools. There are now new opportunities to build on this experience and commitment. The Government is actively seeking the involvement of faith groups in many areas of public policy and is building on the successful collaborative work involved in producing the new non-statutory framework for Religious Education as a model for other forms of engagement in and beyond education.

7.2 The Free Church Education Committee (FCEC) aims to serve its member denominations and to work with others to ensure that Christians have a voice in education and that, in turn, the churches are fully informed about educational issues. The United Reformed Church has much to offer to the world of education and we believe that a closer working relationship between the United Reformed Church and the Free Church Education Committee would benefit both the churches and the world of education.

7.3 These are some of the areas in which the FCEC will be involved in the coming months, and in which the United Reformed Church could play an important part:

7.3.1 The debate on **Collective Worship** in schools. Currently many schools are not complying with the requirement for a daily act of collective worship and there is no real incentive for them to do so. It is likely that there will be a review of policy in this area, but only if the churches and other faith groups can demonstrate some degree of consensus. The United Reformed Church needs to be involved in this – collective worship in schools may be the only encounter many young people have with Christian worship, and many of our ministers are involved in leading acts of collective worship in their local schools.

7.3.2 **SACREs** – Standing Advisory Committees for Religious Education. The Free Churches have representatives on these committees within each Local Education Authority. Many of these representatives are United Reformed Church members. We need to support and encourage these people and to ensure that we are able to provide representatives with experience and enthusiasm. The FCEC will be looking at ways in which we can improve recruitment and support and would welcome an active United Reformed Church contribution to this.

7.3.3 **Teaching as a vocation** Historically Christians have been over-represented numerically in educational professions and we believe that that has had a positive effect on the values and ethos of our schools. There will be new initiatives to encourage Christians to consider teaching as a vocation and a way of living out their Christian faith in society. We will be encouraging the United Reformed Church to be an active partner in this enterprise.

7.3.4 **New housing areas** In areas where new communities are being built, the churches are already actively involved in discussing provision for worship. There have also been discussions about ecumenical schools. The United Reformed Church needs to be working with ecumenical partners in these new areas to consider how best to have a Christian presence in schools.

7.3.5 **Education Sunday** (12 February 2006) is an opportunity to celebrate education – to support our teachers and schools and to encourage our members to take seriously the issues that affect the education of young people in our society. The United Reformed Church has been a partner in this work and we would like to ensure that next year Education Sunday is celebrated across the Church. Unfortunately this year the material did not get as far as the United Reformed Church website.

7.3.6 **Website** The Free Church Education website ([www.freechurcheducation.org.uk](http://www.freechurcheducation.org.uk)) will provide a source of information, news, support to all those involved or interested in education and the church's role. It is being redeveloped and will appeal to a far wider audience – not just specialists. We would like

to ensure that the site is widely known and used by anyone who believes that the churches have something to contribute to education.

7.4 These are just some examples of the work of the Free Church Education Committee. In the coming months the Church and Society Committee will be exploring ways in which the United Reformed Church can be more actively and consistently involved.

## **8 AIDS Working Group**

8.1 The Group devoted much of its time during the autumn to planning and publicising an event, 'God on Edge', scheduled to take place in January. The aim of the day was to enable people to move from showing concern and compassion for people living with HIV/AIDS to grappling with the wider issues. Lionel Blue had agreed to be the keynote speaker, and workshops arranged to explore the issues in depth (sexuality and the church; living and dying with HIV/AIDS; expressing our feelings through art and music; creative writing). However, the disappointingly low number of bookings gave us no option but to cancel it.

8.2 Prior to World AIDS Day 2004, we co-branded and distributed to all churches a poster produced by the Methodist Mission Education office, 'The Body of Christ has AIDS'. It quotes 1 Corinthians 12:26-27, 'Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it ... If one part suffers, every part suffers with it ...'. It has disturbed and challenged. That is what HIV/AIDS in our world is doing to all of us. We have to face up to the implications of those verses.

8.3 The Group plans to produce a booklet of worship resources for World AIDS Day 2005, and again, the United Reformed Church website will provide links to Church of Scotland and Christian Aid materials.

8.4 There remains much to be done. If anything, the recent disappointments have undoubtedly given the Group renewed incentive as it continues to reflect on the best way forward in the task of encouraging a greater awareness of the devastating effects of the HIV/AIDS virus on individuals and communities both in the UK and globally.

## **9 Environmental Issues**

9.1 The Environmental Policy for the United Reformed Church, welcomed and endorsed by the General Assembly 2004, will only be relevant if actions are taken by the church at all levels. In the Policy, local churches are encouraged to examine their environmental practices, using the resources of Eco-Congregation, and to work through Operation Noah to raise awareness of climate change. A network is being developed with the Methodist Church to assist churches and districts to respond to the challenges to the environment by sharing written resources and disseminating information about action taken by local churches.

9.2 Eco-Congregation in England is now managed by the Arthur Rank Centre, support is offered to churches in Wales, and the programme in Scotland provides a revised set of resources on its website. Operation Noah was launched on 9 October with a conference of 250 people and a service at Coventry Cathedral. It is now overseen by the Environmental Issues Network of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and is contributing to the Climate Movement, a coalition of agencies working together to mobilise action related to the G8 Summit in July.

9.3 As part of its overview of current environmental matters, the Environmental Issues Network discussed ways of ensuring environmental issues are recognised during the UK presidency of G8 and the European Union. In particular it sees the need to recognise the damaging effects of climate change on the prospects of the developing world.

## **10 United Reformed Church Peace Fellowship**

10.1 At a well-attended Annual Conference at Carrs Lane in November, John Johansen-Berg gave an incisive keynote address on 'Wall of Shame and Roll of Honour – a strategy for peacemaking in Israel/Palestine'. From the AGM Group Reports five priority actions were chosen:

- to make better links with FURY (via the Youth Secretary and Fury Assembly);
- to make sure United Reformed Church investments are ethically sound (via the Ethical Investment Advisory Group);
- to raise awareness of peace issues through the newsletter and 'Reform';
- to make links with Make Poverty History in 2005;
- to pray and witness against nuclear weapons with CCND.

10.2 The Convener represents the United Reformed Church on Churches Together in Britain and Ireland's (CTBI) Working Group for the World Council of Churches Decade to Overcome Violence. The Group organised a conference at Swanwick in September 2004 on 'Beyond Violence?' to which a hundred people came and the United Reformed Church had the greatest number of participants. Churches have been asked to respond to the Working Group on:

- theological issues (violence and the role of religions);
- liturgical issues (re-reading sacred texts, re-visiting language of worship);
- reconciliation issues (where and when is forgiveness appropriate);
- peace and disarmament issues (in post 9/11 environment);
- abuse issues – women and children (practical measures taken).



10.3 A 'WISE' (Wales, Ireland, Scotland, England) Project may be facilitated by CTBI on a truth recovery and healing process within and between the four nations on the historic resolution of the British Irish conflict. The Group has also worked on the CTBI Lent Course in 2006 planned around the theme of Overcoming Violence.

10.4 Members of the Peace Fellowship remembered Children Living in War Zones on 30 December following the Holy Innocents Day Service in St Martin-in-the Fields, London. We also joined in the Lobby of Parliament calling for sustained and increased British commitment towards the following UN-led processes: achieving the Millennium Development Goals; advancing nuclear non-proliferation; strengthening UN human rights machinery.

## 11 Criminal Justice

11.1 Along with its ongoing concern about prison conditions, support for the families of those in custody and the rehabilitation of offenders, the Churches' Criminal Justice Forum (CCJF) continues to advocate alternatives to custody. A Home Office secondment on Restorative Justice has produced a five-week study pack on the subject in an easily photocopiable loose-leaf format. CCJF supported the launch on 9 December 2004 of the major report *A Place of Redemption, A Christian Approach to Punishment and Prison*, published by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

11.2 CCJF networks with groups and charities in the field of rehabilitation and intervention to prevent offending. It encourages the developing work of Community Chaplaincy (work with offenders that begins while they are still in custody and continues to support them towards taking responsibility for their own lives when they are released).

11.3 In advance of the expected General Election, CCJF produced a Position Paper on crime prevention, the criminal justice system, resettlement and vulnerable groups, together with a list of possible questions for candidates. A Scottish version of the *What can I Do?* booklet on the many opportunities for volunteering within the criminal justice system has now been produced and work is proceeding on updating the original.

11.4 The title Director has now been accorded to Stuart Dew, formerly Criminal Justice Officer, in recognition of the wide remit he undertakes. He is supported by an energetic part-time Policy Officer, Lindsey Holley.

## 12 Andrew Bradstock

12.1 Internally the major event of the year was the departure of Andrew Bradstock to be Director of the Christian Socialist Movement. This is a real loss to the Church. Andrew brought to his time as Church and Society Secretary a double gift. Firstly as an academic and as a radical Christian Andrew had a deep rooting in the history and theology of the English Revolution. This ironically meant that although he himself was not a member of the United Reformed Church he had a deeper appreciation of the origins and nature of the Reformed tradition than most members of the Church. Secondly he brought a great knowledge of contemporary politics and a tremendous ability to network politically - most dramatically evidenced in his arranging the visit of Claire Short to the 2003 Assembly. Although himself critical of aspects of government policy his links with the Labour Movement facilitated contacts which enabled the United Reformed Church to develop its commitment to causes such as **MakePovertyHistory** and the Jubilee Debt Campaign. A particularly innovative initiative came out of his belief that within the globalization process, governments, corporations, non-governmental organisations and international finance institutions so seldom appear to come together to explore common ground. His success in facilitating a two-day seminar at High Leigh in November 2002 around the issue of water sector reform in Ghana which included representatives of the Ghana Trades Union Congress, the World Bank, the Department for International Development, a private company interested in the water franchise in Ghana and leading non-governmental organizations from Ghana, offered a model which has wider applicability. We shall greatly miss Andrew in Church and Society and in the Church generally.

## Resolution 20

## MakePovertyHistory

**As part of the United Reformed Church's renewed commitment to challenging the world's injustices under Catch the Vision, General Assembly warmly welcomes the MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY campaign and calls on all relevant councils of the church to engage fully and imaginatively with the campaign actions for the remainder of the year.**

1.1 The opportunity created by **MakePovertyHistory** 2005 to tackle the deep scandal of poverty is very real, and yet also slender. International consensus to resolve the issues of more and better aid, debt cancellation and trade justice need to be achieved in 2005, while the British Government is in a leading role as host of the G8 Summit and President of the European Union (EU). Even as we meet in Warwick for General Assembly, the leaders of the G8 nations will be embarking for their Summit in Gleneagles.

1.2 The UK government and politicians have shown a great willingness to embrace the campaign. Yet specific UK and European Union (EU) policies still undermine progress in eradicating poverty. The British government are still pursuing Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) which are essentially trade liberalisation agreements with African Caribbean Pacific (ACP) countries. It is still pursuing water privatisation, with much evidence of British aid money used for consultancies to British firms to promote this. Our Ghanaian partners are worried and angered by the large increases in water prices to prepare the industry for privatisation.

1.3 Rich nations promised reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and an end to export subsidies, which aid their farmers but ruin the markets for producers in poor countries, but have failed to deliver reform. Rich country intransigence in key areas that are meaningful to developing nations – including access to medicine, allowing special treatment for certain sectors of poorer nations' economies, and reform of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiating procedures – has left poorer nations facing the full consequences of a sweeping process of liberalisation. The campaign seeks trade justice, not free trade.

1.4 For example, last year's 'United Reformed Church working for trade justice' poster told of Mali cotton farmers whose livelihoods were taken away by deep falls in world cotton prices, brought about by great increases in US and EU subsidised cotton

coming on to the market. In June 2004 these subsidies were declared illegal by the WTO. The US challenged that – so for another year the four West African cotton dependent countries have seen deepening poverty. The WTO upheld its ruling that the cotton subsidies are illegal (March 2005) but the US has shown no inclination to abide by the ruling, but is dragging its feet.

'How can I forgive those who use false scales and weights?

Your rich people exploit the poor, and all of you are liars.' (Micah 6:11-12)

The truth is that there is huge system of exploitation and economic dominance. We are part of it – not intentionally so – but yet we are complicit unless we stand out against it.

1.5 Already we have demonstrated that campaigning does work. In March, the Prime Minister, as a signatory to the Africa Commission Report, stated that, "Forcing poor countries to liberalise through trade agreements is the wrong approach to achieving growth and poverty reduction in Africa, and elsewhere." (Tony Blair at the launch of the Report, 11 March 2005). This was a major turnaround which would probably never have happened but for the incredible flurry of passionate campaigning.

1.6 Another success of the campaign has been the announcement by the Government in March that it will no longer use conditions attached to aid to force poor countries to privatise industries and open their markets.

1.7 This resolution calls on all churches to redouble their efforts in the second half of the year to campaign for justice. It builds on Resolution 17 in 2003 on the Millennium Development Goals, and Resolutions 17 and 18 to Assembly in 2004 introducing the 2005 campaign to double aid and make trade just and noted the increased emphasis on campaigning for economic justice. These are critical issues of our times and the Church must be at the forefront of making the moral argument in Jesus' name.

# Doctrine, Prayer and Worship

**The purpose of the Committee is to encourage and advise the Councils and Committees of the United Reformed Church in their continual study of theology, enabling the Church to reflect upon and express its doctrines; to participate in and respond to ecumenical and interfaith discussions on doctrinal matters; to produce resources and arrange consultations, in response to requests or on its own initiative, in order to enable the Church in all its councils to grow in faith, devotion and spiritual experience; to publish regular and occasional prayer and worship materials; to support and develop ecumenical and international collaborations in the areas of faith and order and spirituality; to oversee the work of the Prayer Handbook Group and the Network for Silence and Retreats.**

## **Committee Members**

**Convener:** Revd John Young      **Secretary:** Revd Kirsty Thorpe (to 2003),  
Revd Richard Mortimer, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and  
Faith and Order (from 2003)

**Members:** Revd Geoffrey Clarke; Revd Hilary Collinson; Revd Dr Susan Durber; Mrs Chris Eddowes;  
Miss Sarah Lane; Revd Jason McCullagh; Revd Dr Peter McEnhill; Revd Dr Robert Pope; Revd Prof Alan Sell;  
Revd Alistair Smeaton; Revd Peter Trow; Dr John Turner.

**Representatives of other committees:** Revd Barry Hutchinson (Silence and Retreats Network);  
Revd Dr John Parry (Interfaith Relations Committee)

**Representatives of other denominations:** Revd Canon William Croft (Church of England);  
Revd Dr John Emmett (Methodist Church).

1      *Worship from the United Reformed Church Part 2* was published to wide acclaim in 2004 and sold extremely well at General Assembly. Very grateful thanks are due to the writers of the services it contained and to the Publication Sub-Committee. A further CD Rom of Collects is being actively explored.

2      There have been two pieces of collaboration with the Youth and Children's Work Committee. In respect of the first, thanks are also due to Alistair Smeaton for producing material, particularly on the services of baptism and thanksgiving for the birth of a child, for the booklet *In the Beginning*. In respect of the second, personnel were provided to assist with two one-day Conferences on *Believing, Belonging and Baptism*. At these two events dilemmas were recognised around issues of Christian initiation in general and in particular the admission of children to communion, eg the situation of families who moved house and became part of the worshipping life of a church which in all good faith did not admit children to communion when the church where they had worshipped before had done so. As a result a draft questionnaire is being prepared on the practice of Christian Initiation in our churches, in order to discover what local churches are doing, how they see current practice and what they identify as real needs.

3.1      An invitation was received from the Deputy General Secretary to respond to section C, on Ecclesiology, of the paper on Personal and Conciliar Leadership and Authority, which had been submitted

to Mission Council as part of the work decided on at the conclusion of the Human Sexuality working party process. Our opinion was sought about the value of printing it as a separate document, as some saw it as the first systematic commentary on the Basis of Union as a working document. It was decided to set up a Task Group to recast the paper as an aid to ecumenical talks. This duly took place and we thank Alan Sell, Sarah Lane, Peter McEnhill and Robert Pope for a very important and helpful statement.

3.2      Mission Council expressed considerable gratitude for a piece of work faithfully and thoroughly discharged. However it reached the conclusion that the document did not present the full and final form of all that needed to be said. It recognised that further work was needed to reflect the changes which had taken place in the theology of mission and to help address the missionary calling of the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It also discerned the United Reformed Church was in evolution and valued the document as a profound statement of what we had been but did not feel it described either the fullness of what we had become or of what we aspired to be. Recognising that it was deeply unfair to ask good people to give time to producing work and then shift the goalposts between meetings, Mission Council concluded that what was really needed was a portfolio of documents. Further work will take place to establish a 'contents page' for such a portfolio with Mission Council.

4 Our committee notes two pieces of work arising from the Catch the Vision process. The first of these is on the nature of Eldership and ordination, having regard to matters outstanding from *Conversations on the Way to Unity*, and recent work by the Ecumenical Committee in respect of last year's General Assembly Resolution 41, by the Ministries Committee in respect of Equipping the Saints and by the Life and Witness Committee on the structures of the local church. The second is on the provision of catechetical material. In order to commend the Christian faith it is necessary to know about that which one commends.

5 Other matters which the committee has been considering include a number of responses – to *Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth*, the Confession agreed at the 24<sup>th</sup> General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in Accra, to government proposals on Civil Registration and to a request from the Synod of Scotland Church and Society Committee for a reference point from the theology of marriage in their engaging with proposals before the Scottish Parliament. We have also done some thinking on transsexualism and gender reassignment, produced material for the Ministries Committee on lay presidency at communion and discussed future work with the Interfaith Committee on apologetics to people of other faith.

6 We thank the retiring editor, Revd Ken Chippendale, and his team for their contributions to the Prayer Handbook and welcome the new editor Geoff Duncan.

7 The Silence and Retreats Network reports elsewhere in this book but we would like to indicate our support for them in a time of discernment and reassessment.

8.1 **Committee Membership.** Since the last time we reported we have said farewell to Glyn Millington, Robert Pope, Jenny Poulter and Alistair Smeaton. We have welcomed Geoffrey Clarke, Hilary Collinson, Chris Eddowes, Sarah Lane, Jason McCullagh, Peter Trow and John Turner. John Parry has joined us as a representative of the Interfaith Committee. David Bunney ended his period of service representing the Silence and Retreats Group and has been replaced by Barry Hutchinson. Likewise Stephen Wigley has been replaced as the representative of the Methodist Church by John Emmett. We offer deep thanks to all for services rendered and willingness to serve.

8.2 In particular we would wish to draw attention to two great servants of the Committee. Kirsty Thorpe completed her service as Secretary of the Committee in July 2004. We are greatly in her debt for all her work, her mighty labours on our behalf, her deep involvement at textual level and the huge support she has been to other officers. Richard Mortimer, who became Staff Secretary relating to the Committee in July 2003, has taken over her secretarial duties.

8.3 And at this Assembly we say farewell to our outgoing Convener John Young. We pay tribute to John's gracious, gentle and eirenic leading of business and especially to his use of poetry and creative writing in worship which has stimulated much imaginative reflection upon the representation of reality and how words open up the numinous. We look forward to welcoming Susan Durber as his successor.



# Ecumenical

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

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

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

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

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

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

**The Committee maintains official United Reformed Church links with overseas churches and world and regional ecumenical organisations. It guides the United Reformed Church's participation in the Council for World Mission. Through it official contact is made with British and Irish ecumenical bodies.**

**The work of selecting, training and caring for missionaries and overseeing exchange of personnel is undertaken by the International Exchange Sub-Committee.**

## **Committee Members**

**Convener:** *Revd Elizabeth Nash*

**Secretaries:** *Revd Richard Mortimer (Secretary for Ecumenical Relations), Revd Philip Woods (Secretary for International Relations), Revd Dale Rominger (International Relations Programme Officer).*

**Members:** *Revd Rowena Francis, Mrs Pat Gurr, Mr Malcolm Porter, Revd Lindsey Sanderson, Mrs Ann Shillaker, Revd Bryan Shirley, Revd Cecil White.*

**The National Synod of Scotland:** *Red Mary Buchanan*

**The National Synod of Wales:** *Revd Stuart Jackson*

**Convener of the International Exchange Sub-Committee:** *Revd Chris Baillie*

**Representatives to World Council of Churches:** *Revd Dr Susan Durber (Faith and Order), Revd Jill Thornton (Central Committee).*

**Representatives of other Committees:** *Revd Christine Craven (Ministries), Revd Hilary Collinson (Doctrine, Prayer and Worship), Revd Sue Henderson (Training), Mrs Katalina Tahaafe-Williams (Racial Justice & Multicultural Ministry), Ms Marie Williams (Interfaith Relations).*

**Pending new appointment:** *Church and Society, Life and Witness, Youth and Children's Work.*

**Representatives from other churches:** *Revd Richard Cattley (Church of England), Revd Peter Sulston (Methodist Church), Revd Dr Donald Watts (Presbyterian Church in Ireland).*

## **“You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”**

1 The United Reformed Church works and witnesses in three nations and, through *Belonging to the World Church*, internationally. We are part of instruments, fellowships, alliances and councils in four nations, Europe and the whole inhabited earth.

2 **In the United Reformed Church** the commitment to ecumenism in the United Kingdom and beyond continues to be a central feature of our life. The Ecumenical Committee was very pleased that the response from local churches to Catch the Vision in 2004 called so strongly for yet more commitment to unity.

3 Both areas of our work, UK ecumenical and international ecumenical relations, come together in our support of the development of **multicultural ministry** here, working alongside the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Committee. This relatively new development in our ecumenical journey offers fresh opportunities to experience and be renewed by the richness and vitality of God's church.

4 The regular **Consultation between the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and the Synod Ecumenical Officers** took place at Windermere in October 2004, organised by a completely new team. Revd Andrew Faley, the Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations at the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and

Wales, continued the high standard of input from our ecumenical partners. The next Consultation is scheduled for May 2006.

5 In 2004 we hosted three events: with assistance from our UK Reformed partners, a **World Alliance of Reformed Churches** (WARC) consultation to bring together their work on Covenanting for Justice in preparation for the WARC General Council in Accra, Ghana and, with Churches of Christ ecumenical partners, the **Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council** and the **World Convention of the Churches of Christ**. Of these the World Convention was by far the largest undertaking, numbering over 1,000 people and we are very grateful to all those who contributed to providing a warm United Reformed Church welcome for those who attended from all around the world, not least Wessex and Southern Synods whose generous assistance enabled everyone to have a memento of the occasion to take home with them.

6 In England, the **Anglican – Methodist Covenant** was signed in Westminster Central Hall on 1st November 2003. A Joint Implementation Commission was established and this body has set up four sub-groups on:

- Faith and Order,
- the promotion of good practice,
- communication and presentation,
- wider ecumenical issues.

By the time General Assembly meets both the Church of England and the Methodist Church will have received significant reports. These include, respectively, that of the Rochester Commission on Women in the Episcopate (November 2004) and that of the Methodist Faith and Order Committee on Episcopacy (Methodist Conference 2005). It would be fair to say that each denomination is very interested in what the other will decide, in the hope that reciprocally positive outcomes may bring the prospect of ministerial interchangeability nearer. In the effort to implement and develop the Anglican – Methodist Covenant there is a fresh consideration of the biblical and theological concept of Covenant as a basis for furthering Christian Unity.

7 The **Advisory Group on Faith and Order** responded to the Report of the Rochester Commission and also to that of the Eames Commission on Authority in the Anglican Communion (The Windsor Report). It considered the document "Faith Stance on the Global Crisis of Life" which formed the basis for the **Accra Confession** (see below paragraph 20 and appendix 1), two draft services – one prepared with the Presbyterian Church of Wales for the ordination of Elders and the other with the Methodist Church for the Induction and Welcome of Ministers in United Churches – and government plans for new legislation regarding Civil Registration.

8 2003 saw no "Forum"-type meeting, but **Churches Together in England** organised a **Gathering** at Stoke Rochford Hall, Lincolnshire in early November, an event which was appreciated as a means for key people to meet each other and an opportunity to give local enthusiasts an experience of the bigger picture

9 The follow-up to the Consultation on Local Ecumenical Partnerships in November 2002 by the **Churches Together in England Group for Local Unity** ultimately produced three crisp headings from a large mass of fascinating but uncoordinated material:

- spirituality of sacrifice,
- good practice in team building and team working,
- the theology of diversity,

all of which echoes with the trends discerned by the Catch the Vision Process.

10 The **South East Northumberland Ecumenical Area** was inaugurated in September 2004 and there are discussions about similar projects in a number of places.

11 In Wales the failure of the plans for an Ecumenical Bishop in East Cardiff came as a devastating blow. This led to wide reflection on the long standing Covenant in Wales out of which came a renewed sense of commitment with far greater awareness. At the meeting of the leaders and officers of the Covenanted Churches in Wales (ENFYS) on 29th and 30th January 2004 it was agreed unanimously to recommend to the five Covenanted partners that, **"We reaffirm our commitment to journeying together in covenant relationship"**. Reaffirmations have duly followed and ENFYS has become an integral part of CYTUN, the national Churches Together Instrument for Wales.

12 A second **United Area** in Wales has been inaugurated with the Methodists in the Bridgend/Maesteg/Porthcawl area, including the Covenanted Baptists in Maesteg, and conversations continue with the English-speaking Association of the Presbyterian Church of Wales about a United Area in the North. A broad-based Coalition for Evangelisation in Wales has been established.

13 In Scotland a **National Sponsoring Body for all Local Ecumenical Partnerships** has come into being, and is chaired by the Revd Murdoch Mackenzie. Despite the rejection of the Scottish Churches Initiative for Union Proposals by the Church of Scotland, these received support from our Scottish Synod, the Methodist Church in Scotland (except Shetland) and the Scottish Episcopal Church, all of whom will explore developing shared work. There have also been exciting developments on the Granton Waterfront, where seven churches are involved in regeneration in a depressed area of Edinburgh.

14 **In all three nations** in which it is set the United Reformed Church has continued to work alongside and with ecumenical partners, particularly the Methodist Church. Responses to the Methodist / United Reformed Church Pastoral Strategy produced work for the Liaison Committee, especially in planning for a second **Consultation on United Areas** (following a highly regarded first such event in Wiltshire in April 2002), which will take place in Tenby, Pembrokeshire in October 2005. The pack for United Churches entitled *How to Make it Work* went out of print at the turn of the year. Hopefully this will be reprinted as soon as possible following a thorough updating of all material. Work has also been undertaken on Orientation for Incoming Ministers in United Churches and Areas.

15 **Across the Irish Sea** representatives of the United Reformed Church took part in a most fruitful **British – Irish Reformed Consultation** with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Presbyterian Church of Wales and the Church of Scotland in April 2004 at the Corrymeela Community. All present shared something of their situation and reflected together on the challenge and practice of mission in modern culture.

16 **Churches Together in Britain and Ireland** has been undergoing a complex review which has considered the shape of **ecumenical architecture** most appropriate for each of the four nations separately and together. At the time of writing this report the process is not yet complete but it is clear that there is no consensus about proposed changes. Some denominations are concerned about finance and long term sustainability and so want as minimal a Four Nation body as possible. Others, especially those present in three and four nations, hear the fears from Scotland and Wales that England will dominate and that the degree of reciprocity in the capacity of each National Instrument to undertake work on behalf of all four nations should not be assumed throughout, and therefore want a more substantial Four Nation body.

17 Against this background the **Churches Together in Britain and Ireland Assembly** met in Swanwick at the end of February. It was presented with the proposed timetable for the remainder of the process of reaching decisions about the future (key elements being the April Church Representatives Meeting and a one day Assembly in November) and asked to feed in its own reflections and any fresh thinking. Some significant ideas duly emerged. As a result our General Secretary, in his capacity as Trustee, indicated that at the April Church Representatives Meeting he would request more time to cost and consider these, with the corollary that all parties maintain their current funding of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland for up to another two years to enable this to take place. At the time of writing this report (March) we await the April Church Representatives Meeting and, in the light of

what happens there, Ecumenical Committee will table resolutions at General Assembly.

18 **Within Europe** we continue to be active in the **Conference of European Churches** contributing particularly to its Church and Society Commission's work on European integration and environmental concerns, and within the **Community of Protestant Churches in Europe** (formerly known as the Leuenberg Church Fellowship) where we are represented on the Executive Committee by Fleur Houston. Within the **Council for World Mission European Region** we are engaged in a range of activities which are exploring new ways of being church.

19 **In the Wider World**, the **Council for World Mission** has undergone major constitutional changes, giving a smaller trustee body (compared to the old Council) reflecting the partnership of its 31 member bodies and instituting an Assembly which meets every three years. As a 'community of churches in mission' it continues to support us and its other members in their mission programmes and through a new initiative, *Walking Together*, which it is currently piloting is experimenting with ways in which local congregations can be networked together.

20 At the **World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC)** General Council (August 2004) their work on Covenanting for Justice came to fruition in the **Accra Confession** (which is included here as appendix 1) which is now the subject of further inter-committee work as we seek to introduce its insights into our life and mission. For a church 'seeking to be Christ's people transformed by the gospel, committed to making a difference to the world' (Catch the Vision) the Accra Confession provides a rich resource.

21 February 2006 will see the next Assembly of the **World Council of Churches (WCC)**, with the theme 'God, in your grace transform the world'. Until then we are represented on the Central Committee by Jill Thornton. She has kept the Committee informed of significant developments in the global ecumenical arena as the WCC launches a process of 'ecumenical reconfiguration' exploring the calling of the ecumenical movement today. Our range of engagement with WCC programmes, including the Faith & Order Commission, the Churches Commission on International Affairs and the WCC Ecumenical Officers' meeting, introduce other perspectives on this, but all highlight the need for new approaches to global ecumenical working. One of our concerns though is that there are increasing moves towards a more confessional approach to international ecumenism, which threatens to marginalise the witness of united and uniting churches who are not organised on a confessional basis. This is shared by other similar churches and we have begun to network with them to ensure that our voice is heard within and alongside the confessional bodies.

22 ***Belonging to the World Church*** is both a programme and an ethos that informs all our international work. Its three aims form the basis for our engagement beyond ourselves:

- Enriching our life and witness
- Welcoming the world church in our midst, and
- Working for justice and peace in the world.

Working with our international partners the programme provides reciprocal opportunities for learning, sharing stories and equipping ourselves to participate more fully as partners together in God's mission. Most synods now fully participate in the programme with a global and/or European partnership. In addition, over the last two years, we have organised more specialist opportunities to enhance our ministry amongst Ghanaian and Jamaican communities in the UK, visits to and from ***Commitment for Life*** partners, and a range of more general training opportunities exposing people to different ways of being church in other parts of the world. The fruits of all this are spread widely throughout the church informing fresh approaches to being church here as we witness and worship together, welcome the stranger in our midst, and campaign for a more just world. All this activity would not be possible without the generous co-operation of our partners and their sense that it not only gives added value to the United Reformed Church, but to them as well and so collectively to our engagement in God's global purposes.

23 It is with great sadness, however, that due to financial constraints at this time both generally and in particular following the exhaustion of a substantial endowment fund which has supported the work of the Ecumenical Committee throughout its life (and previously the World Church & Mission Department) the Committee agreed to substantial cuts for 2006 (some £247,000 less compared to 2004, or about 35% of its budget) resulting in dramatic reductions to the ***Belonging to the World Church*** programme and the Church's grants to ecumenical bodies in the UK and overseas with whom we work closely and whose work has been a considerable benefit to us.

24 Engaging with our partners and the world today is fraught with increasing difficulties. A duty of care to those we send to places of risk (e.g. Israel/Palestine) has caused us to review our risk management and travel insurance policies and led to new approaches enhancing the safety and the care we offer. Obtaining ***visas for those we invite here*** has become increasingly troublesome and resulted in more frequent denials than in previous times, causing frustration and disappointment all round leading us to join with our UK ecumenical partners (for whom this is also an issue) in taking this up with the government.

25 Three of our country concerns speak particularly to what it means to be partners together in God's mission. With the ***Presbyterian Church of Myanmar*** (Burma) we are engaged in a journey of support and long-term solidarity as we provide external assistance removed from the arbitrary interventions of their country's ruling powers. Of late, this has been made much harder for us by the ever stricter sanctions regime imposed by the USA and the EU and so working with some of our other East Asian partners we hope to see much of this work transferred closer to Myanmar later this year, enlarging our bilateral partnership to a multilateral arrangement better able to meet the pressing needs of the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar today.

26 Since 9/11 we have been journeying with our partners in the ***USA*** responding to the 'war on terrorism' and together seeking to resist the 'clash of civilizations' logic which seems increasingly to inform international affairs. Our US partners have been particularly appreciative of our stance and in autumn 2003 the United Church of Christ (UCC) and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) together presented an award to us in the following terms: "Affirms the United Reformed Church whose faithful journey has led to a courageous and prophetic witness in the global community." Our journey with our US partners still continues with the Moderator of General Assembly (Sheila Maxey) visiting both these churches and the Presbyterian Church (USA) around the time of last year's Presidential election and the UCC/Disciples electing Philip Woods (Secretary for International Relations) as one of the international Directors on their Common Global Ministries Board.

27 ***Israel/Palestine*** occupies many people's attention and in all its complexity is frequently the subject of much debate in the pages of *Reform*. In October 2004 the Committee sponsored an inter-committee solidarity visit bringing together representatives of Interfaith Relations, ***Commitment for Life***, our representative on the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) Middle East Forum and others in a visit to tease out what it means to stand alongside people in this conflict. It was arranged by Brian Jolly, one of our ministers who has extensive church contacts in the region. This was followed up in November with a consultation organised jointly with ***Commitment for Life*** in which we learnt of the many and diverse ways people in our churches are active in supporting the peoples of Israel/Palestine and are campaigning on the issues arising from the conflict there. Following on from this

- We are exploring ways in which we can journey with churches and the Christian community in Israel/Palestine
- ***Commitment for Life*** has added an Israeli partner alongside the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC)



- We are entering into a dialogue with the Israeli Embassy
- We are convening a group to help us explore the political/theological issues raised by events in Israel/Palestine.

28 **In all this work** we are assisted by our networks of Ecumenical Officers, *Belonging to the World Church* Advocates, Global and European Partnership Coordinators and our ecumenical partners in the UK and overseas. The Ecumenical Committee is very grateful for all those who work at Church House and beyond on our behalf. They give endlessly of their time and commitment. The United Reformed Church's good reputation in ecumenical affairs and across the world

is due to the work of Richard Mortimer, Philip Woods and Dale Rominger, ably supported by Sandy Hurter (June 2003-August 2004) and now by Carmel Webster. The Committee, with its representatives from other Assembly Committees, makes the connections and practical sense of the broad canvas of our ecumenical engagement. This is no easy task and requires much of the Committee's Convener. In this last period we said farewell to John Rees who ably served in this role, and whose thoughtful contributions have helped shape our ecumenical engagement in recent times and welcomed Elizabeth Nash who brings to us a wealth of experience, both as a trainer and through that which she acquired whilst serving as Moderator of WARC's Department of Cooperation & Witness.



*The*  
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# International Exchange Sub-Committee

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

## Committee Members

**Convener:** Revd Chris Baillie

**Secretary:** Revd Philip Woods (Secretary for International Relations)

**Members:** Mrs Heather Barnes, Revd Birgit Ewald, Mrs Eileen McIlveen, Revd Elizabeth Nash, Revd Andrew Prasad, Revd Mike Thomason, Revd Nigel Uden (Receiving Mission Partners Programme), Revd Dale Rominger (Belonging to the World Church), Mrs Katalina Tahaafe-Williams (Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry).

1 The primary concern of this committee is the oversight of the people we share in mission with our international partner churches, both those who come to these islands and those we send overseas. It is therefore appropriate that we begin by recording who these people are:

### **Sending Mission Partners** (i.e. those serving overseas)

- Alison Gibbs – serving with the United Church of Zambia
- Stephen & Hardy Wilkinson – serving with the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM)
- Tony Addy – serving with the European Contact Group for Urban and Industrial Mission (based in the Czech Republic)
- Mary and Paul Thomas – served until July 2004 with the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands.

### **Receiving Mission Partners** (i.e. those from overseas serving here)

- Godwin Odonkor – Ghanaian Minister in London, from the Presbyterian Church of Ghana
- David Jonathan – Interfaith worker, Luton, from the Church of North India
- Henry Iputau – City Mission, Norwich, from the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa
- Chang, Jen-Ho – Ministry amongst Taiwanese, Manchester, from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan.

How we go about the exercise of care and concern for these people and their families, their recruitment, placement and resettlement consumes most of the committee's time, with regular reviews of our procedures and the application of lessons learnt from experience, all of which is incorporated in two volumes: 'Sending Mission Partner Guidelines' and 'Receiving Mission Partner Guidelines'.

2 On behalf of the Ecumenical Committee this committee manages the **Belonging to the World Church** grants programme enabling individuals in training for the ministry or to be Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs), lay people, youth and ministers/CRCWs as part of their Continuing Ministerial Education to experience and learn from the world church in ways which will enable them to make fresh and creative contributions to our ministry here.

3 Of particular concern during this period has been the development of a wider range of opportunities for **international ministerial exchange** and we have been working with International Ministry Exchanges/Clergy Exchange International Foundation to achieve this. Unfortunately, at the time of writing this report, the progress which had been made seems to be slipping away and it would appear that a new approach is called for, which is more bilateral than multilateral. This is a disappointment to us as a multilateral programme would have been much more efficient, but these are difficult days ecumenically across the world and we have to work with that reality.

4 **World Exchange**, the international volunteer programme we run jointly with some of our British partners, has shifted its emphasis from gap-year opportunities (although it does still offer some of these) to focusing on opportunities for people taking career breaks or newly retired. This is in part due to increasing competition in the gap-year market, but more importantly due to increased offers from older people and increasing requests from international partners for qualified people to provide consultancy or other time-limited services.

5 Our **scholarship programme** continues to develop with its new emphasis on providing in-country opportunities. This has meant that in the case of our non-CWM African partners we can benefit nearly 200 people a year with quality much needed training opportunities, as opposed to three or four when we were bringing them to the UK for the very limited

opportunity of a one-year post graduate course. This change has been much appreciated by our partners (who initiated it) and is to be further built upon when, as requested by them, we facilitate a consultation in Africa in April this year (along with some of our CWM African partners) to evaluate and develop the training programmes we and they are involved in.

6 As a result of budget cuts our very popular (and to the best of our knowledge globally unique) **English language for church workers** course has had to end, much to the disappointment of our partners. Currently we are working with them to see if it can in any way be replicated on an in-country basis, and we are very grateful to the qualified teachers of English as a foreign language who responded to our request to volunteer their services for such an approach, but it remains to be seen if and how this dramatically cut down approach can work.

7 The committee continue to receive regular reports from **British and Irish Amity Teachers' Group** of which we are a part, recruiting and supplying English teachers for China.

Although called a committee, this is really a working group as all the members are actively involved with the sharing people in mission aspect of our work, serving on monitoring groups, interview panels, writing letters to those serving overseas and so on. Their contribution is invaluable and much appreciated by the staff and especially by those we are supporting both overseas and here as mission partners.



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**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, Mr Graham Law, Mr Errol Martin, Mr Peter Ward (Convener, United Reformed Church Trust), Mrs Marie Whitman, Mr John Woodman.

## **1 Our remit**

1.1 Last year highlighted the new working arrangements with the Resource Planning Advisory Group (RPAG). It has now been decided that the Committee should assume some of the responsibilities given to RPAG which has been stood down by Mission Council. However a revised remit is not being brought to General Assembly this year as the review of governance by Catch the Vision may result in other changes.

## **2 Risk Assessment**

2.1 This is now being managed by Mission Council Advisory Group acting as the Trustees of the Church. Positive progress is being made and this should become a continuing process as required by Charity Law and SORP.

## **3 Specific tasks undertaken in 2004**

3.1 Acting under delegated authority from the Mission Council Advisory Group two matters have been dealt with in conjunction with the United Reformed Church Trust.

3.2 The immediate future for the premises at Yardley Hastings has been agreed and a licence granted to East Midlands Synod. This safeguards the interests of the local church whilst allowing the wider use of the buildings for the time being.

3.3 The phased development at Windermere to improve facilities for the Centre has occupied considerable time. Phase 1 which involved the conversion of most of the bedrooms to en-suite has been completed. The subsequent phases need financing and consideration continues to be given on the possibility of a national appeal.

## **4 Personalia**

4.1 Firstly, we should recognise the continuing high quality service given to the Church by its Committee members. The Finance Committee, United Reformed Church Trust, Retired Ministers' Housing Society and the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Trust Limited each require professional skills and particular expertise. We are particularly well served in each of these areas where legislation and good practice are making growing demands on public bodies, particularly charities. This year we thank John Woodman for his service to the Finance Committee as he stands down having completed his four year term of office and Peter Ward who has completed his term of service on the United Reformed Church Trust.

4.2.1 Secondly, we acknowledge the work of the Pensions Executive. During 2004, Mission Council considered the remit of the Pensions Executive and asked it to assume responsibility for oversight of the church's lay staff pension scheme which is administered on the Church's behalf by The Pensions Trust. This was in addition to the Pensions Executive's existing responsibilities in relation to the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund. In relation to the Church's lay staff pension scheme the pension executive reports to the Finance Committee.

4.2.2 Mission Council also considered the membership of the Pensions Executive, which had not previously been approved by Assembly through the nominations process. Victor Hughff has been a member of the Pensions Executive for many years serving as convener until July 2004 and as a member since then. His term of office now ends and we record our grateful thanks to him for his exceptional service in which he brought his specialist expertise to the role.

4.3 Thirdly, the staff have had a difficult year with the loss of the Chief Accountant and other staff shortages. They have ensured all essential work has been completed on time and dealt with other matters

as expeditiously as possible. A particularly heavy burden has been borne by the Financial Secretary who has worked very long hours to meet deadlines.

## **Resolution 21**

## **Accounts**

**General Assembly adopts the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2004.**

### **1 2004 Accounts**

1.1 The 2004 accounts are set out in the Book of Accounts and include a report from the Finance Committee commenting on the result for the year and the financial position as at 31 December 2004.

## **Resolution 22**

## **Appointment of Auditors**

**General Assembly resolves that PriceWaterhouseCoopers LLP be 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 During the year we conducted a review of the audit appointment which has resulted in the recommendation to appoint a new firm as auditors to the Church. We wish to express our thanks to the out-going firm, RSM Robson Rhodes LLP who have been the auditors since the formation of the United Reformed Church.

## **Resolution 23**

## **The giving of the members of the Church to central funds**

**General Assembly gratefully acknowledges the giving of the churches in 2004 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

**Resolution 24****United Reformed Church Ministers'  
Pension Fund investment policy**

**General Assembly resolves that:**

- a) **It supports the ethical dimension of the investment policy currently operated by the Trustee of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund.**
- b) **If the Trustee continues to invest the pension fund assets having regard to ethical issues (and having consulted the Church over any changes to the policy) the Church will promptly reimburse the pension fund in respect of any losses (including inferior investment performance) attributable to the ethical dimension of the Trustee's investment policy, as identified in periodic reports commissioned by the Trustee from their professional advisers. Such reimbursement shall be made within a period satisfactory to the Trustee and, if it so requires, shall be made in addition to any contributions which would otherwise be required on the advice of the Actuary.**

**1 United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund investment policy**

1 The Trustee of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund operates an investment policy consistent with the Church's ethical investment policy and that the Trustee's policy was adopted after consultation with the Church.

2 Best indications are that the ethical constraints on the Trustee's investment policy have had a broadly financially neutral effect over the past 10 years but

have had an adverse effect on financial performance more recently and may continue to have such an adverse effect in the future.

3 It is for the Trustee to determine the investment policy of the pension fund and they must do so in accordance with their legal obligations, acting in the financial interests of the beneficiaries.

# Interfaith Relations

## The task of the committee is:

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

## Committee Members

**Convener:** Revd Dr John Parry (Sikhism)                      **Secretary:** Mrs Jean Potter  
Revd Peter Colwell (Islam), Dr Iain Frew, Revd Heather Pollard, Miss Marie Williams.

**Advisers:** Dr Elizabeth Harris (Buddhism), Revd David Taylor (Church's Agency for Interfaith Relations in Scotland [CAIRS]), Grace Gorski (Hinduism), Revd Alistair Ellefsen-Jones (Indigenous Religions), Revd Jonathan Dean (Judaism), Mr Matthew Bean (New Religious Movements).

**Staff Link:** Mrs Katalina Tahaafe-Williams (Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry)

## 1 Introduction

The first of the erstwhile British Council of Churches' Guidelines on Dialogue, adopted by the United Reformed Church many years ago, indicates that *Dialogue begins when people meet each other*. It may seem an obvious truism but it reminds us that dialogue takes place amongst people of faith and not between theological and philosophical systems *per se*, though these systems inform, and are represented by, such people of faith. In dialogue one often discovers the depth of faith of the partner in dialogue, together with the concerns that such people have for their communities in this country and their ability to practise and learn about the faith. Recent years have shown something of a change of heart indicated not only by the Queen's reference to the need for good interfaith relations in her last Christmas address but also by the willingness of Christians to allow their buildings to be used by other people of faith. In December 2004 the authorities of the Anglican Cathedral in Truro invited the local Muslim community to use one of their rooms to teach their young people about their faith – yes, there are Muslims in Truro. Similarly Central United Reformed Church in Darwen, Lancashire, opened its doors to a wonderful Eid party in January 2005. However, while there may be a seed change in attitudes amongst many Christians, the reality is that dislike, even hatred, of the 'other' is rife within British society. The Jewish community reports that anti-Semitic crime reached record levels in 2004. This may be partly explained by more effective identifying and recording of anti-Semitism, but it may also be the case that tensions in the Middle East are

transferred to the streets of the UK. It is significant to see that the report of the use of Truro Cathedral by Muslims was under the headline: *Muslims in Truro Cathedral!* What is the implication of the exclamation mark in a secular newspaper? This is a matter of significance when major political parties emphasise stricter race and immigration policies as part of their election campaigns.

## 2 Support for local congregations

As a result of the greater need for understanding between the faiths many local congregations have made a real effort to meet their neighbours of other faiths. This we welcome warmly and, for our part, would remind the denomination that members of the Interfaith Committee, together with the growing number of Synod Interfaith Advocates and our committee Advisers, are willing to speak at church meetings and services of worship. Likewise, in an attempt to help understanding, material has been written and made available on the nature of *Jihad*, on Jesus as a Muslim Prophet and, in time for Assembly 2005, an essay on Jesus through Hindu eyes.

## 3 Seeing ourselves as others see us

The attempt to see our own faith through the eyes of people of another faith is paramount. One wonders how people of other faiths respond to those missionary hymns, which we continue to sing with such themes as 'the whole wide world for Jesus'. We hear of, and are perturbed by, Muslims talking of the need to make the whole world *dar ul Islam* – the house of Islam – but do we understand the impact of 'Jesus shall reign where

e'er the sun doth his successive journeys run' on the casual hearer of another faith community? Combine this with the fear that many have of an overwhelming Western influence which undermines their faith and culture and one begins to see why members of some other faiths protest vehemently even if they would never dream of supporting attacks. Add another element, that for Muslims conversion to Christianity is back-sliding since the Prophet Muhammad came, in their understanding, to correct the misinterpretation of Jesus' message by Christians down the ages, and one will begin to see why antipathy towards America and her allies is so stark a reality.

#### **4 Developing work**

Discussions are underway between the Interfaith Committee and the Centre for the Study of Christianity in South Asia at the University of Birmingham. The matter in hand is with regard to re-establishing the opportunities for dialogue through conferences with the Sikh community in the UK. Early indications show considerable interest on the part of the Sikh community who so often seem have been relegated to being minor players alongside other faiths in dialogue meetings, yet whose theology and generally dissenting tradition make them natural partners in dialogue for our denomination. Such dialogue is not a new phenomenon, since, in the 1980s we were the only denomination in the world involved in bi-lateral discussions with the Sikh community. Since then such dialogue both in the UK, India and elsewhere has been only spasmodic. We hope to make a real attempt to revive this debate not only on the theology but on the implications of faith on everyday life from both Sikh and Christian perspectives.

#### **5 Exploring Interfaith dialogue in India**

The committee are presently negotiating a possible visit to India in 2006, to be shared with members of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, with the intention of discovering the nature of interfaith dynamics in an environment where Christianity is very much the minority faith. For Christians both in India and in Taiwan living amongst people of other faiths is an everyday matter. Interfaith dialogue *per se* may not be a regular part of conversations, but there will be countless occasions when acts of personal kindness and generosity will be both given and received. A more public interface is to be found in many service industries, shops and restaurants where attitudes towards the other faith communities will often dictate the nature of daily relationships. We are no longer isolated from this experience. In even the smallest of towns people of other faiths are to be found as restaurateurs, take-away proprietors, shop-keepers

and certainly in the medical profession. Such people are now looking for places in which to pray. The opportunities for hospitality and friendship are growing. Our church in Heald Green, just south of Manchester, is an example of where friendship with the Muslim community has deepened thanks to the continued interest expressed by church members in the building they sold to the Muslims. To explore how people in both India and Taiwan have dealt with issues like this ministers and members of the United Reformed Church are invited to join in the visit to India, which will be largely self-funding, but it is hoped that some financial subsidies may be available.

#### **6 How do we speak of our faith?**

As people meet inevitably they will be asked about the nature of their own faith. To this end, how many of us could explain succinctly to Hindus why Christians believe Jesus to be not simply one of many incarnations of God, but the only one. Or could you speak of your faith in the Trinitarian God to a Muslim for whom associating another being with the being of God is the gravest of all possible sins. To this end early discussions have taken place with the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee to consider the possibility of writing a series of booklets on apologetics to particular faiths. It is a task fraught with difficulties but one we wish to tackle even if it may take some time.

#### **7 Breaking out of stereotypes**

Such a task is not confined to Christians alone. It is interesting to see that in recent years three significant books have appeared from the Muslim community: *Liberal Islam* was described by its editor, Charles Kurzman, as being something of a surprise in terms of how much had been written on this issue – he had probably expected sufficient material to cover a post-card but found quite the opposite. Of a similar vein is: *Progressive Muslims*, edited by Omid Safi, on justice, gender and pluralism. Likewise Ziauddin Sarkar's *Desperately Seeking Paradise* reveals a life-time's intellectual enquiry and critique of his own deeply held faith. Read them and discover an element of Islamic experience rarely confessed in a stereotyping world.

#### **8 Our own faith challenged and enhanced**

So what does such an exploration do? Whether it is dialogue with people or an inner dialogue through reading, one is faced with the question, 'What do I believe?' Time and time again those involved in dialogue have been forced not to water down the Gospel, of which they have been accused, often falsely, but to ask searching questions of their own faith. 'How do I speak of my faith?' ... now, there's a question for the coming decades...



# Life and Witness

**The purpose of the Life and Witness Committee is:**

**to enable the local church to capture the vision of God's mission for itself and to plan its life accordingly;**

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

## **Committee Members**

**Convener:** Revd Brian Jolly

**Secretary:** Revd John Steele

Revd Linda Elliott, Revd Ken Forbes, Revd Ian Fosten, Revd Kate Gray, Revd Michael Hodgson, Revd Peter Hurter, Revd Emmanuel Nkusi, Mrs Sheila Brain, Mrs Jenny Carpenter, Mr Colin Ferguson.

**Convener of Stewardship Sub-Committee:** Mr Ray McHugh

**Convener of the Windermere Advisory Group:** Mr Jim Wilkinson

## **1 People**

1.1 Since the last full Committee report in 2003 Angela Hughes and Alison Lowe have left us, and Sheila Brain, Colin Ferguson, Ian Fosten, Kate Gray, Michael Hodgson, and Emmanuel Nkusi have joined us.

1.2 This year we say thanks and farewell to Ken Forbes and Peter Hurter, and to Jenny Carpenter who has served the United Reformed and Methodist churches as their Rural Officer/Consultant since April 2000; we offer Jenny our very best wishes for her retirement.

1.3 We are pleased to welcome Patrick Smyth and Simon Walkling to our ranks, and also Peter Ball returning to the Committee as its Convener-Elect in 2006.

## **2 Rural matters**

2.1 Although a good recovery has been made since the Foot and Mouth epidemic, the countryside has continued to be in the news not always for the best of reasons. The hunting debate was dominant in terms of parliamentary and media coverage, but it is good that issues to do with food production, processing, distribution and sale are increasingly matters of public debate. Churches are encouraged to enter fully with others in their locality into the celebration of British Food Fortnight (24 Sept–9 Oct) and to discriminate in

favour of fairly traded domestic as well as imported products. The British food industry now relies heavily on migrants, many of whom are vulnerable to exploitation. In this connection the Churches' Rural Group has produced a leaflet of practical suggestions for churches with back-up material on the Arthur Rank Centre website ([www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk](http://www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk)).

2.2 There is still much uncertainty as to the future of British farming. The introduction of Single Farm Payments though broadly welcomed has yet to prove its worth. Increasingly funding for rural regeneration will come via the Regional Development Agencies, so the churches are challenged to make the most of their regional networks. The Farming Information for Rural Ministry (FIRM) papers summarising new legislation, regulation, rural conferences etc. produced weekly by Alan Spedding for the Arthur Rank Centre and available on its website, are proving an invaluable tool.

2.3 As from April 2004, Eco-congregation in England and Wales transferred from Encams to the Arthur Rank Centre, and Jo Rathbone was appointed on a one-day a week basis to continue to promote the material and the award. Later, funding was put in place to enable her to devote time specifically to its promotion within United Reformed Church West Midlands Synod area. Ecocongregation is a challenging

programme for “greening” the church, whether rural or urban, but its future funding is precarious.

2.4 Synod Rural ‘link people’ are meeting in June with rural officers from other denominations to share stories and inspiration. The URC/Rural Consultant has made direct input to Eastern, Northern and West Midlands Synods in the last two years, and visited a number of local churches for Mission or Harvest Festival weekends. The possibility of some rural United Reformed churches becoming involved in developing the low key tourism represented by Hidden Britain Centres is an exciting prospect. ([www.hidden-britain.org.uk](http://www.hidden-britain.org.uk)) The workbook entitled *Presence* produced by the Methodist Rural Chairs Group, with the URC/Methodist Rural Officer-Consultant as its Secretary, is being imaginatively used both denominationally and ecumenically across the country. In Wales, URC officers took the initiative in supplementing its stories with some Welsh ones. A Welsh ‘Presence’ Day was planned at Newtown in April.

2.5 Ecumenical rural initiatives are being taken in both Wales and Scotland. The Revd Michael Cruchley, the Wales Synod Rural Officer, is highly regarded ecumenically. The value of there being at least one full time rural officer for the Welsh churches cannot be denied. Fund raising is in progress to create a church-backed meeting space at the Royal Welsh Showground. The possibility of developing something echoing the Arthur Rank Centre for Scotland is now being explored. An Action for Churches Together in Scotland Churches Rural Group will soon be set up, and it is hoped to create an ecumenical full time Rural Officer post for Scotland.

2.6 Rural issues such as the shortage of affordable housing; the skewed demographic makeup of many villages, transport and the competing claims of resident and visitor remain problematic. Rural churches are able to feel the rural pulse: they need encouragement, support and, above all, vision.

### **3 The Windermere Centre**

3.1 The vision for the Windermere Centre is to be a place where the United Reformed Church can be equipped, challenged, resourced and nurtured in the process of developing its life-in-mission. The Centre has developed significantly both in terms of its facilities and programme. The first quarter of 2004 was taken up with the en-suiteing programme, as recommended by the Windermere Review Group’s report to the 2003 General Assembly. All the first and second floor rooms are now en-suite. The ground floor retains four single wheelchair-accessible rooms. The Centre has been redecorated to a high standard and the menu developed and improved to provide a cooked breakfast and an imaginative vegetarian menu. Broadband facilities means that guests now have access to the internet in the lounge. This facility is to be extended to all the rooms and will be particularly useful to sabbatical visitors wishing to carry out research.

3.2 The kitchen has been significantly renewed and upgraded to keep abreast of the latest Health & Hygiene regulations. The Fire Safety precautions have been similarly upgraded.

3.3 The Centre Programme has included speakers and presenters from overseas and others who are the top people in their fields, giving the Church access to courses and speakers of the highest calibre. The Church has often been disappointingly slow to take up some of these opportunities. Nevertheless, the Centre continues to put on courses which, while less financially viable, are vital to the life of the Church as it seeks to catch God’s vision for its future. The higher costs are offset by more popular, ‘bread-and-butter’ courses.

3.4 The Centre also seeks to enable Assembly Committees to ensure that their work reaches the grass roots of the Church by inviting them to run relevant courses. Churches and groups continue to use the Centre in increasing numbers. Links have been made with our ecumenical partners and with FURY to extend the service that the Centre is able to offer the Church.

3.5 Since the 2004 Assembly there have been conversations between representatives of Life & Witness, Finance and the URC Trust with the General Secretary, and it has been agreed that the Windermere Appeal (which was withdrawn from the business of the 2004 Assembly) should not come to the 2005 Assembly, but rather be considered as part of the ‘Catch the Vision’ review of the church’s resources and opportunities in 2006, and that during the coming months ways will be sought to resolve various Trust matters.

### **4 Evangelists**

4.1 The 2001 Assembly acknowledged the need to identify those in lay or ordained ministry who have the gift of evangelism, and directed the Life & Witness committee to initiate work towards finding ways of releasing and supporting men and women to exercise ministry as evangelists.

4.2 We reported to the 2003 Assembly that we had produced the booklet *Growing Up to the Ministry of Evangelists* and had begun consultation across the church. Since then it has been good to learn that some of our churches do actually have ‘evangelists’ alive and well and engaged in evangelism in a variety of different ways. It may well be that these individuals are the tip of a considerable iceberg if only our local congregations were better at recognising the true nature of many of the things going on under their noses! Life and Witness continues to receive stories and experiences and to look for appropriate ways of sharing them with the wider church.

4.3 There have been a number of developments since the 2003 Assembly. The United Reformed Church shows signs of waking up to the possibilities of evangelists. As well as approaches from interested

individuals, a number of regional Enquirers' Conferences have included opportunities for us to share something of what it might mean for those sensing a call to this ministry. A useful residential Consultation on 'Developing the Ministry of Evangelism' was held in May 2004, posing questions like 'Has the United Reformed Church got a theology of Evangelism?' and looking at 'Changing concepts of Evangelism in a changing world'. We have been in dialogue with officers of the Training and Ministries Committees exploring ways of training and releasing men and women for the ministry of evangelist. There has been a necessary pause during this period to enable those Committees to complete their own major works (Training Review and 'Equipping the Saints') but these important discussions will soon continue. A promising invitation from the Methodist Church to share in the development of an evangelism training course has not advanced very far to date, owing to their own far-reaching review process, but we hope it can be reactivated in the not too distant future.

4.4 From the variety of other related work that has been ongoing over the past 2 years we would want to make the following comments:

- a) We would reaffirm that our understanding of evangelism must be rooted in a broad understanding of mission. Whilst acknowledging the inevitable theological tensions existing in the life of our broad church, we should be keen to dialogue with each other, and engage with our communities, recognising that there are many ways of being evangelist and doing evangelism.
- b) We believe that training and enabling in evangelism should be available to members, elders and ministers (in much the same way as it is available to those who lead worship in our churches) and done as far as possible ecumenically.
- c) The idea of facilitating a distinct ministry of stipendiary evangelist has not met with significant support. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that individuals may feel called to full-time work as an evangelist and will expect to find places and opportunities where such a calling can be fulfilled. We believe that the proposal of the Ministries Committee to develop Special Category Ministry should be seen as a significant way of testing both the need for full-time evangelists and the calling of individuals to this work.
- d) We have produced a draft proposal for a TLS Module on evangelism which we are beginning to discuss with the Training Committee. We think this could be developed in such a way as to be useful in helping to equip members, elders and ministers.
- e) 'Catch the Vision' continues to dominate our agendas, and our work has begun on local church structures, arising from the last Assembly. The Steering Group has asked us to take a lead in a Consultation this autumn to look at a whole-church understanding of evangelism and spirituality. As a consequence our work on evangelists will now be presented as part of the 'Catch the Vision' report to the 2006 Assembly.

## 5 Community of Women and Men in the Church

5.1 The Group for the Community of Women and Men in the Church (CWMC) has been going through a period of review in the context of the broader aspects of the requirements of being an 'Inclusive Church' and also the implications of the 'Catch the Vision' process.

5.2 A major piece of work was undertaken in respect of the need for the United Reformed Church to adopt policy and procedures in relation to sexual harassment, which can occur in church situations just as easily as in society at large. This was largely overtaken by the publication of the important Churches Together in England and Ireland report *Time for Action* on sexual abuse and the churches. CWMC produced a response to that which was included in the report from the special Task Group set up by Mission Council and is involved in the ongoing work in relation to this.

## 6 Holiday Forum

6.1 Holiday Forum continues to flourish and to provide one of the most pleasurable meeting places not just for members of the United Reformed Church but also a number of friends from other churches. The format of theme, worship, discussion and free time and relaxation makes it a wonderful blend of mental and spiritual refreshment as well as a holiday. Over the last two years we have enjoyed the challenges of David Cornick and Lawrence Moore and we like to think that they also enjoyed our challenge.

6.2 This year we are fortunate to have David Peel leading us in his year as Assembly Moderator on 'Encountering Church' and plans for 2006 are already well advanced with Philip Woods having already agreed to lead the theme.

6.3 Numbers are settling at about two hundred and twenty, which still allows the week to retain its family feel. Indeed one of the great strengths of Forum has been its appeal across the age barrier. Friendships have been forged in this one week that have held firm over many years. A small number of our regulars are now over eighty (even ninety) yet in the same company we have a wealth of children and young people, so much so that we have now made links with the Youth Office and we are glad to say that this link will soon be made more formal. It has been

good in the last two years to have a very active youth representation on our planning group which has taken a lot of responsibility for their own activities.

6.4 Financially Holiday Forum continues to be viable. We do not aim to make any profit so our actual profit and loss can change from one year to another. This is mainly due to the success of having a large proportion of children and young people and the difficulty of never knowing exactly what this might do to the budget. Although the responsibility for managing this week is in the hands of an annually appointed committee of Forum members it is good that our links have been strengthened with the national Church and the administrative support we receive from Tavistock Place is greatly appreciated.

6.5 We are glad to reflect something of the vibrancy of our denomination when we get together, a place to which most of those who come are happy to return.

## **7 Emerging Church website**

7.1 The [www.emergingchurch.info](http://www.emergingchurch.info) website was launched in 2003 by a partnership of organisations and denominations, for those enquiring about new expressions of church, providing information and a site for the sharing and discussing of experiences as the Church attempts to 're-invent' itself in order to reach the 21<sup>st</sup> Century world for Christ.

7.2 In a time of transition for our own church, there is much on this site to inspire and challenge us to think creatively about future possibilities. With links through the Woodlands Project coming to an end, the Life and Witness Committee recently agreed to a financial contribution to the site over the next two years.

## **8 Evangelising Contemporary Spirituality**

8.1 The major task facing Christians in Britain today is how to respond to their neighbours who are interested in spirituality but who see the church as irrelevant. The evidence of spirituality is all around us: businesses talk of their corporate spirituality; leading politicians have their spiritual advisors; and Body, Mind and Spirit Fairs are crowded out. People are searching: but not in church (where worship is often seen as cerebral rather than spiritual) or formal Christianity, though the person of Jesus commands respect as a wise teacher.

8.2 The Churches Together in England Group for Evangelisation has recently addressed the subject in a resource-workbook *Equipping Your Church in a Spiritual Age*. This outlines research which has been undertaken into contemporary spiritualities and then suggests ways in which local churches could respond. These range from emphasising angels at Christmas (angels books crowd the Personal Development section of W H Smith) to setting up a Christian stall at a New Age Fair.

8.3 Life and Witness are pleased to commend the workbook as a valuable first step in helping churches engage with what their neighbours believe. Unless we treat their views seriously and engage with them, they will not treat our faith seriously or engage with us. And they are in the majority.

8.4 Further details will be available at Assembly, and we hope to introduce the workbook and its use by local churches at a special interest meeting.

# Stewardship Sub-Committee

## **Sub-Committee Members**

**Convener:** Mr Ray McHugh     **Secretary:** Revd John Steele  
Revd John Durell, Revd David Legge, Mr Mick Barnes, Mrs Jackie Haws, Mrs Sue Wilkinson.

## **1 Terms of Reference**

1.1 Always remembering that Christian Stewardship is our response to the grace of God in Jesus Christ, to promote the concept of Christian Stewardship and enable the development of resources which support the practical implementation of Christian Stewardship in order to further the mission of the church.

## **2 Stewardship Advocacy**

2.1 A number of free, short, intensive courses have taken place at the Windermere Centre, led by Lawrence Moore, and have equipped over twenty people to become Stewardship Advocates.

2.2 Mrs Sue Wilkinson, a sub-committee member has become our National Stewardship Network Co-ordinator alongside her duties in North Western Synod. Key elements of this new role include creating and maintaining a database and being the central point of contact for Stewardship Advocates, plus providing a link with the CTBI Stewardship Network. A separate email identity for the National Stewardship Network Co-ordinator has been organised through the Life and Witness office.

## **3 ACT!**

3.1 This free publication continues to be available as a resource to help churches in the development of a mission project. It looks at Stewardship in the widest sense, the aim of which is to encourage and enable churches to develop a mission project in such a way as to ensure the most effective use of all available resources.

## **4 TRIO – The Responsibility is Ours**

4.1 Although TRIO is not free, there is still a continuing demand. Equal quantities of disk and acetate versions are now being produced. Animated slides are also being developed.

## **5 CTBI Stewardship Network**

5.1 We continue to develop links with other denominations through the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland Stewardship Network.

5.2 This provides a forum for the exchange of ideas and gives us the opportunity to learn more about other denominations' approach to the very important issue of stewardship.

5.3 The Convener represents our Church at these meetings. However, it is hope that the National Stewardship Network Co-ordinator will also attend, possibly alternating with the Convener.

5.4 A CTBI Stewardship Network Conference is being planned for the Summer of 2006.

## **6 Personnel**

6.1 Since we reported in 2003 a number of membership changes have taken place. That same year we lost Mr Frank Dale and Mrs Sheila Yates and gained the Revd David Legge, Mrs Jackie Haws and Mrs Sue Wilkinson. Mrs Anne Mitchell concluded her service in 2004 at the same time as Mr Ray McHugh succeeded Mr Keith Webster as Convener. We also welcomed the Revd John Durell.

6.2 We were grateful for Revd J Howard Reed's co-opted service before he left to return to the United States. This year we bid farewell to Mr Mick Barnes.

6.3 These contributions to the work of the Sub-Committee have been greatly appreciated and we express our sincere thanks.

## Equipping the Saints

### The History

1 The 2004 meeting of Assembly welcomed the report *Equipping the Saints*, produced at the request of the Assembly by the Ministries Committee. Assembly challenged every congregation to respond locally to the first two recommendations (have you done so yet?); asked for comments on the remaining recommendations; and sought further proposals for the 2005 meeting of Assembly in the light of the feedback received.

2 The 2004 report was in the book of Reports to Assembly and is also on the United Reformed Church website ([www.urc.org.uk](http://www.urc.org.uk)). The text below reproduces the Summary and the list of recommendations.

### SUMMARY OF THE 2004 REPORT

A fast changing society provides a challenging context for the Church's mission. 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, 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. We challenge every local church to think afresh about its support of its members when they are dispersed in their daily living.

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 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.

Ministers of the Word and Sacraments 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.

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.

More diverse leadership patterns also make it desirable and necessary that the Church should think again about presidency at the sacraments.

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. But we believe that they would contribute to *Changing Ministry for the Challenge of Mission*.

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 2004 REPORT

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.

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 The appointment and ordination of Elders should involve a commitment to continuing development, including appropriate 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 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 The United Reformed Church should adopt the title 'local preacher' in place of 'lay preacher'.

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.

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.

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'.

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.

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.

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.

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.

13 Formal discussions about the recommendations in this report should be arranged with representatives of the Methodist Church and other ecumenical partners.

3 *Equipping the Saints* is one dimension of the *Catch the Vision* process. Issues relating to ministry intertwine with many other issues being reviewed and so it is natural that work which flows from the 2004 report will appear in various places in the Assembly agenda in 2005 and beyond.

## The Feedback

4 We are very grateful for all the thinking, praying and discussing that lay behind over 200 written responses. We heard from the majority of Synods and District/Area Councils. While some responses were formal statements agreed by a Council of the Church, others were confined to reporting the flavour of various personal views.

5 We were encouraged that the overall tone of the responses was to support strongly the thrust of *Equipping the Saints*.

6 As we expected, the responses underlined the variety of situations in which local congregations and their Ministers and other leaders work. The village chapel, the suburban congregation and the inner city ecumenical partnership will not necessarily need or produce the same ministry patterns. Some people searched *Equipping the Saints* for a new standard pattern of ministry to apply everywhere. They searched in vain.

7 Our patterns of ministries need to be rooted in our shared principles set out in the Basis of Union, but the feedback reinforced our belief that the United Reformed Church is not best served by a standard pattern. Nor do we want a hierarchy of patterns with hints that some patterns are superior to others. Rather we want to make it easier for the pattern best suited to the possibilities of each place to be available in that place.

8 We were also glad that the feedback underlined the comments in *Equipping the Saints* about the special and vital place amongst us of our Ministers of the Word and Sacraments. Their theological expertise and leadership is clearly highly valued and even more prized as their numbers diminish.

9 This reinforces the need to provide our Ministers with the best possible support and to make sure that the work we ask each of them to do makes the best use of their particular gifts.

10 Mission Council has asked the Ministries Committee, in consultation with the Training Committee, to shape a policy on the development of Ministers and Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs). This will include looking at Continuing Ministerial Education and best practice in appraisal patterns. Ministers in non-stipendiary service (or 'self-supporting' ministers), CRCWs, ministers in

Assembly appointments and those on the Special Category Ministry scheme, together with some other paid ministers, already benefit from periodic review procedures. We note moves in the Church of England towards compulsory annual appraisal for all clergy.

11 Our postbag and e-mails have also reminded us of the stress felt by some Ministers. As in any organisation in a period of change, the leaders bear the double burden of dealing with the personal implications of change as well as having to be its advocate to others. While workload is often a factor in stress, we believe the root problem is often ambiguity about the role. We remain strongly in favour of honest and explicit discussions between Ministers and others involved to identify agreed, realistic expectations concerning this particular Minister in this unique setting. These expectations then need to be regularly reviewed by the Minister and their pastorate.

12 We are also aware that some Ministers and others feel their work is devalued by being seen as merely 'maintenance'. A mantra like 'From maintenance to mission' may be helpful shorthand but becomes unhelpful if it is heard to denigrate faithful, unglamorous tasks that actually build the foundations on which other work can rest. As one correspondent put it, 'Blessed are those who keep the roof on and make the tea – they enable mission to happen'.

13 So the vision of patterns of ministries we offer the Church is one where we seek to use our resources to equip everyone to engage in God's mission in the world. To further that aim, we envisage a wide variety of patterns in different congregations as they serve their own communities. In all of them we look for an Eldership focused on its key tasks and able to be the core leadership team. In some places, the Elders might be complemented by a Minister (paid or self-supporting) working in that one church and community. In more places, a Minister would be deployed as part of a collaborative leadership team across several congregations, with an agreed role for the Minister. In other places, there would be no Minister providing day-to-day leadership but the District or Area Council would ensure the congregation had access to a Minister when support was required.

14 With this pattern in churches, we would hope Ministers would be released from stressful and sometimes quite impossible expectations. We believe it is possible to provide effective leadership across several communities provided the model of leadership used takes account of the more limited time and engagement available in any one community. And sometimes the best use of a Minister's gifts will be to engage with a community not as a leader of a settled congregation but as a chaplain; or to be a trainer; or an evangelist; or....



15 Identifying the best pattern of leadership for an individual congregation or the best pattern of working for a particular Minister is a responsibility of the local Councils of the Church, acting within the parameters of the Basis of Union and the Structure of the United Reformed Church. It is not a task for an Assembly Committee.

## This Report

16 Having considered the feedback from the 2004 report, we have reviewed all the Recommendations. In the next section we outline where matters now stand on those Recommendations which are not the subject of formal proposals at the 2005 Assembly.

17 The Resolutions on Eldership derive mainly from Recommendation 3. Our feedback reinforced strongly the emphasis given in the 2004 report to the central role of the Elders in each local congregation. We want to harness the momentum behind these ideas and so bring four Resolutions to capture some of the key points concerning the working out of our principles in practice. This is all within the context of renewing congregational life and equipping church members for their witness in the world.

18 In addition to our work, included within *Catch the Vision* is a wider review of the structures of the local church, which obviously involves the Eldership. The Life and Witness Committee were asked by the 2004 Assembly to take the lead in this and to bring proposals to the 2006 Assembly. They hope to build on the work in *Equipping the Saints* and so further resolutions on Elders may be proposed in a year's time. On a longer timescale, work is also planned on the issues surrounding the ordination of Elders. In the light of these further pieces of work, we have avoided bringing any proposals this year which would involve a change to the Basis of Union.

19 The delivery of most of our proposals depends on Elders' Meetings, Church Meetings, District and Area Councils and Synods. We are aware that the Church will be debating the future of all these bodies in the near future, but for clarity in this report we refer to current structures. If the structures change in the future, we believe the proposals will need to be picked up by the new bodies.

## The Journeys of Our Recommendations

### Recommendations 1&2: Style of Local Church Life

20 We are glad to hear of congregations that have risen to the challenges set by Assembly and started fresh thinking about their life. We have pointed out to those working on the Structures part of *Catch the Vision* that the ability of local churches to respond to these challenges does depend on the wider church structures owning them as well.

### Recommendation 5: The Title 'Lay Preacher'

21 There is no consensus favouring any new title so we bring no proposals for change. We need to remain alert to the problems the title can cause ecumenically, especially in relation to the status of 'lay' presidents at the sacraments.

### Recommendation 8: Classification of Ministers

22 There was general support for this Recommendation. We therefore intend to change the classification in the URC yearbook to move away from a classification based on payment to one based on role. We envisage categories such as the following:

F/t	Full-time
P/t	Part-time
MSE	Minister in Secular Employment
Chap	Minister principally engaged in Chaplaincy
SCM	Minister working under the Assembly Special Category Ministry Scheme
R	Retired
R(a)	Of retirement age but authorised to continue in active Ministry

Thus a full-time University Chaplain working under the Special Category Ministry Scheme would be designated as 'F/t SCM Chap'. Ministers in the list with no classification against their name would be those who have been given permission to remain on the Roll of Ministers while below retirement age but not actively engaged in any form of ministerial service within the Church.

23 There is further work to be done on the implications of decoupling payment from classification. We welcome Assembly's endorsement for the concept of Non-Stipendiary CRCWs. The Ministries Committee will continue to work with the Training Committee on issues relating to the training for, and transfer between, paid and unpaid ministerial roles.

### Recommendation 9: Training Needs

24 Response to this Recommendation was positive but the action will await further progress on the Hind review and the United Reformed Church Training Committee's own review.

### Recommendation 10: Flexible Remuneration

25 We suggested that the logic of the concept of a stipend (a payment according to need) ought to lead to more variation in the levels of stipend actually paid. This idea received only minority support from our correspondents and so we have not pursued the idea. We trust that all Church members will give to the Ministry and Mission Fund with an enthusiasm that demonstrates this commitment to paid ministry.

**Recommendation 12:  
Presidency at the Sacraments**

26 The gist of what *Equipping the Saints* said received strong support. We therefore simply reiterate the importance both of using the flexibility already available and of reviewing arrangements regularly and carefully so that our provisions and practice do not fall into disrepute. The policy is set out in paragraph 25 of the Basis of Union.

**Recommendation 13: Ecumenical Consultation**

27 We received a substantial and thoughtful response from the Faith and Order Committee of the Methodist Church, which may be of particular interest to those in united congregations. Copies can be obtained from the Ministries Office.

**The Worker Bees**

28 The *Equipping the Saints* work in 2004-5 was mainly done on behalf of the Ministries Committee by:

The Revd Pauline Barnes  
The Revd Christine Craven (Secretary)  
Mr John Ellis (Convener)  
Mrs Wilma Frew  
The Revd John Piper  
The Revd Dr David Thompson

**Resolution 25**

**Elders and Ecumenism**

**General Assembly reaffirms the place of Elders in the work of the United Reformed Church as described in paragraph 23 of the Basis of Union. Assembly requests that District and Area Councils seek to ensure that even when the precise processes and title set out in paragraph 23 are not used, some leaders of each congregation cover the functions of Elders and can properly be recognised as Elders for the purposes of the wider councils of the Church.**

1 We believe the distinctive characteristics of Elders, drawn from the Reformed tradition, need to be reflected in the life of every congregation which is part of the United Reformed Church. We are of course aware that in many local congregations, including a large number of Local Ecumenical Partnerships, patterns

of leadership draw on traditions other than those which shaped the United Reformed Church. Whilst we applaud the aspiration to find leadership patterns appropriate to local circumstances, this Resolution seeks to ensure that the essence of the Eldership does not disappear.

**Resolution 26**

**Election of Elders**

**Given the importance of Elders in the leadership of United Reformed Church congregations and the need for ecumenical partners to respect the office, Assembly urges every local church to use a selection process for Elders which reflects the significance of their appointment.**

1 Because further work is to be done on the issues surrounding the ordination of Elders, in this and subsequent resolutions we avoid reference to ordination as such. We focus on principles that we believe are important whatever the precise form of entry into the office.

2 This resolution is to encourage the wider use of best practice. For example, we believe that a selection process should include at least the following characteristics. The process:

i) Is only open to those who have been members of the United Reformed Church for at least two years:

- ii) requires the candidates to have a good understanding of the Basis of Union and any applicable local church Rules;
- iii) requires the candidates to have understood the promises in Schedule B and how the office of Elder is exercised in their local congregation;
- iv) provides opportunity for prayerful consideration of candidates by their fellow church members;
- v) involves a secret ballot held at a Church Meeting and publicised to all the members in advance.

## Resolution 27 Elders and Wider Church Representation

**General Assembly, recognising that an Elder is part of the leadership of the whole Church as well as of the local congregation, requests the explicit involvement of the wider Church in the induction of Elders.**

1 Whether or not Elders are ordained, it would be valuable to find ways in induction services to show more clearly that the ministry of Elders is recognised by the wider Church and that there are wider dimensions of Eldership than those exercised within the local congregation.

2 At an induction the local church minister normally presides and he or she will be a member of the District or Area Council *ex officio*. Involvement by the local church's elected representative to the Council, or by other Council personnel, would make

more visible the interest of the wider Councils of the Church. Options would include:

- i) a District or Area Council officer being present at the induction;
- ii) a letter of greeting from the Synod being read at the induction;
- iii) the local congregation's elected representative to the District or Area Council taking part in the induction;
- iv) all newly inducted Elders being received at a District or Area meeting or service.

## Resolution 28 Personal Development of Elders

**To promote the development of the gifts and skills of Elders, Assembly requests:**

**Synods to ensure the provision of locally based opportunities for the development of Elders in local churches or groups of churches; and each local church to set aside time and resources at least once a year specifically for the development of the gifts and skills of Elders.**

1 Taking the high calling of Elders seriously implies that every effort should be made to encourage personal development of those called to this ministry. Various structured and informal opportunities are available to do this, both within the local church and beyond it. We want to encourage these opportunities to be given a high priority, in the lives of individuals and of congregations, even when other pressures threaten to squeeze them out.

2 Some correspondents were anxious that our original Recommendation might lead to a compulsory, standardised (and not very relevant) training course. We had no such intention. We hope this Resolution will

make clear the priority without prescribing the means and by the time of Assembly the Training Committee may be able to say more about new options for delivery. We hope local churches will be nudged into thinking more systematically about the needs of their Elders. We hope that will include giving more attention to the individual needs of new Elders and of potential or proposed Elders. The proposal for a regular review of development needs is partly about recognising that changing circumstances can also make it desirable for experienced Elders to acquire skills not previously needed.

**Resolution 29****Collaborative Leadership**

**General Assembly urges local churches and groups of churches to develop collaborative leadership patterns, and wherever possible to do so ecumenically.**

1 This Resolution derives mainly from Recommendations 6 & 7.

2 We heard virtually unanimous support for collaborative leadership but also anecdotes suggesting it is by no means everyone's experience.

3 In *Equipping the Saints* we said that the purpose of collaborative leadership was 'to make best use of the particular people available in each place for the good of the whole people of God and the effectiveness of (the Church's) ministry in the world... The opportunities for mutual support and personal development available to members of teams are of great benefit to the Church as a whole as well as to the individuals.' We are envisaging more than just Ministers working well together; we are looking to Elders to be at the heart of this, working with Lay Preachers and others as well as with Ministers. We

hope they would make opportunities to worship and pray together and to consider whether a specific team leader needs to be identified.

4 This style of leadership may need careful explanation to ecumenical partners, but is enriched further when it can involve them too. It demands a commitment of will, time and effort from all involved, ongoing training and development, and the ability to cope with change within the team, not least as personnel change.

5 Collaborative leadership also makes it possible to set more realistic boundaries around the expectations on any one individual. For Ministers and others in leadership roles recognised by the wider Church, the District or Area Council has a key responsibility for ensuring that the expectations of those leaders and the pastorates are reasonable.

**Resolution 30****Deployment**

**General Assembly, recognising that the number of Ministers of the Word and Sacraments continues to fall much more rapidly than the number of congregations, requests Synods, District and Area Councils to deploy Ministers in ways which show imagination and flexibility, and in particular:**

- a) **to focus on present and future opportunities not historical patterns;**
- b) **to look at leadership needs and resources in each congregation, accepting that not every congregation has or will have a Minister directly providing their day-to-day leadership;**
- c) **to take account of the deployment plans of sister denominations;**
- d) **to take account of the service offered by self-supporting Ministers;**
- e) **to take account of the Church's policy on Local Church Leaders as agreed at the 1998 meeting of the Assembly;**
- f) **to remember the possibilities provided by the Special Category Ministry scheme.**

1 This Resolution on deployment derives mainly from Recommendations 4 & 6.

2 While many Ministers serve single church pastorates, a large and rising proportion of paid Ministers are responsible for at least two congregations and over a hundred serve three or more. We remain concerned that in some cases this is not the result of a careful identification of key priorities and the matching of gifts with possibilities; rather it reflects the easy option of simply adding extra churches to a Minister's workload. With a likely further reduction of around a fifth in the number of paid ministers by the end of the

decade, it is all the more vital that we identify carefully and prayerfully the best possible deployment of all our Ministers.

3 This Resolution embodies the thinking in Recommendation 6, which received strongly positive feedback. It is the responsibility of the District or Area Council to ensure that deployment is effective and that as far as possible each local church has effective leadership. The Resolution gives these Councils permission and encouragement to break free from inherited patterns of ministerial deployment and look at current and future priorities. The Resolution

### **Resolution 31**

recognises that it may not always be appropriate to provide a Minister for the day-to-day leadership of every congregation.

4 This Resolution does not remove any of the District or Area Council's responsibility to have oversight of the whole District or Area. In particular, where a congregation does not have a Minister for day-to-day leadership, the Council will want to ensure it has access to one when such support is desirable.

5 The Resolution also encourages some best practice that is not followed everywhere: to consult ecumenically; to consider all the ministerial resources available, paid and unpaid; and to explore creatively whether the options provided by Local Church Leaders or Special Category Ministry might provide part of God's answer.

## **Resolution 31**

## **Ministry and Mission Fund Report**

**General Assembly resolves that a report showing how the Ministry and Mission Fund contributions have been used should be sent each year to every local church.**

1 This Resolution on the use of the Ministry and Mission Fund derives mainly from Recommendation 11.

2 Our suggestion of a report to show people in local churches how their M&M Assessment has promoted Mission was warmly received. Although a substantial amount of information is already available, it often does not penetrate into the minds of local churches. We envisage a lively leaflet

containing stories, not a bulky document rich in numbers. We hope it would also be available in electronic form. It would be a particularly relevant resource when Church Meetings are being encouraged to rise to the challenge of making their contribution to the Fund.

3 Other aspects of Recommendation 11 are taken up in a Resolution concerning Special Category Ministry contained within the *Catch the Vision* Steering Group's report to Assembly.

# Ministries Sub-Committees

## Accreditation Sub-Committee

### Sub-Committee Members

**Convener:** *Revd Ken Chippindale*

**Secretary:** *Revd Christine Craven*

*Revd Keith Argyle, Mrs Judith Booth, Revd Gwen Collins, Revd Howard Sharp, Mrs Sheila Telfer, Revd Tony Wilkinson*

### 1 Roll of Ministers

#### Admissions to the Roll

(from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005)

#### By Ordination

John Bradbury, Ann Bray, Peter Blackband, Elaine Brown, Gordon Brown, Ruth Browning, David Coaker, Matthew Connell, Clare Davison, Sheena Dickson, Ruth Dillon, Mark Houghton, Ann Hufton, Irene John, Margaret Johnson, Heather Kent, Martin Knight, Janet Llewellyn, Jan Maxwell, Jenny Morgan, Sarah Moore, Keith Morrison, Susan Powell, Vivien Randles, Alan Seymour, Alison Toplas, Marion Tugwood, Stuart Turner, Barry Welch, Mark Woodhouse, Ann Woodhurst, Ernest Yu, Jenny Yule.

#### Deletions from the Roll

(from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005)

#### by transfer to other Churches

Philip Burroughs, (to the Church of Scotland),  
Jacqueline Petrie (to the Church of Scotland),  
Peter Phillips (to the Church of Scotland),  
Richard Barry West (to the Church of Scotland),  
Chris Vermeulen (to the Church of Scotland),  
Klaus Gutwein (to the Evangelische Kirche),  
Murray Rae (to New Zealand), Tamas and Marta Sugar  
(to the Hungarian Reformed Church).

#### by resignation

Martin Knight, Anthony Kevin Waters,  
John Smith Wilkinson, Sally Ann Wills

### 2 Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers

(The following have successfully completed their course of study and have received Assembly Accreditation between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005)

**Northern Synod:** Peter Smith, Mandi Young

**North-Western Synod:** Robert Brown, Hugh Williams, Linda Potter

**East Midlands Synod:** Margaret Childs, Beverley Kean, Nancy Marshall, Grenville Beck, Charles Jolly

**West Midlands Synod:** Rosalind Selby

**Eastern Synod:** Faith Paulding, Gillian Taylor, Katrina Hackett, Ronald Wade

**South Western Synod:** Catherine Harris, Helen Perring, Valerie Elms, Michelle Pickering

**Wessex Synod:** Linda Jackson Thelma Roberts, Lynne Upsdell

**Thames North Synod:** Christine Hall, Alan Myers, Graham Tarn, Elizabeth Haynes, Barbara Fordyce

**Southern Synod:** Michael Donnelly, Margaret Grew, Jean Hensman, Alice Frimpong, Hannah Bestente

## **Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee**

### **Resolution 32**

### **Ill-health retirement**

#### **General Assembly**

- a) **consents to the use of Rule 44 of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund (the Scheme) such that any member of the Scheme who in future retires on ill-health grounds shall be paid a pension based on their full prospective years of pensionable service up to their normal retirement date; and**
- b) **requests that comparable grants are paid to those who have retired on ill-health grounds since January 2004.**

### **Ill-health retirement**

1.1 The current provisions in the event that a member retires before normal pension age on account of incapacity to undertake the duties of a stipendiary minister or CRCW due to ill-health are set out in Rule 20 of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund (the Scheme).

1.2 When a member retires early on grounds of ill-health the Scheme provides an early retirement pension. The value of this is dependent on the completed years of service. However, if the actual service is less than twenty years then a pension is provided based on the lower of

- i) twenty years, and
- ii) the prospective service to normal retirement date.

1.3 Examples:

- A member who commenced service at age 30 and retires at age 45 on grounds of ill-health will receive a pension based on twenty years pensionable service.
- A member who commenced service at age 30 and retires at age 60 on grounds of ill-health will receive a pension based on thirty years pensionable service.
- A member who commenced service at age 50 and retires at age 55 on grounds of ill-health will receive a pension based on fifteen years pensionable service.

1.4 All these payments are made out of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund.

1.5 The Retired Ministers' Aid Fund is a separate restricted fund of the United Reformed Church available for the support of retired ministers. In recent

years it has mainly been used, on a discretionary basis, to make *grants* to augment the pensions of ministers retiring early on grounds of ill-health. Pensions paid by the Scheme have been supplemented by grants paid from the RMAF up to the level that would have been payable based on full prospective service to the normal retirement age. Although these grants have been discretionary, over many years most if not all ministers retiring on ill-health grounds have had their pensions augmented in this way.

1.6 Late in 2003, it became clear that the RMAF was not in a position to provide further grants of this sort for new cases in the future. However, if no action had been taken, this would have left a significant inconsistency between the way Scheme members had been treated in the past and the way they would be treated in the future.

1.7 Furthermore, the Anglican, Baptist and Methodist pension schemes all allow for prospective service when calculating early retirement pensions for those retiring on ill-health grounds.

1.8 Therefore, we recommend the change of policy set out in the resolution so that the Pension Fund can be used to augment these pensions.

1.9 If this resolution is passed by Assembly, then the Pension Trustee will use the discretion provided by Rule 44 of the Scheme to augment the pension of anyone retiring on grounds of ill-health from Assembly 2005 until the date when the rules of the Scheme are amended to effect this change in policy. It is intended to bring to Assembly 2006 a resolution that will propose the changes to the wording of the Trust Deed, which will implement this change.

# 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]

**Secretary Elect:** Revd Elizabeth Brown [2009]

## Synod Representatives:

I	Revd Peter Poulter	II	Revd Ruth Woolaston	III	Revd John Oldershaw
IV	Mrs Val Morrison	V	Mrs Irene Wren	VI	Dr Tony Jeans
VII	Revd Elizabeth Caswell	VIII	Revd Roz Harrison	IX	Mr Peter Pay
X	Revd Martin Hazell	XI	Dr Graham Campling	XII	Dr Jean Sylvan-Evans
XIII	Revd John Arthur, with the Immediate Past Moderator and General Secretary				

## I. ASSEMBLY STAFF APPOINTMENTS

- 1.1 The Nominating Group**, convened by Mrs Val Morrison recommended the appointment of Ms Michelle Marcano for the position of Human Resources and Facilities Manager at Church House and she commenced work on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2004.
- 1.2 The Nominating Group, convened** by Revd Lesley Charlton, recommended the re-appointment of Revd Roberta Rominger to serve as Moderator of Thames North Synod from 1 September 2005 to 31 August 2010.

## 2. ASSEMBLY COMMITTEES and Sub-COMMITTEES

Notes:

- The Moderator, the Moderator-elect, the immediate past Moderator and the General Secretary are members *ex officio* of every Standing Committee.
- Officers and members appointed since Assembly 2004 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 2006. (⇒) indicates a **Secretary Elect** who will become Secretary in 2006.
- The date in brackets following the names indicates the date of retirement, assuming a full term.
- 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.
- 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: Facilities Co-ordinator

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 2007

Revd Martin Hazell [Convener], Mr Peter Pay, Dr Graham Campling\*\*



## 2.2 CHURCH and SOCIETY

Convener: Revd Martin Camroux [2006]

Secretary: Secretary for Church and Society

Mr Geoffrey Duncan [2006]

Mr Simon Loveitt# [2010]

Revd Tjarda Murray [2007]

Mrs Glenna Paynter [2007]

Miss Emma Pugh [2007]

Revd Dr David Pickering\*\* [2009]

Revd Margaret Tait\*\* [2009]

## 2.3 COMMUNICATIONS and EDITORIAL

Convener: Revd Martin Hazell [2007]

Secretary: Secretary for Communications

Mr Philip George [2006]

Revd Martin Whiffen [2007]

Revd Paul Snell [2008]

Revd Janet Sutton [2008]

Ms Julia Wills [2008]

Mrs Valerie Jenkins\*\* [2009]

Ms Catherine Lewis-Smith\*\* [2009]

Mr Ron Sweeney\*\* [2009]

Mr Richard Lathaen\*\* [2009]

## 2.4 DOCTRINE, PRAYER and WORSHIP

Convener: Revd Dr Susan Durber [2009]

Secretary: Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith & Order

Revd Prof Alan Sell [2007]

Revd Geoffrey Clarke [2007]

Revd Hilary Collinson [2007]

Miss Sarah Lane [2007]

Dr John Turner [2007]

Mrs Chris Eddowes [2008]

Revd Jason McCullagh [2008]

Revd Peter Trow [2008]

Revd Gordon Smith\*\* [2009]

Miss Suzanne McDonald\*\* [2009]

Mrs Jill Jenkins\*\* [2009]

## 2.5 ECUMENICAL

Convener: Revd Elizabeth Nash [2009]

Secretary: Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith & Order

Revd Rowena Francis [2006]

Mr Malcolm Porter [2006]

Revd Lindsey Sanderson [2006]

Mrs Ann Shillaker [2007]

Mrs Pat Gurr [2008]

Revd Graham Maskery\*\* [2009]

Revd Anthony Howells\*\* [2009]

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

Mrs Heather Barnes [2006]

Revd Nigel Uden [2006]

Mrs Eileen McIlveen [2007]

Revd Michael Thomason [2007]

Mrs Sylvia Jackson\*\* [2009]

## 2.6 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Convener: Revd Wilf Bahadur [2006]

Ms Morag McLintock\*\* [2010]

Secretary: Revd Derek Hopkins [2008]

Mr Derek Estill [2006]

Mr Alan Hart [2006]

Revd Sue MacBeth [2007]

Dr Ruth Shepherd [2008]

Mrs Louise Sanders [2008]

Revd Kate Gartside\*\* [2009]

## 2.7 FINANCE

Convener: The Treasurer

Secretary: Financial Secretary

Ms Alison Holt [2006]

Revd David Dones [2007]

Mrs Marie Whitman [2007]

Mr Errol Martin [2008]

Mr Graham Law [2008]

Revd Dick Gray\*\* [2009]

Mr Graham Morris\*\* [2009]

*vacancy*\*\* [2009]

Convener of the URC Trust

## 2.8 INTERFAITH RELATIONS

Convener: Revd Dr John Parry [2007]

Secretary: Mrs Jean Potter [2008]

Revd Peter Colwell [2006]

Dr Iain Frew [2008]

Revd Helen Pollard [2008]

Mr David Jonathon\*\* [2009]

## 2.9 LIFE and WITNESS

Convener: Revd Brian Jolly [2006]

Revd Peter Ball\*\*#[2010]

Secretary: Secretary for Life and Witness

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]

Revd Simon Walking\*\*[2009]

Mr Patrick Smyth\*\*[2009]

### 2.9.1 LIFE and WITNESS - STEWARDSHIP Sub-Committee

Convener: Mr Ray McHugh [2008]

Secretary: Secretary for Life and Witness

Revd David Legge [2006]

Mrs Jackie Haws [2007]

Mrs Susan Wilkinson [2007]

Revd John Durrell [2008]

Mr Gareth Curl\*\*[2009]

### 2.9.2 WINDERMERE ADVISORY GROUP

Convener: Revd Bernard Collins [2009]

Secretary: The Director of Windermere

Mrs Irene Wren [2008]

Revd Carole Allison\*\*[2009]

Revd Jan Berry\*\*[2009]

Convener of Windermere Management Committee, Convener of Life and Witness Committee,

Representative of Carver URC

## 2.10 MINISTRIES

Convener: Mr John Ellis [2006]

Revd Peter Poulter#\*\*[2010]

Secretary: Secretary for Ministries

Revd Pauline Barnes [2006]

Mrs Joan Trippier [2007]

Revd Paul Whittle [2007]

Revd Terry Oakley [2008]

Revd Alan Evans\*\*[2009]

Mrs Joanna Morling\*\*[2009]

Convener of National Assessment Board

### 2.10.1 MINISTRIES - ACCREDITATION Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Gwen Collins [2009]

Secretary: Secretary for Ministries

Mrs Judith Booth [2006]

Revd Tony Wilkinson[2007]

Revd Howard Sharp\*\*[2009]

Mr Simon Rowntree\*\*[2009]

Mr Rod Morrison\*\*[2009]

### 2.10.2 MINISTRIES - CRCW Programme Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Bob Day [2008]

Secretary: The CRCW Development Workers

Revd John Burgess [2006]

Mrs Janet Holden [2006]

Mr Peter Twilley [2007]

Revd Tracey Lewis [2008]

Mrs Maureen Thompson\*\*[2009]

### 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: *to be advised*

Secretary: Ms Avis Reaney

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 [2010]

Secretary: Secretary Retired Ministers' Housing Society Ltd

Mr Malcolm Lindo [2007]

Mrs Pauline Mewis [2006]

Mrs Liz Tadd\*\*[2009]

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: Prof David Cutler [2009]

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 Walkling  
Retiring 2008 Mrs Judith Harris, Mrs Barbara Lancaster, Dr Cameron Wilson  
Retiring 2009 Mrs Tina Ashitey, Dr Peter Clarke, Mr Hugh Abel  
Retiring 2010\*\* Revd David A L Jenkins, Revd Dr Irene John, Revd Edward Sanniez, Revd Lesley Charlton

## 2.11 NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Dr Stephen Orchard [2006]

Revd Malcolm Hanson#\*\*[2010]

Secretary: 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], Dr James Merrilees [13], with the Immediate Past Moderator and the General Secretary.

## 2.12 PASTORAL REFERENCE COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Keith Forecast [2007]

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary

Revd David Grosch Miller [2007]

Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith\*\*[2009]

The Treasurer

Revd Meryl Court [2008]

Convener of Welfare Sub-Committee

The General Secretary

Mrs Sharn Waldron [2008]

### 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 and MULTICULTURAL MINISTRY

Convener: Revd Andrew Prasad [2007]

Secretary: Secretary for Racial Justice

Mrs Sandra Ackroyd [2007]

Revd Carla Grosch Miller [2007]

Mrs Pat Poinen\*\*[2009]

Mrs Elaine Patrick [2007]

Mr Iain Bhagwandin [2008]

Revd Norman Setchell [2007]

Revd Helga Cornell [2008]

## 2.14 TRAINING

Convener: Revd John Humphreys [2007]

Secretary: The Secretary for Training

Mrs Susan Brown [2006]

Mrs Valerie Burnham [2007]

Mrs Kate Breeze [2008]

Revd Sue Henderson [2006]

Dr Ian Morrison [2007]

Revd Richard Church [2008]

Revd Malachie Munyaneza [2006]

Revd Rachel Poolman [2008]

*vacancy\*\**[2009]

## 2.15 YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S WORK

Convener: Revd Kathryn Price [2006]

Revd Neil Thorogood#\*\*[2010]

Secretary: Revd Steven Faber [2008]

Mr Huw Morrison [2006]

Revd Tim Meachin [2008]

Miss Rosemary Simmons\*\*[2009]

FURY Chair

Mrs Doreen Watson [2007]

Revd Sian Collins\*\*[2009]

Ms Ruth Hezlett\*\*[2009]

FURY Council Member

Mr Augustus Webbe [2007]

Revd Robert Weston\*\*[2009]

*vacancy\*\**[2009]

## 2.16 DISCIPLINARY PROCESS - Commission Panel

**Convener:** Mrs Helen Brown [2009]

**Deputy Convener:** Revd David Helyar [2007]

**Secretary:** Revd Alison Hall [2010]

### Members:

Mr Martin Ballard	Miss Ina Barker	Revd Wendy Baskett	Revd David Bedford
Revd James Bolton	Revd Jim Brown	Revd Ken Chippindale	Mrs Janice Cockcroft
Miss Kathleen Cross	Revd Alison Davis	Revd John Du Bois	Mr Colin Ferguson
Mrs Wilma Frew	Revd Joan Grindod-Helmn	Mr Peter Jolly	Mrs Barbara Lancaster
Miss Elizabeth Lawson QC	Revd Daphne Lloyd	Revd Julian Macro	Mrs Barbara Madge
Mr Peter Mann	Revd Nicholas Mark	Revd Ted Marley	Revd Denise Megson
Mrs Jean McAslan	Revd Sandra Pickard	Revd Shelagh Pollard	Mrs Sheila Pratt
Mr Nicholas Pye	Revd Michael Rees	Revd Raymond Singh	Revd Dr David Thompson
Mrs Lynne Upsdell	Ms Elizabeth Whitten	Mr Clive Willis	Revd Joan Winterbottam
Mr Ken Woods			
**Mr Des Colechin	Mr Derek Craig	Mr David Eldridge	Revd Nanette Lewis-Head
Dr Fiona Liddell	Dr Jim Merrilees	Mrs Pamela Sharp	Mr Alan Small
Mr Patrick Smyth			

## 2.17 PANEL FOR THE APPOINTMENT AND REVIEW OF SYNOD MODERATORS

Mrs Sally Abbott	Revd Mary Buchanan	Revd Craig Bowman	Mrs Helen Brown
Dr Graham Campling	Revd Lesley Charlton	Revd Dr Susan Durber	Dr Jean Silvan Evans
Mrs Janet Gray	Mr Alun Jones	Revd Nanette Lewis-Head	Mr John Lumsden
Mr Okeke Azu Okeke	Mr Simon Rowntree	Revd Raymond Singh	Mr Ron Todd
Revd Cecil White	Mrs Irene Wren		

## 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, <i>vacancy, vacancy</i>
Mersey Synod	Revd Jenny Morgan, Mrs Wilma Prentice, Mr Donald Swift
Yorkshire Synod	Mrs Val Morrison, Revd Pauline Loosemore, Mr Roderick Garthwaite
East Midlands Synod	Mrs Anne Ball, Mrs Barbara Turner, Mrs Irene Wren
West Midlands Synod	Mrs Melanie Frew, Revd Anthony Howells, Mr Bill Robson
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 Glenis Massey, Revd Clive Sutcliffe
Thames North Synod	Revd John Macauley, Revd Dr Roger Scopes, <i>vacancy,</i>
Southern Synod	Dr Graham Campling, Mrs Maureen Lawrence, Mr Nigel MacDonald
National Synod of Wales	Mrs Janet Gray, Mr Stuart Jones, Mr W Stuart Jones
National Synod of Scotland	Miss Irene Hudson, Revd Alan Paterson, Mr Patrick Smyth

## 4 TRUST BODIES

### 4.1 UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST

Chairman: to be advised

Secretary: Mr Tony Bayley

Directors

Revd Leslie Watson [2006]

Mrs Fiona Smith [2008]

Dr Geoffrey Sides [2009]

Mr Ernest Gudgeon [2010]

Mr Donald Swift [2010]

Mrs Jill Stidson\*\*[2011]

Revd John Waller\*\*[2011]

[*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: Mr Brian Moere

Secretary: Ms Avis Reaney

Members of URC: Mr Brian Moere [2008] Mr Michael Goldsmith [2009]

*vacancy\*\**[2011] *vacancy\*\**[2011]

Members of Fund: Revd Gwen Thomas [2007] Revd Michael Davies [2008]

Revd Graham Spicer\*\*[2009] *vacancy\*\**[2011]

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

##### **4.2.1 PENSIONS EXECUTIVE**

Convener: Mr Maurice Dyson [2010]

Secretary: Ms Avis Reaney

Revd Kathryn Taylor Revd Richard Wiggins

[*ex officio* Honorary Treasurer, Convener MoM sub-committee]

the Pensions Executive reports to the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pensions Trust Board, the Maintenance of Ministries sub committee and to the Finance committee.

#### **4.3 CONGREGATIONAL MEMORIAL HALL TRUST**

Revd Peter Grimshaw

Revd Dr Peter Jupp

Mr Hartley Oldham

Mr Graham Stacy

Dr John Thompson

Dr Elaine Kaye

#### **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 Sheila Maxey

General Synod of Church of England

Revd Fleur Houston

Methodist Conference

Revd Elizabeth Nash

General Assembly of Church of Scotland [note 5]

Revd Sheila Maxey

Revd John Humphreys

Revd Mary Buchanan

Presbyterian Church of Wales [note 5]

Revd Sheila Maxey

Union of Welsh Independents [note 5]

Revd Stuart Jackson

Congregational Federation

Revd Heather Whyte

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 URC 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 2004**

General Secretary                      Convener of the Ecumenical Committee  
Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry,  
Revd Peter Brain, Mrs Eileen McIlveen, Revd Stephen Brown

#### **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 Humphreys

### **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. URC 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 Roy Fowler, Revd Harry Lanham, Revd Roberta Rominger

#### **7.1.1 HEALTH and HEALING DEVELOPMENT GROUP**

Dr Margaret Moore, Mrs Jackie Ballard, Revd Delia Bond, Revd Deborah McVey

### **7.2 Anglican/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

## **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]

### **8.3** Northern College

*alternate* Mr Colin Howard [2008]  
Secretary for Training, [2009]  
Revd David Jenkins [2009]  
Mr Bill McLaughin [2009]  
Miss Margaret Atkinson [2007]  
Mrs Helen Brown [2007]  
Revd Dr Robert Pope [2007]

Council of the Partnership for  
Theological Education, Manchester:

Secretary for Training

<b>8.4</b>	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] Revd Fleur Houston**[2010] Secretary for Training,
8.4.1	Cheshunt Foundation	Mr David Butler
8.4.2	Cambridge Theological Federation	Convener Westminster College Governors
<b>8.5</b>	Homerton College Trustees	Mr John Chaplin [2005] Mrs Elisabeth Jupp [2006] Lady Sally Williams [2007] Revd Dr David Thompson[2008]
<b>8.6</b>	Queen's College, Birmingham	Revd Elizabeth Welch, <i>vacancy**</i> Secretary for Training in attendance
<b>8.7</b>	Aberystwyth (Memorial College)	Mr Leslie Jones
<b>9.</b>	<b>GOVERNORS of COLLEGES and SCHOOLS with which the URC is associated</b>	
<b>9.1</b>	Caterham School	Revd Nigel Uden [2007] Mr John Mathias [2008]
<b>9.2</b>	Eltham College	Revd Derek Lindfield [2007]
<b>9.3</b>	Walthamstow Hall	Miss Margaret Vokins
<b>9.4</b>	Milton Mount Foundation	Revd George Thomas [2006] Mrs Clare Meachin [2006] Revd David Cuckson [2006] Mr Graham Rolfe [2008] Mr Brian West [2008] Revd Nicola Furley-Smith*[2008]
<b>9.5</b>	Silcoates School,	Dr Peter Clarke [2005] Revd Arnold Harrison [2005] Mrs Val Morrison [2006] Prof Clyde Binfield [2007] Mr David Figures [2007] Mrs Valerie Jankins [2009]
<b>9.6</b>	Taunton School	Revd David Grosch-Miller
<b>9.7</b>	Wentworth College	Revd Daphne Hull
<b>9.8</b>	Bishops Stortford College	Revd Nigel Rogers

**10. Miscellaneous:**

The URC 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 Publications Development Group	Mrs Patricia Hubbard Mrs Rosemary Johnston
Churches Main Committee	Ms Avis Reaney Mrs Janet Knott (legal Advisor)

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 Revd Dr David Thompson
Wharton Trust	Dr John Thompson**[2009]

**Resolution 33****Nominations**

**General Assembly appoints committees and representatives of the Church as set out on pp 83-91 of the Book of Reports subject to additions and corrections contained in the Supplementary report before Assembly.**



# Pastoral Reference

**The Pastoral Reference Committee considers the cases of ministers referred to it by Mission Council, synods, district councils, or their committees or by moderators of synods. (General Assembly Reports 1999). By a Welfare Sub-Committee, it also deals with all welfare and emergency matters including the use of welfare funds. Because of the nature of many of the cases it is a confidential committee, which reports in general terms only, directly to the General Assembly. (The Manual Section G5)**

## **Committee Members**

**Convener:** *The Revd Keith Forecast*      **Secretary:** *The Revd Ray Adams*  
*Mrs Irene Brunskill, The Revd Meryl Court, Mrs Sharn Waldron, The Revd David Grosch-Miller,*  
*The Revd Alan Wharton [Convener, Welfare Sub-Committee], Mr Eric Chilton [Treasurer].*

1      The Committee has met six times in the two years since the last report was made to the General Assembly.

2      Much of the Committee's time is taken up with consideration of the personal circumstances of individual ministers and members of their families which are referred to us, and by its very nature this business must remain confidential. We try to carry out this work with precision and care and it is our hope that those whose stories cross our table feel that they are served satisfactorily. In particular we are sometimes able to recommend the payment of stipend for ministers who find themselves, for a variety of reasons, unable to maintain active ministry for a short period, perhaps because of sustained sickness or because a pastorate has ended in difficult circumstances and the minister has not yet found another sphere of service.

3      Additional business comes our way, however, and recently we have been asked to consider and advise the Synod Moderators on aspects of the matter of the occupancy of manses in sensitive situations, such as when a minister dies in service and leaves a family in the manse, when a minister's marriage fails and the family needs to be housed, or when a minister has accepted a call to service elsewhere but the move has to be delayed for a variety of reasons. Others, we understand, are examining the legal issues of such situations, but we are attending to the pastoral aspects and will advise accordingly.

4      The Committee was asked to comment on procedures being drawn up to deal with situations where a minister might be deemed to be unfit to minister for reasons quite other than the requirements of discipline. We made our comments.

5      Some years ago the Assembly received the results of work done by a small group addressing the subject of Stress in the Ministry. This subject has been brought to our notice once again, with particular reference to ministerial workload, to congregations' expectations of ministers (and ministers' expectations of themselves) and to the effect of ministry upon minister's

spouses and families. We are continuing to work on this and may have something to report at a later stage.

6      A particularly traumatic situation in one pastorate was referred to us with a view to establishing advice guidelines that might be used in other circumstances of extreme pastoral crisis. We are continuing to work on this.

7      We are glad once again to commend the Churches' Ministerial Counselling Service and note that ministers and members of their families continue to avail themselves of this valuable means of support and healing. We have now agreed that retired ministers, ministers' widow(er)s, estranged spouses, those in training for ministry and their families may seek the help of the Service on the same terms as serving ministers.

8      **The Welfare Sub-Committee** deals with applications for support from the Church's Funds which are allocated for Welfare purposes. We have noted that the funds traditionally available for the alleviation of hardship will be exhausted within the next few years and new sources of income will have to be identified. We would encourage church members to consider making donations and to remember these funds when making their wills. Meanwhile, we have agreed a stated policy under which grants will be considered and will be sharing this with the Synod Moderators.

9      Our committee is represented on the committee of 'Broken Rites' – an interdenominational group offering mutual support and information to separated and divorced spouses of ministers. This group does invaluable work among a particular focussed constituency and is deeply appreciated by those involved. We commend it to those in need of its ministry.

10      In 2004 The Revd Pat Hall and Mr Okeke Azu Okeke came to the end of their term of service on this Committee and this year Mrs Irene Brunskill likewise completes her term. We record our gratitude to these people for the conscientious way in which they have shared in our work.

# Racial Justice & Multicultural Ministry

This committee is responsible for:

- **Enabling the United Reformed Church to understand and respond to the multi-racial/multi-cultural nature of society in order to enhance its mission;**
- **Assisting the United Reformed Church to reflect on racial justice issues and to address these in its policies;**
- **Identifying strategies for combating racism in all its forms in the church and society, working closely with other committees and councils of the church to implement them;**
- **Helping the United Reformed Church to celebrate the diverse racial and cultural backgrounds of its membership, encouraging all members to participate meaningfully at all levels of the Church's life.**

## Committee Members

**Convener:** Revd Andrew Prasad

**Secretary:** Mrs Katalina Tahaafe-Williams

Mrs Sandra Ackroyd, Mr Iain Bhagwandin, Revd Dr John Campbell, Revd Helga Cornell, Revd Carla Grosch-Miller, Mrs Elaine Patrick, Revd Norman Setchell.

## 1 Introduction:

### ***Catch the vision – for God's Tomorrow ...***

1.1 The United Reformed Church is a multicultural church in a multicultural, multi-faith and increasingly secular society (and world). Together with other mainline churches in contemporary western democracies, it finds itself wrestling with how to respond to the changes and growing diversity both within itself as well as in the wider society. The end of Christendom in the West has meant that so-called mainline churches have become isolated, alienated and marginalised from their host culture. In short, the church has become a diasporic minority community of faith. Against this post-Christian reality, the United Reformed Church has seen and seized the opportunity to rediscover what it means to be church.

1.2 The question of what it means to be church inevitably raises concerns about missiology and ecclesiology. Mission is God's initiative. The church is invited to receive and share in it. It follows then that a church with this understanding of the *missio Dei* would have the ability to proclaim the gospel to a specific context and simultaneously seek God's purposes in the whole of creation. Such a church would understand the absolute significance for today of learning to live and witness together as people of difference. How we live and relate with all our differences in an ever growing and complex world is a central theological challenge for the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

1.3 The Committee believes this to be a *kairos* moment. The United Reformed Church (and indeed Britain itself) is culturally and ethnically diverse. The opportunity is there for the United Reformed Church to articulate a self-understanding as a community of difference and thereby model an alternative way of being. The United Reformed Church is in a position to model the vision of a truly multicultural body of Christ. Through its life and witness as a marginalised community of faith, it can exemplify a commitment to inclusion and reveal the kind of Christ proclaimed in its midst. This commitment becomes even more critical at a time when social and political rhetoric seeks to exclude rather than embrace. The mission call then is to become a truly multicultural Christian ecclesia, founded on the notions of welcome and hospitality.

1.4 As the United Reformed Church seeks to hear again God's call and to re-vision what it means to be church, the urgent task of seriously engaging with cultural diversity and what it means to be the multicultural church needs to be a priority if it is to live up to this high calling.

## 2 History of Striving for Racial Justice (Reports 2005 Appendix 2)

2.1 From its inception the United Reformed Church has endeavoured to respond to God's call and claim on it with regards to racial justice. Its history of striving for racial justice speaks of a church that is *centred upon the gospel and the proclamation of its message of freedom and justice*. It speaks of a church that passionately

believes in God's power to make a difference in peoples' lives and to transform communities to witness authentically to God's kingdom, known and proclaimed in Jesus Christ. Indeed, the Committee believes that the United Reformed Church's continuing commitment to eradicating racism is the mark of a church called by God to live and promote *God's way of life of justice, peace, and reconciliation* ('Catch the Vision' Commentary).

2.2 In 1978 the United Reformed Church urged all its members to support the British Council of Churches (BCC) *Statement against Racism* by making public stands against all forms of racism. In 1981 it strongly opposed the British Nationality Bill. The Church adopted the **Declaration on Racism** in 1987, committing itself to equip all its members to challenge racism in all its forms and to devote resources to this task. In the 90's the United Reformed Church acknowledged the existence of barriers that marginalize certain groups within our church structures. It adopted an **Equal Opportunity Policy** and **Charter for the Church** to monitor the appointment, call, representation, and position of women, black people, all ages and people with disabilities in the church; and to take appropriate action where necessary to address the rights and responsibilities of black members. 1996 saw the appointment of a Multiracial/Multicultural Development Worker, and in 2001 the Assembly appointed and inducted the first Assembly Secretary for Racial Justice together with an Assembly Committee for Racial Justice to continue the work.

2.3 Noting the rise in racist violence and racial prejudice exposed by the presence of refugee and asylum seekers in Britain and Europe, the United Reformed Church called on its members to welcome and befriend these brothers and sisters in need, and urged the British government to fairness and compassion toward them. Most recently, the January 2004 Mission Council declared its concern over the rise of extreme right-wing and racist political parties in Europe and the UK, stating that *...within Britain membership or any form of support for organisations such as the British National Party (BNP) is incompatible with Christian discipleship*. Further, it called on the whole church to make these views known in the local and European elections in June 2004, and noted with welcome the growth in the number of migrant congregations in the United Reformed Church.

### **3 Challenges and Opportunities (Reports 2005 Appendix 3)**

3.1 The United Reformed Church has a tradition of embracing diversity in its worship styles, theology and discipleship. Its history of striving for racial justice is an affirmation that in fact it is a multicultural church with membership composed of different cultures and ethnicity.

3.2 For many years, across much of London and in various other towns and cities, local congregations of the United Reformed Church have been grappling with the opportunities and challenges of building one just and caring fellowship with members from two or more distinct cultures and backgrounds. The Committee rejoices to see local congregations where people of diverse cultures seek to worship in one fellowship. We also recognise the rightness of our journeying alongside congregations that for the time being remain focussed on particular migrant communities as we all explore how best to sustain both unity and diversity within the body of Christ. **(Reports 2005 Appendix 4)**

3.3 While the overall composition of the church is multicultural, living as a multicultural church continues to be a challenge. The United Reformed Church tries hard to rejoice in the rich mix of ethnic cultures that is so characteristic of British life. But it needs to consider seriously just how welcoming it is to those strangers looking for belonging. Are there enough done to let all people in the community and neighbourhoods know that they are welcome and that the church doors are open to receive all with care and hospitality? How inclusive is the church in embracing diverse worship styles? It would be tragic to repeat the mistakes of the *Windrush* years when a dearth of welcome for Caribbean Christians significantly added to the impetus for the formation of black majority churches in the UK.

3.4 There needs to be more intentional effort in developing multicultural ministry and in proclaiming the United Reformed Church as a church that welcomes all cultures and ethnicity, if it is serious about becoming a *vibrant and sustainable Christian community in the next ten years* ('Catch the Vision' Commentary). It is no exaggeration to say that such rich cultural diversity provides the church with opportunities for mission it cannot ignore. This is an opportunity for the United Reformed Church to engage more seriously with the notion of what it means to be a multicultural church as it considers its future.

3.5 Though challenged with the vision of multicultural ministry, the Committee has faith that the United Reformed Church is striving to respond to the call to be diverse, lively, inclusive and flexible. The Committee believes that the church hears God's call to become a community of faith that is truly multicultural, i.e.- a church that embraces cultural diversity and is united by faith in Christ. Hence, General Assembly's move in 2004 to change the Committee's title to Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry (RJ&MM), affirming the Committee's leading role to develop multicultural ministry in the United Reformed Church as integral to its brief. The Committee is eager to work to equip the United Reformed Church to become not only visibly multicultural, but also to live multiculturally, through its programmes and initiatives.

#### 4 **Self-Examination – Individual and Institutional Racism**

4.1 The United Reformed Church recognises that racism is a sin. Racism and racial discrimination continue to be pervasive features of most societies. If we are honest, we will admit to holding attitudes and opinions that make unfavourable judgements towards people based on ethnicity or skin colour. Racism is a key obstacle to the realisation of *truly multi-racial/multi-ethnic communities, which safeguard diversity, where different identities interact, and where the rights and obligations of all are fully respected in love and fellowship* (Transformative Justice, WCC, Geneva 2004). *Metanoia*, the graced turning of one's heart towards God, is an essential part of the Christian faith. The first step that prepares one to receive this grace is to examine oneself for that which impedes one's relationship with God and with God's people.

4.2 Key world events have drawn national and local government attention to the insidious and pervasive nature of racism within institutions and structures (e.g., *Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report, 1999; UN World Conference against Racism, 2001*). The World Council of Churches (WCC) produced a paper in response to the 2001 UN World Conference against Racism called *Transformative Justice - a vision for building truly inclusive and just communities through healing, reconciliation and re-establishing right relationships*.

4.3 In Britain the wider church has also responded to these developments. In 2003 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) published *Redeeming the Time: All God's People Must Challenge Racism*, endorsing the Stephen Lawrence Report's definition of institutional racism and acknowledging the existence of such racism within the church.

4.4 The Stephen Lawrence Report defines **institutional racism** as *those established laws, customs and practices that systematically produce racial inequalities in societies. If racist consequences are the result of institutional laws, customs or practices, the institution is racist whether or not the individuals maintaining those practices have racist intentions*. Institutional racism is systemic and not simply the function of racist individuals in the organisation. There is a distinction between racial prejudice and racial discrimination. People who are not racially prejudiced can practice racial discrimination when they participate in an institution that perpetuates racial inequalities, and in their failure, which may be unconscious or uncritical, to offer equal opportunities and access to services to all people. Institutional racism is inherent in how the institution conducts its business and is administered in seemingly impersonal ways without the explicit endorsement of the institution. Indeed, it persists and even flourishes despite the dominant culture's explicit disavowal of any form of racism.

4.5 The United Reformed Church defined institutional racism in its 1987 Declaration on Racism as those *...organizational barriers which deny black people a just share of power and decision-making and the church's failure to ...adapt so that black people can share fully in its life*. It also affirmed the richness of life that true multicultural sharing can bring. Eighteen years on and our churches remain largely mono-cultural, as does our leadership. Visible involvement by minority ethnic peoples at all levels in the life of the church is minimal. Like the Metropolitan Police Service and other institutions, the church is often oblivious to how its structures and practices exclude people of other cultures. The exclusion of minority ethnic people, though unintentional, is the outcome of institutional racism.

4.6 The United Reformed Church is hindered in its effort to become a truly multicultural community of Christ by the destructive influence of institutional racism. The church needs to grapple honestly with the problem of institutional racism. It needs to examine rigorously its ways of conduct and to consider the consequences of its policies, practices, and procedures for minority ethnic peoples and those on the margins. The challenges of today present opportunities to be used constructively, and in the words of the General Secretary, that involves *...serious self-analysis and the deliberate creation of equal opportunities, for only so can God's gifts be fully appreciated*.

#### 5 **Sacrifices and Pruning**

5.1 The Committee believes that for the church to move forward in faith, changes must be made in the way it orders its life and finances. More than physical and financial change is required. Sacrifices and pruning, without which the vision for the church's future cannot be attained, need to take place in the hearts and minds of people. What must be sacrificed is the desire to stay within comfort zones. What must be pruned is the limited understanding of who are neighbours and what care is due to them. What is called for is nothing less than a transformation and renewal of minds so that, in the words of the apostle Paul '*...we may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect*.' (Romans 12: 2)

#### 6 **The Committee's contribution**

6.1 The Committee is passionately committed to helping the United Reformed churches develop caring and just communities of mutual hospitality and welcome for all. **Educational and training resources** are helpful tools for equipping the churches to become communities of mutual hospitality, welcome, and reconciliation. The Committee is committed to working ecumenically to produce such resources. In addition to '*Strangers No More*' which was produced jointly with the *Methodist Church*, the Committee is now close to completing another training resource with the *Baptist Union* aimed at meeting various levels of need in the churches.

6.2 The **Racial Justice Advocacy Network** continues to help people on the ground engage more deeply and without fear with issues of cultural diversity. The Advocacy work includes: work with refugee and asylum seekers throughout the UK; trade justice and make poverty history campaign; work in partnership with secular community projects to promote and develop cohesive multicultural communities; and work to develop good inter faith relations. The Racial Justice Advocates are committed and inspiring individuals who volunteer time, energy and even personal resources to develop just and reconciled multicultural communities.

6.3 The **Multicultural Youth Programme** began with regional multicultural youth events throughout 2004 and early 2005, leading up to the United Reformed Church Multicultural Youth Conference in October 2005. At the October conference a Multicultural Youth Forum is to be launched. This forum will be run and led by young people from different backgrounds.

6.4 **Annual/Biennial Conferences** are planned for 2005 for three specific minority ethnic groups in the United Reformed Church, in preparation for the United Reformed Church Multicultural Conference and Celebrations planned for 2006. The conferences will provide opportunities and space for the gathering of people from similar minority ethnic background to come together and share their culture and their stories. They would be spaces in which to reflect together on how they may impact the life and witness of the United Reformed Church – their spiritual home.

6.5 The committee continues to work closely with ecumenical partners to nurture and develop minority ethnic leadership through our networks, particularly in the **Ethnic Minority Lay and Ordained Ministers (EMLOM)** Association.

6.6 The **website** has been fully designed and ready to go. Assurances have been given that it will go up very soon. A **data base** of resource people is being compiled so that we can have people from minority ethnic background readily available to serve on committees and other councils of the church when needed.

6.7 Promoting inter faith relations and dialogue continues with the **Inter Faith Relations Committee** and ecumenical inter faith networks like CIPA, CCIFR and others.

6.8 Support for the **Mission Partners**, and **Volunteers** is an important of our work and the mission partner programme is especially helpful in raising awareness and supporting multicultural ministry projects.

6.9 Working for racial justice and to develop multicultural ministry nationally and globally in partnership with networks that include Churches commission for Racial Justice (**CCRJ**), **CWM**, **WCC**, and others is significant and ongoing.

6.10 **Racism Awareness Training** for various groups including synods, districts, theological colleges, congregations and ecumenical bodies continue to be an active part of the work.

## 7 Kairos Moment

7.1 The Committee believes that now is a **kairos** moment for the United Reformed Church to further its commitment to the Lord's work of healing the divisions in the human family through the Committee's work for racial justice and to develop multicultural ministry. The Committee seeks to equip all levels of the church to build a United Reformed Church that is truly hospitable to the whole people of God and therefore a sign and witness to the reconciling and redemptive work of God in Jesus Christ. It seeks to develop communities of mutual hospitality, welcoming all peoples and the joys, gifts, and opportunities for service they bring. Now is an opportunity for the United Reformed church to make clear it's commitment to becoming a multicultural church that welcomes people of all backgrounds nurturing, supporting and utilising their gifts for leadership and full participation in the life of the church.

**Resolution 34****Developing Multicultural Ministry**

The Committee asks that General Assembly commits to the following practical steps to enable the United Reformed Church to further develop as a multicultural church:

- a) General Assembly requires racial awareness training to be included in the induction of future Assembly staff, employees and committee members, and instructs that provision be made for training all existing staff and committee members at least once every two years.
- b) General Assembly affirms its support for the Racial Justice Advocacy Network, strongly urges each synod or region to appoint a Racial Justice Advocate Co-ordinator and encourages congregations to support the advocacy by encouraging members to join the network.
- c) General Assembly instructs the Secretaries for Training, Ministries and Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry to evaluate the accessibility to minority ethnic people of the systems of candidacy and training for Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Church Related Community Workers, lay preachers and lay leaders, and to report with recommendations to Mission Council no later than March 2006.
- d) General Assembly authorises the Committee for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry to conduct an audit of church structures, policies, procedures and practices for the presence of barriers to full participation of minority ethnic people, and to report with recommendations to Mission Council no later than October 2006.
- e) General Assembly endorses the *'Guidelines for welcoming and Receiving Migrant Churches'* (Assembly Reports 2005 Appendix 5) and commends them to the United Reformed Church.

## Other Resolutions

### Training Committee

#### Resolution 35

#### Partnership within the Hind Process

General Assembly, recognising that the Training Committee is working within a climate of considerable change,

- a) encourages the Committee to continue in constructive partnership with the Church of England's training review 'Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church' (known as 'the Hind process') and its subsequent implementation, and
- b) emphasises the need for the Committee to safeguard
  - i. the aims and parameters of its own programmes in any arrangements to subsume them in new ecumenical provision; and
  - ii. the financial resources and commitments needed to sustain them.

1.1 As noted in the Training Committee report to General Assembly 2004, "all our training is done ecumenically and in many ways we are dependent on the Church of England" (para.3.2.4.10). In March 2000 the Church of England embarked on a review of the structure and funding of its ordination training under the leadership of Bishop John Hind. The resulting report, with the significant title 'Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church', proposed a radical restructuring. It was finally adopted by the General Synod of the Church of England in July 2003. The General Synod also agreed to an implementation programme. The entire process is familiarly known as 'Hind'.

1.2 Because of our close involvement with the Church of England through our use of their regional courses to train those preparing part time for the ministry of Word and Sacraments, the United Reformed Church – along with the Methodist Church – was invited to participate in the implementation programme, with the possibility that other denominations might become involved in due course. The contribution made by our representatives has been appreciated by the Church of England. The January 2004 report of the Regions Task Group noted, "the group's work has been greatly assisted by Methodist and United Reformed Church representation on the group itself". United Reformed Church representatives are involved in a number of the task groups working on the various aspects involved in preparing for the full implementation of Hind.

1.3 Our representatives have reported back to the Training Committee through an informal reference Group that has met as necessary. The full Committee

has also been kept abreast of Hind thinking and planning as it has developed both across England and in the regions.

1.4 The time has now come when our partner churches seek a more substantial response to Hind, in consequence of which the Training Committee believes that a more formal recognition by General Assembly of what is happening is appropriate and required. The Training Committee notes that the principles underpinning the Hind process (integrated training for the whole people of God) coincide creatively with the principles for a learning church which the Committee has offered the *Catch the Vision* Steering Group.

1.5 In presenting this resolution, Training Committee acknowledges that General Assembly is being asked to support the involvement of the United Reformed Church in a process, which is far from complete, and within which, in some areas, the Church of England itself is struggling with the implications of Hind.

1.6 To assist the development of the new Regional Training Partnerships (RTP's) which are a key element within the Hind proposals, Training Committee agreed at our meeting in February 2005 to contribute, where appropriate, £1,000 towards the start up costs of each RTP. This will come from within the current training budget for 2005 and is an amount comparable to that being given by the Methodist Church. Training Committee expects that this will not cost more than £11,000, and is offered as support in regional negotiations with the Church of England and Methodist Churches.

1.7 At this stage, Training Committee is not able to provide any assessment of the overall cost of our involvement in the Hind developments. Nor are we in a position to know whether there will be a cost at all. In the absence of financial detail, Training Committee stresses that any expenditure beyond the agreed budget for training will be subject to the normal scrutiny and procedures of the church.

1.8 In seeking the agreement of General Assembly, Training Committee underlines the fact that Hind does not look to a uniform pattern amongst the regions, but seeks flexibility whilst yet securing a number of essential core values. Partly because of this, and partly because there is considerable

variation in the strengths of the partner churches across the regions, Training Committee anticipates that there will be some variation in the ability of the United Reformed Church to respond in identical ways in all the regions.

1.9 Nonetheless, the Committee believes that the process will be damaged if the United Reformed Church does not formally commit itself to work constructively towards a mutually beneficial outcome. It also believes that such a commitment, related to a particular and important aspect of our life, authenticates the statements of ecumenical intention made by previous General Assemblies.

## **Private resolution sponsored by the Conveners of the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Committee, Nominations Committee and Equal Opportunities Committee.**

### **Resolution 36**

### **Equal Opportunities Monitoring**

**General Assembly instructs the Nominations Committee to monitor the appointments of Synod Moderators, Assembly Appointed Staff, Westminster College Staff and the conveners of Assembly Committees in order to seek a balance in those groupings which matches the balance in other nominations of:**

- a) an equal number of men and women**
- b) at least 10% representation from minority ethnic groups.**

*Proposer: Revd Dr Stephen Orchard*

*Seconder: Revd Andrew Prasad*

1.1 Following the resolution on Nominations and Equal Opportunities, proposed from Mission Council, Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry, Nominations and Equal Opportunities conveners felt it would be helpful if there were encouragement to look at other groupings of appointments and to seek balance in those. All the appointments in this resolution are normally treated as one-off appointments, but if the

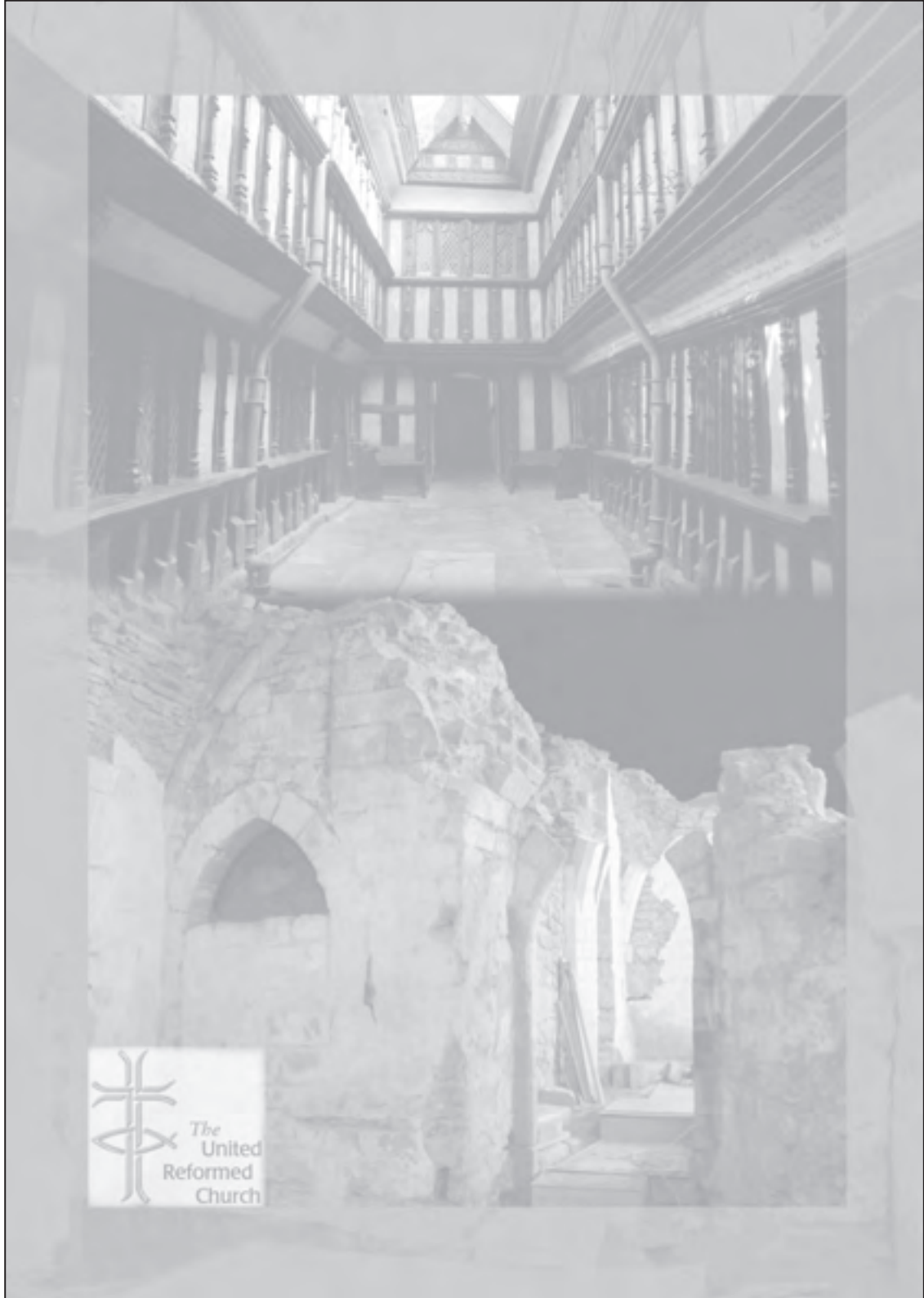
United Reformed Church is going to further its Equal Opportunities objectives then it will need to take action on structural discrimination. This resolution is not about positive discrimination but it does seek affirmative action through encouraging the United Reformed Church to ensure appropriate balance in its appointments.





*The*  
United  
Reformed  
Church

# Appendices



# Appendix I

**World Alliance of Reformed Churches  
24th General Council, Accra, Ghana  
July 30 – August 13 2004**

## **Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth**

### **Introduction**

1. In response to the urgent call of the Southern African constituency which met in Kitwe in 1995 and in recognition of the increasing urgency of global economic injustice and ecological destruction, the 23rd General Council (Debrecen, Hungary, 1997) invited the member churches of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to enter into a process of “recognition, education, and confession (*processus confessionis*)”. The churches reflected on the text of Isaiah 58.6 “...break the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free,” as they heard the cries of brothers and sisters around the world and witnessed God’s gift of creation under threat.

2. Since then, nine member churches have committed themselves to a faith stance; some are in the process of covenanting; and others have studied the issues and come to a recognition of the depth of the crisis. Further, in partnership with the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation and regional ecumenical organizations, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches has engaged in consultations in all regions of the world, from Seoul/Bangkok (1999) to Stony Point (2004). Additional consultations took place with churches from the South in Buenos Aires (2003) and with churches from South and North in London Colney (2004).

3. Gathered in Accra, Ghana, for the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, we visited the slave dungeons of Elmina and Cape Coast where millions of Africans were commodified, sold and subjected to the horrors of repression and death. The cries of “never again” are put to the lie by the ongoing realities of human trafficking and the oppression of the global economic system.

4. Today we come to take a decision of faith commitment.

### **Reading the Signs of the Times**

5. We have heard that creation continues to groan, in bondage, waiting for its liberation (Romans 8.22). We are challenged by the cries of the people who suffer and by the woundedness of creation itself. We see a dramatic convergence between the suffering of the people and the damage done to the rest of creation.

6. The signs of the times have become more alarming and must be interpreted. The root causes of massive threats to life are above all the product of an unjust economic system defended and protected by political and military might. Economic systems are a matter of life or death.

7. We live in a scandalous world that denies God’s call to life for all. The annual income of the richest 1% is equal to that of the poorest 57%, and 24,000 people die each day from poverty and malnutrition. The debt of poor countries continues to increase despite paying back their original borrowing many times over. Resource-driven wars claim the lives of millions, while millions more die of preventable diseases. The HIV and AIDS global pandemic afflicts life in all parts of the world, affecting the poorest where generic drugs are not available. The majority of those in poverty are women and children and the number of people living in absolute poverty on less than one US dollar per day continues to increase.

8. The policy of unlimited growth among industrialized countries and the drive for profit of transnational corporations have plundered the earth and severely damaged the environment. In 1989, one species disappeared each day, and by 2000 it was one every hour. Climate change, the depletion of fish stocks, deforestation, soil erosion, and threats to fresh water are among the devastating consequences. Communities are disrupted, livelihoods are lost, coastal regions and Pacific islands are threatened with inundation, and

storms increase. High levels of radioactivity threaten health and ecology. Life forms and cultural knowledge are being patented for financial gain.

9. This crisis is directly related to the development of neoliberal economic globalization, which is based on the following beliefs:

- unrestrained competition, consumerism, and the unlimited economic growth and accumulation of wealth is the best for the whole world;
- the ownership of private property has no social obligation;
- capital speculation, liberalization and deregulation of the market, privatization of public utilities and national resources, unrestricted access for foreign investments and imports, lower taxes, and the unrestricted movement of capital will achieve wealth for all;
- social obligations, protection of the poor and the weak, trade unions, and relationships between people, are subordinate to the processes of economic growth and capital accumulation.

10. This is an ideology that claims to be without alternative, demanding an endless flow of sacrifices from the poor and creation. It makes the false promise that it can save the world through the creation of wealth and prosperity, claiming sovereignty over life and demanding total allegiance, which amounts to idolatry.

11. We recognize the enormity and complexity of the situation. We do not seek simple answers. As seekers of truth and justice and looking through the eyes of powerless and suffering people, we see that the current world (dis)order is rooted in an extremely complex and immoral economic system defended by empire. In using the term "empire" we mean the coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power that constitutes a system of domination led by powerful nations to protect and defend their own interests.

12. In classical liberal economics, the state exists to protect private property and contracts in the competitive market. Through the struggles of the labour movement, states began to regulate markets and provide for the welfare of people. Since the 1980s, through the transnationalization of capital, neoliberalism has set out to dismantle the welfare functions of the state. Under neoliberalism the purpose of the economy is to increase profits and return for the owners of production and financial capital, while excluding the majority of the people and treating nature as a commodity.

13. As markets have become global, so have the political and legal institutions which protect them. The government of the United States of America and its allies, together with international finance and trade institutions (International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organization) use political, economic, or military alliances to protect and advance the interest of capital owners.

14. We see the dramatic convergence of the economic crisis with the integration of economic globalization and geopolitics backed by neoliberal ideology. This is a global system that defends and protects the interests of the powerful. It affects and captivates us all. Further, in biblical terms such a system of wealth accumulation at the expense of the poor is seen as unfaithful to God and responsible for preventable human suffering and is called Mammon. Jesus has told us that we cannot serve both God and Mammon (Lk 16.13).

### **Confession of Faith in the Face of Economic Injustice and Ecological Destruction**

15. Faith commitment may be expressed in various ways according to regional and theological traditions: as confession, as confessing together, as faith stance, as being faithful to the covenant of God. We choose confession, not meaning a classical doctrinal confession, because the World Alliance of Reformed Churches cannot make such a confession, but to show the necessity and urgency of an active response to the challenges of our time and the call of Debrecen. We invite member churches to receive and respond to our common witness.

16. Speaking from our Reformed tradition and having read the signs of the times, the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches affirms that global economic justice is essential to the integrity of our faith in God and our discipleship as Christians. We believe that the integrity of our faith is at stake if we remain silent or refuse to act in the face of the current system of neoliberal economic globalization and therefore **we confess** before God and one another.

17. **We believe** in God, Creator and Sustainer of all life, who calls us as partners in the creation and redemption of the world. We live under the promise that Jesus Christ came so that all might have life in fullness (Jn 10.10). Guided and upheld by the Holy Spirit we open ourselves to the reality of our world.

18. **We believe** that God is sovereign over all creation. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Psalm 24.1).

19. **Therefore, we reject** the current world economic order imposed by global neoliberal capitalism and any other economic system, including absolute planned economies, which defy God's covenant by excluding the poor, the vulnerable and the whole of creation from the fullness of life. We reject any claim of economic, political, and military empire which subverts God's sovereignty over life and acts contrary to God's just rule.

20. **We believe** that God has made a covenant with all of creation (Gen 9.8-12). God has brought into being an earth community based on the vision of justice and peace. The covenant is a gift of grace that is not for sale in the market place (Is 55.1). It is an economy of grace for the household of all of creation. Jesus shows that this is an inclusive covenant in which the poor and marginalized are preferential partners, and calls us to put justice for the “least of these” (Mt 25.40) at the centre of the community of life. All creation is blessed and included in this covenant (Hos2.18ff).

21. **Therefore we reject** the culture of rampant consumerism and the competitive greed and selfishness of the neoliberal global market system, or any other system, which claims there is no alternative.

22. **We believe** that any economy of the household of life, given to us by God’s covenant to sustain life, is accountable to God. We believe the economy exists to serve the dignity and well being of people in community, within the bounds of the sustainability of creation. We believe that human beings are called to choose God over Mammon and that confessing our faith is an act of obedience.

23. **Therefore we reject** the unregulated accumulation of wealth and limitless growth that has already cost the lives of millions and destroyed much of God’s creation.

24. **We believe** that God is a God of justice. In a world of corruption, exploitation, and greed, God is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor, the exploited, the wronged, and the abused (Psalm 146.7-9). God calls for just relationships with all creation.

25. **Therefore we reject** any ideology or economic regime that puts profits before people, does not care for all creation, and privatizes those gifts of God meant for all. We reject any teaching which justifies those who support, or fail to resist, such an ideology in the name of the gospel.

26. **We believe** that God calls us to stand with those who are victims of injustice. We know what the Lord requires of us: to do justice, love kindness, and walk in God’s way (Micah 6.8). We are called to stand against any form of injustice in the economy and the destruction of the environment, “so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5.24).

27. **Therefore we reject** any theology that claims that God is only with the rich and that poverty is the fault of the poor. We reject any form of injustice which destroys right relations – gender, race, class, disability, or caste. We reject any theology which affirms that human interests dominate nature.

28. **We believe** that God calls us to hear the cries of the poor and the groaning of creation and to follow the public mission of Jesus Christ who came so that all may have life and have it in fullness (Jn 10.10). Jesus brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry; he frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind (Lk 4.18); he supports and protects the downtrodden, the stranger, the orphans and the widows.

29. **Therefore we reject** any church practice or teaching which excludes the poor and care for creation, in its mission; giving comfort to those who come to “steal, kill and destroy” (Jn 10.10) rather than following the “Good Shepherd” who has come for life for all (Jn 10.11).

30. **We believe** that God calls men, women and children from every place together, rich and poor, to uphold the unity of the church and its mission, so that the reconciliation to which Christ calls can become visible.

31. **Therefore we reject** any attempt in the life of the church to separate justice and unity.

32. **We believe** that we are called in the Spirit to account for the hope that is within us though Jesus Christ, and believe that justice shall prevail and peace shall reign.

33. **We commit ourselves** to seek a global covenant for justice in the economy and the earth in the household of God.

34. **We humbly confess** this hope, knowing that we, too, stand under the judgement of God’s justice.

- We acknowledge the complicity and guilt of those who consciously or unconsciously benefit from the current neoliberal economic global system; we recognize that this includes both churches and members of our own Reformed family and therefore we call for confession of sin.
- We acknowledge that we have become captivated by the culture of consumerism, and the competitive greed and selfishness of the current economic system. This has all too often permeated our very spirituality.
- We confess our sin in misusing creation and failing to play our role as stewards and companions of nature.
- We confess our sin that our disunity within the Reformed family has impaired our ability to serve God’s mission in fullness.

35. **We believe**, in obedience to Jesus Christ, that the church is called to confess, witness and act, even though the authorities and human law might forbid them, and punishment and suffering be the consequence (Acts 4.18ff). Jesus is Lord.

36. **We join in praise** to God, Creator, Redeemer, Spirit, who has “brought down the mighty from their thrones, lifted up the lowly, filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands” (Lk 1.52f).

### **Covenanting for Justice**

37. By confessing our faith together, we covenant in obedience to God’s will as an act of faithfulness in mutual solidarity and in accountable relationships. This binds us together to work for justice in the economy and the earth both in our common global context as well as our various regional and local settings.

38. On this common journey, some churches have already expressed their commitment in a confession of faith. We urge them to continue to translate this confession into concrete actions both regionally and locally. Other churches have already begun to engage in this process, including taking actions and we urge them to engage further, through education, confession and action. To those other churches, which are still in the process of recognition, we urge them on the basis of our mutual covenanting accountability, to deepen their education and move forward towards confession.

39. The General Council calls upon member churches, on the basis of this covenanting relationship, to undertake the difficult and prophetic task of interpreting this confession to their local congregations.

40. The General Council urges member churches to implement this confession by following up the Public Issues Committee’s recommendations on economic justice and ecological issues.

41. The General Council commits the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to work together with other communions, the ecumenical community, the community of other faiths, civil movements and people’s movements for a just economy and the integrity of creation and calls upon our member churches to do the same.

42. Now we proclaim with passion that we will commit ourselves, our time and our energy to changing, renewing, and restoring the economy and the earth, choosing life, so that we and our descendants might live (Deuteronomy 30.19).



*The*  
United  
Reformed  
Church

# Appendix 2

## United Reformed Church Proclamations against Racism

### 1. 1978

#### 1.1 Resolution 4

1.1.1 The Assembly endorses the **Affirmation in the British Council of Churches Statement on Racism** and urges all members to make a public stand against racism in all its forms and in support of the reconciliation which is so integral a part of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

1.1.1.a **The Affirmation of the BCC Statement** is as follows:

1. *The Gospel of Jesus Christ sets forth the unity of the human race: the acceptance and love of all within the human family.*
2. *We assert again the claims of love and justice: to seek the good of others and to work for the human rights of all.*
3. *We recognise that Britain is now a pluralist society of varied races, cultures and religions; we must respect those who practice different religions and adhere to different styles of life; a more varied society offers new opportunities to us all.*
4. *We believe that racial policies and racial activities of the National Front, and other similar bodies, are entirely contrary to the truth of the Gospel and contrary to the true integrity of this nation.*
5. *We believe that racial attitudes will not be defeated by violence on our streets, but by open and unyielding commitment to freedom and justice for all.*
6. *We therefore urge Christians and non-Christians to act in ways which are free from racial discrimination and to support those values which are the foundations of our democratic society.*
7. **A Commitment**  
*As a witness to this stand against racism we sign this statement as a clear commitment to a tolerant and just society, freed from racism of all kinds.*

### 2. 1980

#### 2.1 Resolution 1

2.1.1. The Assembly urges all churches to study the question of racism, both locally and nationally, using the publications of the British Council of Churches' Community and Race Relations Unit, and commends to all Churches the CRRU Project Fund as a practical way of contributing to the creation of a truly multi-racial society in Britain.

### 3. 1981

#### 3.1 Resolution 3

3.1.1 The Assembly expresses its opposition to the British Nationality Bill and urges Her Majesty's Government to withdraw it, and it calls upon Churches to make their views known to their members of Parliament; to work actively to combat racism; to contribute to the project fund of the Community and Race Relations Unit of the British Council of Churches.

### 4. 1987

#### 4.1 Resolution 4

4.1.1 The Assembly adopts the **Declaration on Racism** and commends it for study and action and as a future point of reference throughout the Church.

##### 4.1.1.1 **The Declaration on Racism:**

##### **Creed.**

The United Reformed Church believes that all people are created in God's image, free and equal in his sight.

##### **Definition.**

Racism results where prejudiced attitudes of superiority over others are combined with the power to shape society.

##### **History.**

Western civilisation is, and has long been, seriously flawed by racism.

##### **Acknowledgment.**

British society nurtures racism through assumptions, stereotypes and organisational barriers which deny black people a just share of power and decision-making.

##### **Confession.**

The Church displays racism by failing to adapt so that black people can share fully in its life, its outreach and its decision-making.

**Affirmation.** There is cause for celebration in church and society when black and white people learn to cooperate, share power and make decisions together and where new forms of community life are thus discovered.

**Commitment.** The United Reformed Church commits itself to challenge and equip all its people to resist racism within themselves, within the church and within society as a whole and to train people and devoted resources to this task.

**Pledge.** The United Reformed Church pledges itself, as it shares in action against racism, to monitor and review at regular intervals what progress is being made in church and society.

## 5. 1990

### 5.1 Resolution 7

5.1.1 The Assembly adopts the statement **A Declaration of Equal Opportunities** policy (in relation to ministers).

Par. 4: The Church is aware of possible barriers for example to women and to black people within the structures of the Church in ministry and others posts; this has to do with expectations, position, role and status.

Par. 5: The Church will therefore establish appropriate methods of monitoring the appointment, call and position of women and black people in the ministry and of considering appropriate action where necessary.

## 6. 1994

### 6.1 Resolution 7

6.1.1 The Assembly adopts an **Equal Opportunity Policy** (by unanimous vote) as follows:

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

6.1.1.1 Assembly declares:-

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

## 7. 1994

### 7.1 Resolution 19

7.1.1 Assembly welcomes and adopts the document '**Charter for the Church**' and encourages those responsible for the appointment or nomination of members of all the councils of the church to become more aware of the issues and to follow its recommendations.

### 7.2 Resolution 20a

7.2.1 General Assembly calls the whole church to prayer and action so that ways are found to listen to people of different cultural backgrounds in our churches.

### 7.3 Resolution 20b

7.3.1 General Assembly instructs the Mission Council

- (1) to consider the motion from Thames North Synod on the allocation of a special multi-racial ministry;
- (2) to make proposals to the General Assembly of 1995 in consultation with the new Standing Committee on Equal Opportunities and the Finance Committee as to what post, if any, is needed and how it should be funded.

## 8. 1996

### 8.1 Resolution 22

8.1.1 Assembly, noting the concern of the Churches Commission for Racial Justice and in support of their statement, gives its full support to those in local churches and communities who feel constrained by conscience to offer sanctuary to individuals and families facing deportation, providing they are satisfied that sanctuary is a last resort and that at least one of the following applies:

- a) there is a well-founded fear of persecution;
- b) there is a serious threat to family life;
- c) there would be a basic denial of justice and compassion.



## 9. 1996

### 9.1 Resolution 7

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

## 10. 2000

### 10.1 Resolution 49

10.1.1 General Assembly resolves to urge Mission Council as a matter of high priority to secure funding and urgently to make an appropriate appointment to continue the work begun by the Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper.

## 11. 2001

### 11.1 Resolution 40

#### Refugees and Asylum Seekers

11.1.1 General Assembly urges Her Majesty's Government to accord greater dignity and respect to those seeking asylum in the United Kingdom by:

1. Adopting a positive attitude to refugees and asylum seekers.
2. Accurately informing and educating the public, thereby dispelling myths that give rise to resentment and racism.
3. Simplifying and expediting the asylum seeker procedure.
4. Ending the voucher system forthwith and introducing a workable cash benefit system.
5. Ensuring that where detention is deemed to be necessary, it is caring and supportive to which end prisons should not be used.
6. Liaising with local statutory and voluntary bodies and churches in dispersal areas to ensure adequate resourcing and human support.

11.1.2 General Assembly encourages all United Reformed Churches, with their ecumenical and interfaith partners, to develop and sustain a positive approach by:

1. **Welcoming refugees and asylum seekers irrespective of faith or ethnicity and** valuing the contributions they have to offer.
2. Encouraging congregations to befriend, advise and support.
3. Offering material assistance as appropriate.
4. Lobbying constituency MPs.

## 12. 2003

### 12.1 Resolution 27

#### Refugees & Asylum Seekers

12.1.1 General Assembly, noting the strength of feeling on the issue of refugees and asylum seekers in our society today, urges all members of the United Reformed Church to:

- a) acknowledge the unequivocal call of the Bible to care for the stranger in our midst and to respond to the needs of strangers in our own neighbourhoods with compassion and practical friendship;
- b) seek to address our own attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers with honesty and in ways that reflect the quality of our faith and commitment to our caring God;
- c) seek to live out the gospel in relation to refugees and asylum seekers through challenging the selfishness and racism that their presence has exposed, and by resisting any attempts to make this racism socially acceptable, whilst being aware that honest attempts to do so may lead to ridicule by many in British society.
- d) To join with other Non-Government organizations in active local and national campaigning to further the above aims.

## 13. 2004

### 13.1 Mission Council Resolution on the British National Party (BNP)

13.1.1 Mission Council at its January 2004 meeting declared that:

'membership or any form of support for organizations such as the BNP is in compatible with Christian discipleship...'

### 13.2 Resolution 8

#### Racial Justice & Multicultural Ministry

General Assembly agrees that:

- a) The Racial Justice Committee be renamed the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Committee;
- b) There should be cross representation between the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Committee and other General Assembly committees, together with the opportunity for an occasional inter-committee forum, to ensure its work is effectively integrated with the whole work of the United Reformed Church, and in particular with its work in developing relations with new migrant churches.

**Committee for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry**  
**Convener: Revd Andrew Prasad**  
**Secretary: Katalina Tahaafe-Williams**

## Appendix 3

# The Vision of Multicultural Ministry

1.1 Multicultural Ministry for many is about minority ethnic people or newly arrived migrants. Multicultural ministry goes beyond ministry with minority ethnic groups or with newly arrived migrants. It is a ministry to all people across the boundaries of their various cultures. It involves deeper engagement and mutual impact between members and congregations of different cultures, leading to new opportunities in the life and mission of the whole Church. For many Christian Churches this is a new frontier of mission, hence understanding is limited. Multicultural Ministry is not a marginalised ministry only to minority ethnic groups. It is not an extension of mission overseas. It is an integral part of the life of the whole church, enriching every aspect of it and including every member.

1.2 But there is a mindset that needs to be challenged and changed for us to begin the journey to being truly multicultural. This mindset has to do with ethnocentrism, eurocentrism, and racism on the part of the majority culture which are implicit in our codes of behaviour and practice, world outlook, cultural norms, indeed in all aspects of our lives - the consequence of which is the alienation, exclusion, and marginalisation of minority ethnic people from equal and full participation. That is the reality for most people outside that cultural norm.

1.3 Given this reality, as Christians and members of the United Reformed Church, we can only speak in terms of a vision and hope for what is to become. Multicultural ministry is a vision of God's diverse human family becoming a reality right here in the United Reformed Church. It is a vision of the church becoming a community of faith where all equally belong. It is a longing for a new spirituality; a new way of being where all can trust, forgive and practice active hospitality, just sharing of resources, and affirm interdependency, connectedness and belonging to one another. It is more than co-existence. It is more than simply making space for one another to exist, and it is more than tolerating difference.

1.4 The United Reformed Church's journey to becoming truly multicultural requires the recognition that the unity of the church is more than the union of three former denominations. It is also the union of Christians of many cultures and ethnic origins. This union is a gift of God through Christ who is the head

of the church. It is an expression of the commitment to be faithful to our Lord's Prayer that his disciples might be one. It is an expression of the church's commitment to bear witness to a unity of faith and life in Christ that transcends cultural and ethnic, national and racial barriers. It involves taking seriously the good news that Jesus Christ has made peace between people of every ethnicity, culture and class. This unity is a foretaste of the reconciliation of all things in Christ. It is a goal to be achieved as the church commits itself to becoming a church characterised by its commitment to justice, respect and valuing one another's cultures, and protection for victims of racial hatred and violence.

1.5 The church needs to welcome the fact that its membership is made up of people of different cultures and ethnicities and to see this diversity as a reminder that the church is both product and agent of mission. This should remind it of its responsibility as a church to be the sign and witness to the Kingdom which is to come. The church should therefore seek to be a sign of hope within the British society, particularly to those marginalised because of their ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The church needs to provide for the full participation of minority ethnic people in its decision making councils; it needs to ensure that they are welcomed and given equitable rights in the use of the church's properties; and it needs to ensure that they have access to its resources. Their concerns and perspectives should be reflected in the agenda of business of the churches' councils, and most of all, the church needs to be open to the changes that the Holy Spirit will bring through the creative contributions and participation of people of different ethnic and cultural groups to its life.

1.6 It must be emphasised that the needed empowerment and support for minority ethnic members and congregations is not to become a means of distancing the rest of the church from the hurts and struggles of the minority ethnic family. The church needs to provide opportunities for cross-cultural and multicultural fellowship and meaningful engagement.

1.7 The journey to becoming a church that is truly multicultural will not be easy. It will inevitably involve painful and difficult times. People are bound to misunderstand and hurt each other. Unconscious attitudes of the dominant culture that 'our' way is the

best way of doing things still need challenging. There is still some way to go in learning how to live together. The present social and political climate affirms the need for new hearts and minds for this journey, not only for the church but for Britain as well.

1.8 But the hope of multicultural ministry is the realisation of the Kingdom of God on earth. The vision of multicultural ministry (*The vision of a Multicultural Church*, United Church of Australia, 1998) is for a Christian community in which -

- the uniqueness of each culture is valued and affirmed
- all can accept, appreciate and respect each other
- all can share and learn from each other
- all can participate equally in decision making
- ecumenism is more than union of denominations but includes the harmonious sharing of life with people from diverse cultures
- people of no faith and other faiths with the love of Jesus Christ.

1.9 That is, a truly multicultural church is one where unity in Christ is affirmed whilst at the same time the distinctiveness of each culture is valued. It is a unity without uniformity; the harmonious sharing of life with people from diverse cultural traditions in one church.

#### **A Multicultural Church: -**

- a) Knows that the human family is one race, consisting of people of different ethnicity and cultures, by God's deliberate design;
- b) Rejoices in the diverse gifts of the human family as treasures in their own right;
- c) Welcomes all people into the community of faith regardless of colour, ethnicity, language or culture;
- d) Boldly rejects the sin of racism which prevents authentic engagement with the diverse cultures within the community, and allows hatred and prejudice to thrive;
- e) Uses multicultural inclusiveness as a key organising principle for the church in society;
- f) Opposes and challenges institutional racism at all levels of church and society;
- g) Welcomes the diverse spirituality of all in its liturgy, worship and learning;
- h) Is open to sharing its gifts, premises and resources with brothers and sisters who need a place to gather and worship God;
- i) Is committed to developing cross-cultural, intercultural and multicultural relations amongst its members respectfully and with sensitivity; and
- j) Works for justice for all of creation.



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**Committee for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry**  
**Convener: Revd Andrew Prasad**  
**Secretary: Katalina Tahaafe-Williams**

# Appendix 4

## Multicultural United Reformed Churches

### 1. Introduction

1.1 As well as the emergence and growth of single-ethnic minority ethnic congregations in the UK some of which have associations and relationships with the United Reformed Church in some of our Synods; multicultural United Reformed Churches are growing and form a significant presence within the United Reformed Church. Ministry, mission and resources in relation to these churches need to be taken seriously by the denomination.

### 2. History

2.1 Multicultural United Reformed Church congregations have been a feature of the United Reformed Church since its beginning in 1972, but the number of such congregations has grown steadily since that time. The most significant minority ethnic group in the early days were from different Caribbean roots (e.g. Jamaica, Guyana, St Kitts, Barbados, Trinidad etc). There were in fact a few people of Caribbean roots in Congregational churches pre 1950. Many people who came from the Caribbean in the Windrush era and tried to settle in churches went through many painful experiences. People naturally looked for church of the same or similar tradition to the areas they were familiar with in the Caribbean, but were met with a cold reception or ignored or told that they would surely be happier down the road where there was a black church (usually a Pentecostal one). This kind of situation was also experienced by West Africans trying to worship in Churches of Presbyterian tradition in the 1960's, 70's and 80's. However there were a few Congregational and Presbyterian Churches that did warmly welcome people from the Caribbean and other places in the early days (e.g. Church in Sheffield, now a United Reformed Church and same now United Reformed Church congregations in London). Between the 1970s and 1990s there has been a steady increase in the number of people from Caribbean and West African roots joining United Reformed Churches. The majority of the people of West African roots are from Ghana. Some church congregations also include people of different Asian and European roots.

### 3. The Current Situation

3.1 At present in the United Reformed Church we have churches that include a small number of minority ethnic members, others where 50% of the members are of minority ethnic origin and some that are predominantly or even totally minority ethnic

in composition. Such churches are often referred to a black majority United Reformed Churches. London has the largest percentage of minority ethnic people in the UK (approximately 60% of the minority ethnic population in the UK) so it is not surprising that the largest United Reformed Church minority ethnic population can be found in United Reformed Churches in London. For example approximately 47% of the United Reformed Church's in Thames North Synod are multi-cultural to a lesser or greater extent. The following is a very approximate estimate of the minority ethnic percentage in church's in the Thames North Synod.

- 24% of Churches have only a few
- 12% of churches have fifty percent
- 11% of Churches have a predominantly minority ethnic members

3.2 A similar pattern to a lesser extent can be found in the London Churches of the Southern Synod. Multi cultural United Reformed Church's can also be found in several other Synods, particularly in the West Midlands (e.g. Birmingham and Wolverhampton) but also in Yorkshire and South Western Synods, and others.

3.3 Many of the churches described here are maintaining their level of membership and some are growing steadily in membership. They are not declining churches. There many good examples within these churches of community outreach and community work within the church building. In terms of what is happening in multicultural United Reformed Churches, they could be said to be in continuum. At one end there are some that still have a white core group of members holding all the power and responsibility and where minority-ethnic members are on the fringes of the church. At the other end of the spectrum there are churches that have undergone a transformation in leadership, where minority ethnic members have been invited, enabled and empowered to lead and reshape the church and are in positions of responsibility in eldership, leadership amongst children and young people and in finance and management. They are also offering their gifts and talents in worship and some are serving in the wider church at District, Synod and National levels. Some churches have been and are being enriched and changed through the mutual growing together of all the different ethnic and cultural groups, within a congregation.

#### 4. Lessons to be learnt

- Ensure that ministers and elders do not speak on behalf of minority ethnic members of their churches
- Identify and deal with any racist behaviour in the congregation. If left unattended, such behaviour can create a real block, which will prevent the church becoming truly multicultural
- Avoid paternalistic approaches towards minority ethnic members
- Stress the importance of the different cultural groups and members recognising and valuing each other
- Multi cultural churches themselves must not get too comfortable with the composition of their congregations, because there may be other and emerging ethnic groups settling in the neighbourhoods around the church, that maybe the church should be reaching out to. Just as the ethnic composition in communities can shift and change over a period of time, so must the church also respond to such changes

#### 5. Principles to work at and continue to work towards

##### ● Building confidence

Amongst people who have been let down and kept down by churches in the past. So that people's gifts, talents and skills can be used shared and developed.

##### ● Real sharing

Sharing between different cultures within a church does not only imply eating and drinking together, but means sharing power and responsibility. It means being around the decision making table as well as the food table.

##### ● Spiritual nurture

The spiritual nurture of minority ethnic members as for all members needs to be carefully considered. Particularly in multi cultural churches, there can be different kinds of spiritual needs which will require a variety of responses.

##### ● Education and training

It is important to ensure that minority ethnic members of churches have, as well as all members' information about training and resources in relation to eldership, Youth and Children's work training and ordained ministry. They should be actively encouraged to enquire about these opportunities and be able to access them.

##### ● Participation

It is important that minority ethnic members of congregations are invited to consider church membership, if they are only worshippers. Also within some cultures the practice of volunteering comes after a personal invitation to get involved in an aspect of Church life or take responsibility

within the Church.

##### ● Empowerment

Empowerment of and amongst minority ethnic member churches to participate, be involved and to take up leadership is crucial, so that the whole church can benefit from peoples gifts, talents and skills and be truly enriched.

#### 6. Gains and benefits

6.1 The gains and benefits of being a multicultural United Reformed Church include;

- The variety of worship experience (that can be drawn on) that not only comes from experience of church in other countries but also because minority ethnic members also come from different denominational backgrounds.
- The Rites of Passage practices and experiences relating mainly to birth, marriage and death and also particular kinds of services relating to the offering, gift days and fund raising all provide good opportunities for theological reflection and pastoral care.
- The great opportunities for youth and children's ministry. Many multi cultural churches have sizeable numbers of children and young people. Such local churches are enriched by their presence and therefore so is FURY at local level. Minority ethnic young people within the United Reformed Church could become a sizable and significant presence and force within FURY in the wider United Reformed Church.
- The relationship that many minority ethnic members have with families, communities and churches in their countries of origin, provides natural links with churches in other countries. Opportunities for forming links and twinings between United Reformed Churches and churches in these countries are many (e.g. With Churches in Ghana and also with the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands).

#### 7. Conclusion

- It is important that the national level of the United Reformed Church recognises that multicultural United Reformed Churches exist and have great potential for growth.
- It is also important that District Councils and Synods also recognise that such churches exist within their areas and that minority ethnic members of these churches should be thought about when considering representation on committees and councils of the church.
- It could be useful if the United Reformed Church provided opportunities to invite multi-cultural United Reformed Churches to write and tell their stories so that the denomination can hear first hand the diversity of life that exists in the United Reformed Church and the potential for growth and development.

**Committee for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry**  
Sandra Ackroyd

# Appendix 5

## Guidelines for Receiving Migrant Churches

1.1 The United Reformed Church is a Multicultural Church! The Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Committee believes this to be a reality recognised by our 'Catch the Vision Statement' as it calls on our churches to respond faithfully to the call to be diverse, inclusive and flexible. Minority ethnic Christians are growing, and new migrant churches are very much part of that vibrant growth. Already we have the Ghanaian churches in London that are linked to the United Reformed Church through our Ghanaian Ministry. We also have our United Reformed Church Urdu-speaking congregations, and several United Reformed Church Korean services in different parts of the UK.

1.2 The Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Committee seeks to equip the United Reformed Church to take seriously the meaning of being a church that is truly multicultural. We believe that being church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to be multicultural, and this means rejoicing in and embracing cultural diversity and the rich opportunities they bring for the mission and ministry of the whole church. We are convinced that for our church to be a *vibrant and sustainable Christian community in the next ten years*, we must be more intentional about being visibly multicultural and living multiculturally. We need to be more proactive about becoming churches that welcome all people, treating them with care and hospitality. We believe that the United Reformed Church is called to be a sign and witness to our Lord's healing and reconciling power in a wounded world. We therefore seek to equip our churches to become centers of hospitality, justice and reconciliation – i.e. to become churches that are truly multicultural. How we welcome new migrant churches is crucial to this process, hence the following guidelines:

1.3 It is critical that in seeking to be a multicultural church we judge all our procedures by the test – ***Does this express the welcome that Christ offers to all who seek him?*** This means that we may need to be less rigid and legalistic in our thinking where minority ethnic and new migrant churches are concerned, if we are to be faithful to the call to be *diverse and lively, inclusive and flexible*.

### 1.3.1 Preliminary Questions

When a migrant congregation seeks entry, some preliminary and key questions need to be asked:

- *Are they a settled and permanent group;*
- *Is their worship open to people of all races;*
- *Is their faith in agreement with our Basis of Union;*
- *Do they seriously desire to be in fellowship and mutual oversight with our neighbouring congregations and/or local ecumenical partners.*

### 1.3.2 Educational Programme

(i) If responses to the above are all affirmative, then the process of receiving the new congregation begins in the spirit of open-armed welcome! That is, we must make clear at this point that the new congregation is very welcome, and that as part of us an educational and orientation programme for the new group to understand our church and ministry better must be carried out. The Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry and District Council must work together on the educational tasks from the outset. Other Assembly staff and committees must be consulted where relevant.

(ii) The local 'host' church must also participate in the educational process as they too need to understand the ministry and culture of the new congregation better. District Council and the Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry must consult on appropriate cross-cultural awareness training for this group.

### 1.3.3 Leadership

When we welcome and receive a new congregation, we need to recognise their leadership, whether lay or ordained. We need a way to formally recognise any lay or ordained leadership the group might have. This is critical for the transitional period, but also for the long-term survival of the new congregation. The Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry must consult with the Secretaries for Ministries, Training, and Ecumenical Relations to devise a system of formal recognition of minority ethnic leadership as part of this guideline.

### 1.3.4 Property Sharing

1.3.4.a It is important from the outset that each congregation involved, both 'host' and new, be encouraged to see the issue of sharing property in terms of a conscious, specific mission strategy of a multicultural church. It is important that the Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry and District Council facilitate the forming of a written agreement for this relationship. Such an agreement should accord rights of usage, an appropriate sharing of costs and responsibilities, taking into account the ministry needs. The process of forming this agreement should recognise the equality of the groups as they share in mission as communities in the service of Christ through this Church. The agreement or covenant should make clear that where possible priority of use is given to the congregations before any outside group; sharing of property is not based on rental or tenancy agreement; each congregation share in the

cost of repairs, maintenance and service charges in an equitable manner; decisions on property issues must be representative.

1.3.4.b There may be cases where property transfer between congregations occurs, or where purchase/sale of property takes place. More detailed guidelines need to be provided for them. What is vital is that both groups understand that property is resource for mission, and that their agreement should foster the mission and growth of the church as a whole, not hinder.

### 1.3.5 Relationship to Home Church

1.3.5.a Multicultural Ministry is striving to establish a true unity in diversity - a harmonious sharing of life with people from different cultural traditions in one church/community. We emphasise the concepts of 'respect of each culture' and 'sharing life' as core values. We strive to welcome new migrant congregations with respect and love. But we are clear that our focus is right here in the UK, enabling and empowering minority ethnic members to be full and equal members of our church. The United Reformed Church needs to reflect in its mission and life the world church that is right here in our midst. Our commitment to multicultural ministry affirms the Council for World Mission model of mission that states God's mission is global and we are all partners in it. Further, we want to emphasise our commitment to multicultural ministry as a ministry in its own right with a particular focus on mission right here in the UK. We therefore need to be clear that when we are receiving new migrant congregations they become fully part of us. As such they are governed by the United Reformed Church rules and regulations, and are official members of the United Reformed Church.

1.3.5.b From the outset we need to make a clear distinction between 'maintaining cultural traditions' and 'maintaining home church tradition'. Confusing the two is not helpful for developing a truly multicultural United Reformed Church, and our overseas church partner relationships may complicate this issue for us if we are not aware of this distinction. Our welcoming, if done properly, should be sufficient in helping to build mutual trust and respect. There should be no necessity to involve the homeland church in how we develop multicultural ministry here in the UK, except as a matter of courtesy where the need may arise, or in the case of ecumenical partnerships, follow the procedures established for Local Ecumenical Partnerships.

### 1.3.6 Generational Issues

There are two generations involved here, the first and the second and later generations. It is vital that the ministry of migrant churches put some emphasis on Christian education for all these generations, respecting the concerns of each generation with a particular focus on those growing up and being educated in the UK. Done with wisdom and sensitivity the emerging generations can serve as a bridge between the different cultures in this context.

### 1.3.7 Models of Multicultural Church

We need to respond appropriately to the call to be inclusive and flexible. This means being open to different models of being church. Trust and friendship can take time to develop. Two congregations worshipping at different times in different languages but with a single church/elders council meeting is one model. A multicultural/mixed congregation where two or more groups merge into one is another model. Because of the different needs of the generations in migrant churches, we may need to allow for different language services. For example, there may be a youth service in English for the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation minority ethnic people, who may prefer English to their mother tongue. Indeed, young people from both groups may join this service together, thereby establishing a multicultural youth service. The important point is that there can be different models in the one church. Such diversity can thrive and be affirmed within the framework of the United Reformed Church as the home to all these groups - as the manifest body of Christ who unites us all. The implied emphasis here is an assertion of our identity as the United Reformed Church, which is a certainty of belonging and ownership that new migrant groups particularly need as they try to establish roots in a new context. This need not compromise our commitment to ecumenism.

### 1.3.8 Inauguration/Model Constitution

1.3.8.a When levels of satisfaction for all parties are adequate and such satisfaction is clearly expressed, then there should be a formal ceremony of welcoming and receiving the new congregation into the United Reformed Church. An Inaugural Service led by District Council in consultation with the Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry and the new group(s) may be planned. Such a service similar to an induction/commissioning service may include the handing over of the new congregation's roll to the District; a symbolic acceptance or affirmation by the parties involved (i.e. the new congregation, the host congregation etc..) of their property sharing agreement; the adoption of and commitment to the *'Model Constitution for a Local Congregation of the United Reformed Church'* (Available from the Racial Justice & Multicultural Ministry Office) by the parties involved. It is important that in such an Inaugural Service, the new congregation is properly enabled to have its say in what happens and that the 'host' congregation also is included. Often the new congregation would want someone from their own ethnic leadership to play a key role (e.g. preaching) on the day.

1.3.8.b It is important to note that while the process leading to this important event may have taken some months and therefore it was a lengthy journey, this inauguration event needs to be recognized as the beginning of another phase of the journey where friendship, goodwill, and patience must be encouraged and the groups/parties embark together on this exciting and enriching journey of mission and authentic witness to the saving grace of our Lord.

**Committee for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry**  
**Convener: Revd Andrew Prasad**  
**Secretary: Katalina Tahaafe-Williams**

# Appendix 6

## Students sent by Synods

(Information as of autumn 2004)

### Northern

#### Stipendiary

Liz Jewitt (NEOC)

#### Non-Stipendiary

Stan May (NEOC)

#### CRCW-in-Training

Ann Honey (Northern)

### North Western

#### Stipendiary

Richard Bradley (Westminster), Philip Brooks (Northern), Alan Crump (Northern), Gillian Heald (Northern), Richard Howard (Mansfield), Michele Jarmany (Northern)

#### Non-Stipendiary

Sheila Coop (Northern), Lindsey Cottam (Northern)

#### CRCW-in-Training

Alison Dalton (Northern)

### Mersey

#### Stipendiary

Caroline Andrews (Northern), Hilary Bell (Northern), Peter Lyth (Queens), Stuart Radcliffe (Northern), Carolyn White (Northern)

#### Non-Stipendiary

Anne Bedford (Northern)

### Yorkshire

#### Stipendiary

Philip Baiden (Northern), Ashley Evans (Northern), Murray George (Northern), Annette Haigh (Northern)

### East Midlands

#### Stipendiary

Marcus Hargis (Northern), Janet Hopewell (Westminster), Suzanne McDonald (SC&URC), Jenny Mills (Mansfield), Lesley Moseley (Mansfield), Alison Termie (Westminster)

#### Non-Stipendiary

Louise Gee (EMMTC), Victor Webb (Northern)

### West Midlands

#### Stipendiary

Kay Cattell (Westminster), Timothy Mullings (Northern), John Potter (Queens), Liz Shaw (Northern), Ann Sheldon (Westminster)

#### Non-Stipendiary

Robert Maloney (Northern)

#### CRCW-in-Training

Rosemary Buxton (Northern)

### Eastern

#### Stipendiary

John Cook (Westminster), Andrew Mann (Queens), Tim Richards (Westminster), Sam White (Westminster)

#### Non-Stipendiary

Donald Nichols (EAMTC)

#### CRCW-in-training

Liz Kam (Northern)

### South Western

#### Stipendiary

Paul Ellis (SWMTC), Viv Henderson (SWMTC), Timothy Searle (Mansfield)

#### Non-Stipendiary

Jennifer Kilgour (SWMTC)

### Wessex

#### Stipendiary

Bridget Banks (STETS), Lucy Brierley (Westminster), Helen Higgin-Botham (Westminster), Hilary Nabarro (Westminster), Jon Sermon (Northern)

#### Non-Stipendiary

Clare Callanan (STETS), David Moss (STETS), Wendy White (STETS)

#### CRCW-in-training

Patricia Oliver (Northern)

### Thames North

#### Stipendiary

Andrew Birch (Queens), Anne Dove (Westminster), Dominic Grant (Westminster), Shirley Knibbs (Westminster), Peter Little (Westminster), Graham Tarn (Westminster)

#### Non-Stipendiary

Pauline Main (EAMTC)

### Southern

#### Stipendiary

William Bowman (Westminster), Suk In Lee (Queens), Romilly Micklem (Westminster), David Morgan (Mansfield), Martyn Neads (Queens), Caroline Vodden (Mansfield)

#### Non-Stipendiary

Diane Farquhar (STETS), Ian Gow (SEITE), Jenny Snashall (STETS), Wendy Swan (SEITE), Roger Wood (STETS), Malcolm Wright (SEITE)

### Scotland

#### Stipendiary

Craig Jesson (SC&URC), Helen Mee (SC&URC), Jack Muir (SC&URC)



# Appendix 7

## Statistics of Students in Training

	Students in Training				Anticipated entry into URC Service			
	Feb 2002	Feb 2003	Feb 2004	Feb 2005	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>STIPENDIARY</b>								
<b>Full Time Courses</b>								
Mansfield College	9	6	8	6	1	1	2	2
Northern College	25	24	22	16	1	5	4	5
Queen's College	5	4	4	6	1	4		1
Scottish United Reformed & Congregational College		3	2	4	1	2	1	
Westminster College	27	23	20	18	6	3	4	5
<b>Part Time Courses</b>								
EMMTC			2					
NEOC	1	1	1	1			1	
STETS		1	1	1		1		
SUR & CC		1	1					
SWMTC		1	2	2		1		1
Synod	1	2						
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>CRCW</b>								
Northern	5	6	5	5		3	1	1
<b>NON-STIPENDIARY</b>								
<b>Part Time Courses</b>								
EAMTC	5	1	2	2		1	1	
EMMTC	2	2	1	1	1			
Northern College	6	7	8	5	1	3	1	
NEOC	3	2	2	1		1		
SEITE	3	3	2	3		1		2
STETS	8	7	8	6	3	1	1	1
SWOC	1	1	1					
SWMTC	2	3	1	1	1			
Synod		2	3					
WMMTC	1	1	1					
<b>Full Time Courses</b>								
Mansfield								
Queens								
SUR & CC	3							
Westminster	4	3	2					
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>

EAMTC	East Anglian Ministerial Training Course
EMMTC	East Midlands Ministry Training Course
NEOC	North East Ordination Course
SUR & CC	Scottish United Reformed & Congregational College
SEITE	South East Institute for Theological Education
STETS	Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme
SWMTC	South West Ministry Training Course
SWOC	South Wales Ordination Course
WMMTC	West Midlands Ministry Training Course

# Appendix 8

## Reports from Colleges

### Mansfield College Ministerial Training Course

#### 1 Inspection

1.1 Last year we could report to Assembly only the provisional findings of the ecumenical inspection of the ministerial training course. We are now pleased to report the following points.

1.2 The inspectors recognised the results of the considerable amount of development that has gone on in the past few years in the ministerial training course delivered jointly by Mansfield College and Regent's Park College.

1.3 The inspectors were impressed by the excellence of the Bachelor and Master of Theology degrees as demanding courses for ordinands and ministers. The tutorial method of teaching was commended for its flexibility, high expectations and supportiveness.

1.4 The inspectors recommended that Mansfield College should continue to be recognised for initial ministerial training by its sponsoring churches (the United Reformed Church and the Congregational Federation); should develop further its commitment to theological education; and should expand its Masters studies programmes in theology for Continuing Ministerial Education.

1.5 The inspectors noted the small numbers of ordinands at Mansfield College and recognise that this is a cause for real concern.

1.6 The staff and ordinands at Mansfield College are rightly encouraged by the points made by the inspectors, but share their concern about low numbers of ordinands. Regarding the last point, we recognise that it is only because of our combining with the larger number of Regent's Park College ordinands that we are able to have viable student cohorts in year groups.

#### 2 Ordinands

2.1 While the number of ordinands in training are fewer than we would like (currently 6), we are impressed with the quality of our ordinands expressed in the following ways: in the sacrifices made in order to pursue their vocation; in their commitment to training

and thirst for theological learning; in their close fellowship as a United Reformed Church contingent and also with their Baptist colleagues. At the end of the last academic year the following ordinands were awarded their leaving certificates, and have been ordained and inducted:

2.2 Alan Seymour to Folkestone and Hythe (Southern Synod), Sheena Dickson to South Oxhey (Thames North Synod), Assistant Chaplain to Mansfield College, and Assistant Chaplain to Campsfield Reception Centre, Oxford, and Dr Sarah Hall to St Andrew's, Sheffield (Yorkshire Synod).

#### 3 Postgraduate Study

We are pleased to report that we currently have 6 students taking the Master of Theology in Applied Theology. Five of these are studying part-time, three of whom are United Reformed Church ministers. One, The Revd Florence Tache Che from the Presbyterian Church of Cameroon, is studying full time. This is an excellent course for rigorous theological reflection on pastoral practice. We would encourage ministers and others to contact us for further information on this course if they are interested in applying to study.

#### 4 Staff

Teaching staff continue to be active in research alongside teaching commitments.

*Walter Houston*, Director of Ministerial Training and Chaplain Fellow in Old Testament, took a sabbatical from January to April in order to write his book on Social Justice in the Old Testament. *John Muddiman*, G B Caird Fellow in New Testament, is currently writing a book on Pseudepigraphy in the New Testament, and has been commissioned to write a monograph on Galatians, and a book on Mark's Gospel and Mission. *Julian Templeton*, Assistant Director of Ministerial Training, is in the process of submitting a PhD thesis comparing the theological realism of Bonhoeffer and TF Torrance.

*Peggy Morgan*, Tutor in the Study of Religion, is currently preparing a second enlarged edition of *Ethical Issues in Six Religious Traditions* for Edinburgh University Press. Staff are often willing to speak at ministers' summer schools and other events out of term time.

**5 College and Chapel Life**

Those undertaking initial and continuing ministerial education at Mansfield College do so as part of a multi-disciplinary college of the University of Oxford with a student body of 300 and a teaching staff of 30. They are part of the Middle Common Room and have their vocations tested as they eat, socialise and converse with students studying a range of subjects and holding a range of religious beliefs. Compared with many other Oxford colleges, Mansfield maintains a strong contingent studying theology (28), and maintains an active chapel life. During term time prayers are offered in the Chapel each morning. There is a once-a-week communion service and a Wednesday evening service to which visiting preachers are often invited. Undergraduates lead their own Sunday evening service. We believe that this combination of multi-disciplinary pluralism and regular Christian worship provides a challenging, stimulating and enriching environment in which to test and respond to the call of God to ministry.

**6 Future hopes and challenges**

Staff of the ministerial training course have been pleased to be consulted by the Training Committee about the emerging reconfiguration of training in the United Reformed Church. We realise that the gradual decline of conventional vocations poses particular challenges about the viability of ministerial training courses such as Mansfield's. At the same time, we recognise that the vision of the Training Committee for educating the whole people of God presents us with particular opportunities.

6.1 We welcome the opportunity to play our part in the new integration and extension of lay education, and pre and post ordination education.

6.2 In addition to initial ministerial training, Mansfield is well-placed to host those who wish to continue their education by taking postgraduate qualifications in theology at the University of Oxford.

6.3 We are already in a partnership with other theological colleges in Oxford, sharing the same theological syllabus, and are willing to take our place in the emerging Regional Training Partnership.

6.4 We are also presently exploring being a 'hub' for those engaged in theological/ministerial research and discussion in the United Reformed Church in England. Such a hub would require a funded Research Co-ordinator who would encourage networks of those engaged in various areas of research to communicate with each other and meet occasionally for seminars and conferences.

6.5 We are also hoping to build closer links with Synods in our area order to combine our resources and expertise in lay education.

6.6 However, with the equivalent of 2 half-time staff dedicated to ministerial training, finding time to engage in such 'developmental' work is difficult. We are therefore very grateful to members of Mansfield's education and training committee who have made available additional time for this important work. Please pray for staff, ordinands, and committee members as we balance our present responsibilities with future possibilities.

## Northern College (United Reformed and Congregational)

### 1 New Staff

1.1 The Partnership for Theological Education of which we are an integral part both in terms of buildings and of teaching programmes, began the 2004-2005 academic year with three new staff members. Revd Dr Andrew Pratt joined the staff of Hartley Victoria College (Methodist), Revd Dr Glenn Marshall joined the staff of Northern Baptist College and Revd Dr John Campbell joined the staff of Northern College as our new Principal. All three have brought their own particular skills and enthusiasm to add to our shared commitment to offering a diverse array of attractive and relevant theological education for the people of God.

1.2 In April 2004, Revd Graham Cook was appointed as Secretary to the Board of Governors of Northern College, in succession to Revd John Mitchell. We thank John for his work and welcome Graham.

1.3 At the end of 2004, Professor James O'Connell completed his period as the part-time President of the Partnership. As we go to press, the search for a new full-time President of the Partnership, who would also serve as Director of the Manchester Ecumenical College, is well advanced.

1.4 In the summer of 2005 Professor Clyde Binfield, who has served as President of the Northern College Governors since the formation of our new smaller Board of Governors and as a College Governor for nearly thirty years, will be stepping down as President. We want to acknowledge his commitment and particular gifts offered in our service. The governors have agreed that Revd Dr John Sutcliffe will take over the role of President in succession to Professor Binfield.

### 2 New Links

2.1 On behalf of the Partnership, we continue to explore closer links with the Windermere Centre and the Scottish College and also to investigate possibilities for closer co-operation with all the other colleges and courses used by the United Reformed Church. Our staff are also seeking appropriate ways to engage in continuing ministerial education, support for lay preachers and training and events open to all interested people in co-operation with the training programmes of the synods in the north of England and Wales.

2.2 During the course of the year our staff have shared in a range of training events outside Luther King House (from one-off days on worship and preaching to various ministers' summer schools), in addition to the wide range of educational opportunities 'in house' in South Manchester.

### 3 New Ministries

Last year's leaving students received calls to pastorates, as follows:

P G Blackband	(SM)	Arnold, The Dales & Burton Joyce, Nottingham
R Browning	(SM)	St John's Flint, Bagillt, Hebron Mostyn, Pen-y-maes
D Coaker	(SM)	St John's and Elmwood, Warrington
R Dillon	(SM)	Oakvale, Huyton and Stoneycroft, Liverpool
D G Ellis	(NSM)	Beeston Hill United Free Church, South Leeds
D R Howarth	(SM)	Sparkhill URC / Moravian, Birmingham
A M Hufton	(NSM)	Barrow in Furness
M E Knight	(SM)	Grosvenor St Aidans, South Manchester
K J Morrison	(SM)	Castle Hill and Doddridge Memorial, Northampton
D A Neville	(CRCW)	Bloomsbury Mission Project, Birmingham
V A Randles	(SM)	Wembley Park, West London
L Talbot	(SM)	Cottam Hall, Preston
M R Tugwood	(SM)	Marple, Goyt Valley
S P Turner	(SM)	Wilton Road and Winson Green URC / C of E, Birmingham
M N Woodhouse	(NSM)	Adeyfield Free Church, Hemel Hempstead

### 4 New Techniques

As in other colleges and courses, our programmes continue to evolve and develop. At present we are trialling a new package to help students, their placement supervisors and tutors to better assess each student's personal and spiritual development for ministry – an important part of our work where fair assessment is far harder to achieve than in the area of academic performance. We hope that this new tool will enable much more incisive and helpful discussions between students and those who supervise them about their personal development for ministry.

### 5 New Challenges

The uncertainties about the future of theological education in the United Reformed Church, where the process of review is taking place against a background of falling ministerial student numbers and the ongoing Hind process in which our denomination seeks to share with the Methodist Church and the Church of England, make for real uncertainty about the future role Northern College will play. However, as we wait for clearer indications of what is happening to us and around us, we continue to work to improve the quality and the range of what we do. By all means, we want to continue to contribute to the theological education of the whole people of God as creatively and effectively as we possibly can. We continue to take a deep delight in that challenge and remain very grateful for our particular calling.

## 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 Foundation is an active partner in the emerging West Midlands Regional Training Partnership. Practitioners in the region are working closely together to deepen our understanding of each other's work, to start developing convergence in our activities, and to begin the complex task of designing new pathways and curricula for a range of educational, ministerial and training needs. The Church Leaders have given a positive lead in this process, including the Moderator of the West Midlands Synod. The experience of Queen's in offering flexible pathways in various modes – full and part-time, residential and non-residential, helps us all in the region to be creative and innovative in our thinking and planning.

1.3 As part of our continual curriculum development we are offering a new MA in Ministry from September 2005. This has been designed specifically for United Reformed Church ministerial candidates in their internship year. The MA focuses on reflective practice which helps to structure and deepen the experience of the internship. The programme can also be taken as a post-graduate diploma, so the majority of United Reformed Church candidates in training will be able to follow this pathway.

1.4 Discussions are also at an advanced stage with the sponsoring bodies of the United College of the Ascension (UCA) on the Selly Oak campus in Birmingham. The UCA is a mission college, whose work in recent years has embraced a wide range of ecumenical activities and interests globally and locally. Proposals are being developed to move the activities of the College from Selly Oak, and to develop a new Centre for mission studies in a global and ecumenical context within the Queen's Foundation. All parties will consider these proposals in depth before the summer but, from Queen's perspective, we hope that they will be fruitful. We believe that the presence of an international community of scholars and students will

greatly enhance and enrich every aspect of ministerial education and formation at Queen's. We are confident that there is much to gain by the experience of worshipping, studying and living together.

### 2 Students

2.1 Recruitment has held up well in all areas of the Foundation, with approximately 140 students studying here. The proportion of students in each of the three 'departments' remains roughly equal, and of these students, 11 are members of the United Reformed Church, with 6 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. Three students are undertaking a placement in Port Elizabeth in South Africa, and we look forward to welcoming two members of their community in the autumn. Last year a group of 10 students from Queen's spent a week with the faculty at Leipzig, and this year we look forward to welcoming 10 students from the faculty at Queen's for an intensive programme on Christianity and the Arts.

### 3 Staff

We have been delighted to welcome new members of staff to the Foundation. The Revd Dr Jane Wallman is a pastoral and practical theologian, bringing a wide range of ministerial and teaching experience in course and college. We are delighted to welcome Professor John Hull who joined our staff team at the beginning of the academic year having spent all his working life in the University of Birmingham. John's expertise as an educationalist, his theological work on disability, and his track record in research strengthens the resources of the Foundation, and we are fortunate to have him as a colleague.

### 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. Staff research also continues in the course of the busy life of the Foundation. Paula Gooder has published a commentary on the minor prophets; Nicola Slee has published *Words for Today* – a rich and exciting collection of daily bible notes – and *Praying like a Woman* – a collection of prayers, poems, psalms, canticles, litanies, laments and creeds. Peter Kevern and Paula Gooder have published *Exploring New Testament Greek* – practical textbook for undergraduate students and serving

ministers is specifically designed to teach the reader about New Testament Greek, and to enrich the readers understanding of Scripture. Andrew Chandler, Director of the George Bell institute which is based at Queen's, has published *Presences Felt – Encounters in a Lost Century*, examining the realities of power and resistance in history, politics, biography and culture. Stephen Burns has published a Grove Booklet *Welcoming Asylum Seekers* and contributed a chapter 'Forgiveness in Challenging Circumstances' in *Forgiveness in Context* eds. Fraser Watts and Liz Gulliford.

## 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 among others Dr David Cornick, Ian Randall (Spurgeon's College), Sue Hope (Anglican Renewal Ministries), Inderjit Bhogal (Urban Theology Unit), Fr Gerard Hughes, and Esther de Waal, Sr Benedicta Ward.

## 6 Future directions

This is a critical time for all the churches' training institutions. We are confident that the Foundation is well placed to serve the churches and to respond to new challenges and opportunities. We value highly the integral place of the United Reformed Church in the Foundation and welcome new opportunities to develop this relationship further.

## Westminster College

### 1 Working together in Cambridge

1.1 How do we prepare people to minister in the Church that is coming into being rather than the Church of twenty years ago? This has been a fundamental question as the Cambridge Theological Federation has been working on a new award for its students. In addition to the BTh offered in conjunction with the University of Cambridge and the MA in Pastoral Studies validated by the Anglia Polytechnic University a new BA course which prepares people for Christian ministry is at an advanced stage of planning. It will be offered from 2005 for those on the East Anglian Ministerial Training Course and from 2006 for all other students. The planning has required us to revisit the questions of what is essential in ministerial training, not only in the United Reformed Church, but all our participating denominations. Some traditional content has been reaffirmed. The new emphases include better integration of the various subject components and recognition of the missiological needs of churches.

1.2 The Federation gains much from its Cambridge setting but always finds an undercurrent of opinion that it is somehow dry and academic and running behind the contemporary Church. It is pleasant to be in theme-park Cambridge and on the tourist routes but the reality of the University of Cambridge today is that it is a major centre of scientific and technological innovation. We are working together with both our partner universities to make sure our theological courses meet the highest standards and are relevant to our society. All our courses are vocational and all embrace a wide spectrum of theological opinion and academic achievement. The Federation is adept at providing that access to higher education which is expected in modern universities.

1.3 Westminster College is a key centre for Federation teaching and meetings. The staff contribute to the Federation team well beyond their teaching requirements, helping with the smooth running of the enterprise and its strategic development. Stephen Orchard became President in January 2005. Those engaged in ecumenical projects of all kinds will know that it is not always easy to accommodate each others needs. The Federation is no exception but Westminster College is committed with the rest of the United Reformed Church to keep the ecumenical agenda at the front of its thinking.

### 2 The wider United Reformed Church

In addition to planning for changing the nature of our work in Cambridge the college has been following the debate on the future of training within the United Reformed Church and helping to move it forward. Representatives of governing bodies and staff at all the colleges recognised by the United Reformed Church met at Westminster to consider how they could best

help the review. The meeting enabled the first common discussion of a possible wider sharing of teaching and learning resources throughout our constituency. Westminster continues to be substantially committed to work with lay preachers, TLS, continuing ministerial education, refresher courses and sabbaticals. This year saw the first intake of ministers to the Doctors of Ministries (D. Min) programme we have begun in collaboration with Princeton Theological Seminary. Five of the ministers on this programme are from the United Reformed Church. These services to the Church bring gains to the college, particularly for those in initial ministerial training. Our staff and students contribute to the wider life of the Church in many ways. Our major disappointment is the continuing fall in numbers of candidates for ministry and its impact on student numbers for us and for our sister colleges. Fortunately, the Federation provides a large community within which our students can flourish.

### 3 The world Church

Our students continue to participate in programmes which take them beyond the United Kingdom. At the beginning of this academic year two of our students visited Ghana. Staff have been to Germany and Malaysia. The Principal gave some time from his sabbatical for a visit to Singapore and Myanmar. We have received visitors from the United States, New Zealand and Poland. Two of the staff of the Princeton Theological Seminary joined us for the initial studies for the D. Min in Cambridge. In the summer of 2005 our ministers will be travelling to New Jersey. The Federation opens up other parts of the world to us as visitors come to our partners in Cambridge. We received many such visitors from the world Church at one time when we conferred together on ecumenical education in April 2005. These visits and visitors not only remind us of the joys of Christian hospitality but how differently the mission of the Church is seen in various parts of the world. We regard this as an important part of Christian formation for our own ministry.

### 4 The buildings

We are carrying out the programme of improvements arising from the new disability legislation. This brings benefits all round, including a more secure system of access to the college buildings. The charm of an historic building, much admired by visitors, is balanced, as many local churches know, by the continuing challenge of maintenance. We continue to hold off any major development while we address other concerns which arise. We have upgraded our links to the Cambridge University computer network, providing access in all student rooms. There have been additions to the induction loop provision for those with hearing difficulties and new access paths for wheelchair users and those who find coarse gravel heavy going. College lighting is being improved and

plans are advanced for a new en-suite facility which will meet disability requirements. The main meeting rooms have been re-decorated and carpeted. Apart from making the buildings more suitable for our own use these improvements increase our attractiveness to other groups who wish to hire the college.

## 5 The Library

The usual pictures of Westminster College are dominated by the Library, which holds pride of place in the buildings. We continue to develop this as a resource for the whole Church. For those living at a distance the catalogue can be consulted by way of the Cambridge University catalogue, if "Affiliated Institutions" is selected on the menu. Cataloguing of the United Reformed Church History Society collection has passed the half-way point. As the significance of our collection in terms of Reformed history becomes more apparent we receive more requests to accommodate visiting scholars and to answer queries. Some days we are providing rare manuscripts for Jewish scholars. Other days we help a local church secretary sort out a query about where a local church was situated in the nineteenth century. We make a modest charge to those seeking help with family history, to cover our costs. We are grateful for the continued work of Richard and Jean Potts in sorting and classifying archives of the Presbyterian Church of England. Even after local archives were dispersed to local record offices there remains a formidable collection of central records.

## 6 Pastoral Studies

Another problem associated with "theme-park Cambridge" is the perception of outsiders that we can only prepare people for university and rural ministry. Quite apart from the opportunities Cambridge provides for students to work in night shelters, visit hospitals or counsel the bereaved our pastoral placements and internship programmes embrace a diversity of urban and metropolitan settings. Together with overseas visits these opportunities have a transformational

effect as students come to consider their future ministry. We owe a great deal to Lance Stone who has shaped this part of our work in recent years. Lance concludes his service with the college in August 2005. Not only have the present college community benefited from Lance's teaching and company but also many now serving in ministry. In defiance of the maxim that "those who can't do teach" Lance leaves us to go up the road as minister of Emmanuel and Cherry Hinton Road churches in Cambridge. We wish him, Sally and their family all blessings. Assembly appoints staff to Westminster and we trust they will wish to thank Lance, who has also served them as a leader of Bible Study, for the rich service he has given in their name. We welcome as Lance's successor the Revd Neil Thorogood, whose most recent pastorate is at the Free Church, Welwyn Garden City.

## 7 Celebration

7.1 At our Commemoration of Benefactors in 2004 our preacher was the Revd Dr Susan Durber and the lecture was given by Dr Janet Soskice of Cambridge University, who is writing a new book on Agnes Lewis and Margaret Gibson, the college's great benefactors. At a service in November we remembered with thanksgiving the life of Buick Knox, who taught Church History in the college from 1968 to 1985 to the benefit of so many students.

7.2 We also give thanks for the gifts of our leavers, who were:

John Bradbury (Earle Road and Liverpool City Centre Ecumenical Team), Elaine and Gordon Brown (both to the Gateshead Group), Heather Kent (Harwich Road and Christ Church, Colchester and Walton-on-the-Naze), Sarah Moore (Darwen Ecumenical Partnership), Barry Welch (Ashington and Widdrington), Ernest Yu (Wimbledon, Trinity), and Jennifer Yule (Sinfin Moor, Derby). Janet Llewellyn, who left in 2002, was ordained and inducted to ministry at Clapton Park, London.



## Scottish United Reformed & Congregational College

### 1 The College

1.1. The theological education scene is a constantly changing one and providing institutions have to be responsive to the shifting priorities and demands of our church partners. For us, it has been equally important to develop our own sense as educators of where theological education, in its broadest sense, ought to be going and to be developing our pattern of life and practice in the light of our growing understanding.

1.2 Perhaps the first major change for us, around two decades ago, was to move from being a provider of the core theological curriculum. We shifted to concentrating our teaching and learning work on the provision of what we might loosely term professional studies and developing awareness in students of our church traditions. Beyond this, the role of the college became and remains managing the ordinand's whole curriculum on behalf of the church, giving guidance and support to their university studies and facilitating a coherence across the different learning experiences of university, college and placement.

1.3 The second area of development was in seeing ministry as being not the preserve of those called to the ordained ministry of Word and Sacraments but as being of the whole people of God. This perspective was of course entirely consistent with – and even required by! – our ecclesiological values. This has meant a number of things: Under a reciprocal agreement, we work in partnership with the synod of Scotland on its educational provision. We have moved the emphasis in staffing towards employing academic staff who are both ministers and qualified educators. We are working towards achieving a more integrated pattern of teaching and learning that brings together people from different sectors of ministry and service in the church's life.

### 2 People

2.1 At the annual meeting, the Revd John R Smith, minister at Morningside United Church, Edinburgh was appointed chairperson of the College in the place of Mrs Helen M Mee. The synod of Scotland had approved the candidature of Helen for training for the ministry of Word and Sacraments and she has resumed her theological education. We should like to pay tribute to her dedication and understanding that she brought to the life of the College in a period of transition, both in a widening of the work of the college and following the unification of the Congregational Union of Scotland and the United Reformed Church in the UK. We wish her well as she moves forward in her formation for ministry. We welcome John to the office of chairperson. He brings a wealth of experience in ecumenical relationships, in education and in world mission to this work.

2.2 The Revd Susan Kirkbride has been appointed to join the Revd George Sykes as a part-time college tutor. Sue is a stipendiary minister of the United Reformed Church in Edinburgh, working particularly in ministry with the frail elderly. Formerly, she taught business studies with the University of Gloucestershire before moving to Scotland and undertaking a Master of Theology at Edinburgh University. Sue's joining the college team will strengthen particularly our work in church organisational studies and in ministry with older people. She has recently published an article on a hymn project in Edinburgh, *Restoring the Soul*, in the Journal of Dementia Care.

2.3 The Principal has been awarded the status of Chartered Fellow in the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (formerly the Institute of Personnel Management and the Institute of Training), having previously qualified as a chartered member. We congratulate the Treasurer too who also has been appointed to be a Fellow, this time in the Chartered Institute of Bankers.

### 3 Learning for the whole people of God

3.1 It is a central goal of the college to foster and enable the ministry of the whole people of God. The formation of ministers of Word and Sacrament remains a core activity but we do not see it as an aspect isolated from our commitment to the learning of a wider community.

3.2 In part, this work is undertaken through the offering of an educational opportunities programme in collaboration with the synod of Scotland under a reciprocal agreement. This encompasses adult education courses, lay training events and retreats.

3.3 We are endeavouring more and more to encourage the learning together of ordinands, students for lay service, ministers on continuing education and adult education participants. Our belief is that learning should not take place apart that can be done together, wherever possible. If learning is to have a major experiential dimension, then the bringing together of different experiences and perspectives and wisdom enhances the learning of all. We recognise that there has to be some space for specifically focused learning opportunities for particular client groups and we know well the organisational and administrative challenges in trying to achieve our goal. Nonetheless, we are glad to be able to record increasing success in developing mixed learning groups.

3.4 A growing number of synod ministers using EM3 funding and indeed others are now pursuing higher degrees at the universities in Scotland. The college's research network is part of a framework of both support and enabling the learning to be shared more widely.

#### 4. A dispersed college

4.1 The college is a dispersed community in a number of ways. Ordinands are frequently co-matriculated at one of the Scottish Universities and so also belong to that community of learners both in the divinity school and in the wider university. There is a need to train part-time students who can be some 300 miles from the College base in Glasgow. The open nature of college provision means that different learner cohorts form around particular courses and events. The possibilities of collaboration with other colleges and institutions opens up more distance learning opportunities.

4.2 In all these respects, we have to work to develop and maintain a sense of being a learning community and not simply a series of disparate learning groups. In this, of course, the core group of ordinands plays a vital role. Building and sustaining that community while ensuring that programmes are tailored as far as possible to the needs of each learner can be challenging.

#### 5 The ecumenical scene

5.1 The theological education scene in Scotland is distinct from the pattern in the other nations. The whole ecumenical context post-SCIFU and the loss of Scottish Churches' Open College have not been encouraging signs in recent times. We are glad to see however that there are the first signs of some recovery in ecumenical commitment. In particular, a number of churches are now meeting together to share thinking and planning in initial theological education, where previously there had been only limited collaboration in immediate post-initial education for ministers. The Scottish Episcopal Church is seeking to share with others in its exploration of education for lay ministries and service and the Iona Community has been supporting consultation amongst church adult learning providers. We discern in these signs of hope and encouragement for a renewed ecumenical collaboration in Scotland.

5.2 The college is aware of the ecumenical developments in England arising from the "Hind" report. Though it does not formally extend into Wales and Scotland, we are conscious that inevitably its

influence will not fail to have significance, albeit largely indirectly. We are grateful that the Training committee has been conscious of the situations outside of Scotland and keen to nurture developments in each of the national synods and indeed between them.

#### 6 Publications

A more recent development for us has been in the publishing of learning materials. Both are available through the URC Bookshop or directly from the College.

6.1 *Once upon a Time: 2005* is the centenary of Hans Christian Andersen, the writer. The College has published a resource pack of materials for working with children, young people and adults around 10 of Andersen's stories, familiar and less so. There are also sections on storytelling and doing *Asking Questions, Sharing Ideas* with children and other background material.

6.2 *Managing to Change*: This set of training materials is targeted principally at elders and others in leadership in the church.

#### 7 Spirituality and formation

7.1 We are ever aware that the formation of ministers is more than simply a matter of developing intellectual ability, knowledge and a range of skills. All have to be rooted in a developing faith and in the practice of prayer and reflection. Students are encouraged to participate in the silence and retreats work of the United Reformed Church synod: this year on the themes of Bread, Gardens, St Cecilia and Weaving the Threads. The College's own retreat on *Friendship* brings together officers, ordinands, staff and College Friends.

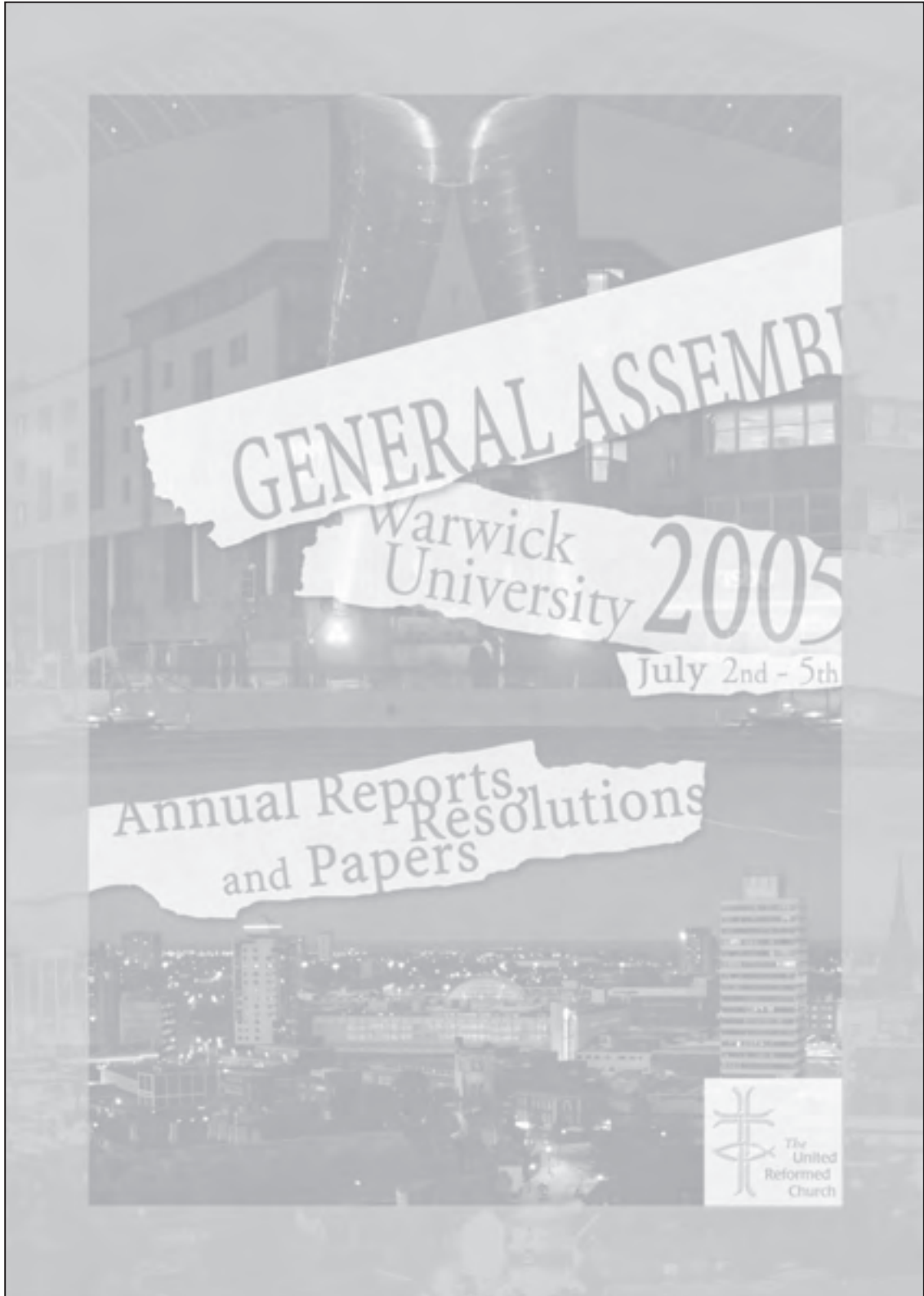
#### 8 College service

8.1 The college annual service will this year be held on Friday 17 June 2005 at Augustine United Reformed Church in Edinburgh, when the preacher will be the Revd Roy Lowes BEd MTh, Secretary for Training of the United Reformed Church.



*The*  
United  
Reformed  
Church

# Information



# URC History Society

1 The main gathering for Society members continues to be the Annual Meeting, held this year at Mansfield College on 25 September. It was agreed to explore the possibility of a merger with the Churches of Christ Historical Society. An audience of thirty then heard Professor Isabel Rivers speak about Joseph Williams and his *Journal*. This proved to be a fascinating dissection of dissenting spirituality and practical living in C18 Kidderminster and also gave an insight into what his later editors thought edifying. After lunch Elaine Kaye and Michael Hopkins showed us the college library before setting off on a tour of famous Oxford sites. New Road Baptist Church was also included and tea at St Columba's ended the day.

2 Archival re-organisation proceeds at a steady rate, aided by Mr and Mrs Richard Potts's continued commitment to the task. No action on attic storage space has been taken, pending other decisions to be made on the future use of Westminster College. A steady stream of enquiries and visits in connection with the project "Who They Were the 20th century" has underlined the advantages of centrally organised archives.

3 In the Library Dr Marian Foster has made substantial progress in the cataloguing work. Some gaps have been identified and then filled, the most important being the set of volumes edited by Christopher Stell on *Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting Houses* in England. Shelving books which still bear the marks of damage inflicted by the destruction of Church House in 1945 is a reminder of the commitment of volunteers then and since in the conserving of a particular heritage. The appeal for the new *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* was well supported and the set was purchased in conjunction with the College.

4 Enquiries ranged from genealogical research (the most common) to proof reading the descriptive labels for a display of Nonconformist Communion silver at the Victoria & Albert Museum. Congregations looking to mark a significant anniversary may find it helpful to contact the Administrator.

5 The grant from the Church has remained unchanged for five years, but assistance from the Communications Department in preparing text for the *Journal*, was much appreciated. The editor, Professor Clyde Binfield, was able to include papers given at the 2003 Study Weekend, as well as major articles on Calvinism, Philip Doddridge, and the reception of Biblical Criticism in Nonconformist Colleges. Closer to our own time there was a reminder of parallel ordinations in Bristol in the mid 1980s, when the ecumenical climate seemed warmer.

6 An anniversary was marked at the General Assembly meeting, held at the University of Glamorgan, when Professor J Gwynfor Jones recalled the Welsh revival of 1904-05 in which young people and women played such a prominent part. It was good to see many non-members in his audience.

# URC Musicians' Guild

**1.1** It's that time of the year again! Time to review another year that has passed, hopefully with musical memories and joys to cherish. Maybe you have heard some special music, new to you, music that made those hairs on the nape of your neck stand up – the so-called tingle factor?

**1.2** Or maybe it was just business as usual, the hymn-prayer-hymn-reading-hymn-sermon-hymn-blessing situation? And what about the 'good heavens, we had that hymn only two weeks ago' situation? Please, please tell me I am wrong and that all the churches you know are alive with new music composed by gifted musicians young and older, that you all have music groups comprising piano, guitar, recorders, violins, clarinets etc and that you all have overhead projectors and screens so that the congregation is obliged to look up from its boots and hence make a sound far more gratifying to the person accompanying the hymns!

**1.3** The reality is that all over the UK, our churches are a wonderful example of variety in worship. But behind that variety, there is someone, or hopefully a group of people, who have some influence over the music that is so much a part of our worship; someone who will advise the person leading worship on the choice of hymns and songs, on whether the young people have learned something new that they would like to sing to the congregation, someone who will make sure that the organist or pianist is thanked for their music at some time during the service, someone with a good singing voice (hopefully in tune!) who will give confidence to others nearby without dominating the whole show.

**1.4** Again, I don't believe all these things are necessarily true either. I am certain there are churches where the one and only musical person feels dreadfully alone and unsupported, where the congregation is so small that it is difficult to feel that it is making wonderful, joyful and uplifting music in celebration of our Lord.

**1.5** So it is all the more important that the URC Musicians' Guild continues in its activities to support this variety of music in worship and the wide variety of musical skills and abilities that the Lord gives to his people, giving succour to the hungry and the weak as well as encouraging the mighty and strong to share their gifts with the less fortunate. Never has there been such a huge range of musical resources to encourage and inspire worship. There really is no excuse for settling for the hymn-prayer-hymn 'sandwich' because that is the easy option!

**1.6** So, join the Guild, find out what is going on in your area – if there appears to be nothing going on, find out why and offer to help something happen. The Guild is for everybody, everywhere and has something for everyone.

# Schools Related to the United Reformed Church

**1** Representatives of the Schools met in London, 14 June 2004. Arrangements for the meeting were made by the Headmaster of Silcoates School.

**2** Students, staff, and governors of the Schools met at Corrymeela, 7–10 October 2004. The meeting, arranged by the Headmaster of Caterham School, whose father was the founder of Corrymeela, is referred to in the reports from Caterham School, Eltham College, and Silcoates School. Building on the experience shared with the Collegio Valdese at Torre Pellice in 2002, the Schools now look forward to a similar encounter at Taizé in 2006. They believe that such meetings express and develop the spirit of their foundation.

**3** The Schools remain grateful for bursaries provided by the Milton Mount Foundation and the Leverhulme Trade Charities Trust. In June 2004 the latter approved a further generous grant, to be awarded subject to the provisions of the Trust, for each of the three years, July 2004 to July 2006. The Headmaster of Eltham College has agreed to co-ordinate the arrangements for this grant on behalf of the Schools.

**4** The Schools congratulate Dr John H Newton on his appointment as Headmaster of Taunton School and thank Mr Julian P Whiteley for his contribution to their meetings during his time as Headmaster at Taunton.

## **5 Caterham School**

Caterham has enjoyed another successful year with a most encouraging ISI Inspection Report.

There has been a significant impact with the new Director of Learning and Teaching, a post to monitor and develop how we teach and how pupils learn.

This development has gone hand in hand with yet another improvement in A level and GCSE results, allowing an unprecedented 90% of pupils to go to the universities of their first choice.

Caterham continues to develop its World links with thirty-three pupils going in three teams with World Challenge to Zambia/Botswana. Another group was on an exchange programme with the Western Reserve Academy in Ohio and they made a DVD of their experience in this key State during the recent USA Presidential elections.

The six United Reformed Church Schools went on the next stage of their European "Building Bridges" campaign to the Corrymeela Community where they learnt a lot about the work of the community and worked with a mixed religious group of students from Belfast.

A trip to the Taizé Centre is planned for 2006.

The new Master Plan has begun to be implemented with the building of a new Refectory and state-of-the-art Science building.

## **6 Eltham College**

Eltham College has experienced a face-lift in 2004. Two major building projects have been completed and a third approaches completion. The first and most obvious is the new entrance. On 3 July 2004, Stephen Smith unveiled the plaque on the new Millennium Gateway which acknowledges the contributions of Old Elthamians during his Presidency of the OEA to the completion of this project. The Gateway provides a new entrance to the College from Grove Park Road, allowing parents to deliver their children safely, and easing congestion on the main road. Stephen described it as a gateway of welcome, a gateway to learning and a gateway to our community.

The second development has been the refurbishment of The Grange, the eighteenth-century villa which has housed our Junior School. Working with the local authority's conservation officer, our architect has re-instated the Grange while enlarging the twentieth-century extensions into a more stylish and purpose-built classroom block for our 7 to 11 year-old pupils. The result is striking and the teaching and learning environment in the Junior School has been greatly enhanced. The official opening was conducted by Simon Weston, the Falklands veteran: he talked to the boys about his personal experiences and his charity, Weston Spirit, which offers a fresh start to young people in deprived areas.

After the closure of the Boarding House in July, construction work began on the conversion of the building into a Music Centre, providing instrumental teaching and practice rooms for our visiting music teachers. This was due for completion in the late spring of 2005.

In January, the school launched a Development Campaign for a Bursary Fund. In the past years pupils have been able to attend the College with support from either the Direct Grant or Assisted Places Schemes. Now that the Government have withdrawn this support – the final group of students to benefit from the Assisted Places Scheme left in 2004 – Governors agreed that a professional approach to fund-raising should be adopted to establish the finances to open education at Eltham to all who would benefit, regardless of their financial background. This campaign has enjoyed a reasonable success in its first year and its positive start has given us the confidence to believe that we shall eventually raise sufficient funds to ensure that the essential ethos and Christian character of Eltham College are preserved.

2004 also marked two sad occasions: Barry Withecombe, Maths teacher, cricket fanatic and manager of the Tuck Shop, died unexpectedly at Easter after twenty-seven years service. A Memorial Service was held in May and many friends and former pupils shared their memories of this Mr Chips-like character. At the end of the summer term a Chapel Service and Luncheon brought together Old Elthamians who were celebrating the life of former Headmaster, Christopher Porteous, and those who were remembering the contribution of the Boarding House to the life of the school. Tributes from Christopher Bradnock, the Revd Peter Swaffield, and the Revd Frank Wells contributed to a most moving service. The passing of Boarding will be a significant mile-stone in the life of the school. However, we hope to ensure that the positive values that the boarding house brought to the school can be maintained in the future.

In October a group of current Elthamians travelled to Northern Ireland with other pupils and staff from the Schools to visit the Corymeela Community. They reported how warmly they had been welcomed and how they understood far more about the troubles there and appreciated what it was like to grow up with this as a back-drop.

Over the summer holidays Eltham College was proud to host a Tented-Village for about 2500 members of the Soul in the City project, on College Meadow. This is an off-shoot of “Soul Survivor” inviting young Christians to spend two weeks working within different London boroughs on youth projects. The project received much local and national press coverage and it was considered to be a very positive programme to help and involve young people in the capital city.

## 7 Silcoates School

Hail and farewell. Mrs Jo Sharpe succeeded Mrs Rosemary Mackenzie as Headmistress of St Hilda’s School. The Revd Brenda Hill, a wise friend, retired from the Governing Body.

We were very pleased to welcome the new Bishop of Wakefield, the Right Revd Stephen Platten, to Silcoates when he confirmed a number of pupils in the Chapel. The Chapel Choir, wearing their new robes, sang beautifully in Wakefield Cathedral at a Thanksgiving Service for the life and work of Dr John France, a remarkable man who was in charge of our outdoor activities for very many years.

The Choir also performed splendidly, as did other music groups, at the opening of the new Music School. Jane Glover spent a memorable day with us and it was a great treat – and an excellent education – for our young musicians to find themselves under the baton of an internationally renowned conductor.

In June another magnificent new building, the Sixth Form Study Centre, was formally opened. The summer holidays saw a major reorganisation of the rooms in the main building.

Our candidates did very well in the summer examinations, the statistics of the A level and GCSE results mirroring those of the record-breaking students of 2003. At A level the average total of UCAS points per student was again the equivalent of three B grades and virtually all of the Upper Sixth leavers have embarked on a university degree course, or will do so after a “gap” year. The GCSE pass rate equalled last year’s high-water mark of 92%: half of the grades were A\* or A.

Two five-star Guests of Honour graced our Junior and Senior Speech Days. Sally Kettle, lately back on dry land from rowing the Atlantic, told of her remarkable experiences. Dr Ingrid Roscoe, Lord Lieutenant of West Yorkshire, charmed us all and indeed made a return visit to watch an excellent production of Duerrenmatt’s *The Visit*.

Busy terms; busy holidays. Among the many (ad)ventures were trips and tours as far afield as Rome, Luxembourg, the Lofoten Islands, Australia and New Zealand. The most moving were the visits to the battlefields of the First World War and the Normandy beaches (especially poignant in early June 2004) and the days spent at Corrymeela by representatives of the Six Schools.



## 8 Taunton School

This has been another successful year at Taunton School.

Academically we have had our best results for many years. At A level the pupils enjoyed a 98% pass rate with 65% graded either A or B with some seventeen pupils achieving at least three grade As; our AS results were creditable with 94% of examinations passed and 56% at A or B grade (both improvements on last year); whilst at GCSE 97% of examinations were passed with 47% at A\* or A. For a school that is essentially non-selective we believe that these results are a credit to the hard work and industry of both the students and staff.

The students are leading increasingly busy lives: they continue to impress not only with the scope of their involvement in extra-curricular activities but also the enthusiasm with which they enter into them. On the rugby pitch the 1<sup>st</sup> XV had an outstanding season winning all but one of their games averaging over 45 points per game whilst conceding on 30 throughout the season. The 1<sup>st</sup> VII were runners-up in the Final of the National Schools Sevens at Rosslyn Park. The girls were not to be outdone. They reached the National Schools Netball Finals although sadly they did not perform to the best of their ability on the day. Two pupils were selected for National Age Group Hockey Teams.

The Arts, in particular music, have flourished over the last twelve months. Many more pupils have been involved in drama including a newly introduced Inter-House Drama Festival and three student-directed productions. Sadly and, one suspects, like many schools, the impact of the Summer Examinations sessions has been significant. It may be that we have seen our last summer musical – a great shame. The resurgence of music at the School has been spearheaded by two new, young, and enthusiastic staff. The number of pupils receiving music lessons has trebled in twelve months, the number of groups doubled. The improvement in standard is unquantifiable but has been, nonetheless, exceptional.

Elsewhere we now have over 10% of pupils assisting with our new Community Volunteers Programme, the CCF is the largest in Somerset and the numbers involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme have increased significantly. These facts restore one's faith in the younger generation, particularly when one is constantly told by the media and other commentators how selfish and lazy the youth of today are.

In February 2004, following eighteen months of preparation, the School achieved the Investors in People Award.

At the end of December the school welcomed as Headmaster Dr John Newton, a Housemaster and formerly Director of Studies at Eastbourne College. He

replaced Julian P Whiteley who, in compiling this, his last report, describes his years at Taunton School as "exciting and rewarding, if at times a touch exhausting".

## 9 Walthamstow Hall

The academic year 2003-2004 was busy and successful. The previous year saw us start term in September with builders in residence in the main Victorian building and last year ended with more builders, this time working on the redevelopment of the Science block.

Public examination results were very good: 100% pass rate at A level, with 49% of grades passed at grade A. Three candidates secured places to read medicine, one at Oxford. At GCSE 65% of passes were at grades A or A\*, with girls achieving between 9 and 12 passes. These results placed us 27<sup>th</sup> in the Guardian's top independents' league table.

Outside the classroom, girls continued to distinguish themselves in extra-curricular activities and maintained a pleasing level of involvement in charity and community work. Our links with the Peckham settlement were maintained, and we had a record number of sixth form girls involved in Sevenoaks Voluntary Service Unit projects like riding for the disabled and visiting local care homes.

We were pleased to re-establish our link with Neyyoor mission school in India through a current member of staff whose parents were in medical missionary work at Neyyoor. Year 11 raised over £400 for Children in Need, and all six school houses supported their chosen charities with commendable commitment. Girls seem to be as adept at making money as giving it, and our LVI Young Enterprise Company won the award for Best Company in North West Kent for the sixth successive year.

In the Spring Term, our Lacrosse squad toured the USA on what proved to be a most memorable school trip. Our U12, U13 and Senior netball teams won their leagues and the U13 reached the semi-finals in the Kent Schools' Tournament. Our U12 and U14 lacrosse teams were runners-up in the Kent tournament.

Music and Drama continued to be strong with lively inter-house competitions and a succession of pleasing concerts and recitals throughout the year. One notable occasion in the Autumn Term was a Christmas Concert by torchlight following a power failure. In true Walthamstow Hall spirit, the concert continued despite the lack of power.

In the Summer Term, we were delighted to be joined at our Prize-Giving ceremony by Professor Martyn Chamberlain, Master of Grey College, Durham. We were also pleased that an old friend of the school, Miss Downton (aged 103), was able to join us on that

occasion. She knew and remembered Miss Blackburn (Headmistress 1946-1979) as a child in Sevenoaks and greatly enjoyed having the opportunity to meet current staff and pupils.

As the summer term drew to a close, the builders arrived to start gutting the Science block, ready to refit. When we returned in September we found transformed science facilities with the Biology Department re-sited to be in the same building as Physics and Chemistry. The new laboratories have the latest in Inter-active Whiteboards and ICT kit as well as state-of-the-art science facilities.

Improvements such as these should enable us to continue providing girls with the excellent education they need to play a full part in life in the twenty-first century.

## **10 Wentworth College**

Value added (measure of progress for each pupil's career in the school) continues to be a main strength and feature of our examination results. With the publication of the GCSE results, we are able to calculate the amount of value added for each of our pupils based on a national test taken when they entered the school. Last year each pupil achieved an average of 9.2 grades above those predicted. This is an impressive figure as it means that they performed well above pupils of a similar ability elsewhere in the country. Meanwhile, students in Year 13 completed their final modules in twenty-two subjects with an overall pass rate of 100%.

Boarding at Wentworth continues to thrive. Boarders have enjoyed their regular craft, swimming, basketball, and roller skating sessions in school. They have also been out to see films, go ice skating, bowling, and visit places of interest such as Bath, Winchester, and Brighton. The highlight of the year was the annual camping expedition: in June 2004 a group of twenty-one girls and members of staff stayed under canvas near Beaulieu, visiting Lyndhurst and a local dairy farm.

Task Force has continued to flourish. There were canoeing sessions in the school pool in which the girls helped Victoria School pupils to take part in an activity not usually available to them. For many girls the highlight of the school year was the art and music tour to Barcelona at the end of April 2004. Visits were made to art galleries and the chamber choir and flute group gave concerts to large audiences in Montserrat and Barcelona Cathedral.

Many sixth form members were given the opportunity to attend Young Enterprise, to gain an insight into business and mix with local schools. Our sporting teams have also had a successful year, and a number of girls were selected for county squads in badminton, tennis, and netball. Last summer fifty junior members of the school took part in a most enjoyable performance of *Tales Untold*. Other members participated in the school's annual *Songs from the Shows* dinner event and the senior drama group staged *After September* during the Autumn Term.

Our girls have dedicated much of their time to charitable activities, such as preparing 140 Christmas shoe boxes for the Mustard Seed Relief Mission. Two of our Year 11 girls wrote and produced a musical, *Silver Slave*, in aid of Cancer Research UK. Staff and girls took part in a charity week raising funds for the *BBC Children in Need Appeal* and the MacMillan Lewis-Manning Hospice in Lilliput. The girls have also been busy raising money for the Beslan and Tsunami Appeals. Year 9 held a cake sale and the school's flute group and Gill Price (Year 13) performed at a Tsunami concert in St John's Church, Boscombe.

The Advent Service for 2004 was held at Richmond Hill URC, Bournemouth, led by the Revd Adrian Bulley, the Moderator for the Wessex Synod, and the Minister, Dr Donald Norwood. It was well attended by governors, parents, and the congregation. The music provided by the school choir was especially pleasing.

# Silence and Retreats Network

## **Core Group**

**Convener:** Revd Barry Hutchinson    **Secretary:** Revd Meriel Chippindale  
Revd Gill Jackson; Mr Alan Fox; Revd Brenda Stephenson; Mr Mark Argent

1        Some years ago Silence and Retreats published a leaflet called *Retreat to Advance*. The title encapsulates something of the ideology and purpose of the network and it begins to unwrap one of our central beliefs. This is that unless we take time away in retreat and silence, listening for and interacting with God, we make it harder for ourselves to advance in any aspects of the Kingdom which is in us and amongst us. Put more positively, it is when individuals, small groups and whole congregations take time out to be with God, much as Jesus took the disciples aside a while in the midst of a busy ministry, that God is able to transform us. It is this deep inner transformation, possible only through silence, that helps us to discern more clearly various realities – of the world around us, of the divine presence in the temporal and material, of ourselves as loved, called and equipped people of God.

2        This inner, deep transformation properly issues in mission which, reflecting the nature of God seen in Jesus Christ, is balanced, gentle and compelling. Because of such balance mission itself will be nourishing for the missionaries rather than enervating as so much church activity is or threatens to become.

3        Taking this to heart ourselves, the network is retreating to Windermere for a time of assessment and discernment during which we hope to be changed, challenged and guided into the future. Cutting back

on the 'business' of reportage from our splendid Synod link people, we plan to enter into a 48 hour period of guided silence to listen to and engage with God, whom we believe is calling us in some new directions which are currently vague but which we hope will become clearer in the months ahead. Perhaps this is one aspect of his call to our whole church which we are responding to in many new initiatives, extant and in the pipeline, which will be well discussed at Assembly?

4        Be that as it may we are heartened to hear of increasing interest in 'spirituality' in our church, however that word might be understood; of people who believe themselves called to found quiet houses which are small places of retreat, healing and prayer; of people who feel themselves called to a deeper commitment to the life of prayer and into the radical contemplative lifestyle. And we suspect that Silence and Retreats Network will need to re-invent itself to encompass and further encourage such growth.

5        So, watch this space, as they say, and see what will happen in the future. Maybe it will be nothing much but maybe, just maybe, God will be doing something new and different for us and with us and through us, us being the United Reformed Church, with the Silence and Retreats Network being only one small part of the wider body.

# Women's World Day of Prayer

1.1 The service this year, held on Friday the 4 of March, was prepared by the women of Poland with the theme, 'Let our Light Shine'. A theme which reflected the many hopes of the people of the country.

1.2 The borders of Poland have been moved several times as the result of wars and partition. The Polish people have suffered much, before and during, and after the Second World War. They have been divided, occupied and subjected to many atrocities. The concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau stands as a permanent reminder not only to the millions of Jewish victims of the holocaust, but to the thousands of Poles who lost their lives there.

1.3 There have been many famous Polish people. Most notably in recent times is Pope John Paul 11, who was elected Pope in 1978. In 1979 Pope John Paul led a Service in the centre of Warsaw whilst the country was still under communist rule. The fact that someone who did not conform to communism was allowed to speak in public, without restrictions, was incredible.

1.4 In October 2003 the Bible Society invited two representatives from our national committee to join them as they visited their office in Warsaw, I was privileged to be one of the committee members chosen for this memorable event. As the Polish WWDP national committee has close links with the Bible society we all joined together to meet with the writers of this years Service.

1.5 Whilst in Poland we met with Bishop Pikas, a Roman Catholic, who is a great supporter of the Week of Prayer for Christian unity and has worked hard to bring the churches of Warsaw together to share in this. There are seven churches belonging to the Polish Ecumenical Council: the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Old Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Methodist and Baptist

1.6 The Services held throughout England, Northern Ireland and Wales were very well attended with over 350,000 orders of service used. Especially translated service and information sheets are produced for the Welsh speaking churches.

1.7 Services were held in Cathedrals, Churches, Halls, Hospitals, Nursing homes, and Schools where the special children's service sheets, along with the teacher notes are used at assemblies. The children's information is also used in many of our Junior churches groups.

1.8 Day conferences and preparation days have continued to increase to the extent that we now have three conference co-ordinators arranging conferences in different areas of the country.

1.9 The service for 2006 has been prepared by the women of South Africa with the theme 'A Sign of the Times'



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