

# **Annual Report, Resolutions and Papers**

**General Assembly 2008**

**Vision4Life**

**Mission Council**

**Reports**

**Appendices**

**Resolutions**

**Information**

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# Introduction

General Assembly 2008

This book of reports sets the scene for the 2008 General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, to be held in Edinburgh.

It gives a glimpse of the huge amount of work and thinking that has taken place this past year in committees, synods and local churches. I think you will be impressed with the opportunities that are opening up and how much has been achieved since the Church met in Manchester.

The reports illustrate, in many different ways, our bright future. We are on a journey – a pilgrimage – and we travel increasingly hopefully. That note of hope is explored by the synod moderators in their report, which introduces the whole programme.

Vision4Life is a growing expression of the churches' enthusiasm to engage with our traditions in new ways.

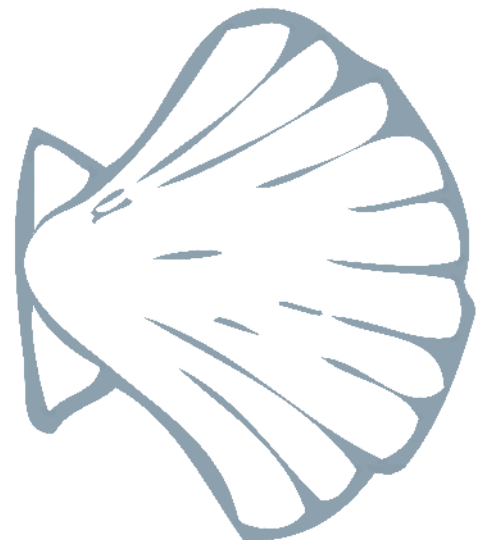
We celebrate more examples of innovative work when, for the first time, we present the annual Congregational community awards on the floor of Assembly.

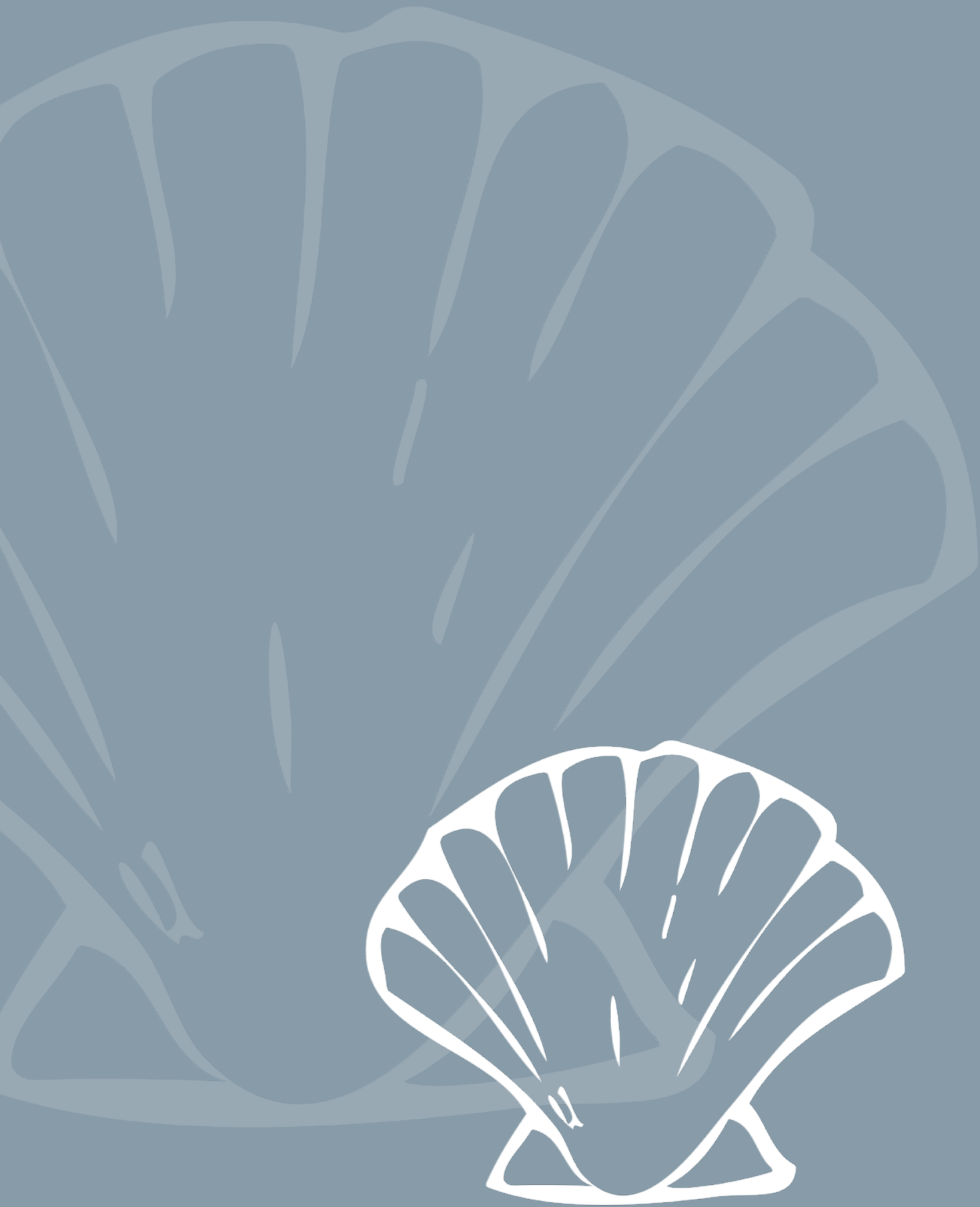
Building on last year's successful Children's Assembly we reflect the new found optimism and confidence spelt out in a bright vision for youth and children's work.

We induct as Moderator the Revd John Marsh, who will serve for two years – another first. We won't meet again as the Church altogether until we gather in Loughborough in 2010.

If you are coming to Edinburgh, travel safely; we look forward to welcoming you. If you are not, please support our deliberations in prayer. And use this book to inform, enrich and inspire your Christian lives. For we are, as the moderators suggest, prisoners of hope.

Martin Hazell  
Director of Communications





*'Optimism and pessimism don't exist for me ... (I am) a prisoner of hope, and hope is a qualitatively different category to optimism. Optimism is a secular construct, a calculation of probability... hope wrestles with despair, but it doesn't generate optimism. It generates this energy to be courageous, to bear witness, to see what the end is going to be. No guarantee, unfinished, open-ended. I am a prisoner of hope. I'm going to die full of hope.'*

Cornel West, Professor of Religion, Princeton

# Prisoners of Hope

## 1 Introduction

1.1 Our primary calling and privilege as people of God is to celebrate God whose love flows grace-fully through the whole created order. Our joy, with God's help, is to live the good news of the promised Realm of God that Jesus framed in actions, words, images, poetry, common stories and proverbs of his day. Jesus' focus was always towards God, declaring in his encounters the profound but simple love that God has for her world and her people. The response of those who dare to call themselves followers of Jesus is to be a people living out of that hope, confident in their own skin, prepared to give account for the God-hope that is in them for God's sake, the sake of the world and its peoples. God's grace makes us prisoners of hope.

## 2 Rehearsing the Hope-full Story

2.1 The Christian community is shaped by a story and envisioned by hope. It is in and through our worship at its best that we rehearse this God-shaping story that has been passed from generation to generation. The Good News Jesus embodied in his life and teaching subverted much of the thinking and practice of his day – both religious and 'secular'. Because God who has revealed herself in Jesus of Nazareth is at its heart, our rehearsal of this story is also a challenge to much that is considered 'reality' in our world. Such witness entails risk as it dares to subvert the widely accepted order, and this is true whenever people in smaller, or larger, congregations worship and gather around the Word, and bread and wine, and remember the night Jesus was betrayed.

2.2 But, of course, the story, this haunting memory forged through centuries that we rehearse in our worship is for telling, for practice. At its best our worship takes us to a place of courage and hope. The experience of resurrection radically reshaped and re-invigorated the early disciples and the early church as they reflected on their experiences of the Jesus who had got under their skin. The power and mystery of God blew like wind through the world of their presuppositions, prejudices and inherited beliefs. Such an encounter with the living God transforms us again and again, bringing us to the point of wonder and awe. As we rehearse and engage with this story the Spirit will model our Church into a God-shaped

movement of Good News. This hope-full, God-shaping, will 'push' us to discover ways to express this alternative vision that God offers to the world. Our worship and theology must never be separated from our practice of it. As this hope-full story has brought renewal, re-visioning and re-shaping of the Church, so we are strengthened to live our own personal stories within this Great Story as *God's people ... transformed by the Gospel ... making a difference to the world's Kingdoms in Christ's name.*

2.3 The monthly moderators' meeting is always set in the context of worship. There, we share with each other our own encounters with God as we meet with people and congregations throughout these nations; people who express their corporate and personal faith in different ways, with different theological emphases, and even different spiritualities. The Church we encounter lives paradoxically. It is strong yet fragile, passionate yet often subdued, joyful and anxious, celebrating Good News and the grace of God yet often needing confidence in the Gospel we rehearse. So what is it that really excites us, drives and shapes us? Where does our hope lie, and what difference does that make?

### 3 Hope and Change

3.1 Like other Churches, our Church is living through re-evaluation and change. Change, wherever it happens, leads to a degree of uncertainty – and organisational change is not often established quickly. Change is not everyone's cup of tea because it brings with it difference, uncertainty, and even risk. It can upset patterns, practices and habits, and create uncomfotableness. Also our minds can play tricks on us and we imagine the church only to have been as we remember it. This reinforces our prejudices as to how it should be. We even adopt the dictum, 'it's always been like this.' No it hasn't! God's Church has always been provisional, always in a place where it has had to grapple with the gospel and how that gospel converses with our own particular life experiences and cultures. It has always had to grapple with what difference that Gospel might make to the ways our communities are created, policies made, and how that is achieved. The history of our tradition is rich. It is of a Church that has always been transformed, re-formed, out of our grappling with God revealed in Scripture.

3.2 Of course we have choices to make about change. We can adopt a negative, or even suspicious and closed attitude towards change, maybe because it doesn't suit our preferences. And anyway we like things as they are. Alternatively we can adopt a more open attitude, trusting that the hope-full God is somehow moving us, shaping us, inspiring us to discover again the immensity of God's very being, in order to discover the new territory, new experiences, new ways to be alongside our neighbours with truth to 'tell'.

3.3 Like others, we can feel the chill that accompanies institutional survival. Our conversations often return to the concerns around our Church, concerns that can too often take a turn toward the negative. We can talk ourselves into creating a spiral of despondency. That is not to say that we should not face up to our reality: the apparent persistence of our decline, the dearth of candidates for particular ministries, the future of ministry and training, the present position of ecumenical engagement, and, of course, structures and our budget, are important for us. We cannot ignore these issues. However the restructuring we have discerned through the *Catch the Vision* process has been significant, and we look with anticipation to the emerging differences the resulting remodelling will make to our Church and to our mission.

## 4 Hope and Engagement – our stories within God's Story

4.1 Focus on 'structures' can also too easily create a mindset that this is 'the' proper topic of conversation for people of God. We are an organisation, and we do have an institution to maintain – at least for the present. However such institutional concerns can pre-occupy us, and maybe even provide a convenient way for avoiding the real heart of our calling. It will be in our persistence in re-discovering of God that we will discover the shape that our Church will become.

4.2 The Church Life Survey indicated that in our Church we are good at socialising people into the Gospel, and that we are a people committed to justice and peace issues. *Jubilee 2000*, the *Nestlé* issue, *Fairtrade* and *Commitment for Life* are all landmarks of passion for the Gospel concern for our sisters and brothers living in difficult economic, political, and life denying situations. However, the survey also indicates that on the whole we are uncertain of the biblical material – the significant text in our formation. Subtly this uncertainty can lead to a draining of confidence when it comes to speaking about this liberating, hope-full, life-giving God.

4.3 But there are inspiring, moving and humbling stories to be told about Churches that are responding in a variety of ways to the way the hope-full God shapes their life and witness.

4.4 Think of the small congregation of Providence, New Mills who, seeing the social deprivation of their post-industrial community and the drug-dealers gathering like vultures at the school gates. They decided that these people would not win the day. So they did something about it. Their after-school youth club is now so popular that the only sanction the young people need is the threat of being barred! In a set of buildings which they are renovating bit by bit, relying on grants and volunteers, they bring friendship, hope and consistent support to young people who have no other church connection. They didn't wait for a new building or more people to counter the activities of drug dealers and all that means; they just got on with it.

4.5 Or think of the small village of Avonbridge – not far from where we meet as Assembly. It has the feel of being a rather forgotten village. A couple of years ago the congregation of five or so were expected by those who thought about them to fade away. However, this was not their spirit. They continued to run a weekly luncheon club and credit union. In the last two years they have been joined by a few children and a couple of new members. The newly inducted minister and the congregation of Cumbernauld some fifteen miles away determined to help them. There was practical help generously offered to improve the state of the building, especially when there was a significant question mark about the state of the kitchen. A grant was won to have a community audit by an elder of the Church of Scotland. The church is now engaged with the local primary school and has plans to make its premises more useful to the community. From a near-death experience, they are looking forward with a degree of hope that gladdens the spirit, and indeed is the spirit.

4.6 If the moderators feel refreshed and exhilarated by some, we agonise with others. If we feel the excitement of some, we feel the frustration of others. There are congregations whose members have become tired and jaded, churches among whom some of the excitement about God has faded into familiarity and formality. Some take the changes that we have made in their stride: others find it more difficult. Among the factors that often shape their life are, keeping things on the road and not giving up on our buildings. All this is often magnified by the pressures of conforming to increasing legislation. There is also evidence around our church that people are tired and concerned about the introversion of thinking about the institution itself. It is true that structures will not save the church. That is simply an expression of secular organisational thinking – 'downsizing'. But that should not be our way.

4.7 So we detect a widespread recognition of a desire for renewal, for transformation and for confidence in the gospel hope. God prompts us to look for the 'new' emerging from the 'old'; to practise the 'now' and 'not yet-ness' of hope, and to live with that as a creative tension rather than allowing uncertainty to paralyse us. It is clear that we have talented, gifted, committed people in our church. We also have the visionary resources among us, and God does still call people to serve in a whole variety of ways, in and outwith the Church. Often it is the sheer persistence of the Church that is nothing less than astonishing.

4.8 We wonder whether we are actually sometimes too comfortable with being who we are, rather than trusting ourselves to the subversive God we see in Jesus' to lead us into who we can be. But we should not underestimate the experience of the journey we began in 1972. The astonishing drive, faith, vision and risk-taking of our forebears in bringing the United Reformed Church onto the World Church scene was simply inspiring. That momentous vision remains for us an inspiration that draws our response to the hope-full God.

## 5 So what?

5.1 We have heard that what excites, moves and drives people is not exploring 'the expression of the thing', rather it is 'the thing itself'. In other words when people truly engage with God and not the institution of the Church, they find an excitement that grabs them. Congregations are enriched and excited by 'getting into God together' in what might be thought of as old fashioned means of Bible reading, prayer and worship. But rediscovering the excitement and the newness of spirit that emerges when we discover, or discover afresh that the inclusive, passionate, life giving, death defying, hope-full love of God for us in Jesus, is a moment of sheer grace. We will not always pin that down. We will not always understand that moment when we are touched by God. We will not always be able to intellectualise such visceral experiences. But we will be changed and transformed by them.

5.2 Our task is to be faithful in our exploration of God in order to 'know' what God is about and therefore who we are and can be. But it is also not to be afraid of engaging with those outside our all-too-often tight circles to hear of their understanding of God. Grasping the subversive nature of God will encourage us to explore the fluidity of dogma and structure that we see in the emerging churches. Acknowledging those who choose to remain outside the formal Church, but who nevertheless regard themselves as Christian who are exploring this loving passionate, patient, trail blazing God with integrity will challenge our form of being Church. Is it time for us to admit that the Church has maybe hi-jacked the word 'ecumenical' for itself, subtly forgetting that it refers to the 'whole created order' – a peculiarly Christendom notion for a post-Christendom Church? After all, God was around before Jesus came along, and we will find expressions of God in the wisdom and insights, not only in other traditions, but also in other faiths.

5.3 So the moderators want to offer this vision, challenge and encouragement to 'us all' – to immerse ourselves into the hope-full God and accept that the rest is up to God – even the future of the United Reformed Church. This is what we understand to be at the heart of the **Vision4Life** process. We are good at producing materials to enable people to engage in this way, but we should not think that everything can or should be reduced to a 'Pack' or a 'Programme'. The world is full of those. There is no substitute for the encounter with God and each other for which they are a resource. There is real evidence that there is a hunger for this sort of authenticity. Some of our number pointed to the evidence for this in the television series 'Monastery', and others in the exploration of God in the Arts.



5.4 We want to challenge us all; when the encounter proves prophetic to have the courage to let go of the old in order to grasp the new. To encourage the development of a Church that presents opportunities for this to happen. We want to encourage our church not to be afraid of the subversive-ness of God; the God who will rattle our cages, who breaks down barriers, who helps us to recognise and accept difference and to discover where God is doing something, and saying something new, in people's lives.

5.5 We want to encourage our churches to find ways of engaging with those who have already imagined something different; to move toward those who consider themselves Christians but who maybe outside the formal churches and whose critique will be important for us to hear. Creating the conditions where people are included and where they can find hospitality and warmth, will be to create the opportunity for them to experience the welcome of God, and the sheer joy of being people of God.

5.6 We want to encourage us all to explore what has become known as the *Emerging Church*. By that we do not simply mean churches who are doing the same things differently, but those who are genuinely seeking God in different ways out of a different culture and milieu.

5.7 We want to encourage us to place ourselves in the hands of the creating God by engaging with poets and artists, and musicians and film makers, scientists and social entrepreneurs, all who reveal something of what it is to be truly human.

5.8 We want to encourage our churches to recognise the strengths we have and not to be afraid of using those strengths in order to support our weaknesses. We want for us to throw off the satisfaction of the 'where two or three are gathered' mindset, and to expect our witnessing communities to grow.

5.9 Maybe we need to give ourselves permission more often to think the unthinkable; to go out on a limb, recognising when vision is being submerged in the principle of conciliarity, and to trust each other and open ourselves to the spontaneity of the Holy Spirit. Standing in the Reformed tradition it should be of no surprise to us that 'God has yet more light and truth to break forth from his word'. We can be bold. It's in our genes!

5.10 In short, in all our God talk, God discovery, God encounter, we want to encourage us all to make space to be encountered by the generous, and as someone at one colloquium put it, the 'Big Hairy Audacious God', whose love, desire and hope for people is passionate, whose provision for us and for God's world is abundant, grace-full, transforming and creative.

5.11 We are truly called to be prisoners of the God-hope that generates the energy '*to be courageous, to bear witness, to see what the end is going to be. No guarantee, unfinished, open-ended.*' (Cornel West). So we want to encourage us to be a people who are prisoners of hope. Not the sort of superficial hope that hopes in ourselves, but the deep hope in the gracious God who is there, who reaches to us in Jesus, and who inspires us with the Holy Spirit. Good News is never about fear, optimism or pessimism, rather it is a liberating fact. Paradoxically, being prisoners of hope is actually about the liberation and freedom to be people of God, transformed by the Gospel, making a difference.

### **6 Personalia**

6.1 During the course of this last year, since Assembly last met, we have seen significant changes in the moderators' Meeting and the leadership of our Church.

6.2 During this year we have said farewell to Arnold Harrison who served as moderator of the Yorkshire synod for 11 years and we have welcomed Kevin Watson in his stead. Elizabeth Caswell who has served the Eastern synod for 11 years moves to serve in local pastoral charge, and we welcome Paul Whittle who is called to serve that synod. Elizabeth Welch ends 12 years as moderator in the West Midlands synod this year, and as this report is prepared, Roy Lowes has been nominated to succeed her. At this Assembly we will rejoice with the Church that Roberta Rominger has been called to serve as general secretary of the United Reformed Church. This is a first! Roberta will be the first woman to be called as general secretary in the history of our Church. We want to thank these colleagues for their generosity, wisdom, love and for their companionship. We wish them God's blessing. At the same time we want to thank David Cornick for his companionship and guidance, and wish him every blessing in his calling as general secretary of Churches Together in England.



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1. 'How can we become a vibrant and sustainable Christian community within the next ten years?' That's the question *Catch the Vision* posed for us all back in 2003, and this year we can all start answering it. We've moved on from simplifying our church structures to something nearer the heart of things for many of us – how to breathe new life into local congregations.
2. This is where **Vision4Life** comes in. You could say it's the non-structural bit of *Catch the Vision*, something which has come up from all of us rather than something which 'they' (whoever 'they' might be) have decided from above we should be doing. In the United Reformed Church we dislike it when we think other people are telling us what to do, especially if the suggestion comes from outside the local church. **Vision4Life** stands a chance of transforming our life if it develops from within local congregations – otherwise our past record indicates we simply won't do it.
3. So where and how has **Vision4Life** arisen? The encouraging thing is that it emerged from conversations between people who would not have previously seen one another as natural allies and who together span a range of theological outlooks. They began by doing some of the basics of being a Christian community – talking about the Bible, praying and sharing stories of their faith journeys. Despite their continuing differences, they experienced a deepening sense of unity and excitement as they discovered within one another a shared longing to renew the life of the United Reformed Church. That's how **Vision4Life** began – with new relationships, with a title, with a logo and then with the emerging process which General Assembly agreed to support last year.
4. Naturally enough, people have asked who is behind **Vision4Life** and where it fits within the structures of the denomination. A number of people have been involved with the Steering Group, which meets every six months or so, and now includes Ray Adams, John Campbell, Bob Day, Susan Durber, John Hall, Brian Harley, Brian Jolly, Lawrence Moore, Paul Snell, Steve Summers, Kirsty Thorpe, Mike Walsh and Sally Willett, with support from Church House being coordinated by Francis Brienen as secretary for Mission. The Steering Group do not want to see the freshness and flexibility of **Vision4Life**'s way of working being lost within the framework of a national committee agenda. Although **Vision4Life**'s current home is under the umbrella of the Mission committee it also has a lot to say to training and education, as well as many other parts of our common life.
5. So what is the introductory year, until December 2008, about? Four colourful booklets of taster material were published in February and sent out widely through the denomination. These are designed to help local churches find ways of talking together about some of the things we know should be central to our church life, but which we don't always do as well or as often as we should. One booklet looks at the Bible, one at prayer and another at evangelism – or the way we tell our faith stories. The fourth booklet includes ideas for how to get your congregation to the point of deciding to 'sign up' for **Vision4Life**, as well as some ideas for a service once you have done so.
6. There has been some encouraging feedback from this part of the process and the booklets have proved to be popular items. From comments the Steering Group has heard and discussions on the website at [www.vision4life.org.uk](http://www.vision4life.org.uk) it is already clear that people are engaging with the discussions that this process has helped to focus. Not everyone feels comfortable with the tone of the taster material – for some it's too evangelical and for others it's too liberal

– but with ours being such a broad church theologically that is hardly surprising. Some people have commented, quite understandably, that their congregations are already fully involved with their own programmes on the Bible, prayer and evangelism, or that this year their main focus has been Hope 08. Others criticised the lack of specific material for children and young people.

7. All of that is fine – **Vision4Life** is not about trying to impose uniformity on the United Reformed Church, if such a thing were even possible. What does feel significant to the Steering Group, though, is the number of responses received from people who seem to have been waiting for something like this to help them in addressing what their congregation is doing now and where God wants it to be in the future. Not only that, when we Christians do similar things at the same time as one another there is an opportunity for God to bless our shared experiences in a way that cannot happen when we do our thinking individually and at different times. That is another way in which **Vision4Life** represents something new.

8. The next stage of **Vision4Life** starts with Advent 2008 with a year focusing on the Bible. A menu of materials will be sent to every congregation this autumn and fuller versions of what is on offer will be available in print and on the website as the year unfolds. Some congregations will probably want to get more involved than others and as with the introductory material the resources will be designed in ways that make them adaptable to local needs. It is up to each congregation to think through how to feed some of these ideas into the various networks and age groups they have among them.

9. From Advent 2009 there will be a year focused on prayer, and in Advent 2010 a year centred around evangelism begins. The hope is that by December 2010, building on what we have already done, we should feel more confident to address the sharing of our faith stories which is one of the activities we seem to find most difficulty with. Just one appeal to everyone – please do not think that putting a **Vision4Life** label onto an activity will somehow make it part of the process. For that logo to be valid you will need to have thought and prayed through with others how your planned event truly relates to being transformed by the Bible, prayer and evangelism.

10. Nobody would claim that any single prescription can be a cure for all our ills but **Vision4Life** aims to suggest some things that are well worth trying. The photographs in the introductory booklets are of different pairs of hands doing a whole variety of things. Please get 'hands on' with the materials **Vision4Life** produces and feel free to play with them creatively so they work for you and those around you. Then you'll start to discover what a **Vision4Life** might look like for your church, where you are.

Kirsty Thorpe

**Vision4Life**  
Transforming the church





**Vision4Life**  
*Transforming the church*



Edinburgh



1.1 Mission Council's task is to take a comprehensive view of the work of General Assembly; to decide on priorities; and to encourage the United Reformed Church at all levels in its engagement with the world. The scope of this engagement ranges from the local to the international arena, and includes relationships with ecumenical partners in the UK and overseas. While Mission Council services and maintains the work of General Assembly from one year to the next, it is principally concerned about the Church's future direction and the support of all its members.

1.2 **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 and Welfare committee), the synod moderators, two representatives from the FURY Advisory Board, and three representatives from each synod.

1.3 **Mission Council Representatives appointed by synods** (in March 2008) were:

Northern synod	Miss Elaine Colechin, Revd John Durell, Mr Justice Semuli
North Western synod	Revd Rachel Poolman, Ms Marie Trubic, Revd Alan Wickens
Mersey synod	Miss Emma Pugh, Mr Donald Swift, tba
Yorkshire synod	Mr Roderick Garthwaite, Revd Pauline Loosemore, Mrs Val Morrison
East Midlands synod	Revd Jane Campbell, Mrs Margaret Gateley, Mrs Irene Wren
West Midlands synod	Mrs Adella Pritchard, Revd Anthony Howells, Mr Bill Robson
Eastern synod	Mr Mick Barnes, Mrs Joan Turner, Revd Cecil White
South Western synod	Mrs Janet Gray, Revd Roz Harrison, Revd Stephen Newell
Wessex synod	Revd G Cliff Bembridge, Mrs Margaret Telfer, Mr Peter Pay
Thames North synod	Mr David Eldridge, Revd John Macaulay, Revd David Varcoe
Southern synod	Dr Graham Campling, Mrs Maureen Lawrence, Mr Nigel Macdonald
National synod of Wales	Revd Dr Peter Cruchley-Jones, Revd David Fox, Mrs Liz Tadd
National synod of Scotland	Miss Irene Hudson, Revd John Sanderson, Mr Patrick Smyth

## The different roles of Mission Council

1.4.1 Mission Council *acts on behalf of General Assembly*, taking decisions which are considered to be urgent or time-sensitive, and which need action between meetings of the Assembly. Mission Council may also be asked to undertake a piece of work on General Assembly's behalf. In such cases, the action is reported to a following Assembly, as in paragraphs 3 to 4.3.7 of this report.

1.4.2 Mission Council also *acts on its own behalf*, taking advice from its advisory groups (eg 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 6.1 to 6.5, and Resolutions **1** to **5** (with their alternative resolutions **6** to **8**) on pages 211-218.

1.4.3 Mission Council may from time-to-time instigate work, appoint a special task group or ask several Assembly committees to co-operate in undertaking a piece of work on its behalf. It is also often asked to be a sounding board for committees shaping new policies before bringing them to General Assembly. Paragraphs 5.1 and 5.16 reflect some of these different ways in which Mission Council works.

## 2 Our meetings

2.1 Since last General Assembly, Mission Council has met twice residentially and once for a one-day meeting. These occasions were chaired by the moderator and worship was conducted by the moderator's chaplain, the Revd Lucy Brierley.

2.2 Mission Council has received reports of changes in synod structures that resulted from the *Catch the Vision* process that General Assembly agreed last year. Mission Council has also monitored proposals to create a mission committee and Mission Team to coordinate work done previously by five Assembly committees: Ecumenical (including International Relations); Church and Society (including *Commitment for Life*); Life and Witness; Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry; and Interfaith Relations.

2.3 Under the leadership of the general secretary, Mission Council approved the next stage of *Catch the Vision*, called **Vision4Life**. This initiative seeks to enable the renewal of local churches through their re-engagement with the bible, prayer and evangelism.

Initial presentations were made about **Vision4Life** at autumn synods; materials were sent out to all local churches in February; and an interactive website has been established. It is hoped that **Vision4Life** will be adopted by local churches for use by Advent 2008. (See also page 5)

**Vision4Life**  
*Transforming the church*

2.4 Mission Council has received a number of papers over the past two years by the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship committee on the United Reformed Church's ecclesiology. Its most recent paper, *Our Life Together*, is a commentary on the Basis of Union prepared by the Revd Dr Robert Pope. This was discussed and commended to the Church by Mission Council.

2.5 Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, accepted the resignation of the Revd Dr David Cornick as general secretary on his appointment as secretary of Churches Together in England from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008. The moderator expressed the Assembly's gratitude to Dr Cornick for his outstanding service to the Church during the past seven years, and presented him with a gift on behalf of the 13 synods and the Assembly. Mission Council also ratified a revised process for appointing his successor.

## 3 Action taken on previous Assembly resolutions which referred matters to Mission Council

**From Assembly 2005:**

**3.1 Resolution 6: General Assembly, in accepting the Declaration towards a Safe Church instructed all Assembly Committees to operate within it; and urged 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 responses to Mission Council by March 2006.**

Mission Council took action on this resolution in several ways:

3.1.1 Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council accepted a document 'Policy and Procedures in response to alleged incidents of sexual harassment and abuse against adults' as fulfilling the Declaration of a Safe Church

and instructed synods and Assembly officers to implement the 'Policy and Procedure', subject to scrutiny by the legal advisers.

- 3.1.2 Mission Council established a Sexual Ethics Advisory Group to monitor all sexual ethics work in the Church, to be made up of a synod moderator, one representative each from the Education and Learning committee, the Ministries committee, a synod 'safe church' representative, and other expertise as needed.
- 3.1.3 Mission Council accepted a proposal that a Pastoral Response Team (PRT) be established as a way of fulfilling the Declaration of Safe Church, in relation to ministerial misconduct; and instructed the deputy general secretary to take the necessary steps to establish the PRT system. This needs suitable people to be identified and trained at synod and Assembly level. The newly-appointed Sexual Ethics Advisory Group, convened by the Revd Carla Grosch-Miller, will monitor the co-ordination and support of these teams.
- 3.1.4 Synod advisers met on several occasions to consider how to help churches think through the implications of the Resolution (paragraph 3.1 above) for their congregations. They worked on a revision of the Declaration (**Appendix 5**) and produced a booklet *Relating Together* which is a resource for local churches considering their response to sexual abuse and harassment. It is intended to be used with *Life Together* (paragraphs 3.2 and 3.2.1 below) and worship material (*Worshipping Together*). These three documents were sent to all synods in time for distribution to local churches at their Spring 2008 synod meetings.

#### **From Assembly 2006:**

**3.2 Resolution 40: General Assembly instructed Mission Council to revisit the 'Declaration of a Safe Church' and bring to the next Assembly proposals to extend its provisions to cover emotional, physical and domestic abuse and neglect.**

- 3.2.1 A Mission Council task group, convened by Mrs Rosemary Johnston, produced resource material called *Life Together*, to help local churches consider their response to the abuse of adults in the church. (see 3.1.1 above)

#### **From Assembly 2007:**

**3.3 Resolution 1: General Assembly instructed Mission Council and the Nominations committee to do such further work as is necessary to create a 'think-tank' on mission and spirituality.**

This work is ongoing.

**3.4 Resolution 5: General Assembly resolved that as from 2008 it would elect two moderators at its biennial meeting, one a minister of Word and Sacraments or a church related community worker, and one an elder, to serve together for the following two years.**

**Resolution 5a: General Assembly asked Mission Council to review the whole process for the nomination and election of moderators of General Assembly.**

- 3.4.1 Mission Council had to consider these resolutions urgently, so that nominations could be brought to the 2008 Assembly. The Council was aware of the difficulty of changing the system, and therefore agreed to the suggestion that the Revd John Marsh continue to serve as sole moderator, with assistance from his predecessors, for the whole period from 2008-2010, and that at the 2008 Assembly a minister/ CRCW should be elected to serve as moderator between 2010 and 2012, and that an elder be elected at the same Assembly to serve for the same period.

3.5 **Resolution 47: General Assembly asked Mission Council to set up a task group to oversee the process of addressing issues of human sexuality, particularly those set out in the report (*Moratorium on policy decisions of homosexuality* – document 2 Reports to Assembly 2007) and to enable the process of widening discussions to involve the whole church.**

3.5.1 A task group is being formed, with the intention of Mission Council bringing a report to the 2010 General Assembly.

## 4 Actions taken on behalf of General Assembly

### 4.1 Appointments:

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council appointed:

- 4.1.1 the Revd Roberta Rominger as general secretary from a date to be agreed with the Thames North synod for a seven year period;
- 4.1.2 Mr Frank Kantor as secretary of Church and Society from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2007;
- 4.1.3 Ms Francis Brienen as secretary for Mission from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2008;
- 4.1.4 the Revd Dale Rominger as secretary for World Church Relations from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2007 until 31<sup>st</sup> October 2012;
- 4.1.5 the Revd Paul Whittle as moderator of Eastern synod from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2008 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015;
- 4.1.6 the Revd Dr Michael Jagessar as secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry, from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2013;
- 4.1.7 the Chairperson of the United Reformed Church Trust to be a member of General Assembly and of Mission Council;
- 4.1.8 Mrs Claudette Binns to serve as a Trustee forthwith until General Assembly 2014.

### 4.2 Reappointments:

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council, reappointed:

- 4.2.1 the Revd Richard Mortimer for a further term of service as secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith and Order, from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2008 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2013;
- 4.2.2 the Revd Nigel Uden as moderator of the Southern synod for a period of five years from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2013;
- 4.2.3 the Revd Peter Noble as moderator of the National synod of Wales for a period of five years from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2013.

- 4.2.4 Mission Council, received reports of the reviews of two synod moderators, and noted their recommendations that the Revd Adrian Bulley be reappointed to serve as moderator of Wessex synod from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2009 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2014;
- 4.2.5 and that the Revd Terry Oakley be reappointed to serve as moderator of the East Midlands synod from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2010 to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2012. (**Resolutions 9 and 10** on page 219).

### 4.3 Resolutions on behalf of General Assembly

4.3.1 Mission Council set the basic ministerial stipend for 2008 at £21,060.

#### 4.3.2 Ministers' Pensions Fund:

- 4.3.2.1 a) **Valuation:** A periodic valuation by professional advisers estimated on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006 that there was an actuarial deficit. The 2006 General Assembly agreed, by Resolution 23, to increase the Church's rate of contribution to the Pension Fund, with part of the extra money intended to close the Fund deficit by 2017.

- 4.3.2.2 The extra money the Church would pay to the Fund was expressed as a percentage contribution per active member of the Fund (7.3% of stipend). When the calculations were done, they implicitly assumed that the number of stipendiary ministers in active service would stay constant between 2006 and 2017. In fact it is expected that the number of ministers will decline and so the amount of money raised by this formula will not be sufficient to cover the deficit.
- 4.3.2.3 For the part of the Church's contribution to the Pension Fund that relates to covering the deficit, the sum paid per year until 2017 should be a sum fixed in real terms and not related to the number of active stipendiary ministers, for as long as their numbers continue to decline. In addition a retrospective payment should be made to offset the under-payment since the Assembly resolution came into force.
- 4.3.2.4 Consequently, Mission Council resolved that with respect to the Church's contributions to the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund:
- (i) from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2007, the active members' monthly stipend to be used in calculating the monthly payments to meet the shortfall in funding will be calculated based on the greater of a) the total active members' stipend roll in force in each particular month, and b) one twelfth of £11,895,208 indexed in line with the percentage increase in the level of a minister's stipend between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006 and the particular month; and
  - (ii) that an additional payment be made to the Fund to make up the difference between the shortfall funding payments made for the period from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2007 and the payments that would have been made if the formula in (i) above, had been in operation during that period.
- 4.3.3 **b) Amendment to the Rules**
- 4.3.3.1 Mission Council amended paragraphs 6.4 and 6.4.4 of the Rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund so that they read as follows:

6.4 'The Pension Trustee may, in the manner which it thinks fit and as if it were absolutely and beneficially entitled, use the whole or any part of the Fund to invest in, acquire, dispose of, lend or otherwise deal in or undertake to deal in any property, assets, rights, options, assurances, contracts or interests (whether or not such transactions involve liability, produce income or are authorised by law as investments for trust assets). Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing provisions trust money may be invested or applied as follows:

6.4.4 'In the purchase of assets of a non-income producing nature and any transaction calculated in the opinion of the Pension Trustee to offset or reduce any risk of loss to the Fund, or to facilitate efficient portfolio management (including the reduction of cost or the generation of additional capital or income with an acceptable level of risk), and so that the Pension Trustee may deal in foreign currencies (either at the official rate of exchange or any other rates), contracts for differences and other derivatives (exchange traded and non-exchange traded) for present or future settlement.'

- 4.3.4 **Membership of the Pensions Executive:** Noting that (a), the convener of the Pensions Executive is appointed by General Assembly and has always been a professional actuary, (b), the treasurer is an *ex officio* member of the Executive, and (c), the Executive also seeks suitable representatives of the Church's two main pension schemes to serve, Mission Council resolved that the Pensions Executive should include within its membership three people appointed by General Assembly, one of whom should be appointed as the convener.
- 4.3.5 **Optional Deferral of ministers' retirement dates:** Mission Council reaffirmed General Assembly's policy that ministers in full time stipendiary service should normally retire in the month of their 65<sup>th</sup> birthday but resolved that, with the agreement of the synod and of the pastorate/post concerned, this retirement could be deferred for a period of up to six months. For the avoidance of doubt, Mission Council reaffirmed the 2006 Assembly's decision (Resolution 26 'Duty to Consider': extension of full-time stipendiary service) for cases where a minister wishes to extend a period of full-time service beyond the six months after his or her 65<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- 4.3.6 **Regeneration Agency:** Mission Council noted with gratitude the work already undertaken on the development of the Regeneration Agency, and encouraged its further development as part of the mission of the United Reformed Church.
- 4.3.7 **Statement on Burma:** Mission Council expressed its deep concern for the suffering of the people of Burma and supported the worldwide international demonstrations on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2007 against the suppression of freedom in that country. It instructed the Mission department to convey this message to our partner churches in Burma.

## 5 Other Actions

Mission Council passed a number of resolutions concerning

### Committee reorganisation

- 5.1 It agreed that the Stewardship sub-committee become a sub-committee of the Finance committee, and that existing members of the sub-committee who wished to continue join those members appointed by the Finance committee.
- 5.2 It established a Law and Polity Advisory Group to advise on such constitutional and legal matters as the Council shall remit to it. Its first convener is to be the Revd Prof David Thompson.
- 5.3 It appointed a Faith and Order Reference Group.
- 5.4 It agreed to the setting up and the composition of a Mission committee.
- 5.5 Mission Council agreed that, in years when there was no ordinary meeting of General Assembly, the transition date for committee membership should be the end of the summer meeting of Mission Council or 1<sup>st</sup> July, whichever was the later.

### The appointment and review of Assembly-appointed staff

- 5.6 Mission Council agreed to increase the number of members on the Panel for the Appointment and Review of synod moderators to twenty-four, and to limit their service to six years.



5.7 It agreed that up to 50% of the ministry of the Revd James Breslin which relates to his work as Assembly clerk should be funded from the General Assembly budget for the remaining period of his appointment until the close of General Assembly 2012.

### **Financial and legal matters**

5.8 Mission Council accepted the budget for 2008.

5.9 and agreed to the creation of a designated Legacy Fund within the central accounts of the Church.

5.10 Mission Council agreed to the proposal of its Grants and Loans Group that the Group now be dissolved; developments elsewhere in the Church's structures, notably the evolution of synod resource sharing mechanisms, meant that the Group's objectives could be more efficiently achieved elsewhere. The Finance committee agreed with this view. Mission Council also resolved to phase out by 2012 the demand on the Ministry and Mission Fund to provide funding for the former purposes of the Grants and Loans Group.

### **Ministers and Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs)**

5.11 Mission Council resolved to establish a Working Party on Housing Provision for Ministers and CRCWs with the membership to include a minister in stipendiary service appointed by Mission Council, two members nominated by both the Finance and Ministries committees, and one nomination each from the Retired Ministers Housing sub-committee and the Provincial Legal and Trust Officers (PLATO) to report in time for the 2010 General Assembly.

5.12 Mission Council instructed the clerk of Assembly, in consultation with the Ministries committee and the CRCW Development Officers, to prepare alterations to the Structure of the United Reformed Church such as to grant membership of the relevant Councils of the Church to church related community workers.

5.13 Mission Council also resolved to move in General Assembly that 'General Assembly appoints all serving CRCWs currently in post or commissioned between this date and the next ordinary meeting of the General Assembly to serve as additional members of the synod in which they are based.' **(Resolution 11)**

5.14 **London Synod Commission:** The 2005 Assembly instructed Mission Council to appoint a Commission of Assembly to investigate the feasibility of creating a London synod. The Commission, convened by a former Assembly moderator, the Revd Bill Mahood, reported to Mission Council in March 2007. Mission Council asked the Commission to do further work on the mission justification for a London synod, on synod boundaries, the division of resources, financial and staffing implications, synod offices and Trusts. Two representatives from Thames North and Southern synods were to be co-opted on to the Commission.

5.14.1 Mission Council also set a timetable, asking that initial proposals be brought to the synod meetings in Spring 2009, so that, if agreed, final proposals could be brought to Mission Council and General Assembly in 2010. If approved, a London synod could then be fully operative by General Assembly in 2012.

5.14.2 In March 2008 the Commission came back to Mission Council with the recommendation that the detailed work on the practical implications be deferred for a further period. This recommendation was based on the following considerations

- a) a parallel process had been initiated to undertake research into the state of the United Reformed Church presence in London, with a view towards identifying a ten-year strategy for mission and development. The resulting report 'Bread to Spare' had been generally well received and the two synods had produced a joint proposal for its implementation through the establishment of a 'Partnership Forum' comprising key representatives from both synods, in order to oversee delivery of the strategy across the two synods. This would have a particular emphasis on relating to Greater London as a whole, but will not be confined to the London area;
- b) there was good evidence that local churches were prepared to support this strategy with a degree of energy and enthusiasm; it needed to be given a reasonable time to test out how well the process works;
- c) the 'Partnership Forum' proposal for co-operation across the synods could be a way of testing the ground for whether such a joint 'Agency' might meet the need for a unified approach to issues relating to Greater London, or whether a stronger and more coherent structure (such as a single synod) might be required in the longer run;
- d) it would not be appropriate to expend time and energy at the present time on working out details of the implications of implementing a London synod, as this information might well be out of date in a few years time if a delay was agreed.

5.14.3 Mission Council accepted that detailed work on the possible implementation of a single London synod be deferred, pending an assessment of whether co-operative work between the two existing synods might adequately meet the need for developing a coherent strategy for (a) relating to the Greater London Authority and (b) helping local churches within the London area to deliver effective mission to the city; and agreed that a final report be brought to Mission Council in time for General Assembly in 2012.

5.14.4 In the intervening period the London synod Commission would continue to meet annually with the moderators of Thames North and Southern synods and representatives of the Partnership Forum, to receive reports on the development of the Forum's work and together to evaluate the implications for the possible formation of a London synod.

### 5.15 **Windermere Centre**

Mission Council endorsed proposals for developing facilities at the Windermere Centre in partnership with the Carver Memorial Church and instructed the Finance committee, in conjunction with the Education and Learning committee, to undertake the necessary detailed negotiations on behalf of the Assembly. The Council delegated to the Mission Council Advisory Group the authority to approve the proposed link building at Carver Memorial Church provided that the plans had the support of the Carver Church Meeting, the North Western Synod Trust, the Windermere Advisory Group, the Finance committee, the Education and Learning committee and the United Reformed Church Trustees; and that the total cost to be met by grants from central funds would not be more than £250,000.

5.15.1 Mission Council accepted that the annual financial support for the Windermere Centre 2009 revenue budget should be in the range £50k–£100k at 2008 prices.



Windermere Centre

#### **5.16 Emergency Resolution on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip**

Mission Council passed a resolution which was sent to the UK Government, Christian Aid, United Reformed Church project partners in the region, and the Palestinian National Authority, expressing outrage at the impact of the continuing violence on the civilian population in Gaza; support for international efforts to be directed towards ending the blockade of Gaza, and an appeal to Palestinian and Israeli leaders to draw from their faith tradition to work towards achieving peace and justice in both Israel and Palestine.

#### **5.17 Statement on the 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Iraq War on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2008**

Mission Council, on this anniversary, expressed its deep sorrow at the devastating consequences of this war and occupation for the people of Iraq and for the members and families of the coalition forces; it called on those with influence and authority to bring an end to the occupation of Iraq; advocated the resolution of conflict through diplomatic means. The statement also paid tribute to, and offered prayers for, the work of forces chaplains whose calling was to provide spiritual support and comfort to service women and men.

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

### **6.1 Resource Sharing Task Group**

6.1.1 The Resource Sharing Task Group (RSTG) and the Inter-Synod Resource Consultation continue to meet. All meetings have been conducted in a good spirit with openness and transparency being essential elements. The work towards achieving the goal of greater sharing of resources between synods continues. Those involved in the process are always seeking new ideas and

ways to improve what has already been achieved. To those synods who contribute substantial funds each year for sharing amongst synods a very grateful thanks is extended, not only from General Assembly but also from the synods receiving financial help.

- 6.1.2 The quartet and quintet groups have met in accordance with the existing arrangements. The continual exchange of ideas and information on all manner of topics has proved to be extremely useful and beneficial to all concerned. It is clear there is a greater understanding of the problems faced by individual synods – and how to solve them.
- 6.1.3 The following are some of the more important issues raised:
- the use of capital receipts from the sale of redundant properties for use on mission projects;
  - the implications of the new Charities Act 2006, with reference to the new accounting methods for churches having to register;
  - Ministry and Mission payments relative to Local Ecumenical Projects;
  - the proposed model Synod 14;
  - the dissolution of district and area councils;
  - the need for more accountability with regards to expenditure on buildings;
  - the increasing burden of costs being devolved to synods following the decisions taken about the funding of the YCWT programme;
  - the proposal that synods should contribute 10% of sale receipts of redundant properties to the Retired Ministers' Housing Society.
- 6.1.4 Work has continued on the proposal to develop a blue-print of a model synod; it is currently referred to as synod 14. The recent work has been looking at Core Tasks and Core Staff. Core Tasks are based on the manual and are seen as a framework on which to build. Core Staff are not prescribed in any way and it is evident synods deal with this issue in many different ways and this is to be expected. It is hoped to complete the work in the near future.
- 6.1.5 The RSTG has held two meetings since General Assembly in 2007. The general secretary and Mr John Ellis Honorary treasurer attended the RSTG meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2007. Mr Ellis also attended the full Consultation meeting held on the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2007.
- 6.1.6 There is still much to be done in encouraging synods to work more closely together and to look at other ways of sharing resources. There appears to be some willingness to move in this direction but some synods are still reticent and remain to be convinced of the possible benefits.
- 6.1.7 Mr Tom Woodbridge (Scotland) and the convener Revd Elizabeth Caswell (Eastern) are due to stand down from their duties with the RSTG in October 2008. Both have made significant contributions to the whole process over the years they have been involved and the United Reformed Church is indebted to them for their valuable service. Replacements are being sought and they will be reported in due course.

## 6.2 Ethical Investment Advisory Group Report

- 6.2.1 The Ethical Investment Advisory Group (EIAG) has been involved in the following activities and discussions since the last Assembly:
- 6.2.1.1 **Synod investments** – the EIAG continued to communicate with synods on their investments portfolios with a view to greater sharing of information and good practice across the United Reformed Church. John Ellis has written to synods in his capacity as treasurer requesting information on the performance of synod investments and this information is still awaited from a number of synods.
- 6.2.1.2 **Oikocredit** – following discussion on the services offered by Oikocredit at their October meeting, the EIAG supported the idea that an article be written in *Reform* explaining Oikocredit's activities. This appeared in the January 2008 edition of *Reform* and the EIAG has endorsed the decision to follow this up with a mailing to all churches publicising

Oikocredit which was agreed at a follow-up meeting with Patrick Hynes, the UK representative of Oikocredit, in December.

- 6.2.1.3 **Extension of ethical investment guidelines** – the EIAG has commissioned Church and Society to undertake a review of the United Reformed Church’s ethical investment guidelines to incorporate the social, environmental and governance impact of companies operations in addition to the existing policy guidelines. These guidelines will be developed in conjunction with ecumenical partners but the United Reformed Church will take the lead on this important initiative with the view to submitting these guidelines to Mission Council at their December meeting.
- 6.2.1.4 **Review of Nestlé boycott** – the working group established to review the decision taken at Assembly in 1992 to boycott Nestlé products met last year and has commissioned a number of reports to guide their response on this complex issue (including the extended ethical investment guidelines and analysis of the Methodist Church’s decision to engage with Nestlé). A report from the Nestlé working group will be presented to Mission Council at their December meeting.
- 6.2.1.5 **Climate Change** – reflecting on the impact of companies operations on climate change (recently debated by the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility); the EIAG endorsed the decision for this issue to be included in the extended investment guidelines of the United Reformed Church. It also endorsed the proposal by Richard Nunn that the United Reformed Church affiliate with the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change.
- 6.2.1.6 **Ethics of United Reformed Church’s Auditors** – following a question at Assembly, concerns had been followed up with PricewaterhouseCoopers, who undertook to look at issues thrown up by aspects of PwC’s African operations. PwC noted however that they are not a multinational company and the British Partnership responsible for our audit is quite distinct from those operating abroad.
- 6.2.1.7 **Conference on Churches and Socially Responsible Investment: 6-7 May 2008** – three members of the EIAG attended this conference which was jointly organised by Oikocredit and the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches in Brussels. A full report on this conference can be downloaded from the Church and Society section of the United Reformed Church website.

### 6.3 Section O Advisory Group

- 6.3.1 All documents relating to Section O (Disciplinary Process) need revision because of changes to the Church structures, cross references to the separate Incapacity Procedure (Section P) and because church related community workers now come within the scope of Section O. Among other changes, we have provided for information to be given to the church’s press officer at the start of a case and at other stages. The reason for this is, of course, so that s/he is able to respond appropriately to any approaches from the media. The press officer will not initiate contact with the press about a case.
- 6.3.2 This work has constituted a major task, not least because errors in our documents could lead to miscarriages of justice. It is essential that any who need to use Section O ensure that they have the most up-to-date version of the schedules and guidelines.
- 6.3.3 We have reviewed the way that training and support should be given to Mandated Groups who have the onerous responsibility of investigating allegations and, where appropriate, preparing and presenting a case for an Assembly Commission hearing. Each synod has now appointed one person to be a member of a Joint Panel from which one member will be selected to lead in the work of a Mandated Group. We hope that the measures we are taking will give greater confidence to those concerned.

- 6.3.4 We have also liaised with synod moderators about the support that they need in the operation of Section O.
- 6.3.5 We have prepared eight resolutions of which a maximum of five will be presented to the Assembly. Resolution **1** ratifies the decision taken under Resolution 12 of 2007 to introduce a Procedure (the Section P Procedure) for dealing with cases of incapacity involving ministers or church related community workers (CRCWs). (This Procedure was formerly known as the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure and it has been renamed to reflect the inclusion of CRCWs.) If this resolution is passed by the Assembly then Resolutions **2, 3, 4** and **5** will be taken and Resolutions **6, 7** and **8** will be withdrawn. Resolution **2** puts in place the Rules of Procedure (Part II) for the Section P Procedure, Resolution **3** would ratify Resolution 16 of 2007 which adopted a new Part I of Section O, Resolution **4** puts in place a new Part II for Section O and Resolution **5** provides indemnity for those within the church who fulfil their functions under the Section O Process and the Section P Procedure. If Resolution **1** is not passed, then Resolutions **2, 3, 4** and **5** will be withdrawn and Resolutions **6, 7** and **8** will be presented instead. These are comparable to Resolutions **3, 4** and **5** respectively but without references to the Incapacity Procedure (Section P).
- 6.3.6 NB Resolution 18 of 2007 makes changes to the Basis of Union and Resolutions 14 of 2007 (with or without the reference to the Incapacity Procedure), 15 of 2007 (if Resolution **1** is passed) and 19 of 2007 make changes to the Structure. All need to be ratified by the 2008 Assembly. They will be gathered in a composite resolution which will include all the changes to the Basis and Structure due to be ratified this year. The references to the Structure contained in the headings and Paragraphs 2 of the respective Parts I set out in Resolutions **1, 3** and **6** have been corrected in accordance with these changes.

### 6.4 The Grants and Loans Group

- 6.4.1 The Group (GLG) administers the Church Buildings Fund, which provides grants and loans to churches to assist with improvements/modifications to church buildings, and the Mission Project Fund, which provides grants for mission work. The policy of giving grants only to synods and churches with the greatest need has been continued.
- 6.4.2 **Budget Provision:** For the year 2007 the budget for grants from the Church Building Fund was approx £117,000. This is the expected income from dividends, deposit account interest and loan interest. This has been used primarily for provision of funds for facilities for the disabled. By the end of the year £58,000 had been spent, with £23,000 granted but not yet spent and a further £13,000 approved at our December meeting. There is always a problem knowing when a grant will be taken up as there are often delays in building work being carried out. If the grant is not taken up within 12 months an extension has to be applied for, but will normally be given. One loan of £25,000 has been made for work on a church building. The allocation for the Mission Project Fund was £135,000 (including £20,000 from Carmichael Montgomery Capital Fund) of which £108,500 has been spent. Again it is not always known when the grant will be taken up.
- 6.4.3 **Grants for facilities for the disabled:** applications for grants towards costs of facilities for the disabled are still being received. This year, nine applications have been approved, a slight decrease on 2006. 11 grants were paid out and there is a commitment from 2007 for a further nine grants, totalling £41,000 for 2008. This means that approx £65,000 will be available next year for grants for building work. Hopefully some of this will be available for work other than on facilities for the disabled.
- 6.4.4 **Mission Project Fund:** In 2007, eleven applications were received of which nine were approved, but five were for extensions of existing projects. An annual report is asked for from all the mission projects; the group is very

encouraged by the initiative, determination and commitment of the people seeking to be 'church' in their communities. From now on a formal review of a project will be asked for before granting any extensions.

- 6.4.5 The group believes that the money it makes available from Central Funds provides a real benefit, both to local churches and communities, and that without it many projects would not get started. As in last year, the hope is that these projects if successful will become self financing. However it is once again clear that many of the projects, especially those in inner cities, though very successful, will need continued financial support. Following the pilot study of an independent evaluation of their project carried out for us by Marlpool and Langley, we have decided that all applications for extensions to projects must be accompanied by an independent evaluation. Incidentally the Marlpool and Langley review resulted in the application for a grant being withdrawn.
- 6.4.5.1 As indicated in last year's report the group has found, especially with applications to the Mission Project Fund, that it needs a representative from the appropriate synod to be present. It is good that the group now has a full complement of representatives, so it has now been agreed that a representative from the appropriate synod must be present for discussion of any Mission Project application.
- 6.4.5.2 In response to the *Catch the Vision* process the group had questioned the future of the Grants and Loans Group and whether the business could not be carried out just as effectively in other committees. A decision is still awaited on this following the reorganizations that have occurred. There however is some concern within GLG about whether there is a more appropriate forum within the structures now in place to discuss Mission Project applications. Considerable expertise has been built up within GLG for looking at these longer term projects.
- 6.4.6 **Thanks:** The group would like to record its thanks to Dr Brian Woodhall (convener) and Mr Graham Rolfe (secretary); and to Rob Seaman (Finance Office) for all the support he has given.

### 1 SUMMARY OF GRANTS PAID FOR FACILITIES FOR DISABLED

North Western synod	5 Grants	Total	£25,000
East Midlands synod	2 Grants	Total	£ 8,000
Eastern synod	4 Grants	Total	£20,000
South Western synod	1 Grant	Total	£ 5,000

### 2 SUMMARY OF LOANS

North Western synod	1 loan	Total	£25,000
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### 3 SUMMARY OF MISSION GRANTS AGREED

Openshaw St Pauls with St Johns	£40,000 over 4 years	(NW synod)
Gamston	£29,500 over 5 years	(E Midlands synod)
Whetstone	£ 5,000 over 2 years	(E Midlands synod)
Groby	£ 3,000 over 1 year	(E Midlands synod)
Sleaford	£25,000 over 5 year	(E Midlands synod)
Pilgrim, Plymouth	£19,500 over 3 years	(SW synod)
Mid Somerset	£ 9,000 over 3 years	(SW synod)
Penhill	£14,000 over 5 years	(SW synod)

### 6.5 Listed Buildings Advisory Group

6.5.1 The Listed Buildings Advisory Group coordinates the work of the synod listed buildings advisory committees in the promotion of mission, focusing on the role of the historic church building as a mission resource. Church buildings are centres of God's work, resources for mission, and they need to be continually seen in this light. The historic church buildings we have inherited are a priceless asset. Regardless of what the law requires, future generations will not thank us if we have unreasonably changed them for short term benefit without taking account of the wider picture. Nevertheless, as mission changes, so buildings have to change to reflect it or, on occasion, may even have to be disposed of. However, where the churches' mission demands it there are usually ways of both retaining the best and providing suitable resources for the future. The challenge is to manage the tension between preserving the best of what is and creating premises which support lively and vibrant church communities, which in their turn minister to a wider community. If we do this well, our buildings can go on serving us while continuing to tell us about who we are and how we come to be what we are.

6.5.2 The group met twice in the year. It has revised and agreed with the Department of Culture Media and Sport the control procedure by which synods manage the denomination's Ecclesiastical Exemption arrangements. Now on the Church's website, it reflects the new structure of the United Reformed Church and incorporates for the first time provision for appeals.

6.5.3 The Group continues to foster relations with other denominations and bodies with similar concerns where these will benefit the Church's work. In 2007 these have included:

- attendance at the English Heritage Places of Worship Forum;
- mutual cross-representation at Listed Buildings Advisory committee meetings with the Baptist Union of Great Britain to share best practice;
- attendance at the annual Roman Catholic conference on the management of historic church buildings.

6.5.4 On behalf of the Church the group monitors developments in the legislative and regulatory framework affecting historic church buildings. It undertook a detailed study of the government's Heritage White Paper which proposes changes in the way historic buildings are recorded and managed, and prepared a response which included expressing concern about the implications for local churches and their officers. Similarly the group responded to new proposals from English Heritage on conservation principles, policy and guidance urging the need to provide assistance to church officers in preparing the documentation proposed. In particular, statements of significance are rapidly becoming standard currency in any official discussion of historic buildings, but there are no proposals to help churches acquire the skills required to prepare them.

6.5.5 The group has received advice from the Charity Commission that the Historic Chapels Trust is entitled to acquire (and trustees enabled to dispose of) redundant places of worship at less than the market value, subject to a Charity Commission scheme.





# East Midlands Synod

## 1 Synod Strategy

The synod is pursuing five elements as part of a strategy for the next few years:

- releasing financial resources from investment income and sale of property to resource mission initiatives in local churches through a Mission Fund;
- imaginative ways of deploying ministers in collaboration with local church leaders, lay preachers and others;
- encouraging local churches and ministers to reflect on mission through ministerial development and review in conjunction with revising pastorate profiles;
- encouraging all local churches to engage with **Vision4Life**; and
- integrating the Crossways Centre at Yardley Hastings into all aspects of the life of the churches and synod.

## 2 Synod Structure

As part of becoming a new synod a third synod meeting has been introduced in June. This will take the form of a Synod Day, with workshops and worship, though there will be a space for any urgent business that needs to be done. The first is planned for June 14<sup>th</sup> at Nottingham Bluecoat School. The new structure is working reasonably well through groups with responsibility for Pastoral, Ministries, Finance and Property, Youth and Children's Work, Mission Enabling. We are working through a Search Group to find well qualified people to serve in synod posts, paralleling the way the Assembly Nominations committee is moving. Our new synod clerk is making a difference to our effective working practices. We are blessed by a good office and synod team who are much appreciated for their help and assistance to local churches. Our communication is helped by a fortnightly e-letter, send out by email (and monthly by post to those who do not have email). It contains stories, news of events, training courses, updates of contact details and links for many of these items to website pages ([www.urc5.org.uk](http://www.urc5.org.uk)).

## 3 Synod Stories

We enjoyed a visit by a group of singers from Botswana synod of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, who inspired us at synod and in events in several local churches. The trip was organised by Muriel Garrow, who sadly died just a few weeks afterwards. Muriel was a remarkable woman: a member of the world-wide Church, through visits to many of our global partners, especially through the Churches of Christ family links. She served as the first CWM Europe Mission Enabler, having already served the United Reformed Church in a similar post. Her life and witness serve as an example to us all of faithful discipleship of Christ.

## 4 Synod Specials

Another Special Category Ministry post was filled earlier this year at the Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal (DIRFT). It is a new kind of chaplaincy to the supply-chain industry. Around junction 18 of the M1 there is a large cluster of warehouses constantly supplied by fleets of lorries.

The minister will also be based at Lutterworth United Reformed Church near the Magna Park distribution centre. This is in addition to a post in Milton Keynes which is still rapidly expanding in the Watling Valley sector, and where there is a new ecumenical Primary School – Christ the Sower; a post in Brackley where a new church is growing through worship at breakfast on Sunday in a local school; a post in Leicester as part of the Ecumenical St Philip’s Centre helping Christians learn how to live out their faith in a multifaith context; and a post in Nottingham linking community ministry with regional ecumenical structures.

### 5 Synods Sharing

The East Midlands synod, is willing to be the lead synod amongst a group of four synods planning the ‘between Assembly’ event at Loughborough University on 10–12<sup>th</sup> July 2009. We are still working on a name for the event; amongst the options so far are: GATHERING ChURCh; URC@ Loughborough, U R Church. We hope to attract adults, young people and children either for a full weekend or for overnight Friday or Saturday and certainly many more for the Saturday.

### 6 Synod Supplement

It is worth reporting that a number of new developments are personal to the synod team: two of our staff will have given birth by Assembly, another has become a grandmother, and several ministers will have retired, some on health grounds. The Church is people not just strategies, structures, stories or specials. Our synod moderator has been invited to continue in post up to his retirement in May 2012; our Training and Development Officer will serve her final year before retirement as three-quarter time post at her request. We give thanks for all the people who serve the synod and thereby the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.



Assembly Hall, 2007

# Southern Synod

'... to keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful.' II Peter 1.8

## 1 Preamble

Since it last reported to General Assembly, Southern synod has been at one with so many others across our nations in working on strategies and structures aimed at enabling and encouraging local churches to be effective and fruitful in their pursuit of God's mission. During Spring 2006 some eight hundred and fifty elders attended presentations in seven district-based gatherings to examine the challenges and opportunities we face. The by now familiar *Catch the Vision* strap-line has been influential; many find it an inspiration to focus upon a motto that gives identity (God's people), hope (transformed by the Gospel) and purpose (making a difference).

## 2 Synod Programmes

Taking their place amongst much else in the synod's life, three programmes contribute significantly as we endeavour to be the Church authentically and relevantly for the twenty-first century. *Water in the desert* offers ministry of Word and Sacraments to a range of projects, most of which are alongside rather than within the life of congregations. For example, Puppet Ministry amongst children, and especially schools, engagement with the burgeoning community in and around the Dome in Greenwich, and Cell Church, to name but three. *Turn the tide* makes grants to assist local churches in their ministry amongst children and young people. An innovative focus upon *Community Regeneration* brings new life and purpose to churches and their buildings where previously the future looked bleak.

## 3 Doing things ecumenically

Ecumenically a Methodist/United Reformed Church United Area has been established in Central Sussex, and there are serious discussions about the possibility of several others. In the light of Methodist reorganisation in and around London we have been in regular and close discussion with its South East district. Several shared initiatives, including training, are being planned, and there is real potential for a growing commitment to be the Church together. We are at the heart of Churches Together sponsoring bodies in Kent, South London, Surrey and Sussex. There are more than forty Local Ecumenical Partnerships or covenanted congregations with either Anglican, Baptist or Methodist associates. In common with other synods, we enjoy mutually enriching overseas partnerships with the Diocese of Rayalaseema in the Church of South India (CSI), with the Reformed Church of Sub Carpathian Ukraine and through the Ghanaian Ministry in London, with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana and the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. Exchange visits and sharing in various outreach enterprises give reality to the links, eg provision of parsonages and mopeds for CSI presbyters to enable the effectiveness of their ministry.

## 4 Training

A great deal of energy and effort is given to training, so that we can play our part in equipping people for fruitful Christian life, which for many includes embracing one of the increasingly diverse range of ministries that are at the heart of the United Reformed Church's witness in the south east. Elders, lay preachers, local church leaders as well as ministers of Word and Sacraments, are offered various opportunities for in-service development, both through day sessions and residential courses.

### 5 London

For some years United Reformed churches in London have closed at a disturbing rate. In collaboration with Thames North synod considerable work has been done to ensure the denomination's life and work in London is farsighted and properly planned. *Bread to spare* is the resulting long term vision for how we can engage with this globally pivotal city. Its thrust is *regenerating discipleship*, which recognises the dual priorities of spiritual vitality within London's United Reformed churches in order to be agents of abundant life in the capital. The effectiveness of *Bread to spare* will either demonstrate that ministry and mission both sides of the Thames is 'doable' by two synods working closely together or it will provide hard evidence suggesting the creation of a separate London synod. By 2012 we hope to know.

### 6 Structures

Following the Church's decision to move from four councils of the church to three, our seven district councils completed their work in the Summer 2007, each by gathering around the Lord's Table. There was real gratitude for much faithful and fine service over the previous thirty five years, not least for those who held office as chairman/president, secretary or treasurer. To ensure care, fellowship and cooperation in mission for the local churches we have established six Area Co-Ordination Teams (ACTs), plus the Central Sussex United Area. These have assumed much of the responsibility of the former Pastoral committees. The synod's committees have been reduced in number and operate under the umbrella of a Mission and Strategy committee, which also acts in the name of synod when necessary. To ensure adequate monitoring of the effectiveness and fruitfulness of the new ways of being Southern synod a careful review will commence in Autumn 2008.

### 7 Staff

The structure is undergirded by a staff team. With the moderator and pastor, administrative, finance and property personnel are mostly based at East Croydon United Reformed Church. In the field we are served by development, ecumenical, mission, regeneration, and youth and children's work officers. They work alongside a legion of others who serve in various capacities, not least the synod's voluntary and indefatigable officers and committee members. The ministries of all these people, so varied and generously given, are greatly valued; they enable whatever effectiveness and fruitfulness is achieved. The gratitude is all the more heartfelt given the unusual demands of this transitional period.

### 8 Conclusion

This report began with words from the opening of St Peter's second epistle; we close with its end, which sums up our need, our goal and our faith: *'But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.'* II Peter 3.18

Nigel Uden  
Moderator

Graham Campling  
Clerk



# Wessex Synod

An important synod strategy document was approved and endorsed by synod in November 2005. Since then, committees, groups and individuals have been working to fulfil the stated purpose of the synod, *'to assist the local church in its response to God's call to mission, as expressed in the Five Marks of Mission'*. Those in leadership within the synod firmly believe that, if the synod is not fulfilling the purpose of assisting local churches to respond to God's call to mission, it has no right to exist. This report seeks to give a snapshot of some of the ways in which that focus has supported and enabled local mission.

## 1 Stories of change

1.1 A substantial synod grant enabled the church at Hythe to undertake a comprehensive redevelopment of their buildings which saw all but the shell of their sanctuary demolished. The new premises have been designed, not just to enhance the church's worship, but also to support the development of the church's important 'Families Matter' initiative and other activities, and to provide a user-friendly base for community activities including a daily foyer ministry and the local baby clinic. The new buildings are already contributing significantly to the church's mission activities.

1.2 In Petersfield, a synod grant enabled the employment of a children's and families' worker who has been such a success in attracting children into the church that the buildings have had to be extended to accommodate them all. Other churches across the synod who received grants from the synod to employ workers under its 'Going for Gold' initiative bear witness to the impact those people have had upon youth and children's work, work with families, making more effective use of premises and mission in their locality.

1.3 The synod has developed an effective team of people who are available to offer advice and support to churches in the areas of mission and evangelism, buildings and youth and children's work. Often they work together in helping a church to think through its mission opportunities. Many churches give thanks for the new ways of thinking and being that members of this synod team have made possible through meetings and workshops.

1.4 The synod's investment in youth and children's work (where churches benefit from two full-time posts: a Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Officer and a secretary for Youth and Children's Ministry) has undoubtedly facilitated the development of a highly successful and effective synod youth executive through which young people are able to exercise leadership and play a key role in the shaping and delivery of the synod's ministry with and for children and young people. The synod has been delighted to celebrate the award of four Child Friendly Church awards to date, while twelve more churches are currently progressing through the self-evaluation process.

1.5 New ecumenical developments continue within the synod. Two local churches are at an advanced stage in exploring the possibility of establishing Local Ecumenical Partnerships with their local Methodist congregations. In one case a recently completed building project has no doubt helped this process. At least two other congregations are at early stages of a similar process.

### 2 Sharing news

2.1 The synod executive has recently initiated a monthly synod e-newsletter that aims to maintain and develop effective communications across the synod, sharing news of forthcoming events, ministerial movements and good news stories from churches. Early reaction has been extremely positive.

2.2 For 2008 the synod executive has introduced 'Sharing Together': a synod prayer handbook that seeks to encourage local churches to hold one another in prayer Sunday by Sunday.

### 3 Refreshing synod meetings

3.1 In November 2007 our biennial meeting of synod took on a new dimension for Wessex. As well as time together to address common issues and make some decisions, we set aside a significant amount of time (a full hour before lunch and a further full hour following lunch) for workshops gathered around the theme of 'mission'. Workshops included Bible study, 'enabling your church's mission', 'starting a young people's group from scratch', 'fundraising for mission', 'promoting your church' and translating a local church's vision for mission into a building project. The feedback was enthusiastically positive, and we aim to repeat the experiment, with different overall themes (centring upon the appropriate **Vision4Life** focus) in our November meetings of synod over the coming years.

### 4 'Challenge and Choice'

4.1 Wessex synod has consistently had around twelve students in training for the ministries of church related community work and Word and Sacraments; this year there are only five students in training for those ministries. Allied to this, ten stipendiary ministers are retiring from full-time service within the synod in 2008 alone. These facts have spurred us into a focus upon vocations because we need new leaders to help local churches fulfil their mission potential.

4.2 '*Challenge and Choice*' is a major initiative which will have taken place by the time of Assembly to challenge individuals to recognise and respond to God's call upon their lives to a variety of ministries. It will take the form of a day of opportunities for participants to try their hands at a number of physical and mental challenges aimed at exercising them outside their comfort zones, and will make the link with the Christian pilgrimage and the challenge and choice associated with God's call.



# The National Synod of Wales

## 1 The new synod

1.1 Much of the focus of our work over the past 12 months has been on reshaping our life without district councils. A useful summary of what we have tried to create in Wales is presented in this short statement:-

1.2 The new synod in 100 words:-

*Synod will continue to meet, be served by **Synod Officers** and **Synod Council**, which will develop vision and set priorities. **Boards**, accessed directly by Local Churches, will implement policies in specified areas, such as mission, property and finance, and leadership development. **Networks** will be developed to provide information and connect interested people. **Synod Elders** will be called to encourage and represent the life of the synod in the **Regions**. The key focus of life and mission in the synod remains the **Local Church**, served by the ministry of **Elders**, which the structures of synod are designed to enhance and enable.*

1.3 The task group who handled the re-structuring put in almost two years' work with drafts and redrafts of the Vision and Structure document which was presented personally to groups from each local congregation in a series of consultative road-shows. Ownership of the new synod structure by people from local churches was essential and the model of road-shows is one that had been proven to work in Wales and one which we will use again.

1.4 With the local church very much in mind, one of the core elements of our new structure is the creation of synod elders. We now have 14 people elected regionally but meeting together as a synod elders meeting and acting as 'a pro-active link between local and synod'. These synod elders were commissioned at the synod meeting in March 2008.

1.5 We hope the new structure takes seriously the desire for each local church to be at the centre of everything that we hope to achieve. The new synod exists to resource local congregations in mission to their communities as they seek to make the gospel come to life.

1.6 As we begin to settle in to this new way of being the United Reformed Church in Wales and new people take up new and different responsibilities there is a feeling of treading into the unknown. It is still early days but we hope that the time and effort that was put in to preparing for the new synod will have its reward.

## 2 Other developments

Whilst re-structuring has taken up most of our time and energy we do have a number of things in the pipeline.

2.1 We are currently exploring the possibility of entering into a Global Partnership with The Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM). The Revd Dale Rominger addressed the synod meeting in March and presented this exciting possibility which was enthusiastically received. Wales as a country has some historical links with Madagascar and the FJKM, whilst many times larger than the Wales synod, is not unlike us in the challenges that it faces.

2.2 The synod at present stands alone in the United Reformed Church in not employing someone as a Youth and Childrens' Officer. Various attempts have been made over recent years to secure such an appointment but none have so far been successful. In recognition of the importance of such work a fresh attempt is now being made and has been agreed in principle by synod.

2.3 The synod now has a Mission Development Fund to which churches are encouraged to apply for funding for mission based projects. The fund is serviced from the proceeds of sales of redundant churches, money which can now be ploughed back into developing ideas which otherwise may well have never materialised. The ceiling amount is set at £10,000 for each application and so far a number of interesting projects have been helped by this fund.

### **3 News of people**

In common with other synods we set aside some posts to resource the churches in Wales. Some changes have occurred in these posts in the last 12 months.

3.1 We said goodbye to two of our synod officers in 2007. The Revd Stuart Jackson retired from stipendiary service having served as full-time Ecumenical Officer in Wales for 8 years and over 40 years in the ministry. We also said farewell to the Revd Alison Davis, who was Training and Development Officer for the southern part of Wales and is now part of the Norwich Team Ministry.

3.2 We welcome the Revd Chris Coe as our new rural officer in 2007. The post of rural officer is one which the synod feels is vital bearing in mind the number of local congregations that are situated in rural settings. Chris hardly had time to unpack his boxes before the farming community was faced with two potentially major issues – the Foot and Mouth outbreak at the Pirbright facility in Surrey and the detection of Bluetongue in livestock at a Suffolk Farm. Neither affected agriculture in Wales greatly but it did add to the stress amongst the farming community – an issue that is never far away.

3.3 We have also welcomed back to the synod the Revd Peter Trow as full-time Ecumenical Officer. The ecumenical scene in Wales differs somewhat from the English setup as we relate to National Churches such as the Church in Wales and the Presbyterian Church of Wales as well as connexional ones such as the Methodist Church. The national synod of Wales shares with these partner churches in Ecumenical Areas, Local Church Partnerships as well as through Cytûn – the ecumenical instrument for Wales. The post of ecumenical officer is therefore vital in our engagement with our sisters and brothers in churches across the nation.

3.4 Finally, the synod welcomes with acclaim the reappointment of the Revd Peter Noble as moderator and looks forward to the next five years under his leadership, vision and care.





## Bishops Lydeard South Western Synod

1.1 The Congregational chapel at Bishops Lydeard was opened in May 1857. Over the years many events were held there. As well as the usual services of worship, there were many social events, including special birthday and anniversary celebrations, dramatic productions and concerts. A Brownie pack and a Mother and Toddler Group used the chapel building for many years; it is believed that Bishops Lydeard was the only church in the synod complete with bouncy castle! Children's workshops were also held, one of which involved the creation of Goliath to scale (9ft tall). During a family service, the lad playing David fired his catapult, hit Goliath right between the eyes and Goliath came crashing down with dramatic effect.

1.2 At the heart of the fellowship were weekly prayer and bible study evenings. The chapel fellowship supported missionary work such as the Moises family from South America who were working in Egypt and Israel and who visited the chapel with their young missionaries-in-training. Pat and Margaret House, worshippers at the chapel, were gifted stain-glass designers, and created a beautiful window for the chapel before they returned to Australia, which was an inspiration to those who saw it. The window is now situated in Langport chapel.

1.3 Eventually, it became clear that the chapel was no longer viable, both from a financial and practical point of view. The fellowship had dwindled to five committed Christians but this was not enough to continue the Christian work, as several members had moved from the village. The decision to close was not an easy one and it was debated long and hard, with much prayer. However, the decision was made and the final service of worship took place on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2007, exactly 150 years from the beginnings of Christian worship at the chapel. The special fellowship and Christian love that was evident during its time as a Christian fellowship will always be with those who worshipped there.

## Castleton United Reformed Church Rochdale

1.1 In January 1866 a number of friends gathered in the village of Blue Pits to the south of Rochdale in order to form a Congregational Chapel and Sabbath School. They hired a shop and upper room in the village and held their first public worship on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1866 and enrolled 20 scholars. They soon agreed to rent a plot of land on which a permanent chapel could be built and in March 1870 the new building was completed at a total cost of £2,350. By this time Blue Pits was becoming known as Castleton and that was the name taken by the church as they moved into this new building. The building was on two levels with a large schoolroom on the ground floor and a church on the first floor. The schoolrooms were extended and an organ added to the church in 1889 and another extension was completed in 1959, but essentially the building layout remained the same throughout its history.

1.2 In 1875 Castleton Congregational Day School opened in the schoolrooms and served the whole village until 1903 when the new council school was opened. As the village grew so did the church, through much of the twentieth century it thrived as a community and spiritual hub for the village, as a home for a variety of groups and organisations and a thriving congregation. In latter years the community groups began to go elsewhere and the congregation gathered new worshippers from the sheltered accommodation that began to surround the building, but found themselves unable to attract new younger worshippers to take on leadership roles. In 2004 the decision was made to sell the building and move as a congregation to Castleton Moor Methodist Church with the hope of creating a Local Ecumenical Partnership, whilst using their funds to support other local congregations and mission projects. But by the end of 2007 it was apparent that this was not going to happen and so the decision was made to wind up the church. Their generous spirit and willingness to explore new mission opportunities will live on in the congregations they have dispersed to and in the money they have left to help a new chaplaincy project in Rochdale Town Centre.

1.3 On the occasion of the Church's 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary the Revd John Hellon wrote: 'We are not to celebrate the fact that we are 70 years old; we celebrate the fact that we are 70 years *young*. The older a church grows, the younger is its spirit'. Such a statement has always been true for the Castleton congregation, the church has not closed, it lives on in new clothes.

## Claydon Old Chapel Mission Project Eastern Synod

1.1 Claydon Old Chapel situated to the north west of Ipswich, had been founded as an outreach from Tacket Street Congregational Church, Ipswich in the 1840s. It had been active in the village, especially with children, until the 1960s. In the 1980s, the life of Claydon Old Chapel had dwindled to a few people. However, with the development of new housing, opportunities were apparent for a new start. With the vision of Mrs Mary Furze and others, there was a desire to refashion the chapel's interior into a more accessible community resource.

1.2 Having received partnership funding of £10,000 from Rural Churches in Community Service – a Millennium Commission Project – a building scheme was carried out for a new kitchen and toilets. This enabled the chapel to be used more fully by groups of all ages from the church and community in Claydon and Barham and neighbouring areas. With the dissolution of the former church a 1999 General Assembly resolution created a new Mission Project.

1.3 With the support of ecumenical partners and some community volunteers the chapel hosted several events including an open youth club. There was also occasional worship, principally conducted by the Anglican incumbent, the Revd Dr Tom Broadbent, who also chaired the Steering Group.

1.4 It became apparent not long into the project that the 'mission' element was proving hard to generate. A village survey gave no further assistance to the project's direction and focus. And so it was at the March meeting of the Ipswich and Colchester district council that the project was formally closed.

## Falkirk (Pleasance Gardens)

1.1 The congregation at Falkirk (Pleasance Gardens) opened in 1875 as a Church of Christ. Their building, near the town centre, was among houses and tenement blocks and the congregation quickly grew, their witness becoming well known in the town. As a Church of Christ, they developed a leadership of elders and deacons, many of whom led worship and preached. From time to time they did receive full-time ministerial help, including an American exchange minister for three years in the late 1950s.

1.2 In the 1960s they started a Sunday school in Bantaskine housing estate, a mile or two away from the church, meeting in the local day school. This work flourished and the congregation even considered moving there, a site being available rent free from Falkirk Town Council. For various reasons they did not proceed with this plan, and a lack of teachers eventually led to the Sunday school closing.

1.3 Falkirk town centre was undergoing big changes and many flats and houses nearby were demolished. The church building ended up facing the rear of a big shopping mall, so there were fewer people living near the church. An aging congregation and family removals meant that the congregation gradually declined in number, and even with part-time ministerial help from Fife and Glasgow, and recently from Avonbridge United Reformed Church, the church had difficulty keeping going. As part of the Reformed Association of Churches of Christ, the congregation had joined the United Reformed Church in 1981.

1.4 In March 2008 the remaining three members decided that they could not continue, with their small numbers and a building needing repair. Following their final service, on 27<sup>th</sup> April, they will become members of Grahamston United Church (Church of Scotland, Methodist and United Reformed Church). We thank God for their witness and service over a long period of years.

## Gorleston United Reformed Church Eastern Synod

1.1 In 1812 a congregational church was established in Gorleston-on-sea near Great Yarmouth in Norfolk in response to the spiritual needs of the fishing community. The church served both the local fishing fleet and also crews who travelled down from the north of Scotland to the English Channel following the shoals of herring.

1.2 Over nearly two centuries the church developed a significant community ministry to the north end of the town. In the middle of the twentieth century a flourishing Boys Brigade company made a deep and positive impact upon the lives of many local boys and young men.

1.3 In the mid 1980's the congregation entered into a partnership with the local health authority and social services department. This led to the premises being completely renewed but at the cost of them being occupied nearly exclusively by a day centre for the elderly during the week.

## Church Changes

1.4 More recently the ageing but committed congregation have engaged in a variety of initiatives as they sought to make meaningful contact with the local community. Since 1995 a Pilots group has provided a secure and caring environment in which dozens of local youngsters have encountered Christian faith and learned to value other people.

1.5 Whilst the congregation failed to grow numerically, their deep spirituality has been in recent years clearly evident and church life has been characterised by warm relationships, much laughter and good food!

1.6 In the end as the burden of managing extensive premises became overwhelming it was decided that it was better to have a good ending than dwindle to an inauspicious conclusion. Over the final weekend in mid July 2007, food, memories and worship were shared.

# St John's, Great Chart Methodist/ United Reformed Church

## Southern Synod

1.1 The Methodists in Great Chart first met in a member's home at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The first church was built in 1812 in Chapel Lane, and served the congregation until 1962 when new premises with far better facilities were built in Singleton Road.

1.2 In 2003 St John's became part of the Ashford United Reformed/Methodist Church operating on four sites.

1.3 Always a significant influence in the life of the village, the congregation recently became very few in number and felt unable to continue as a worshipping community, or to maintain the fabric of the building. It is with regret that they decided to close at the end of October 2007.

# North Petherton United Reformed Church

## Somerset, South Western Synod

1.1 Congregational worship began in North Petherton in 1833. Prior to the turn of this century, North Petherton URC was struggling with a small membership and an elderly eldership. It was over this period that a retired minister, Revd Denis Newman, was seconded by the Taunton district to cover with pastoral oversight with a view to regenerating the fellowship. During his term of oversight the church underwent a refurbishment of modernising the worship area. It was hoped that this might help to encourage both the membership and the community to see some progress. When the time came for this arrangement to cease, as a result of Denis Newman's ill health, the joint pastorate of Westfield and Cannington under the pastoral ministry of the Revd Chris Baillie was approached to exercise oversight. Despite efforts to encourage mission through Bible studies the situation did not improve. The district in 2006 put a time limit of one year for progress to be achieved.

1.2 In 2007 the Church council came to the conclusion that the only way forward was to cease to worship as a fellowship. This was finalised with a closing act of worship and thanksgiving with the moderator on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2007.

1.3 However, that was not the end of the story. The synod decided not to sell the premises but to seek a way for them to be used in community service. A substantial financial offer was forthcoming to enable a project to be initiated for youth work supported by and in joint association with the youth work in Westfield/Cannington churches. Under the banner of Mission to Youth, the project called 'One One' is under way and it is planned to be operational by May 2008. Plans include a café centre for young people, as well as other opportunities for them to meet. Already the project has engendered interest from a number of community based organisations and the community police officer. A monthly worship service began in January 2008. There is much prayer and effort being exercised to make a success of the project, which will be reviewed in a year's time.

# St Ninian's United Reformed Church Solihull

1.1 A final act of worship and celebration was held at St Ninian's United Reformed Church, Solihull, on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2007 to thank God for the life and witness of the congregation over the years.

1.2 The church began its life on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1946 at 6.30 pm when a public service was held in the Council House, Solihull. The Revd Gilbert Porteous of Sheldon conducted the service; the Revd WS Ferrie was the preacher, and 38 people attended.

1.3 This group met in various venues until 1950, but then started regular worship at the Manor House, Solihull, on Sunday evenings. The Sunday School also started at this time. The Women's Guild had already started at this stage, providing friendship and interesting talks for its (mainly Scottish) members.

1.4 In January 1955 the Solihull Presbyterian Church came into existence when the Presbytery raised Solihull to Preaching Station status. In 1958 the church was raised to a fully sanctioned charge and the Revd Cedric Mercer became the first minister of the congregation.

1.5 On 7<sup>th</sup> March 1959 the foundation stone was laid for the new building, which was consecrated on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1961 and became known as St Ninian's Presbyterian Church. Over the next 20 years or so, numbers increased to 216 and for a while the Sunday school had over 100 children. The church sponsored scouting and guiding groups and the FURY group invaded the manse at regular intervals. The Whithorn Society was born in the sixties, having its inaugural meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> January 1964, providing social activities, informal discussion, community service and friendship, with its membership not restricted to church members. In 1972 we became known as St Ninian's United Reformed Church.

1.6 For several more years we continued to welcome Scottish families into St Ninian's, providing spiritual sustenance and friendship. Unfortunately over recent years more families have moved out, rather than in, and although we have welcomed Christians from different traditions, our numbers continued to decline and after much soul searching Church Meeting voted to close St Ninian's as a worshipping community.



**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 2010

The committee brings a resolution that the Assembly of 2010 should be held at Loughborough University, from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> July 2010. **(Resolution 18)**

## 2 A changing Assembly

Amongst signs of change are:

- the presence of a Children's Assembly interwoven with the main Assembly – bringing refreshing and deep insights into matters that adults 'think they know all about';
- the higher standard of presentation through the greater use of technology – a professional staging, web-casting, film reports, recorded interviews;
- increasingly better provision for members of Assembly in sight and sound; with this year the use of signing for the deaf;
- decision-making through consensus.

As with the other councils of the church, Assembly is moving along the path to making decisions by consensus. The process will not be complete until we reach the ideal of fewer topics, and those being discussed in greater depth, with the options still open. This would be assisted by consideration of the issues in smaller groups, enabled by those who have been responsible for the research and are then charged with the task of advocacy. Members of Assembly would be responsible for contributing to some, though not all, the discussions – but would do so in great depth; we would need to trust each other to make recommendations on our behalf. We would reach a final decision, together, in plenary session, by consensus.

## 3 Finance and risk-management

In spite of cost-inflation of many aspects of Assembly we have been able to restrict the expenditure over the last six years to within the range £185,000 to £225,000 – in most years well within the upper budget limit of £250,000. The reduction in the number of members of Assembly will allow additional savings. Yet this has been achieved at the same time as raising the standard of the event, its staging, and the accommodation. Apart from its mission activity – General Assembly is perhaps one of the greatest risk activities that the church undertakes. It involves intensive staffing, huge technical input, considerable expenditure, and widely – if briefly – exposes the reputation of the church.

## 4 Acknowledgements

The preceding paragraph could not have been so confidently written if it were not for the immense amount of work that is undertaken by a very small number of committed people. As in every year, the committee is extremely grateful to those local church members who steward Assembly and to the synod clerk, Jim Merrilees, for his unfailing assistance and cheerfulness.

## Assembly Arrangements

Throughout the year the committee has been thankful for the contributions made by Michael Davies and Michael Hopkins. The committee has again been pleased to work closely with Communications, considering and adapting the many and varied suggestions from Martin Hazell. However, none of this work would have resulted in Assembly happening if it were not for the committed and determined hard work that Ann Barton puts in throughout the year, and especially in the months immediately prior to Assembly itself.

## 5 Resolution – General Assembly 2010

### Resolution 18

Assembly agrees that the General Assembly in 2010 will meet at Loughborough University from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> July.





1. It is exciting – sometimes scary – working in Communications. The frenzied pace of change means we can't stand still. Our aim is to encourage and enable excellence in communication, both within the church and in the ways the church presents its message to the world. That means being up to date with the latest developments in the fast evolving age of electronic communication. At the same time, we recognise that the world of emails, podcasts, blogs, and on-line discussion forums is a million miles from the culture in some churches. We live the tension between equipping people to make best use of the newest communication methods, and staying in touch with those who don't yet use electronic means at all. And there is another tension. The secular communications field is dominated by consumer choice; as a small player, in the hard-pressed religious communications sector, we can't afford to do everything. We have to decide where to concentrate our resources - and what work we should discontinue. We are confident that we – the Committee, the Staff, and the Church – can meet this challenge.

2. Crucial to its response, the Church has appointed several new people to key roles since we last reported two years ago. In January 2007, Martin Hazell became Director of Communications and in August last year Stuart Dew moved from Church and Society to become Press Officer. With the appointment of James Roberts as a sub-editor and Kay Parris as editor of *Reform* we started 2008 as a full team for the first time in several years.

3. General Assembly will sound the fanfare to begin a new era in the life of *Reform*, the United Reformed Church's national journal. Simplifying the subscriptions system was relatively easy, but finding the right Editor took much longer. The contribution of guest editors over two years was widely appreciated and enlivened the magazine's content, but there were inconsistencies. The response to a questionnaire in the March edition has been excellent; it showed people want *Reform* to include theology, to be connected with the real world and contemporary in tone. Following a complete redesign, *Reform* will be re-launched at Assembly, with free copies going to local churches. Every member will be able to have it in their hands at the same time as the new look magazine is unveiled in Edinburgh. We look forward to a flood of extra subscriptions from new and returning readers. *Reform* is a prime forum for stimulating conversation, information-sharing and encouragement; it needs as much support as we can give it. It is costly but it plays a vital part in enhancing our identity.

4. In website terms, ours is out of the Ark. It has served us well for more than a decade but is not able to meet our needs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Commissioning and constructing a replacement has not gone smoothly, which has frustrated and disappointed the Committee and we have had to stamp our foot and insist that we are not to be messed with. Our aim is to provide a new website with a contemporary, attractive look and more opportunities for interaction. It must also meet the practical need of regular users to download information and keep up to date with denominational issues. We will ensure it is reliable and meets all our requirements before it is finally launched.

5. When the press come enquiring, we want to take every opportunity we can to raise the national and local profile of the United Reformed Church. Significant national stories are promoted through press releases, and we are starting to build a network of journalists who understand what the church is about. The Press Officer also helps to prepare church leaders to deal confidently with the media, and the Church to manage threats to

its reputation in potentially damaging situations. Stuart Dew has begun *Newsline*, an information sharing e-newsletter for people in local churches and synods who publicise the mission of the United Reformed Church. The post is only part-time; that's not entirely satisfactory as difficult situations can arise any day of the week. We will be looking to try to expand this important resource.

6. If you read the national press, you will know that the world of religious book publication and sales is currently a difficult place to be. SPCK bookshops have been taken over and the Methodist Church House bookshop has closed. We commissioned a professional study which points to the opportunity these market changes create for our own bookshop; the recommendations are to be considered by the Committee in May, after this report was written. We continue to publish items such as the *Year Book*, *Prayer Handbook* (very successful in its new format this year), *Book of Reports* and *Assembly Record*. Other new publications we have launched are *Together met, together bound*, (a joint venture with the URC History Society) and *Glamour isn't a church word*. We are being more focussed on work we accept for publication; the committee brings a resolution to clarify the situation for potential writers.

7. An enormous amount of work is undertaken by our graphics office, from denominational stationary and certificates to promotional leaflets, booklets and papers that support the work undertaken by various committees and programmes such as TLS. Other parts of the department's work are essential but little known. For instance, we are responsible for ensuring the Church does not contravene copyright legislation in its activities, by buying appropriate licences and explaining their importance to those in local churches who may be unaware of the regulations.

8. Modern communications technology, when operating correctly, allows a small operation like ours to improve information storage and retrieval, and to target our mailings. It has been a serious handicap to the workings of Church House that there has not been an up-to-date, reliable database. That is another area of change. The building of a new database, when completed, will enable corrections and alterations to be made more easily. It will provide a valuable resource for synods and local congregations and for all members. It should also greatly ease the annual task of preparing the *Year Book*.

9. Many of those who attended General Assembly 2007 in Manchester commented favourably on the set and the more professional presentation arrangements. We are building on that this year.

10. The fact that Christian communication is a specialist area, yet part of a much bigger sector, is brought home to us by the United Reformed Church's participation in the Churches Media Council. This body organises a national conference each year at Swanwick, (attended by two members of the Committee in 2007) and plays a key role in promoting religious broadcasting such as this Easter's BBC production *The Passion*. Also in the wider church scene, our Director of Communications serves as a trustee of *Roots*.

11. As well as expressing thanks to the staff team, both long-serving and new, we recognise the contribution of retiring Committee members, Martin Whiffen, Janet Sutton, Paul Snell and Juli Wills.

12. The work of the Communications department, and of the Committee which oversees it, is a vital part of our life together as a national Church. We are committed to seeing improvements in as many areas as possible. We look forward to hearing from you as to where we've got it right, and how we can do things better. Do contact us – by any of the myriad means of communication – so we experience real, two-way communication.

**1.1 The 2006 Assembly agreed to reconfigure the education and learning scene in the United Reformed Church. The committee has spent its time since then working with others to realign training in accord with those decisions.** It has also changed convener, changed name (it used to be the Training committee) and kept other on-going aspects of its show on the road – but the implementation of the 2006 decisions has been its major theme. And what we can affirm is that in numerous ways learning is happening in the church in increasingly diverse and exciting ways. It might not yet be as coordinated as it will be but already the expanding of people's hearts and minds is happening in new ways in line with Assembly's policy.

**1.2 The key goals of the committee,** which General Assembly endorsed in 2005, are:

- integrated education and training to equip the whole people of God for mission – promoted with coherence and in tune with the policies flowing from the *Equipping the Saints* and *Catch the Vision* reports;
- ecumenical engagement at every stage;
- the presentation of a distinctive reformed ethos and history in that ecumenical engagement; and
- the delivery of this policy in a manner appropriate to the circumstances of the three nations in which the United Reformed Church is situated.

**1.3 In 2006 we agreed** to work towards those goals by developing partnerships of learning providers to deliver integrated and dispersed Christian education, nurture and training for the whole people of God. To help achieve this we designated Westminster College (based in Cambridge), Northern College (based in Manchester) and the Scottish College (based in Glasgow) as resource centres for the learning of the whole church. We indicated that from September 2007 only these institutions would receive students for ordination or church related community worker training.

**1.4 So what's been happening?** Well in short there is quite a buzz in the education and learning scene. We know that there is much still to be done and concerns to be addressed – but there is new energy and exciting possibilities in the world we now inhabit. Many in the United Reformed Church will have picked up the flavour of this scene from the December '07 issue of *Reform*, edited by Jan Berry who is a staff member of one of our Resource Centres for Learning, Northern College. Committee officers wrote there about the key principles contained in the policy adopted in '06. The Windermere Centre, Training for Learning and Serving, Synod Training Officers, Resource Centre for Learning students and staff and others wrote of the dynamic developments in many quarters. The fact that Youth and Children's Work and the post ordination Education for Ministry programmes were not included just adds to the impression of the breadth of work and engagement with the whole church. Here though from the committee's perspective are some indications of the developments in the education and learning scene since '06:

## **2 The urgent matters:**

**2.1** An immediate concern in 2006 was the re-organisation of the process of decision making about the Resource Centre for Learning (RCL) through which ordination and church related community worker students would train. This we did in a way which signalled the collaborative approach Assembly had commended. The old system was that at each ministerial assessment

conference two college staff would represent the five colleges and the eight courses we had until then been using. We resolved that in the new dispensation each RCL would be represented at every assessment conference. Together with committee representatives they would discern the most appropriate college and the outline of the training pathway for each student. From the outset this approach has worked well and set a tone.

- 2.1.1 It has allowed proper attention to be given to each student's case and a thorough review made of all the options available. This has been especially helpful where a student intends to be resident some way from the college whilst in training. There have not been many in this category but where they have occurred the Resource Centre for Learning's staff have worked hard and in collaboration with the student and synod to set up training pathways that meets the Church's and the students' requirements.
- 2.1.2 Collaboration between the RCL's is increasing to the point where they not only decide together through which of them a student will train but now (whilst one college will hold the reins of oversight) the others contribute appropriate learning to the design of the student's total requirements. A student might thus experience two or even three RCL's in the course of their training.
- 2.1.3 In order to ensure that people enquiring about ministry have all the information they need the booklet *Becoming a Minister*, which describes what the Resource Centres for Learning offer, has been redesigned to reflect the new provision. It will be further revamped this year. More importantly the RCL's staff have been ready and willing to meet any enquirer to talk about what can be provided for them.

2.2 The number of students starting training has been especially low in the last two candidating years (ten in 06/07 and a similar number in 07/08 – so far as we can see at the time of writing). Whilst this has given some space for the new ways of working to bed down it is not what the Resource Centres for Learning or the committee had hoped for – and the RCL staff are now working to augment the actions of the Ministries committee in the field of vocations.

2.3 The committee is conscious that closer working across the coalition of learning providers for the better implementation of Assembly's policy of '*... promoting the development of partnerships in pursuit of Assembly's commitment to integrated and dispersed Christian education, nurture and training for the whole people of God....*' needs the committee's oversight and it is working to provide that. It has consulted with Resource Centres for Learning and has established a small working group which, whilst mainly committee members, is representative of the principal stakeholders in the education and learning field. Its purpose is to:

- steer forward movement;
- plan and prepare for a more extensive meeting of partnership representatives in October 2008;
- work on the objectives for this partnership; and
- give momentum and steer to the whole process. (It will seek to audit resources, monitor financial questions, indicate common standards, and where appropriate learning outcomes. It will also offer guidance on questions of coordination wherever overlap between providers is an issue.)

All of this is under the auspices of the main committee's development of the broader strategy.

### 3 New ways of relating

3.1 In December 2006 and December 2007 the staffs of the Resource Centres for Learning met for in-depth discussions. These meetings have created a sense of a United Reformed Church staff team which had not previously been the case. In anticipation of the Windermere Centre also playing a part in the committee's work and strategy its director has been a part of these conversations.

3.2 On two occasions in 2007 RCL staff (on one occasion all the Principals) have joined a gathering of training officer to begin to build better relations and coordination in learning provision for the whole church.

3.3 Every synod has been encouraged to ensure that it invites one staff member from the total RCL staff team to relate *on behalf of all resource centres for learning* to their synod and be consulted in their deliberations on education and learning. This development is happening in different ways in each synod. In Scotland the relationship is fully integrated already with the college Principal also being the synod's training officer. In the North West the Principal of Northern College is on the synod's Education and Learning committee. In Yorkshire their new training officer will be invited to contribute to teaching at Luther King House (the home of Northern College) whilst the college staff will support the synod's education programme. Ideas have included 'satellite training' in Yorkshire; eg teaching on environmental issues from a theological perspective at one of the churches. In other places the relationship is being worked out differently. In any case this RCL/synod relationship is seen to be mutually beneficial. Synods can support the work of the colleges as the latter seeks to augment their staff and resources for their expanding role by connecting with the skills and experience of people in the synods. At the same time the RCL offers its skill and experience to the work of the synod.

3.4 In the summer of 2007 the committee hosted a gathering of representatives from all those whom it envisages working in closer partnership (including synods, Training for Learning and Serving, committees with an education brief – eg Equal Opportunities, Racial Justice – Resource Centres for Learning, and other theological colleges). The meeting was well served by David Cornick whose key note address underlined the importance of the church being a learning organisation.

3.5 The Trainers Network (a long standing annual gathering of training practitioners in the church) was given new life in January 2008 when synod training officers, youth and children's work training and development officers and RCL staff together considered how they can ensure the success of the **Vision4Life** initiative.

3.6 As the training review accepted by Assembly in '06 hoped and anticipated the Windermere Centre has now been brought under the remit of Education and Learning through whom it now reports to Assembly. Assembly's 2003 review of the Centre asked for an interim review to take place in '07. This has not yet happened so the committee is now undertaking that review. It is doing so with a view to determining the best ways in which the Centre can work within the wider strategy of the Education and Learning committee and in what sense the Centre is a RCL. (For a further report of the life and work of the Windermere Centre see its section below)

## 4 Some first steps in new ways of working

4.1 The Resource Centre for Learning staff have together committed themselves to work to support **Vision4Life** and a number of them are already actively engaged in it. The committee sees this venture as vital for the denomination, fully warranting the committee's support and useful as a way of modelling how learning providers in the church can work in partnership.

4.2 A cross RCL staff group is working on vocations.

4.3 A cross RCL staff group is working in conversation with the committee's Education for Ministry 2/3 Officer and Training Officers to explore generic training for certain 'tutors' including placement supervisors and pastoral advisors.

4.4 Other RCL staff have been charged with developing a list of the skills of staff and synod training officers for their better deployment in the wider church.

4.5 Northern and Westminster Colleges are in different ways reviewing their life and activity in light of their designation as RCL whilst the Scottish College has reviewed and revised its governance structure and relationship with the synod (see their reports in the supplementary papers for fuller details – together with reports from the other colleges where ordinands are still in training).

4.6 The annual summer school for ordinands on courses will cease to have its essential function as the current cohort of students on courses complete their training. The committee believes though that this school provides a useful function. It aims to continue requiring that all students attend the school at least once in the course of their training. They hope that this will strengthen a sense of collegiality across all students. They also intend to use the school to strengthen the awareness of all students about what it is to be a church in three nations.

## 5 Other ongoing developments which fit into and reinforce the new ways of working

### 5.1 Education for Ministry 2/3 sub-committee

- 5.1.1 This committee is responsible for ministers' and CRCW's education immediately post ordination or commissioning (Education for Ministry phase 2) and their learning thereafter until retirement (Education for Ministry phase 3). Its most recent work has focused mainly on developments for ministers and church related community workers in EM2.
- 5.1.2 This sub-committee has worked to establish better support for the EM2 period of learning where ministers apply their Education for Ministry 1 learning in the new context of their service, and to ensure that this phase of learning follows on smoothly from Education for Ministry 1.
- 5.1.3 To enhance the quality of EM2, the sub-committee and especially its officer, Revd Elizabeth Gray-King, have worked to ensure:
- clarity in the focus of the residential weekends; weekends in each of Scotland, Wales, the north of England and the south of England;
  - that pastoral advisors are aware of the content of the residential weekends to better support the reflections of the EM2 ministers;
  - flexibility in what is required of ministers in order to respond to particular needs;
  - tighter supervision and accountability during this learning period in line with the Assembly decisions of 2004. Synod committees are now responsible for overseeing ministers' learning in EM2. Better accountability has been achieved by a certification system acknowledging satisfactory attendance and participation at weekends, and progression from EM2 to EM3.
- 5.1.4 EM2 guidelines were published in 2007 and fully describe this period of learning, including the role of the pastoral advisor.
- 5.1.5 The committee believes it is vital to encourage the habit of reflection on the practice of ministry and is encouraging the use of a learning journal. Guidelines have been written and distributed to EM2 ministers, synods and pastoral advisors and workshops are being held in synods. The learning journal is designed to best suit the learning style and gifts of each minister.
- 5.1.6 To improve the coherence of learning across phases, discussions are underway with the RCL to ensure that the guidelines for the learning journal used by students in the EM1 phase forms a continuum with the guidelines for EM2. The committee's aim is that learning journals are the basis for reflection in all three phases, throughout the entire minister's service.
- 5.1.7 The sub-committee is also working with synods and RCLs to ensure that training in equal opportunities and sexual ethics is appropriately provided in pre and post ordination/commissioning for ministers and CRCWs.

- 5.1.8 This closer working with synods (who carry responsibility for a ministers learning in EM2) and with RCLs (who carry responsibility for EM1) should ensure that oversight of these two phases will be better integrated.
- 5.1.9 This sub-committee is also responsible for the provision of refresher courses. These have increased in popularity and received many appreciative comments from ministers. Almost a third of the active ministry (Word and Sacraments, and CRCW) have attended a refresher course in the last three years and we believe this is testimony to the value of the courses and the extent to which they are reaching the church's ministry. In recent years, the Windermere Centre and Westminster College have hosted these courses. In 2009, one course will be hosted in Scotland as part of what will probably be an ongoing pattern of hosting some courses in the national synods.
- 5.1.10 The sub-committee (and the main committee) is fully aware that its portion of the United Reformed Church website is woefully inadequate. The record keeping capability of the office also needs to be updated. Under the leadership of the Communications committee (as reported elsewhere), a new United Reformed Church website and database are being installed. These are being designed to meet, amongst other requirements, education and learning needs. For example, the new central database will incorporate our own database for EM2 and EM3 ministers and CRCWs. We hope that these might be connected to the synods' systems, and should be simpler, more efficient and reduce error.

## 5.2 Training and support of Lay Preachers

A proposal has been developed and will be launched this year, (hopefully before Assembly) to give increased support for the in-service learning of lay preachers. There is a great need to support the vital work of lay preachers in the church. There is also a need identified by the main committee's finance sub-committee to develop funding mechanisms which can better show how we are supporting the learning of the whole church and not just ordination training. The proposal seeks to hit both of these targets. It is to provide £200 a year for every Assembly accredited lay preacher to spend on learning activities and/or resources through United Reformed Church centres. These include the Windermere Centre, Training for Learning and Serving, the United Reformed Church bookshop and the Resource Centres for Learning. These centres are also being asked to revise and review what further training they can offer for lay preachers. Westminster College's annual Lay Preacher Conference is very well received and was so oversubscribed in 2007 that it had to be run twice – but it is hoped to see even more resources provided.

## 5.3 Training for Learning and Serving

- 5.3.1 Training for Learning and Serving, a real jewel in the educational crown of the church has come through some significant periods of transition and is again building in strength under its current leadership. Stanley Jackson (Coordinator) and Heather Skidmore (Administrator) continue to serve 'at the heart' of TLS and we thank them for their commitment and dedication. In 2006 Janet Tollington took over from Paul Ballard as convener of the Board of Studies and David Jenkins became convener of the Management Group. In May 2007 John Burgess began a newly defined role as deputy Coordinator and *Gateways into Worship* Course Manager following the resignation of Hilary Collinson who had served TLS to very good effect and with much appreciation for several years. Also in 2007 Revd Dr Walter J Houston became external examiner in place of Revd Dr Anne Jeffers and Sandra Elkin became treasurer. Our thanks go to Peter Pay, David and Sue Powell and Jerome Whittingham, all of whom stood down from course manager roles during the period.



- 5.3.2 A major ongoing transition is taking place with regard to the University validation of the course. Bangor University is in the process of ceasing its partnership with TLS and other similar courses as part of a change in its strategy. A new validating body is being sought with initial approaches centring on the universities with which the two English Resource Centres for Learning relate closely (Chester/Liverpool in the South North West and Anglia Ruskin in Cambridge). In preparation for this move, TLS is focusing on three principal pathways to define its future direction: 1) enriching faith; 2) equipping for service; 3) educational award.
- 5.3.3 TLS continues to be structured as a two year foundation course supplemented by one-year specialist courses. Two new one-year courses are in the process of preparation with a view to commencing in September 2008. They are *Gateways into Evangelism* and *Developing Community Experiences*. The course known as *God's Jesters* has been renamed *Performing Arts in Worship* and now has Dr Janet Bottoms as Course Manager. The one-year course *Experiencing Faith* has been withdrawn for radical revision. *Gateways into Worship* remains the recognised pathway for all who wish to be accredited by Assembly as lay preachers. For the past three years numbers have increased by 40% on foundation and 25% overall. Currently there are 104 course members in total. In the next two years it is forecast that we will have the highest numbers of *Gateways into Worship* students for some time.
- 5.3.4 TLS LITE remains a popular, less rigorous arm of TLS. Materials for this course are available (off the shelf) at the Church House bookshop and local churches can adapt the material to suit their own particular training needs. It is particularly helpful for the development of local worship leaders and for people who wish to reflect on their own understandings of faith but the addition of the module on *Valuing Community Experiences* in the early part of 2007 also demonstrates its wider relevance.
- 5.3.5 TLS is eager to integrate its work with the Resource Centres for Learning and with synod educational programmes, including the development of Regional Training Partnerships. It seeks academic excellence but also open accessibility for all people to take their next steps on the exciting pilgrimage of faith development. It is also exploring ways in which TLS can be re-introduced ecumenically into Scotland (which was the land of its birth!). The very good news is that there appears to be a significant ecumenical response to this idea with the Church of Scotland as the lead interested denomination.
- 5.4 **Windermere Centre**
- 5.4.1 The Windermere Centre is the Assembly's residential training and resource centre for the whole church. Direct oversight of the Centre is exercised by the Windermere Advisory Group. Responsibility for the Centre and advisory group on behalf of Assembly was transferred at the end of 2007 from the former Life and Witness committee to the Education and Learning committee.
- 5.4.2 The Centre seeks to be a vital resource to the United Reformed Church by equipping its membership for life-in-mission. Importantly, it is also the place where the future shape, calling and mission of the Church is actively explored. **Vision4Life**, for example, had its genesis in a consultation at the Centre about developing a theology of evangelism that would command support across the whole theological spectrum within the Church. This major Church initiative will form the basis of the annual programme for the next three years.
- 5.4.3 There are three elements to the Centre's annual programme: a programme of courses and consultations put on by the Centre to equip churches for mission; church weekends; and meetings and events organized by the synods, networks and committees of the Church. Included under this last heading are regular initiatives by the committees such as Training for Learning and Serving residenceals, ministers' refresher courses, ministers' pre-retirement courses, welcome to the United Reformed Church courses, Assessment Board training and, most recently, the church leadership programme.



- 5.4.4 An analysis of the programme for 2008 as seen on the website in March, shows a pattern comparable to the analysis published in last year's Book of Reports:

	2008	2007
Consultations, courses or meetings organized by Assembly committees or staff	26	21
Courses arranged by the director for any individuals to attend	19	24
Local church groups led by themselves or the director	20	22
Events organized by a synod or a district	11	7
Network gatherings or interest groups who run their own activities	10	10
Time slots still available for more groups to book	<u>14</u>	<u>16</u>
	100	100

- 5.4.5 The total of events initiated by the director or other Assembly staff or committees continues at 45, nearly half of the total. Local churches, interest groups and networks occupy most of the rest, finding it a welcoming and valuable venue. There is scope for more synods to organize their events here in this very attractive setting.
- 5.4.6 Work continues to make the Centre a resource ecumenically. It is part of the NNW Regional Training Partnership, but ecumenical progress is otherwise slow. The Centre is also available for B&B and holiday accommodation.
- 5.4.7 In mid 2007 a new senior management structure was established. The director was on sabbatical from 1 January – 31 March 2008 and a scheme of volunteer host couples was expanded to provide cover in a way which we hope will continue. Agreement has been reached on a coordinated finance system between the Assembly Finance office, the Centre and committees, for budget preparation, reports and monitoring, and this is being implemented. The Centre now requires non-refundable deposits in order to confirm bookings and guests are encouraged to settle their bills upon arrival. There has been a noticeable drop in the number of cancelled events as a result, and a marked improvement in the Centre's cash flow.
- 5.4.8 The need for an adequately-sized conference room was identified in the 2003 Mission Council review of the Centre and has yet to be finally resolved. Plans have been made to make regular use of the refurbished sanctuary of Carver Church as a conference venue. Proposals for the necessary building developments are making progress with the support of not only the Education and Learning committee but the Finance committee (who have led this process), Church Trustees and Mission Council. These may involve the construction of a link building between Carver church and halls.
- 5.4.9 The director continues to be a resource to the wider Church through writing, preaching, speaking and membership of several committees and steering groups.
- 5.4.10 During mid 2008 the Education and Learning committee is conducting a review that will consider the Centre's mission purpose, strategic thinking and work since the last review in 2002–3, and look at the work and role of the Centre in relation to the Education and Learning strategy adopted by Assembly in 2006. This review will thus seek to embed the work of the centre into the Education and Learning committee's wider strategy. It will also review the Assembly's arrangements for supervising and managing the Centre. Meanwhile, we appreciate the work of the director and all the Centre staff and course leaders in pursuance of the Centre's role to equip the Church for mission.

## 5.5 Finance Sub-Committee

- 5.5.1 The committee is working to reassure the Resource Centres for Learning of its committed support to them in times when low ordination and CRCW student numbers make the economics of running colleges highly problematic. At the same time it is seeking to work towards a more activity based system of financial support for the RCLs rather than a largely block grant system as has been the case in recent years. In this way the committee hopes to be able to show more clearly what its financial support of these institutions is used for and to more transparently show their engagement in the learning of the whole people of God.

5.5.2 The sub-committee spent some considerable time in the last two years seeing if it could find a better way to organise the student maintenance grant system. It hoped to be able to offer a higher level of basic grant and remove or reduce the allowances and other complicated provisions of the current system – especially in a world where the distinctions between non-stipendiary and stipendiary ministry are being eroded and where every student will have different requirements. It has not been able to meet this goal largely because it did not feel that the church had the funds to raise the basic level of grant to the level that would be needed for this approach to work. But in light of and with the benefit of this work it has now had discussions with the financial staff of the resource centres to ensure:

- that the current maintenance grant system is adapted to be fairly applied to all the students across the colleges,
- to provide more encouragement than previously to students to seek other financial support,
- to deal with a range of anomalies that had crept into the system.

5.5.3 It has become clear here and in other places that being able to work with only three institutions allows a much greater level of cooperation and coordination from which both the students the RCLs and committee benefits.

5.5.4 The committee has noted the direction of the Ministries committee's thinking with regard to manse provision. It has in light of that adjusted its maintenance grant provision from 2008 onwards so that it will more even-handedly provide financial support for those entering training who are owner occupiers.

## 6 Ecumenical and reformed

6.1 The committee is seeking through its strategy to develop the strength of its own denominational provision. But it is doing this in order to strengthen its ability to contribute in the ecumenical scene and not to in any sense withdraw from it. It understands for example that in some Regional Training Partnerships training might be undertaken in a member United Reformed Church synod which is not of United Reformed Church origin. Provided that it meets our benchmarks then that fits very well with the ecumenical engagement the church has at its heart. The better integration and interrelation of United Reformed Church resources will strengthen our ability to contribute to Regional Training Partnerships. It will also provide better resources to help identify where United Reformed Church requirements can be well met by ecumenical partners' provisions.

### 6.2 Regional Training Partnerships

6.2.1 Our committee has reported in previous years on the Church of England's reconfiguration of its learning for the whole people of God which became known as the 'Hind Report'. Central to this review and its ecumenical implementation was the establishment of Regional Training Partnerships across England.

6.2.2 These partnerships have been making varied progress towards establishment since 'Hind' (known officially as 'Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church'), was adopted by the General Synod of the Church of England in July 2003. In some regions very little has been achieved. In others closer working between dioceses, colleges, training courses and some ecumenical equivalents for ordination, reader/lay preacher/local preacher training and lay training is being explored or established.

6.2.3 In the West Midlands for example, a formal covenant has been entered into and partners are designing new pathways and curricula for a range of educational, ministerial and training needs. In the southern part of the north west region the South North West Training Partnership has been formed. Its founding directors include three Anglican dioceses, the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church, the Baptist Union regionally, the Northern Baptist College and Northern College (United Reformed Church and Congregational).

This partnership is working to establish means of promoting Education for Discipleship (an opportunity to enable lay Christians to further develop their learning), training for ministry (through the new Learning for Mission and Ministry Course) and continuing ministerial and professional development for those in accredited lay and ordained ministries.

- 6.2.4 Further North, the Lancashire and Cumbria Theological Partnership is being established and whilst the United Reformed Church won't be involved in its ordination training provision (for our students will be sent through one of our Resource Centres for Learning) the United Reformed Church synod is getting involved in some of the interesting things that are emerging on the lay training front. People locally are excited by the fact that the formal start of the partnership has coincided with the creation of the University of Cumbria. One of the Vice-Chancellors (a Methodist) sits on the executive, and there are moves to get as many lay training courses as possible accredited by the University.
- 6.2.5 Other developments in the Eastern region (including the Cambridge Federation of Theological Education) and Yorkshire (where a well grounded process of ecumenical collaboration in lay provision has been in place for some while) are also progressing and the South Central RTP has now taken an in-principle decision to come into a formal existence.
- 6.2.6 This is not an exhaustive list of what has been happening. No one is pretending that these developments have been swift or progressed smoothly in all places. But progress is taking place and real possibilities can be seen to be emerging. Where the United Reformed Church has a resource centre in the region (Eastern and South North West) we can be confident of engagement in ordination training and substantial input. In many other regions there is often significant engagement from the appropriate synod and its staff regarding lay training and other elements of education and learning. Nevertheless the development of closer interrelation of United Reformed Church resources and the more comprehensive connection of RCL to the synods provides additional strengthening for those synods in their conversations within the Regional Training Partnerships.

### 6.3 **Quality Assurance**

- 6.3.1 The churches have many years of experience of quality assurance in pre-ordination training. The United Reformed Church and Methodist Church (and more recently the Baptist Union) have collaborated with the Church of England as lead partner in validating programmes and inspecting the processes of institutions used for ordination training.
- 6.3.2 However, these processes have developed in ways which have led to some duplication, not least with those operated in higher education under which our institutions also fall. The advent of Regional Training Partnerships (see above) present these quality assurance processes with a new but welcome challenge. That is to say: how do we ensure quality when what we are dealing with now is not a single college or course but a range of providers dealing with a range of provision?
- 6.3.3 The churches (as listed above) have therefore considered the options and agreed a new process. The implementation of these is now being carefully considered. The new processes take on board some of the best practices of the audit approach as it has developed over some years in higher education and elsewhere. This has been seen as an opportunity to move from a 'low trust' approach to one that puts greater trust in the practitioners, while having mechanisms in place to check that internal processes are effective.
- 6.3.4 Essentially this puts the onus on the learning providers to take responsibility themselves for meeting the standards set by the churches. This will then be scrutinized effectively by an external team, appointed by the churches, using an audit approach. An external audit would examine whether the institution's own quality processes are effective and whether training is being delivered in line with the churches' expectations.

6.3.5 The recommendation is that as RTPs develop they should set up internal quality processes which should be integral to their functioning which would include the full range of the RTP's activity: EM1 (pre ordination) EM2 post ordination lay training etc. In place then of the current range of interventions the churches would conduct a single external audit of the RTP every six years. This would check that the RTP's quality and enhancement processes were working well and that formation and education were being offered to the standards expected by the churches. It would not seek to duplicate the quality processes of other partners (eg universities) but would concentrate on those areas that are the responsibilities of the churches (eg formation). The churches' approval of the curriculum would be an integral part of this external audit event.

### 6.4 **Higher Education Funding Council in England (HEFCE)'s new policy and its serious implications for ordination training**

6.4.1 The government is bringing in proposals to withdraw funding for equal or lower academic awards. This is arguably driven by a good desire on government's part to transfer money in order to encourage more people into higher education. But its impact on those in theological education (as well as other fields) where many ordination students already have a first degree is serious. It means that for mainstream churches the fee costs of putting ordination students through higher education could be higher or even substantially higher than they are now. This could mean either more financial burden on the churches or fewer students taking good educational qualifications and a distancing between higher education and theological education. None of these consequences seem desirable to the churches.

6.4.2 Led by the Church of England a number of ecumenical partner churches (particularly the Baptist Union, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church) have been involved in discussions with HEFCE. The aim of these conversations has been to find a way forward that will allow the government's strategy to be developed whilst easing the negative consequences on the churches. The government has already made exemptions to some professions and also to those studying on the relatively new foundation degrees which are qualifications specifically designed to meet employers' needs.

6.4.3 For the United Reformed Church the main difficulty is in Cambridge. The Scottish College is not affected as it operates under Scottish HE policy and in the Regional Training Partnership in the southern part of the North West, in which Northern College operates it is already engaged in a foundation degree programme. In Cambridge though where Westminster College is part of the Cambridge Federation of Theological Education it could threaten the college's ability to train students through the well honed (for the purposes of ministerial training) and well respected Cambridge University BTh degree or the Cambridge Tripos.

6.4.4 At the time of writing it seems however, that discussions will address the church concerns and for the United Reformed Church will mean that we will be able to continue to have the option (amongst the portfolio of options which we have in Cambridge, Manchester and Glasgow) of the Cambridge BTh. In any event there appears to be more time and resources on the table to work this issue through to the better satisfaction of all concerned.

### 6.5 **Ecumenical Strategy Group for Ministerial Training**

The Training Officers of the denominations affiliated to Churches Together in England meet together three times a year in this sub group of CTE. The group has been the forum in which many of the issues noted above, have been discussed. It includes not just Church of England, Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Church membership but also Congregational Federation, Salvation Army and Roman Catholic representation. The secretary for Education and Learning was until the autumn of 2007 the group's chairman and secretary.

## 7 Developments in Scotland and Wales

7.1 For an indication of educational activity in Scotland readers should refer to the Scottish College Report, which is with other College Reports elsewhere in this publication.

7.2 In Wales the synod is running a range of events for church secretaries, young people, worship leaders, ministers (summer school) and good practice advocates. Some of this work is done ecumenically. There is also a programme of creating worship packs, written mainly by lay people, which contain worship material for particular Sundays. These are produced three times a year and sent to church secretaries, ministers and lay preachers. The synod has two Training Officer posts for the north and south of the country. The southern post is currently vacant since the move of Alison Davis into a pastorate in England and they are seeking to reappoint.

## 8 We are doing a lot but we can't do everything

8.1 The committee feels delighted at the organic developments that are taking place partly as a result of its review accepted by Assembly in '06 but arising from other places too. It is aware though that it has finite resources of time, staff and money. It therefore has to put lower down the list of its priorities areas of work which it knows are important. For example:

- a) the development of a research network which would aim to connect together those in the church who have done research degrees to provide mutual support but also to provide a means to release their gifts and learning into the wider church. It is aware of the work in Thames North synod in developing its own research network and applauds this as a model for what other synods might consider;
- b) the need to readdress the issue of resources for elders training, which since the production of the elder's course in around 2001 it has not done. The Life and Witness committee had responsibility for elders training and the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship committee led a major reflection on the eldership which was reported to Assembly in 2007. As a result of that we understand work is being done in the synods on the training of elders;
- c) the importance of developing a strategy with regard to learning in the areas of racial justice and multicultural issues and ensuring that not only are the issues addressed in and through its Resource Centres for Learning but that attention is paid to the ethnic balance of staff. The committee has a group working on this which has cross representation with the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry programme (Mission committee).

8.2 Assembly needs to be assured that the committee has not lost sight of these important matters.

## 9 There is a lot of excitement about but we know that not everyone is happy

Assembly 2006 passed a resolution asking the committee to continue conversations with Mansfield College to find appropriate ways for the college to continue its contribution to the wider church. The review itself indicated that the committee would seek ways of continuing links with other valuable partners in learning (such as the Queen's Foundation, Birmingham) even though it was now not using them for ordination training. The committee has engaged in conversations with these places and they have made positive suggestions to the committee. The committee is pleased that local negotiations in Oxford and the Wessex synod are attempting to ensure the continuance of a reformed chaplaincy at Mansfield College. The committee is aware that the denomination has a governance role at Queen's Foundation and that Queen's and the West Midland's synod are partners in the West Midland's Regional Training

Partnership. But the committee does not believe that it should invest a further stake in either institution unless and until it has a clearer picture of how the partnerships of learning provision across the United Reformed Church and the developing life and work of the Resource Centres for Learning will unfold. The decisions of Assembly commit us to work through the RCLs in the first instance and the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry programme (Mission committee) has advised Education and Learning to embed ethnic balance within its RCLs rather than use, for example, a consultancy based elsewhere. This therefore is what it is aiming to do.

### **10 The challenges ahead include the fact that not everyone wants to learn**

The committee is aware that the provision of resource is not enough and sometimes congregations can feel belaboured by resources offered rather than stimulated by them. We are very much aware that if we are seriously talking about the learning of the whole people of God we need to start from where they/we are. It has been said in our committee that the church has many theories about learning but precious little data about what local congregations want and need. The committee believes that initiatives such as **Vision4Life** which provides a menu of learning opportunities for congregations to select from according to what they need is moving along the right lines. It believes that the outflow from the development of pastoral appraisals that the Ministries committee is developing will also provide good information about what congregations need in order to develop their own life and mission. It hopes also to develop some further research of its own to illicit more relevant data.

### **11 The committee**

The committee is glad that by numerous means learning is happening in the Church in increasingly diverse and exciting ways. It knows that it has much more work to do and guidance to give in further progressing the implementation of Assembly's 2005 and 2006 policy decisions. It looks forward with excitement to the developments that will take place in the next two years and the further fulfilment of Assembly's policies and vision.

### **12 Personnel**

12.1 Assembly 2006 was the point at which John Humphreys' handed over the baton of committee convenership to Malcolm Johnson. Malcolm is now a year into this work and is bringing to the committee the rich benefits of his experience in higher education as well as his experience of having previously convened another Assembly committee. As the committee did not report in 2006 though, it might be appropriate to record its thanks for the work of John Humphreys. This was marked at an informal fringe meeting in July '06. Suffice it then to say here that John steered the committee through four taxing years in which its review was developed and accepted by Assembly. John's ability to be available for committee work, to be calm when the pressure was increasing and to bring a sense of proportion and affirmation at all times was much appreciated.

12.2 The staff in United Reformed Church House who support the committee and its secretary are one personal assistant and one administrative assistant. The occupants of these two posts had changed with some rapidity in the period between 2005 and 2007 bringing with it attendant difficulties in ensuring good and consistent management of committee affairs. However we are delighted to say that the two current occupants of these posts, respectively Philippa Linton, and Penny Hannon have been permanent employees since the summer of 2007. Their work is greatly benefiting the committee and thus the whole church.

The Finance committee is responsible for the general financial oversight of funds administered for the benefit of the United Reformed Church, its long-term financial planning, and the preparation and control of its budget under the authority of Mission Council and the Trustees.

The committee will ensure that proper procedures are in place for the maintenance of accounting records, controlling and monitoring the budgetary process, and the preparation of financial statements in compliance with applicable United Kingdom law and accounting standards. To this end the committee should expect to liaise with auditors at least once per annum.

The committee may take such decisions with regard to the finances of the Church as are necessary within the policies set by General Assembly.

#### **Committee Members**

**Convener:** John Ellis (Honorary Treasurer)

**Chief Finance Officer:** Andrew Grimwade

Richard Gray, Brian Hosier, Jane Humphreys, John Kidd, Graham Law, Errol Martin, Graham Morris, Alan Small (Chairman of the Trustees), Kathryn Taylor

## **1 Working to the remit**

1.1 The committee has worked to the revised remit given by the 2007 Assembly. In particular it has begun a more systematic forward look at the ways in which the central resources of the Church can best be used in furthering its mission. It is hoped a five year plan can be brought to the 2010 Assembly. Mission Council has encouraged this work to proceed. The work will be done in conjunction with the United Reformed Church Trustees, who are equally concerned for the best stewardship of our financial and property assets.

## **2 Working with the churches**

2.1 Mission Council has asked the committee to assume responsibility for the work previously done on stewardship by the former Life and Witness committee. We plan a new group to encourage holistic thinking about Christian stewardship, including its financial dimension, and are considering how best it could serve the needs of synods and local churches.

2.2 Meanwhile the funding for ministers, church related community workers and our other recognised ministries continues to depend on the giving of local church members to the Ministry and Mission Fund. Where the fund is clearly explained in an attractive way, there is usually a cheerful response. We hope the free colourful leaflet sent to every local church last December helped with advocacy. As requested by Assembly, the leaflet will be repeated in some form annually.

2.3 Occasionally a local church finds itself with a substantial capital sum, perhaps from the sale of surplus premises. One church in that situation chose selflessly to give its capital to the Ministry and Mission Fund to provide investment income to the fund in future years. We are very grateful for such generosity.

### **3 Working with the Government**

3.1 Those responsible for financial aspects of the Church's life have spent a large amount of time in the past year with Government agencies, notably the Charity Commission and the Pensions Regulator, attempting to avoid unnecessary burdens being imposed on the Church. While the intention of much of the legislation that affects us may be admirable, its application to the particular situation of a Christian community is not always straightforward.





The committee is responsible for the ministry of Word and Sacraments, church related community work and lay preaching. It is concerned with central care and conditions of service, chaplaincies in industry, higher and further education and in the armed forces and 'special category' ministry. It has concern for the pastoral support of ministers, church related community workers and lay preachers, including supervision, appraisal, self-evaluation and counselling. It oversees the work of the *Assessment Board*. It is assisted by five sub-committees.

#### **Accreditation Sub-Committee**

Maintaining the roll of ministers, this sub-committee accredits those applying for inclusion after training and those coming from other denominations. It is concerned with numbers and recruitment. It also deals with applications for Special Category Ministries.

#### **Church Related Community Work Programme Sub-Committee**

It is responsible for supporting the church related community work ministry and programme under the terms agreed in the church related community work covenant. This includes the accreditation of Churches-in-Community

#### **Leadership in Worship Sub-Committee**

It is responsible for the advocacy of lay preaching and support of those who lead worship in the United Reformed Church.

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

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

#### **Retired Ministers Housing Sub-Committee**

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

#### **Committee Members**

**Convener:** Peter Poulter

**Members:** Roger Allen, Joanna Morling, Helen Renner, Alan Evans, Terry Oakley, Ruth Whitehead, David Cutler (Convener of the Assessment Board)

**Secretary:** Christine Craven

## **Context**

1 Since our last general report to Assembly, the committee has worked in the context of three different forces which have affected the way in which we have interpreted and directed our work. These are: the reception and digestion within the Church of our own major piece of work on *Equipping the Saints*; ongoing discussions with the government on the status of ministers as office holders; and the great release of energy and enthusiasm in the Church as the *Catch the Vision* programme leads us into *Vision4Life*.

## **Continuing work**

2 The detailed outline of the proposals for regular ministerial development review has been prepared and is currently being subject to piloting in three synods. On the basis of this experience we hope to report to Mission Council in December.

3 At General Assembly in 2007 we indicated that we planned to engage in a total review of the housing provision for ministers. A task group appointed by the committee concluded that, in the light of the changing situation of the Church and of the expectations of ministers there was need for a thoroughgoing enquiry into what was an appropriate provision for the foreseeable future. The issues and implications were wider than the committee felt competent to manage, therefore Mission Council was invited to establish a cross-committee task group to work on this. This group will report in due course.

### **Main focus**

4 A significant amount of time has been devoted to consideration of the terms and conditions of service of ministers. This is in part the normal process of the review and updating of our provisions, and partly in response to work of the government department – DTI and subsequently BERR (Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform) – on the employment status of office holders, and the observations made by United Reformed Church ministers to the department's questionnaire. As part of this ongoing work the committee brings to Assembly for resolution a revision of the grievance procedure for ministers and CRCWs together with a new procedure related to capability.

5 The committee's responsibility for the oversight of the numbers and deployment of ministers has been developed in the light of the new spirit of commitment and enthusiasm in the Church, our own work on *Equipping the Saints*, the experience of developing local church leaders in the course of the last 10 years, and the affirmation of the status and role of elders following the Faith and Life committee's report to the 2007 General Assembly. Therefore we wish to 'Challenge the Church' to embrace new patterns of local leadership in the context of team working.

### **A coherence of ministries**

6 Reflection on the implications of the changes in the Church's committee structures has indicated that the responsibility for the oversight and support of the eldership should properly be part of the brief of the Ministries committee. We look forward to the challenge and opportunity of working to maintain and develop a balance of the responsibility and contribution of all the ministries within the Church.

### **Chaplaincy**

7.1 The general secretary and secretary for Ministries sit on the United Board which sponsors Baptist, Congregational, United Reformed Church and other Free Church chaplains to the armed forces. The prayers and concern of the United Board over the last few years has been for those UB chaplains serving with their units in Iraq and Afghanistan.

7.2 However the many ministers of the United Reformed Church who serve as chaplains to hospitals, universities and schools, industry and commerce, prisons are also the concern of the Ministries committee. Such chaplaincy allows for outreach beyond our church buildings. A few ministers serve as full time chaplains but the majority minister in a part time capacity. Support for such chaplaincy is often through ecumenical networks with which the Ministries office has little formal contact. The Ministries committee is grateful to the Revd Cecil White, chaplain at Leeds University, who has agreed to act as the Ministries committee contact with Higher Education Chaplaincy.

## Changes regarding Safeguarding

8 From 12<sup>th</sup> October 2009 individuals will need to register with the Independent Safeguarding Agency (ISA) if they are to work with children and/or vulnerable adults. The Criminal Records Bureau welcomes the launch of the new ISA service as it will remove the most dangerous people from the children and vulnerable adults' workforce. The CRB will continue to provide a person's criminal record and other relevant information through the CRB checks. As further details emerge the Ministries office will contact each minister, CRCW and student about the administration of the new system.

## The old order changeth

9 This Assembly will see the end of Christine Craven's term of office as secretary for Ministries. We wish to mark our admiration and appreciation of the energy, imagination and wisdom that Christine has brought to the post through the last 12 years and wish her well in her new pastorate.



## Assessment Board

**Convener:** David Cutler

**Members:** Tina Ashitey, Judy Harris, Margaret Jenkins, Barbara Lancaster, Wendy Smith, Hugh Abel, Geoff Harrison, James Horton, Peter Clarke, Cameron Wilson, Jan Adamson, Lesley Charlton, Sian Collins, David Jenkins, Irene John, Janet Maxwell, Edward Sanniez

**Secretary:** Christine Craven

1 Since the report to General Assembly 2006 there have been several changes in the membership of the Assessment Board and the Ministries committee wishes to record appreciation of the commitment of all who serve on the Board. In particular, the committee wishes to thank Wilma Frew, Pat Poinen, Sarah Dodds, Diana Cullum-Hall, Roy Fowler, Simon Walkling and Nigel Uden. Those who have served as Chaplains at the Conferences were specially valued. On some occasions it was necessary to bring previous Board members out of retirement to make up the complement.

2 The entire Board meets annually and following on the meeting in 2006 reviewed the processes involved in selection of candidates for training for the ministry of Word and Sacrament, and church related community workers. The need for this was precipitated by the forthcoming changes to the structures of the Church, and the problems this would cause in running the former procedures. There was a wide ranging consultation. The outcome was a series of resolutions accepted by Assembly in 2007, leading to a new process that concludes with the decision being made by the Assembly Assessment Board to forward, or not, a candidate for training. Safeguards were put in place, allowing the existing appeal procedure to be available to candidates. The last Conference, under the old system, was held in November 2007.

3 In 2006/7 the number of candidates attending Assessment Conferences dropped and the numbers have remained fewer than those prior to 2005. General uncertainty about the direction being taken by the United Reformed Church may have had an impact on potential candidates.

4 In view of the smaller numbers coming forward, on economic and logistical grounds it was decided to have two rather than three Assessment Conferences in each academic year. Another means of making the best use of these conferences was to continue to conduct reassessment interviews during these weekends.

**24 candidates attended the assessment conferences and reassessment interviews in 2005/2006**

- 14 for stipendiary service
- 8 for non-stipendiary service.
- 0 church related community workers
- 2 re-assessment (transfer from non-stipendiary to stipendiary service)

**21 were finally accepted for training or transfer as a result of assessment conference recommendations and synod decision.**

- 13 for stipendiary service
- 7 for non-stipendiary service
- 0 church related community workers
- 1 re-assessment

**16 candidates attended the national assessment conferences in 2006/2007**

- 6 for stipendiary service
- 4 for non-stipendiary service
- 1 church related community worker
- 4 re-assessment (transfer from non-stipendiary to stipendiary service)
- 1 application to combine training for CRCW and ministry of Word and Sacraments

**11 were finally accepted for training or transfer as a result of assessment conference recommendations and synod decision.**

- 5 for stipendiary service
- 4 for non-stipendiary service
- 1 church related community workers
- 1 re-assessment (transfer from non-stipendiary to stipendiary service)

5 The annual November consultation at Windermere organised by the Ministries office on behalf of the Assessment Board continues both to provide training for those involved with the interviews of candidates in synods and from the assessment board. It also provides a valuable point of contact between the board and the synods.



# The Accreditation Sub-Committee

**Members:** *Gwen Collins, (Convener), Pat Evans, Rod Morrison, Simon Rowntree, Howard Sharp, Sue Henderson, David Cutler (Convener of the National Assessment Board)*  
**Secretary:** *Christine Craven*

## Certificates of eligibility

1 The Ministries committee is responsible to General Assembly for oversight of the projected number of ministers for future years and for deciding each year, on the basis of these projections, whether Certificates of Eligibility for stipendiary service may be issued to ministers of other denominations. Such a certificate grants eligibility to receive a call to serve in a pastorate or post.

2 No Certificates of Eligibility were issued for the years 2006 and 2007.

3 In September 2007 the Ministries committee authorised the Accreditation sub-committee to issue up to four Certificates of Eligibility each year from 2008 to 2012. Applications exceed this number and the sub-committee has agreed a procedure for considering and prioritising all applications. Certificates are to be issued annually. If after three years no call has been given the certificate lapses.

4 Ministers who are issued with a Certificate of Eligibility, and receive and accept a call to a pastorate or post, will serve a probationary period of one year from induction. On successful completion of this probationary period the minister is added to the roll of ministers of the United Reformed Church. In other words, he or she becomes one of our ministers by transfer.

## Certificates of limited eligibility

5 In contrast to the above, Certificates of Limited Eligibility do not enable a minister to transfer to the roll of ministers. A Certificate of Limited Eligibility allows a minister or community worker of another church to serve in, and be paid by, the United Reformed Church in one specified post only and for a limited period of time. The committee brings two resolution to the Assembly relating to such certificates.

6 Since General Assembly 2006, four Certificates of Limited Eligibility have been issued: three to ministers of word and sacraments and one to a church related community worker.

## Special category ministry posts

7 Eight new special category ministry posts have been approved since General Assembly 2006. General Assembly 2005 agreed to allow for the expansion of the scheme by six posts per year. This would allow for there to be a total of forty two posts by now, but we actually have only thirty one posts approved. There have not been enough applications for the expansion to proceed at the pace envisaged by General Assembly 2005. All applications are given careful consideration and most of the applications submitted in the last two years have been approved, but not all.

8 Of the current thirty one special category ministry posts eleven are vacant. It is the responsibility of this sub-committee to approve the posts, but appointment of people to those posts is done locally. The large proportion of vacancies, together with the smaller than envisaged number of new posts, means that any fears that this scheme would be a serious drain on mainstream ministerial deployment have proved unfounded. On the other hand the slow take-up is a disappointment.

A great deal of work goes into the planning of these posts and they offer the opportunity for us as a church to extend the boundaries of ministry and to respond creatively and imaginatively to current needs. The sub-committee hopes that this report may draw attention to the valuable work waiting to be done and encourage suitably qualified people to give these posts prayerful consideration.

9 The sub-committee wishes to put on record its appreciation of the work of Mary Stacy, honorary administrator for the special category ministry posts scheme.

### **Duty to consider**

10 General Assembly 2006 approved a procedure for consideration of requests to extension of full-time stipendiary service beyond age sixty five, in compliance with the then forthcoming Equality of Employment Age Regulations. Seven such requests have been granted since. During the first year of operation it became clear that most of the requests were for a short extension and therefore it was decided to bring a resolution to General Assembly 2007 asking that requests for extensions of up to six months should be subject to local agreement. This resolution was omitted from the Assembly papers in error and was therefore put to, and approved by, Mission Council at its meeting in October 2007.

### **The roll of ministers**

11 Admissions to the roll of ministers (from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008)

By ordination and induction:

Anne Bedford, Anne Dove, Ashley Evans, Diane Farquhar, Dominic Grant, Annette Haigh, Marcus Hargis, Helen Higgin-Botham, Liz Jewitt, Robert Maloney, Lesley Moseley, Don Nichols, Stuart Radcliffe, Rosalind Selby, Ann Sheldon, Caroline Vodden, Zam Walker, Victor Webb, Carolyn White.

By reinstatement: none

12 Changes within the roll of ministers (from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008)  
non-stipendiary to stipendiary service: Philip Brooks, Pauline Main, John Potter.

13 Deletions from the roll of ministers (from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008)  
by resignation and/or transfer to other churches: Keith Riglin (to the Church of England).

### **Church related community workers**

14 Admission to the list of church related community workers (from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008) by commissioning:- Liz Kam

### **Assembly accredited lay preachers**

15 The following have received Assembly accreditation between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008 as a result of having successfully completed a United Reformed Church course of study or have prior accreditation from another denomination.

North Western synod:	Colin Garley
Mersey synod:	Trevor Brooks, Jenny Makepeace
Yorkshire synod:	Anne Dale
East Midlands synod:	Allison Jolly
West Midlands synod:	Peter Kimberley, Pat Rollnick
Thames North synod:	Anne Lewitt, Jackie Hall
Southern synod:	Sue Knight, Ian Fletcher



# Church Related Community Work Programme Sub-Committee

**Members:** Bob Day (Convener), Paul Whittle, Tracey Lewis, Mal Breeze, Maureen Thompson

**CRCW Development Workers:** Steve Summers, Suzanne Adofo

1 In 2006, *Faithful Cities*, a report from the Commission on Urban Life and Faith included in its recommendations a commendation of church related community work in the United Reformed Church and a request that the training modules be made available to other denominations and faith-related community work.

2 We have continue to lead in developing opportunities for people involved in or aiming to be involved in community work and ministry. Two new TLS courses have been produced. Both aim to develop understanding of community work principles and practices from a faith base. *Developing Community Experiences* is the one year course, expected to be available from September 2008, and *Valuing Community Experiences* is the LITE course.

3 A grant from the Faith Communities Capacities Building Fund in 2007 has enabled a series of workshops to be run, this year, with churches that are looking for help to vision and plan for community work. These workshops have been run by Pete Twilley, a member of Wolverhampton URC and a former member of the Church Related Community Work programme sub-committee.

4 In 2007, Church Related Community Work (CRCW) ministry participated in its first *Belonging to the World Church* Programme exchange. The exchange with the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan was an opportunity to learn about Christian community work in a different context as well as to share our understanding of the particular nature of United Reformed Church CRCW ministry and other church-based community projects in Manchester, Poole and Mold, N Wales.

5 At local, national and international levels, CRCWs are using their theology and practice to make an impact on the life of the church. This is a valuable and rewarding ministry and we continue to encourage new opportunities for service and explore opportunities for new posts.

6 It is with great sadness that we report that Emmanuel Nkusi, CRCW in Newham died in June 2007.



# Leadership in Worship

## Sub-Committee

**Members:** Jan Harper (Convener), Derek Marsh, Ed Strachan, Gwynfor Evans, Alan Cotgreave, co-opted members Janet Tollington, Graham Campling

1 During the past two years the remit of this sub-committee has broadened to include support for all lay folk who lead worship in our churches, and with this in mind it was decided to change the name (from Lay Preaching Support Sub-Committee) to the 'Leadership in Worship Sub-Committee'.

### 2 A definition of a worship team/group

The Leadership in Worship sub-committee has been asked to give a definition of a worship team/group, however the committee believes a 'description' rather than 'definition' is more appropriate. Currently a worship group is probably thought of as a group of musicians who either augment or replace the traditional organist. More properly it should be a group who work together in conjunction with the musicians to prepare services, using the talents and experiences of those inside and outside of the group. They would then work in conjunction with their local minister and lay preachers and become an integral part of team ministries. The members of these groups need to be trained and mentored so that they are able to give their best to God during the worship. A worship planning group need have no musicians in it.

### 3 Training and development

Lay preacher training is an on-going concern and all those involved in leading worship are to be encouraged to follow TLS which is the main route of the United Reformed Church. Some synods have more people taking up the course than others and this may have something to do with the amount of financial support given. Post TLS training has also been under discussion and there are a number of good courses available, including the Westminster Lay Preaching course, and which should be known to synod commissioners. The sub-committee is much encouraged by the decision of the Education and Learning committee to offer Assembly accredited lay preachers £200 per annum for continuing training and development through courses approved by the United Reformed Church. Details of access to such grants may be obtained from synod training officers.

### 4 Commissioners' consultations

Since the last Assembly we have held a Consultation Day at Carr's Lane URC, Birmingham which focused on *Equipping the Saints* and *Catch the Vision*, and discussions were held concerning working with local training officers. This year, by the time Assembly 2008 meets, we shall have held a consultation weekend at High Leigh, with **Vision4Life** as its theme. Synods were invited to send synod lay preaching commissioners and two others from each synod connected with the development of leadership in worship.

5 Also during this time we said goodbye with grateful thanks for all his work to Dr Phil Theaker who has gone to pastures new in Scotland. Two other members of the sub-committee also stood down after their term of office expired, and we have been very grateful to Ann Simcock and Bernard Bentley for their work and their support of this sub-committee.





# Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee

**Members:** Geoffrey Roper (Convener), Maurice Dyson (Convener, Pensions Executive), David Hayden, Brian Knight, Jane Mackerness, Kenneth Summers

## 1 The Plan for partnership in ministerial remuneration – how the money is raised

The sub-committee took note of the Review of Ministry and Mission Fund's suggestion (*Assembly Reports 2006 pages 87 to 92*) that the Plan for Partnership should say something about how the money is raised. A proposal brought to Assembly would expand the opening paragraphs of the plan (*Section 2: Principles of the Plan*) with a form of words devised by the Finance committee, which is responsible for raising the Ministry and Mission fund.

2 Other proposed amendments relate to grants and leave, available to ministers and CRCWs who become parents. The United Reformed Church is not bound to apply every aspect of new employment legislation to the terms and conditions of service for ministers and CRCWs as office holders, because some aspects of employment law do not apply to those in ministerial vocations. We resolved to consider all new employment legislation on the principle that its application by the United Reformed Church may help maintain a high standard of terms and conditions of service.

3 A department of government, BERR, (formerly Trade and Industry) has for some years been in discussion with religious organisations, MPs and trade unions about the applicability of employment law to ministers of religion and other church workers. The United Reformed Church circulated the department's questionnaire *Statement of Good Practice in Working Conditions* from BERR in 2007 to 645 active ministers in stipendiary service and 120 ministers in self supporting service. By October the department had received 38 replies of which 32 were from United Reformed Church ministers. The summary of these replies gave a satisfactory picture overall but the sub-committee sees no reason for complacency and will continue to monitor the BERR discussions. It encourages all responsible for ministers' and CRCWs' terms and conditions to be aware of the *Statement of Good Practice in Working Conditions*.

## 4 Study of ministers' other earnings

About 15% of ministers in pastoral charge were sent a survey form enquiring about their income from ministry-related work. The responses from every synod suggest that paid part-time chaplaincies are now far fewer than a decade or so ago and that, in a variable picture the average (mean) total of fees and other payments was £700 in the preceding year. The sub-committee will have this in mind when reviewing the compensation payments made to ministers in Assembly appointments.

## 5 Sick leave for ministers and CRCWs

A further proposed amendment to the plan makes clear the duty to notify the Maintenance of Ministry office of sick-leave lasting more than three days. The sub-committee endeavours to apply a consistent approach to payments to ministers and CRCWs who suffer longer illnesses. The Plan for Partnership guarantees up to six months full stipend (after allowing for certain state benefits) to those on sick leave. The sub-committee has discussed with synod moderators the procedures which enable timely and fair review for those absent from service long-term and provision for staged return to service where this is appropriate.



# Retired Ministers' Housing Sub-Committee

**Convener:** *David Bedford*

**Members:** *Elizabeth Caswell, Michael Spencer, Liz Tadd, Nanette Lewis-Head*

**Secretary:** *Tony Bayley*

This sub-committee continues to be responsible for policy in matters of the provision of retirement housing for ministers and their spouses. It uses the United Reformed Church Retired Ministers' Housing Society Limited as its agent for the implementation of policy and the practical steps associated with the provision of housing.

## Grateful for generosity

1 The committee is particularly grateful for the donations and legacies received during the year which amounted to approximately £521,000. Many churches, synods and individuals have responded generously to our appeal re-launched in 2006 and these gifts are much appreciated. Revd Bill Wright continues to act as an advocate for the society and is, over a period, talking to each of the synods.

2 In 2007, General Assembly approved a resolution recommending that 10% of funds raised from the sale of redundant churches be contributed to the society. Encouragingly, several synods have already agreed to this course of action.

## The immediate challenge

3 During 2007, a survey was carried out and we would like to express our thanks to the large number of ministers who took the time to respond. The results confirmed that around 60% of ministers expect to need some form of assistance with their retirement housing. The financial result of this is even more difficult to establish, but it does seem that there will be a need for some £2 million each year (from all sources combined, including the sale of properties no longer required by tenants) for the foreseeable future.

4 It is expected that during 2008 assistance will be required for 10 retiring ministers. After allowing for re-housing and the needs of widows/widowers, it would be prudent to anticipate up to 16 applicants in all. This could involve an outlay of over £2 million and thus the importance of a continued high level of receipts from donations and legacies cannot be over-emphasised.

## Our ongoing work

5 During 2007, 20 properties were acquired and 20 were sold, thus maintaining the number of properties under management at 367 at the year end.

6 In 2007 the standard rent payable was £109 per calendar month. New tenants since the beginning of 2004 will pay between £112 and £190 per calendar month in 2008 (depending upon the amount of capital employed by the Society), while pre-2004 tenants will pay £112. Widows/widowers are in receipt of a rent reduction (usually £10 per calendar month).

7 During 2007, visits were made by the officers of the society to 103 applicants, tenants and other properties. In addition, we continue to rely heavily upon, and are grateful for, the commitment of those members of local congregations who generously give oversight to our retirement properties and who assist those who live in them. We would like to hear from anyone who would be prepared to volunteer their assistance in this respect.

8 Retirement Housing continues to figure prominently in the pre-retirement courses run at the Windermere Centre by Ministries. In 2007 three courses were run and two more are planned for this year. The housing sessions are designed to be of benefit to all, regardless of whether or not financial assistance with housing will be needed. In addition, private discussions on individual needs are provided.

9 Work is being carried out on a major update of the Guidelines (the rules under which we operate) and it is hoped to bring these to General Assembly via Mission Council.

10 Anyone requiring more detailed information about the work of the Retired Ministers' Housing scheme should contact the secretary at Church House.





1 General Assembly 2006 agreed that its work should be organised in three broad areas or departments. General Assembly 2007 adopted a detailed plan for the creation and functioning of a Mission committee and department. During the past transitional year existing committees forming part of this new structure have wound up their business and identified specific unfinished policy work needing to be carried forward.

2 Thanks are extended to all those who have served on the various committees that have come together to form the Mission committee both for their dedicated time and effort and also for the graciousness with which they have committed their work into the hands of the new Mission committee.

3 Only one of the committees forming the new structure had been due to report in 2008. Therefore the final report from Church and Society appears separately this year and items from this field will in future be incorporated in the report of the Mission committee.

4 The new Mission committee comprises 13 core members, one from each synod, the moderator(s) and moderator(s) elect of General Assembly, the deputy general secretary, general secretary and the staff secretaries. Simon Loveitt has also been co-opted onto the committee as the United Reformed Church representative on the Management Group of the Joint Public Issues Team.

5 As this report is written (final week of March 2008) the Mission committee has met twice, first for a 24 hour residential meeting at the Windermere Training Centre in late January and then on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> February at Church House. A primary task has been to get to know each other and to understand the range of activities, practices and programmes falling under the 'mission' banner. We have also started to look at resources, processes and programmes and to plot our next steps.

6 We have identified three core areas of work for the coming 12 months:

## **A mission strategy for the United Reformed Church**

7 It is our aim to develop a mission strategy for the United Reformed Church to provide direction for our denomination in relation to its witness, worship and prayer; its work for justice; its ecumenical, international and inter-faith relationships; and in the theological and missiological deliberations that inform these activities. The strategy will be both visionary and practical. It will seek to reflect and to support and guide the mission of local congregations, it will link into and build upon synod mission strategies where they exist, and it will direct the resources and programmes held nationally through the Mission department at Church House.

8 A start has been made to identify what we have called '10 year outcomes' – those things that we would like to see achieved by 2018. Through theological reflection, consideration of our history and tradition and in sharing our practical experiences in the life of the church we have identified a number of themes and issues around which these outcomes will be formed. At the time of writing these include:

- a) understanding what it means to be a mission-centred church by building clarity and confidence throughout the church about who we are, what we do, and why we do it;

- b) being a church which is comfortable with diversity and equipped to welcome people from any background in equal and inclusive ways;
- c) being confident about evangelism with a view to becoming a church growing in numbers, not managing decline;
- d) having strong roots in the life of local neighbourhoods, entering relationships and partnership with a wide range of local agencies;
- e) acknowledging our global context, sharing resources for mission with other churches and partners around the world;
- f) challenging and subverting all which controls, undermines or destroys God's kingdom of justice and peace in social, economic and environmental realms;
- g) forming relationships with Christians of other traditions at individual and institutional levels in demonstrating our unity in Christ and working with people of other faiths to achieve mutual objectives in building a fairer society.

*We would welcome General Assembly's reflections on these themes and how we move them forward in the coming months.*

9 Our intention is to bring a draft Mission Strategy to the Mission Council meeting in December 2008 with further reports to Mission Council in 2009 and a substantive report to General Assembly in 2010.

### **The development of the Mission Department and Mission Team**

10 Initial steps have been taken to bring together a number of staff secretary posts into a single Mission department and staff team. This has happened at a time when there has been significant change in the composition of the team.

11 It has been good to welcome Frank Kantor as secretary for Church and Society, Francis Brienen as secretary for Mission and (in a new role) Dale Rominger as secretary for World Church Relations to the team. Richard Mortimer was reappointed for a second term as secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith and Order at the March Mission Council. We also rejoice in the appointment of Michael Jagessar as secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry. He will take up the post on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008.

12 On behalf of the whole church we would like to record our appreciation of Katalina Tahaafe-Williams (secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry 2001-2008) and of her excellent work in pioneering and furthering this subject within the United Reformed Church, and our gratitude to Sandra Ackroyd who served as temporary secretary following Katalina's departure.

13 The staff secretaries are moving towards working as an integrated team, a process in which we have been deeply helped by Peter Pay, core member for Wessex synod and a management consultant. The secretary for Mission has taken on responsibility for team co-ordination. Further developments in terms of team working and staff posts are likely to evolve in relation to the development and delivery of the mission strategy.

### **On-going work**

14 With so much internal change it has been very important to ensure a high level of continuity with existing work programmes. Separate reports to General Assembly cover the work of the former Church and Society committee (pages 71) and the *Commitment for Life* programme (pages 74) but other highlights are set out below.

15 The United Reformed Church has been involved in two very creative Bilateral dialogues, one with the Church of England, revisiting *God's Reign and Our Unity*, the Report of the 1984 Anglican–Reformed International Commission, and the other with the Roman Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales. Interestingly both have raised significant questions about identity and the leading of God's Spirit. Robert Pope, the new convener of the Faith and Order Reference Group, contributed a paper on the theology of the Basis of Union to the portfolio of papers agreed with Mission Council, which led to a very fruitful discussion.

16 Celebrations were held to mark the inauguration of the new Central Sussex United Area, the opening up of the Anglican–Methodist Covenant between the Archdiocese of York and the York and Hull Methodist district to Yorkshire synod, and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Covenant of Pulpit and Table with the Protestant Church of the Palatinate. Representatives travelled to the third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, Romania. A response was made to *Moving Together*, the review of 10 years of the ecumenical journey in England since *Called to Be One*. We are awaiting with great interest the report of the Council for World Mission Community of Women and Men in Mission team visit to the United Reformed Church in January 2008; the union of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches with the Reformed Ecumenical Council; and a major Conference of United and Uniting Churches in October of this year in South Africa.

17 Following many years' work and careful negotiation by the officers, Mission Council Meeting in March of this year adopted the following resolution: '*The Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church, in pursuit of their Interfaith Relations work, will set up a Joint Reference Group, to be a support for staff members and a source of expertise within and beyond our two Churches*'. In the light of the experience of working together for a number of years and of changes in the committee structures of both Churches it seemed right to pool expertise more formally. The equivalent ratifying meeting of Methodist Council takes place after this Book of Reports goes to press but we hope to report an affirmative response at Assembly.

18 The work of the former Life and Witness committee has focused on the role of the local congregation and the place of telling stories, both as instruction in good practice and as a means to develop a fundamental methodological approach to sharing faith. Issues of rural mission have also been to the fore. Restrictions on movement of animals exacerbated an already existing crisis born of flooding, foot and mouth disease, bluetongue and avian flu. There were concerns about exclusion and bigotry in respect of migrant workers and the need to encourage people to buy locally, and interesting explorations in churches as venues for post offices.

19 Allied to the work of **Vision4Life**, the Mission committee has been reflecting upon the *God is Still Speaking* initiative. This (the name of which comes from the original campaign run by the United Church of Christ in the United States) is about mission, marketing and evangelism, and arises from work undertaken by two gatherings at Windermere over the last two years. It aims to address the situation in a country where many believe in God yet only 8% attend church, where a large segment have little or no church background, where the church is perceived as lacking vision, where some have painful stories of negative personal experience and feeling unwelcome and those who remain often find worship boring and irrelevant. It seeks to increase awareness of the fact, and make people bold to proclaim, that we are Christ's living presence, a people of hope and possibility, of extravagant welcome and hospitality. Key goals are to evangelise in our communities; to build on the work of **Vision4Life**; to strengthen our Church's distinctive witness; to promote and advertise our values of personal worth, inclusion and social justice; to speak directly to those who seek God, spiritual community or religious participation in our society; to inspire hope among church members and friends; and to become a catalyst for growth and renewal.

20 Mission committee has discussed this initiative and committed to forming a working group and commissioning research and development work with colleagues from the USA in order to bring further information and a resolution to a later Mission Council (probably December 2008).

21 The *Belonging to the World Church* (BWC) programme remained the focus of our international work. It is exciting to report that two more synods have joined the Global Partners initiative of BWC. Now twelve of the thirteen synods have international partnership with churches from Cuba to India, Taiwan to Madagascar. BWC continues to work closely with Education for Ministry in both individual and group experiences. Some 25 United Reformed Church ministers had international experiences in the past year. There was also a slight increase in the number of lay and FURY grants. For the first time, BWC and the CRCW programme came together in a visit of church related community workers to the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, followed by a return visit of colleagues from Taiwan to the UK. Overall, it was a successful year. International relations and experiences can change peoples' lives and can re-energise the life of our church.

22 The focus of Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry programmes continues to be one of mission, which motivates engagement with churches and their people. Much of the work is about supporting people in human need and struggle, nurturing and empowering new people, particularly those from minority ethnic groups, to be able to use their gifts and skills effectively within the United Reformed Church. Aspects of the work also involve challenging unjust structures, not just in society but also within the church.

23 Training and education remain an ongoing priority throughout the church's life and structures. The two main networks are the Racial Justice Advocates network and the EMLOMA (Ethnic Minority Lay and Ordained Ministers' Association) network. A recent initiative has started to provide opportunities to equip advocates to facilitate groups of people in racial justice and multicultural issues, and to make a more effective use of the resource materials *The Toolkit*, *Strangers No More* and *We Belong*. This opportunity has developed into a course, based on a resource called *Workers for the Harvest*, carried out jointly with the Methodist Church. It will next run in June and September 2008. Further training and education programmes remain a priority to be developed in the next two years, as well as wider issues such as 'reparations' in relation to the descendants of slaves from the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, affecting many people in diaspora among whom are large numbers of people in some of our churches and communities.

24 EMLOMA continues to give support to black minority ethnic lay and ordained people within the United Reformed Church, also encouraging members to support racial justice and multicultural programmes. During the past twelve months this network has seen a wider group of lay people becoming involved. A vibrant and creative multicultural celebration event took place in London on the first of December 2007. The next one is planned for 2009 and will take place in Birmingham. 2008 marks the third year of the Ghanaian Conference and the planning of a conference for Asian Christians in membership of or associated with the United Reformed Church, is also underway.

25 Following debate at General Assembly 2007, the Mission committee has been tasked with bringing a further resolution on representation at General Assembly.



## Representation to General Assembly

26 We recognise and give thanks to God for the multicultural composition of the United Reformed Church and British Society. The opportunities afforded by the richness in diversity, are manifold.

27 Our understanding of mission challenges us as a church to become more embracing and inclusive as we engage with an increasing ethnic and cultural diversity within the United Reformed Church. This is the focus of our newly worded Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry resolution being presented to Assembly 2008. The ethnic monitoring forms which have been collated this year have been very helpful in gaining a clear idea of how multicultural we are as a Church, ie the composition of our congregations. The Skills Audit forms which have been returned have also given us more information about minority ethnic people in leadership roles and those who are willing to be considered for membership on committees and councils of the wider Church.

28 During the past 10 years, the most rapid numerical growth in the United Reformed Church has been among people of Caribbean, African, Asian and Oriental descent. In some areas of the United Reformed Church they comprise the majority in church congregations, in other areas they are in a minority and in many churches there are not yet any minority ethnic members.

29 Recognising the contribution made by people of Caribbean, African, Asian and Oriental communities to the life and witness of the United Reformed Church, we regret that their contribution to church life is not reflected in the governance and structures of the United Reformed Church. Many continue to experience marginalisation and inequality.

30 We aim to value and celebrate the contribution made by all minority ethnic groups and majority ethnic groups in the United Reformed Church. In using the term 'black minority ethnic' in the resolution, we are referring to people described in paragraphs 28 and 29 above, because of reasons explained in paragraph 29.

### Resolution 32

- a) General Assembly requests each synod to include at least one black minority ethnic member in their group of representatives to General Assembly as from Assembly 2010.
- b) General Assembly instructs Mission Council to monitor and review the representation of black minority ethnic members in General Assembly in relation to the growth trends of the United Reformed Church and report back to the 2012 Assembly.





world that we created



1 This report represents the final report by the Church and Society committee. In future, Church and Society issues will be incorporated in the report of the Mission committee which is seeking to integrate public issues into the mission of the United Reformed Church (together with a number of other areas of speciality – see Report of Mission committee, page 65).

2 A vote of thanks is extended to all Church and Society committee members, staff and conveners (past and present) who have dedicated extensive time and effort to help the United Reformed Church engage in the issues impacting on Church and Society at the national, regional, and local levels. This engagement has helped to raise the profile of the United Reformed Church in the public square and has greatly enhanced its reputation as a Church that is committed to addressing issues of social, economic and environmental justice as part of its mission in the world.

3 A Church and Society network is to be established across all the synods to continue to share information, good practices and coordinate programmes such as climate change throughout the Church. More details on how this network is to function will be released shortly.

4 The Joint Public Issues Team comprising the Methodist, Baptist and United Reformed Churches has continued to function well over the past year. The Baptist Church appointed the Revd Dr Rosemary Kidd as their representative on this team in November 2007 and the United Reformed Church appointed Mr Frank Kantor as their representative in his capacity as secretary for Church and Society in October. The team now consists of seven members (4 Methodist, 2 United Reformed Church, and a Baptist) and Alison Jackson who is the team leader.

Key projects undertaken by the Joint Public Issues Team over the past year include:

- **Climate change** – briefings and communiqués have been produced tracking the passage of the Climate Change Bill through the Houses of Lords and Commons and a joint statement was released on the Bali Conference in December. Actions to implement the Climate Change resolution passed at Assembly last year are covered at the end of this report.
- **Human embryology and early human life** – the working group established to produce a report on the theological, ethical, and social principles in issues concerning early human life in the light of technological and medical developments have now completed their report for Methodist Conference. This report is available on the JPIT website and can be viewed by following this link <http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/> A study guide is to be produced for churches to engage in the important bioethical issues raised in this report which will be available by June 2009, and a second working group formed to consider the issues and challenges around peri-natal and neo-natal care. It is envisaged that the position of the United Reformed Church on the issues of pre-natal, peri-natal and neo-natal care will be reviewed in the light of these reports and resolutions brought to General Assembly in 2010.
- **Migration matters** – a PDF pamphlet dealing with migration matters has been produced which can be downloaded from the JPIT website. This document seeks to expose a number

of the myths related to immigration and to highlight some good practice by different churches who are responding positively to this challenge. A longer report on this issue with a theological reflection on migration, immigration and asylum is also available on the JPIT website.

- **Political affairs** – representatives from our three churches together with the Quakers and Salvation Army again attended the three main political party conferences, meeting Christian MPs and hosting fringe meetings. As members of the RADAR group, we also benefit from the work being undertaken by other denominations and Christian agencies in tracking legislation and consultations which may impact on the Church and Christian values.
- **Advocacy and peace building** – a joint statement was released on the situation in Pakistan in December and separate statements were released on the deteriorating situation in Gaza, the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war in Iraq and more recently on the elections and prospects for peace in Zimbabwe.

5 A resolution is being brought to General Assembly calling for employees in our churches – Church House, synods, and local churches – to be paid a living wage. This is based on the call by Church Action on Poverty for churches to pay their employees a living wage of at least £7.20 an hour in London and £7.00 an hour elsewhere in the UK (see resolution 33).

6 Appreciation is expressed to those synods who have invited the secretary for Church and Society to meet with their Church and Society representatives to discuss local projects and initiatives. Special thanks are conveyed to the synod of Scotland for the invitation to address their synod on the topic of Church and Society as Mission and to conduct a workshop on Climate Change. Finally, thanks are also expressed to Fury Forum and Assembly for the invitations to conduct workshops at these events.

7 The integration of Church and Society issues into the Mission department of the United Reformed Church has commenced and provides both challenges and opportunities for Church and Society in the future. Challenges relate to the prioritisation of the multiple issues impacting on Church and Society, establishing an effective network to coordinate our efforts, and the development of a theological framework for engagement. The opportunities relate to the distinctive contribution the United Reformed Church can make to social transformation in terms of its engagement in society as this becomes a part of its mission focus.

8 We are grateful that in the midst of the restructuring taking place in both the Methodist and United Reformed Churches that Simon Loveitt has agreed to continue representing the United Reformed Church on the management group of the Joint Public Issues Team. This will provide much needed continuity and support to Church and Society within the emerging Mission department. Simon is to be co-opted onto the Mission committee after General Assembly to continue playing this role.



## Living Wage

1.1 The Church and Society committee meeting at the Windermere Centre on 22–23 January 2008 reflected on the call by Church Action on Poverty (CAP) for churches to pay a living wage to their employees. This call comes 5 years after their research on 'A Living Wage Church' in the greater Manchester area which revealed disturbing trends related to the payment and conditions of employment of church staff.

1.2 The United Reformed Church was a signatory of the 'Living Wage' pledge in 2003 and provided funding for the production of the 'Just Church' resources launched this year. We have also expressed support for the proposed campaign to end UK poverty which is to be launched later this year.

1.3 It is believed that complying with this resolution will bring benefits to both employer and employee and will greatly enhance the credibility of the United Reformed Church as we engage in campaigning for an end to UK Poverty and Homelessness and other relevant campaigns.

### Resolution 33

The Church and Society committee calls on all the United Reformed Church's synods and churches:

- a) to support Church Action on Poverty's call for churches to pay a living wage as determined by the Living Wage Campaign;<sup>1</sup>
- b) to ensure that all employees have a written contract of employment;
- c) for the terms and conditions of employment of employees to at least comply with the minimum legal requirements stipulated;
- d) to implement the equal opportunity policy developed by the United Reformed Church;
- e) where contract or agency staff are employed, to engage with contractors and agencies on the payment of their employees to ensure compliance with this resolution.



<sup>1</sup> Currently, £7.20 an hour in London and £7.00 an hour elsewhere in the UK (see [www.church-poverty.org.uk](http://www.church-poverty.org.uk) and follow the campaigns link)

# Commitment for Life

## 1 Our Mission

*Commitment for Life* exists to give United Reformed Church congregations the opportunity to live out the call of Christ to 'love our neighbour as ourselves.' By becoming involved in global justice issues we show Christian living in action. Linking with campaigns, partners and projects through Christian Aid and the World Development Movement, *Commitment for Life* wants to give God's precious poor choice and empowerment. Luke 6 reminds us that our way of life must not be at the expense of others. We cannot separate our relationship with God, with others and the world around us.

## 2 Campaigning

Supporters showed their support for justice issues through the following:

- Christian Aid's Cut the Carbon March. Grateful thanks to all our churches that contributed, in any way, to the success of the march;
- 'The World Can't Wait' event on 2<sup>nd</sup> June saw *Commitment for Life* exhibiting at the Emmanuel Centre, London, along with other NGOs;
- taking part in the International Church Action on Peace in Palestine and Israel (ICAPPI) to show support for the churches in Jerusalem and beyond.

## 3 Working ecumenically

- for peace and reconciliation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The annual Israel/Palestine Day brought together concerned individuals to look at the issues and explore action;
- with other agencies eg Operation Noah, MRDF (Methodist Relief and Development Agency);
- developing joint actions and resources on climate change within the Joint Public Issues Team.

## 4 Support and education

- Through our partner countries' updates, leaflets, posters and the e-publications *Stories for Change* and *Moving Stories*, we encourage local congregations to gain a deeper understanding of life in our four partner countries: Bangladesh, Jamaica, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Zimbabwe.
- *Commitment for Life* would not be the success it is without the continued support of our convener, Melanie Frew, sub-committee, advocates and link people. We offer grateful thanks for their time, enthusiasm and financial commitment.

## 5 Statistics

- Number of churches in scheme: 652, an increase of 11 new churches.
- Amount raised, £522,763 of which 75% (£392,070) goes to Christian Aid to be divided equally among the four partner countries, 10% (£52,278) to WDM and 15% (£78,414) for grant giving, advocacy and administration.
- In 2007 grants were given to: EAPPI (Ecumenical Accompanier Programme in Palestine and Israel), Fairtrade Foundation, Jubilee Debt Campaign, Landmine Action, Muslim and Christian Action for Advocacy Relief and Development (MuCAARD UK), One World Week, Operation Noah, People and Planet and Trade Justice Movement.

## 6 Looking ahead

As part of the new Mission Team we wish to play a full part in the mission of the United Reformed Church. Our 10 year mission is to see all congregations within the United Reformed Church praying, campaigning and offering financial commitment so that Christian Aid and the World Development Movement, through *Commitment for Life*, can expose the scandal of poverty and help in practical ways to challenge unjust systems.



# Climate change resolution

1.1 Following the acceptance of the Climate resolution last General Assembly, a small task group was convened to take the resolution forward and bring ideas for discussion.

1.2 In this changing environment we are aware that many churches are already taking steps to lower their carbon footprint and engaging in their communities. We would seek to complement their achievements rather than produce a different way of working. Our aim is to provide resources and information that will help not replicate, existing publications. We are all in agreement that climate change is a spiritual, environmental and justice issue and one with which the United Reformed Church needs to be associated. We want to be a coherent Christian voice on this issue.

1.3 Ideas already in progress or completed:

- Contributions to June edition of *Reform* including ways to be a carbon neutral church.
- Environmental audit of Church House by the Marches Energy Agency (MEA). Following their report actions will be taken to continue to lower the carbon footprint at Church House. There will be a 'Green Week' to raise awareness within Church House.
- Sharing good practice through 'Creation Challenge', the web page of the Methodist/United Reformed Church Environmental Network. This will give up to date information on progress both at Church House and beyond. [www.creationchallenge.org.uk](http://www.creationchallenge.org.uk)
- This General Assembly Mark Dowd, from Operation Noah, will be a guest speaker on the problems raised by environmental refugees. A Methodist leaflet is available to help churches lower their carbon footprint, giving information on suppliers and ways to campaign both nationally and locally. We are delighted that a minister from the island of Kiribati is a guest at this Assembly. The minister will speak at a fringe event about the devastating impact of climate change on the island.
- Discussions with Christian Aid, World Development Movement leading to more focused campaigning. We are already sharing resources and information.
- The theological perspectives are being considered in a joint working party with Baptist and Methodist and United Reformed Church representatives. A paper will be produced from the task group. This will inform changes needed to update our environmental policy.

1.4 To come:

- September 24<sup>th</sup> sees a 'Green Apostles' Event. This day will be a day for *Commitment for Life* advocates and those within the synods for whom this will be of interest. Speakers will include Mark Dowd and a speaker from Christian Aid explaining how *Commitment for Life* countries are already having to deal with changes in climate. It is hoped that from this meeting a communication network to synods will be set up.
- Mersey synod has agreed to trial the collection of energy readings from churches. This will give a baseline figure on which to build. Although the resolution speaks of church buildings, an area that would show better results may be church manses.
- *Commitment for Life* continues to be the main vehicle for campaigning. The task group is looking to make links across all the areas of the church and encouraging cuts in energy, travel and paper.



**Convener:** *Revd Malcolm Hanson [2010]*

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

**Synod Representatives:**

<i>I</i>	<i>Revd Kevin Watson/Revd Val Towler</i>
<i>II</i>	<i>Revd Ruth Wollaston/Revd Chris Weddle</i>
<i>111</i>	<i>Revd John Oldershaw/Mr Chris Maple</i>
<i>IV</i>	<i>Mrs Val Morrison</i>
<i>V</i>	<i>Mrs Irene Wren/Mr Duncan Smith</i>
<i>VI</i>	<i>Dr Tony Jeans</i>
<i>VII</i>	<i>Revd Elizabeth Caswell</i>
<i>VIII</i>	<i>Revd Roz Harrison</i>
<i>IX</i>	<i>Mr Peter Pay</i>
<i>X</i>	<i>Mr Simon Fairnington</i>
<i>XI</i>	<i>Dr Graham Campling</i>
<i>XII</i>	<i>Dr Jean Silvan-Evans</i>
<i>XIII</i>	<i>Dr Jim Merrilees</i>

*with the Immediate Past Moderator and the General Secretary.*

## **I New committee structure**

New patterns of Assembly committees were agreed at last year's Assembly as part of the *Catch the Vision* process. Part of this involved the amalgamation of a number of committees within a new Mission committee. A further significant change was the grouping of committees within three departments. Work has almost been completed on the implementation of these proposals. The new structures, including the new United Reformed Church Trust, are reflected in the main part of this report.

With the change to biennial Assemblies, it is recommended that committee appointments should continue to be made on an annual basis. That will require Mission Council to give approval to changes in appointments in the intervening year. It also means that since committees and (undated) appointments are normally taken up immediately after General Assembly, in the intervening year a date needs to be set for this changeover. Mission Council has agreed that 'in years when there is no ordinary meeting of General Assembly, the transition date for committee membership shall be the summer meeting of Mission Council or 1<sup>st</sup> July, whichever is the later.'

## **II Think-tank on mission and spirituality**

Also at last year's Assembly, Mission Council and Nominations committee were instructed 'to do such further work as is necessary to create a 'think-tank' on mission and spirituality' (2007 resolution 1). Substantial work has been done on the composition, role and initial membership of a think tank. However, it has now been agreed by Mission Council that since this new body will not be an Assembly committee but more of an inspirational and ideas group for Assembly moderators, the nomination of members for the group should also be their responsibility. There should be further progress on this in the near future.

## **III Current work**

The committee is currently working on a range of issues, including ways of making committee vacancies more widely known. Starting this spring, the lead time from initial listing of vacancies to appointments being confirmed has been extended to fifteen months to allow for the dissemination of information and for suggested names to be received between May and October. The optimum length of service on committees is also being reviewed, as are ways of orientating new committee members to their roles.

### IV Assembly staff appointments

#### 1 Nominating groups

1.1 The Nominating group, convened by Mr Simon Rowntree, recommended the appointment of the **Revd Paul Whittle** to serve as **Moderator of the Eastern Synod** for a period of seven years from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2008 to 30<sup>st</sup> June 2015, subject to review before the end of that period. This was agreed by Mission Council on behalf of General Assembly.

1.2 The Nominating group for the post of **Moderator of the West Midlands Synod** is being convened by the Revd Raymond Singh.

1.3 The Nominating group for the post of **Moderator of the Thames North Synod** is being convened by Mrs Janet Gray.

1.4 The Nominating group, convened by the Revd Elizabeth Caswell, recommended the appointment of **Ms Francis Brienen** to the post of **Secretary for Mission** from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2006 until 31<sup>st</sup> January 2013, subject to review before the end of this period. This was agreed by Mission Council on behalf of General Assembly.

1.5 The Nominating group, convened by the Revd John Reardon, recommended the appointment of **Mr Frank Kantor** to the post of **Secretary for Church and Society** from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2007 until 30<sup>st</sup> September 2012, subject to review before the end of this period. This was agreed by Mission Council on behalf of General Assembly.

1.6 The Nominating group, convened by the Revd Francis Ackroyd, recommended the appointment of the **Revd Dr Michael Jagessar** to the post of **Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry** from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008 until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2013, subject to review before the end of this period. This was agreed by Mission Council on behalf of General Assembly.

1.7 The Nominating group for the post of **Secretary for Ministries** is being convened by the Revd Dr David Peel.

#### 2 Review groups

2.1 The Review group for the post of **Moderator of the National Synod of Wales**, convened by Dr Graham Campling, recommended the reappointment of the **Revd Peter Noble** from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008 until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2013. This was agreed by Mission Council on behalf of General Assembly.

2.2 The Review group for the post of **Moderator of the Southern Synod**, convened by Mrs Helen Brown, recommended the reappointment of the **Revd Nigel Uden** from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008 until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2013. This was agreed by Mission Council on behalf of General Assembly.

2.3 The Review group for the post of **Moderator of the East Midlands Synod**, convened by the Revd Lesley Charlton, recommended the reappointment of the **Revd Terry Oakley** from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2010 until 31<sup>st</sup> May 2012.

2.4 The Review group for the post of **Moderator of the Wessex Synod**, convened by the Revd Mary Buchanan, recommended the reappointment of the **Revd Adrian Bulley** from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2009 until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2014.

2.5 The Review group for the post of **Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith and Order** convened by the Revd Fleur Houston, recommended the reappointment of the **Revd Richard Mortimer** from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2008 until 31<sup>st</sup> July 2013. This was agreed by Mission Council on behalf of General Assembly.

## V Assembly Boards, Committees and Sub-Committees

Notes:

1. The Moderator, the Moderators-elect, the immediate past Moderator and the General Secretary are members *ex officio* of every Standing committee.
2. Officers and members appointed since Assembly 2007 are indicated by one asterisk (\*); two asterisks (\*\*) denotes those whom Assembly 2008 is invited to appoint for the first time; (#) indicates a Convener Elect who will become Convener in 2009, the symbol † denotes someone who has been invited to extend his/her period of service.
3. The number in round brackets following the name indicates the member's synod: (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. This numbering is not shown where it is not relevant.
4. The date in square brackets following the name indicates the date of retirement, assuming a full term.
5. In accordance with the decision of General Assembly 2000 some nominations are made directly by the National Synods of Wales and Scotland.

### 1 Mission Council

Mission Council acts on behalf of General Assembly. It consists of the officers of Assembly, the synod Moderators and three representatives from each synod together with the conveners of Assembly committees.

Northern Synod	Revd John Durell, Miss Elaine Colechin, Mr Justice Semuli
North Western Synod	Revd Rachel Poolman, Ms Marie Trubic, Mr George Grime
Mersey Synod	Mr Donald Swift, Miss Emma Pugh, ( <i>Vacancy</i> )
Yorkshire Synod	Mrs Val Morrison, Revd Pauline Calderwood, Mr Roderick Garthwaite
East Midlands Synod	Mrs Irene Wren, Mrs Margaret Gateley, Revd Jane Campbell
West Midlands synod	Revd Anthony Howells, Mr Bill Robson, Mrs Adella Pritchard
Eastern Synod	Mr Mick Barnes, Mrs Joan Turner, ( <i>Vacancy</i> )
South Western Synod	Revd Roz Harrison, Mrs Janet Gray, Revd Stephen Newell
Wessex Synod	Mr Peter Pay, Revd Cliff Bembridge, Mrs Margaret Telfer
Thames North Synod	Mr Simon Fairnington, Revd Maggie Hindley, Revd David Lawrence
Southern Synod	Dr Graham Campling, Mrs Maureen Lawrence, Mr Nige MacDonald
National Synod of Wales	Revd Stuart Jackson, Mrs Liz Tadd, Mrs Barbara Shapland
National Synod of Scotland	Miss Irene Hudson, Mr Patrick Smyth, Revd John Sanderson

### 2 Mission Department

#### 2.1 Mission Committee

Convener: Revd Ed Cox \* [2012]

Deputy Convener: Revd Elizabeth Caswell \* [2010]

Mrs Chris Eddowes \* (1)[2011]

Revd Andrew Willett \* (3)[2010]

Revd Clare Downing \* (5)[2012]

Revd Peter Ball \* (7)[2011]

Mr Peter Pay \* (9)[2010]

Revd Pauline Sparks \* (11)[2012]

Revd Mary Buchanan \* (13)[2011]

Revd Michael Walsh \* (2)[2012]

Mrs Anne Parker \* (4)[2011]

Revd Louise Franklin \* (6)[2010]

Revd Tracey Lewis \* (8)[2012]

Mr David Jonathan \* (10)[2011]

Revd Simon Walkling \* (12)[2010]

## Nominations

### 2.1.1 Faith and Order Reference Group

Convener: Revd Dr Robert Pope \*\*

Secretary: The Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith and Order

Revd Dr Susan Durber \*\* [2012]

Revd Fleur Houston \*\* [2012]

Revd Dr Michael Jagessar \*\* [2014]

Revd Dr Sarah Hall \*\* [2014]

Revd Dr Neil Messer \*\* [2014]

Revd Dr John Bradbury \*\* [2012]

### 2.1.2 International Exchange Group

Convener: Revd Linda Elliott

Secretary: Secretary for World Church Relations

*Group membership to be decided.*

### 2.1.3 Commitment For Life Group

Convener: Mrs Melanie Frew

### 2.1.4 Methodist/URC Interfaith Reference Group

*Group membership to be decided.*

## 3 Ministries of the Church Department

### 3.1 Ministries Committee

Convener: Revd Peter Poulter [2010]

Secretary: Secretary for Ministries

Revd Alan Evans (4)[2009]

Mrs Joanna Morling (8)[2009]

Dr Roger Allen (3)[2010]

Mrs Helen Renner (3)[2011]

Revd Ruth Whitehead (7)[2011]

Revd Yolande Burns \*\* (2)[2012]



Incoming and outgoing Moderators,  
John Marsh and Stephen Orchard

Convener of Assessment Board

### 3.1.1 Ministries – Accreditation Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Gwen Collins [2009]                      #*(Vacancy)* \*\* [2013]  
 Secretary: Secretary for Ministries  
 Revd Howard Sharp (3)[2009]                              Mr Simon Rowntree (6)[2009]  
 Mr Rod Morrison (4)[2009]                                Mrs Pat Evans (4)[2010]  
 Revd Sue Henderson (11)[2011]

### 3.1.2 Ministries – CRCW Programme Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Paul Whittle [2012]  
 Secretaries: The CRCW Development Workers  
 Mrs Maureen Thompson (6)[2009]                      Mrs Shirley Rawnsley (4)[2010]  
 Revd Helen Pope (6)[2011]                                Revd Susan MacBeth \*\* (4)[2012]  
*(Vacancy)\*\** [2012]    *(Vacancy)* \*\* [2012]

### 3.1.3 Ministries – Leadership in Worship Sub-Committee

Convener and Assembly Lay Preaching Advocate: Mrs Jan Harper [2011]  
 Mr Ed Strachan (2)[2011]                                      Revd Gwynfor Evans (3)[2011]  
 Mr Alan Cotgreave (6)[2011]

### 3.1.4 Ministries – Maintenance of Ministry Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Geoffrey Roper [2009]                      #Revd Dr Anthony Haws \*\* [2013]  
 Mr Brian Knight (8)[2010]                                      Revd Ken Summers (3)[2010]  
 Mrs Jane Mackerness (4)[2011]                                Miss Margaret Atkinson \*\* (4)[2012]  
 Revd Catey Morrison \*\* (1)[2012]                              The Treasurer  
 Convener of Pensions Executive

### 3.1.5 Ministries – Retired Ministers Housing Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd David Bedford [2010]  
 Secretary: Secretary Retired Ministers Housing Society Ltd  
 Mrs Liz Tadd (12)[2009]                                      Revd Michael Spencer (6)[2011]  
 Revd Nanette Lewis-Head (12)[2012]                      Revd John Humphreys \*\* (13)[2013]  
 The Treasurer

**Note:** Properties are managed by a Company viz: **RETIRED MINISTERS' HOUSING SOCIETY LTD**. Details of the Members of the Board may be obtained from the Secretary, Mr Tony Bayley, at Church House

### 3.1.6 Assessment Board

Convener: Prof David Cutler [2009]    #Dr Graham Campling \*\* [2014]  
 Retiring 2009                      Mrs Tina Ashitey (10), Dr Peter Clarke (4), Mr Hugh Abel (9)  
 Retiring 2010                      Revd David A L Jenkins (10), Revd Dr Irene John (13),  
     Revd Edward Sanniez (10), Revd Lesley Charlton (11)  
 Retiring 2011                      Revd Wilf Bahadur(9), Revd Jan Adamson (13),  
     Revd Sian Collins (12), Mrs Wendy Smith (2)  
 Retiring 2012                      Mr Geoffrey Harrison (3), Mr James Horton (4),  
     Mrs Margaret Jenkins (3), Revd Janet Maxwell (1),  
     Revd William Young (6)  
 Retiring 2013                      Mrs Irene Wren \*\* (5), Revd Lis Mullen \*\* (2),  
     Revd Gary McGowan\*\* (3), Revd Val Towler \*\* (1)

### 3.2 Disciplinary Process – Commission Panel

**Convener:** Mrs Helen Brown [2009]    #Miss Kathleen Cross [2014]

**Deputy Convener:** Miss Kathleen Cross

**Secretary:** Mrs Wilma Frew [2011]

#### **Members:**

Retiring 2009                      Revd Wendy Baskett (8), Revd David Bedford (1),  
     Revd James Bolton (5), Revd James Brown (6), Mr Peter Jolly (9),  
     Mrs Barbara Lancaster (2), Mrs Barbara Madge (8),  
     Revd Nicholas Mark (5), Revd Sandra Pickard (8),

## Nominations

	Revd Shelagh Pollard (12), Mrs Lynne Upsdell (9), Ms Elizabeth Whitten (7), Revd Joan Winterbottom (6), Mr Kenneth Woods (7)
Retiring 2010	Revd Meryl Court (10), Mr Derek Craig (3), Mr David Eldridge (10), Revd Nanette Lewis-Head (12), Dr Fiona Liddell (12), Dr Jim Merrilees (13), Mrs Pamela Sharp (3), Mr Patrick Smyth (13)
Retiring 2011	Mr Geoffrey Milnes (5), Revd David Pattie (13), Mr Neil Robinson (4), Revd Yvonne Stone (5)
Retiring 2012	Revd Nicholas Adlem (8), Miss Ina Barker (4), Revd Kay Cattell (5), Revd Kenneth Chippindale (6), Miss Kathleen Cross (2), Revd Alison Davis (12), Revd John Du Bois (11), Revd Joan Grindrod-Helmn (1), Mrs Jessica Hannen (1), Miss Judith Haughton (2), Miss Elizabeth Lawson QC (10), Revd Julian Macro (9), Revd Colin Offor (1), Mr Nicholas Pye (3), Revd Raymond Singh (11), Revd Carolyn Smyth (13), Revd Dr David Thompson (7), Mr David Westwood (4)
Retiring 2013	Revd Pauline Calderwood ** (4), Revd Bill Bowman ** (11), Dr Peter Campbell Smith ** (11), ( <i>Vacancy</i> ) **

### 3.3 Education and Learning

Convener: Professor Malcolm Johnson [2011]

Secretary: The Secretary for Education and Learning

Revd Dr John Campbell (2)[2009]

Mr John Saunders (8)[2009]

Revd John Smith (13)[2010]

Revd Ruth Allen (3)[2010]

Mr Clive Parsons (6)[2010]

Mrs Carol Durose (7)[2011]

Revd Dr Robert Pope (12)[2011]

Revd Dr James Coleman \*\* (4)[2012]

Mrs Fiona Smith \*\* (4)[2012]

#### 3.3.1 Windermere Advisory Group

Convener: Revd Bernard Collins [2009] #Revd Dr Jan Berry [2013]

Secretary: The Director of the Windermere Centre

Revd Carole Gotham (2)[2009]

Dr Tony Jeans \*\* (6)[2012]

Convener of Windermere Management Committee Representative of Carver URC

### 3.4 Youth and Children's Work

Convener: Revd Neil Thorogood [2010]

Secretary: The Secretary for Youth Work

Revd Sian Collins (12)[2009]

Revd Robert Weston (9)[2009]

Miss Rosemary Simmons (5)[2009]

Mrs Rita Griffiths (3)[2009]

Revd Heather Whyte (6)[2010]

Mrs Anthea Coates (8)[2011]

Mr Chris Gill (11)[2011]

Mr Matthew Franks \* (8)[2011]

Mrs Memona Shahbaz \*\* [2012]

FURY Chair

FURY Council Member

#### 3.4.1 Pilots Management Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd David Downing \*\* [2011]

Member: Mrs Denise Beckley [2010]

[Other members of the sub-committee are appointed by the Youth and Children's Work committee. The Congregational Federation also has two representatives.]

## 4 Administration and Resources Department

### 4.1 Assembly Arrangements

Convener: Dr David Robinson [2012]

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(s)-elect, General Secretary, Clerk to Assembly

#### 4.1.1 Tellers at Assembly 2008 for the election of the General Assembly Moderators for 2010

Dr Graham Campling [Convener], Dr Jim Merrilees, Revd John Durrell

#### 4.2 Communications and Editorial

Convener: Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe [2011]

Secretary: Director of Communications

Mrs Valerie Jenkins (4)[2009]	Ms Catherine Lewis-Smith (4)[2009]
Mr Ron Sweeney (4)[2009]	Mr Richard Lathaen (3)[2009]
Mrs Esther Searle (8)[2011]	Ms Lucy Berry ** (10)[2012]
Mr Andy Littlejohns ** (11)[2012]	(Vacancy) ** [2012]
(Vacancy) ** [2012]	

#### 4.3 Equal Opportunities

Convener: Ms Morag McLintock [2010]

Secretary: Revd David Coleman \*\* [2012]

Revd Kate Gartside (12)[2009]	Revd John Macaulay (10)[2010]
Revd Pam Ward (1)[2010]	Mr Jim Hurst (2)[2010]
Ms Mary Jeremiah ** (12)[2012]	Revd Barbara Exley (11) ** [2012]

#### 4.4 Finance

Convener: The Treasurer

Chief Finance Officer: Mr Andrew Grimwade

Revd Dick Gray (8)[2009]	Mr Graham Morris (3)[2009]
Mr John Kidd (11)[2009]	Revd Kathryn Taylor (8)[2010]
Mrs Jane Humphreys (7)[2011]	Mr Brian Hosier (10)[2011]
Revd David Walton ** (13)[2012]	(Vacancy) ** [2012]

Chairman of the Trustees

##### 4.4.1 Stewardship Sub-Committee

The members of this sub-committee are appointed by the Finance committee.

#### 4.5 Nominations Committee

Convener: Revd Malcolm Hanson [2010]

Secretary: Revd Elizabeth Brown [2009]

Secretary-Elect: Miss Sarah Dodds \*\* [2013]

Synod Representatives:

Revd Val Towler * (1)	Revd Chris Weddle * (2)	Mr Chris Maple * (3)
Mrs Val Morrison (4)	Mr Duncan Smith * (5)	Dr Anthony Jeans (6)
(Vacancy) (7)	Revd Roz Harrison (8)	Mr Peter Pay (9)
Mr Simon Fairnington * (10)	Dr Graham Campling (11)	Dr Jean Silvan-Evans (12)
Dr James Merrilees (13)	with the Immediate Past Moderator and the General Secretary.	

##### 4.5.1 Panel for the appointment and review of Synod Moderators

Retiring 2010	Revd Craig Bowman (8), Mrs Irene Wren (5), Mr Okeke Azu Okeke (11), Revd Dr Susan Durber (7), Mr Ron Todd (1)
Retiring 2011	Dr Graham Campling (11), Mrs Janet Gray (8), Revd Cecil White (7), Revd Mary Buchanan (13), Mrs Helen Brown (3), Revd Nanette Lewis-Head (12)
Retiring 2012	Revd Raymond Singh (11), Revd Lesley Charlton (11), Mrs Sally Abbott (10), Mr Simon Rowntree (6), Dr Jean Silvan Evans (12), Mr Alun Jones (4)
Retiring 2013	Revd John Durrell ** (1), Revd Roz Harrison ** (8), Revd John Oldershaw ** (3), Revd Deborah McVey ** (7), Revd Robert Street ** (9), (Vacancy) **, (Vacancy) **

### 4.6 Pastoral Reference Committee

Convener: Revd Alasdair Pratt [2011]

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary

Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith (9)[2009]

Revd Adrian Bulley (9)[2011]

[*ex officio*: The Treasurer The General Secretary The Secretary for Welfare]

Mrs Delyth Rees (12)[2011]

Revd Birgit Ewald \*\* (7)[2012]

### 4.7 United Reformed Church Trust

Chairman: Mr Alan Small

Secretary: Mr Eric Chilton (Acting)

Trustees:

Miss Joyce Bain (13)[2010]

Dr Brian Woodhall (2)[2010]

Dr Augur Pearce (12)[2012]

Revd Prof David Thompson (7)[2012]

Dr David Robinson (4)[2014]

Mission Council Appointed Trustees:

Miss Isobel Simmons \* [2010]

Co-opted Trustee: Revd Michael J Davies [2010]

[*ex officio*: Moderator of General Assembly, General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary]

Mr Ernest Gudgeon (8)[2010]

Mr John Ellis (11)[2011]

Mr Alan Small (3)[2012]

Miss Rachel Greening (6)[2014]

Mr John Woodman (7)[2014]

Mrs Val Morrison [2012]

Mrs Claudette Binns \* [2014]

### 4.8 The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd board members

Chairman: Mr Brian Moere

Secretary: Revd Michael Davies (Acting)

Members of URC: Mr Michael Goldsmith [2009], Mr Andrew Perkins [2011],  
Revd Dr John Dyce \*\* [2013], (*Vacancy*) \*\* [2013]

Members of Fund: Revd Graham Spicer [2009], Revd Duncan Wilson \*\* [2012],  
Revd David Bedford \*\* [2012], (*Vacancy*) \*\* [2013]

[*ex officio*: Honorary Treasurer, Convener Investment Committee, Convener Maintenance of Ministry sub-committee, Convener Pensions Executive]

### 4.9 PENSIONS EXECUTIVE

Convener: Mr Maurice Dyson [2010]

Secretary: Mrs Judy Stockings

Members: Revd Kathryn Taylor † [2012], (*Vacancy*) \*\* [2012]

[*Ex officio*: Convener of Maintenance of Ministry sub-committee, Honorary Treasurer]

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

## 5 Representatives of the United Reformed Church to meetings of sister Churches

Presbyterian Church in Ireland  
General Synod of Church of England  
Methodist Conference  
Congregational Federation  
General Assembly of Church of Scotland

United Free Church of Scotland  
Scottish Episcopal Church  
Methodist Church in Scotland  
Baptist Union of Scotland  
Presbyterian Church of Wales  
Union of Welsh Independents  
Church in Wales Governing Board  
Provincial Synod of the Moravian Church

Revd Dr Stephen Orchard  
Revd Graham Maskery  
Revd Jason Askew  
*To be decided*  
Revd Dr Stephen Orchard,  
Revd Lucy Brierley,  
Revd Mitchell Bunting,  
Revd John Humphreys  
Revd Mitchell Bunting  
Revd John Humphreys  
*To be decided*  
Revd Stuart Jackson  
Revd Keith Jones  
Revd Stuart Jackson  
Revd David Bunnay



## 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 and Faith and Order.

### 6.1 Council for World Mission (CWM) from Assembly 2006

Revd David Coleman, Mrs Ann Shillaker, Ms Catherine Lewis-Smith (CWM Trustee).  
Secretary for World Church Relations

#### 6.1.1 CWM European Region Meeting 2005–2008

Revd David Coleman, Mrs Ann Shillaker, Ms Catherine Lewis-Smith,  
Secretary for World Church Relations, Deputy General Secretary (CWM Europe Trustee)

### 6.2 World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) General Council

Revd Dr Sarah Hall, Ms Emma Pugh, Revd Dr David Pickering,  
Secretary for World Church Relations, General Secretary

### 6.3 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) Church Leaders' Meeting

General Secretary

#### 6.3.1 CTBI Senior Representatives' Forum

General Secretary, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith and Order

#### 6.3.2 CTBI – Environmental Issues Network

Revd David Coaker, Revd Dr David Pickering

#### 6.3.3 CTBI – Church and Society Forum

Mr Simon Loveitt, Secretary for Church and Society

#### 6.3.4 CTBI Churches' Criminal Justice Forum

Mrs Wilma Frew

### 6.4 Churches Together in England (CTE) – from Forum 2006

Miss Alison Micklem, Revd Peter Poulter, Revd Andrew Prasad, Mrs Helen Renner, Revd Elizabeth Nash, Mrs Wilma Frew, Mr Stuart Dew, Mr John Brown, Dr Suzanne McDonald,  
General Secretary, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith and Order

#### 6.4.1 CTE – Enabling Group

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith and Order

#### 6.4.2 CTE – Coordinating Group for Local Unity

Revd Terry Oakley,  
Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith and Order

#### 6.4.3 CTE – Churches Together for Healing

Revd Delia Bond, Revd Deborah McVey

#### 6.4.4 CTE – Women's Coordinating Group

Revd Samantha White

#### 6.4.5 CTE – Churches' Committee on Funerals and Crematoria

Revd Delia Bond, Revd Sally Thomas

## Nominations

### **6.4.6 CTE – Free Churches’ Education Committee**

Mr Graham Handscomb, Mrs Gillian Kingston

### **6.4.7 CTE – Churches’ Joint Education Policy Committee**

Mr Graham Handscomb

### **6.5 Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) Forum**

Revd John Humphreys, Revd Mitchell Bunting (alternate Revd Sue Kirkbride)

### **6.6 National Sponsoring Body for Scotland**

Revd John Humphreys, Revd Mitchell Bunting

### **6.7 Churches Together in Wales (CYTUN)**

Revd Peter Noble

#### **6.7.1 Commission of Covenanted Churches**

Revd Peter Noble, Revd Stuart Jackson, Mrs Ann Shillaker

#### **6.8 Free Church Council for Wales**

Revd Peter Noble, Revd Stuart Jackson

## **7 United Reformed Church Representatives at formal Bilateral and Multilateral Committees**

### **7.1 Methodist/United Reformed Church Liaison Committee**

Revd Kay Alberg, Miss Emma Pugh, (*Vacancy*), (*Vacancy*), Revd Peter Rand (co-opted)  
Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith and Order

### **7.2 Roman Catholic – United Reformed Church Bilateral Dialogue**

Revd Prof David Thompson, Revd Dr John Bradbury, Revd Dr Sarah Hall,  
Mrs Ann Shillaker, Mr Malcolm Townsend, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and  
Faith and Order

### **7.3 Church of England – United Reformed Church Bilateral Dialogue (‘God’s Reign and our Unity’)**

Revd Elizabeth Welch, Revd Dr David Peel, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and  
Faith and Order

### **7.4 Anglican/Moravian Contact Group**

Revd David Tatem

### **7.5 Trilateral Conversation of the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church**

Revd John Humphreys, Revd Mary Buchanan, Revd John Young

## **8 URC Representatives on Governing Bodies of Theological Colleges, etc.**

### **8.1 Mansfield College:**

Ministerial and Educational Training Committee:

Revd Fiona Thomas [2009]

Revd Nigel Appleton [2010]

Convener of the Education and Learning  
Committee

Secretary for Education and Learning

- 8.2 Northern College** Secretary for Education and Learning  
 Revd David Jenkins [2009]  
 Mr Bill McLaughin [2009]  
 Miss Margaret Atkinson [2011]  
 Mrs Helen Brown [2011]  
 Revd Dr Robert Pope [2011]  
 Luther King House Educational Trust: Secretary for Education and Learning
- 8.3 Westminster College: Board of Governors**  
 Convener: Professor Sir Anthony Bottoms [2014]  
 Clerk: Revd Cecil White  
 Revd Craig Muir [2009]  
 Mr John Kidd [2009]  
 Mr Brian Long [2010]  
 Revd Fleur Houston [2010]  
 Dr Jean Stevenson [2013]  
 Secretary for Education and Learning
- 8.3.1 Cheshunt Foundation** Mr David Butler [2010]  
 Revd Craig Muir \*\* [2011]
- 8.3.2 Cambridge Theological Federation** Convener Westminster College Governors
- 8.4 Homerton College Trustees** Lady Sally Williams [2010]  
 Revd Prof David Thompson † [2011]  
 Mr John Chaplin [2009]  
 Mrs Elisabeth Jupp [2010]
- 8.5 The Queen's Foundation** Revd Elizabeth Welch  
 Mr Simon Rowntree  
 Secretary for Education and Learning in attendance
- 9 Governors of Colleges and Schools with which the URC is associated**
- 9.1 Caterham School** Revd Nigel Uden [2011]
- 9.2 Eltham College** Revd Terry Sparks [2011]
- 9.3 Walthamstow Hall** Mrs Isabel Heald \* [2011]
- 9.4 Milton Mount Foundation** Mr Graham Rolfe † [2011]  
 Mr Brian West † [2011]  
 Revd Nicola Furley-Smith † [2011]  
 Ms Hilary Miles [2010]  
 Revd David Cuckson † [2010]
- 9.5 Silcoates School** Prof Clyde Binfield [2011]  
 Dr Peter Clarke [2009]  
 Dr Moira Gallagher [2009]  
 Mrs Val Morrison [2010]  
 Revd Alan F T Evans [2010]  
 Mrs Valerie Jenkins † [2010]
- 9.6 Taunton School** Revd David Grosch-Miller

## Nominations

**9.7 Wentworth College** Revd Martin Ambler [2011]

**9.8 Bishops Stortford College** Mr Anthony Trigg [2011]

### 10 Miscellaneous

The URC is represented on a variety of other national organisations and committees as follows:

<b>Arthur Rank Centre</b>	<i>To be decided</i>
<b>Churches Main Committee</b>	General Secretary Mr Hartley Oldham
<b>Congregational Fund Board</b>	Revd Margaret Taylor † [2012] Revd Eric Allen † [2012] Mr Anthony Bayley [2011] Revd David Helyar [2011] Revd Geoffrey Roper [2011]
<b>Congregational Memorial Hall Trust</b>	Mr Hartley Oldham Mr Graham Stacy Dr John Thompson Dr Elaine Kaye Dr Brian Woodhall Revd Derek Wales * [2011]
<b>Discipleship and Witness</b>	
Board of Trustees	Mrs Patricia Hubbard
Publications Development Group	Ms Jo Williams
<b>English Heritage's Places of Worship Forum</b>	Mr Hartley Oldham (as Convener of the Listed Buildings Advisory Group)
<b>Guides' Religious Advisory Panel</b>	Mrs Susan Walker
<b>Retired Ministers' and Widows' Fund</b>	Mr Ken Meekison Mrs Jill Strong Revd Julian Macro
<b>Samuel Robinson's Charities</b>	Mr Tony Alderman
<b>Scouts' Religious Advisory Group</b>	Revd David Marshall-Jones
<b>United Reformed Church History Society</b>	Mrs Mary Davies Revd Michael Hopkins, Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe Revd Dr David Thompson Dr David Robinson [2011]
<b>Wharton Trust</b>	Dr John Thompson [2009]



## 1 Introduction

1.1 The remit of the Youth and Children's Work committee (YCWC) is to support, encourage and promote work with young people from 0–25 years old. It is a huge task and involves oversight of a number of programmes including our share of the Pilots success story, our part in developing ecumenical training materials and resources, our part in the Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Officers programme. It is a huge task, an essential task and a rewarding task.

1.2 The YCWC has worked hard to bring to this Assembly a clear vision and strategy for children's and youth work within the United Reformed Church (see resolutions on pages 98 and 109-111).

1.3 The YCWC has reviewed and developed its support of the General Assembly appointed staff, who work tirelessly and professionally, to ensure that the United Reformed Church offers the very best support to countless individuals (mainly volunteers) who support and nurture young people in local churches. We must record with gratitude the service offered by each and every member of the staff team, including the administrative team.

1.4 The YCWC is aware that communication is a major issue within our church and we have sought to address the need for both printed materials (through *Update*, a full colour magazine for youth and children's work in the United Reformed Church) and for electronic news (email/web resources) with a joint project involving the Methodist Church.

1.5 The YCWC is aware of the huge contribution made to youth and children's work by the YCWTDO team and records with gratitude the service offered by this team across the nations. The YCWC brings to this General Assembly the evaluation of the YCWTDO programme and subsequent resolutions (see resolutions on pages 109-111).



## 2 Children's work in the United Reformed Church – the last two years...



**Children's Work Development Officer:** Jo Williams

2.1 Following the retirement of the Children's Advocate, a new post, that of Children's Work Development Officer, was created and Jo Williams took up post in July 2006. The post, initially for one year, has been extended until 2009.

### 2.2 Child friendly?

The Child Friendly Church Award scheme (launched in 2006) is rapidly developing. Around 30 churches have already achieved their award and another 60 are working towards the award at this time (about 5% of our churches). The churches who achieve this nationally recognised 'child friendly' status are issued with a certificate and a plaque to display in their church.

### 2.3 Training

'CORE skills for churches' was launched in autumn 2006 with a national trainer's conference. It is now the recognised training course for voluntary children's workers in churches. It has been very successful and courses are running in every synod, further details are available from the [YCWTDos](#).

### 2.4 *Building Strong Towers* and stronger ecumenical links

In March 2007 we worked in partnership with Scripture Union, Methodist Children, the Church of England and National Children's Homes to offer a series of six training evenings across England. Based on the book *Building Strong Towers*, the roadshows attended by teachers and church children's workers, focused on how to support children experiencing hard times. The training material has since been written up and offered for use in other areas and denominations.

### 2.5 Peacebuilders

Peacebuilders, a joint project between Pilots, United Reformed Church, Methodist children and the Church of North India, was launched at General Assembly 2007 with FURY and Children's Assembly creating 14 beautiful boxes and filling them with peace ideas. Assembly then added their thoughts and dreams to the boxes which were taken on to each synod and the Methodist Conference in Blackpool in time for their Peacebuilders launch. We delighted that Peacebuilders, is also being used in many churches as well as in Pilots groups. The packs are being used in worship, Junior Church, mid week clubs, summer camps and even synod events.

peace  
builders



**2.6.1 Children's Assembly**

The first ever Children's Assembly of the United Reformed Church took place alongside General Assembly 2007. 21 children attended from 17 different churches across six synods. It was a fantastic weekend grappling with some of the really big issues facing the church, including: what it means to be church, climate change, assisted dying and the launch of the Peacebuilders pack. We joined General Assembly for worship and Bible study each day and for the celebration on Sunday evening. At other times the children produced mini films, recording what they had been discussing. The children felt well received by Assembly and Assembly were very positive about the children's presence and participation.



General Assembly 2007



2.6.2 Building on the huge success of last year, Children's Assembly 2008 looks set to have three times as many delegates. We will be following a programme of debates and activities on hot topics such as: **Vision4Life**, the purpose of Church, and inclusivity. The young delegates will be encouraged to reflect on their experiences of church and get more actively involved.

2.7 *Urchin* (United Reformed Children's Information Network) updated. *Urchin*, the children's work news-sheet has been replaced by **Update**, a full colour magazine for youth and children's work in the United Reformed Church. *Update* is to be sent free to every church twice a year.

### 3 Pilots in the United Reformed Church – the last two years...



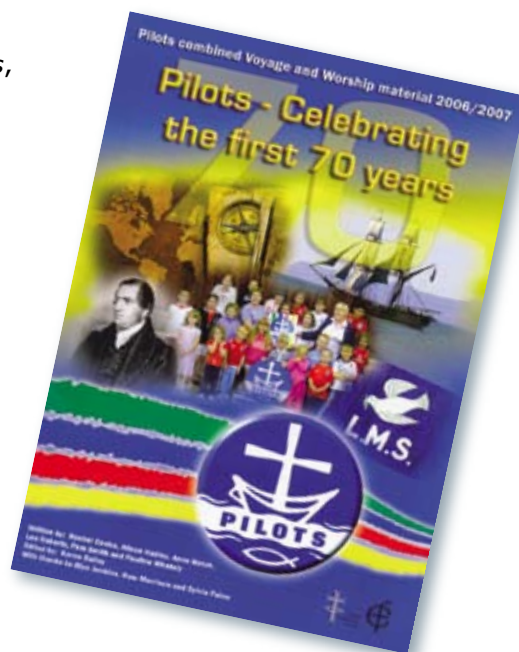
**Convener:** David Downing

**Pilots Development Officer:** Karen Bulley

3.1 Pilots continues to offer a vibrant, exciting programme for children and young people aged between 5 and 18, encompassing ecumenical and faith diversity.

3.2 The whole programme manual, *The Compass*, has been re-written after a consultation process with Pilots themselves and there is so much new material in the new version that Pilots are finding themselves re-invigorated in their local situations.

3.3 Pilots Peacebuilders material, a joint initiative with the Methodist Church and the Church in North India has been a great success and available to the whole Church. Many have taken the opportunity to use the materials: *Peacebuilders – Children for Peace* and *Peacebuilders – Worship for Peace* in their local churches and in their local communities. Peace boxes, a key part of Peacebuilders, have been travelling around both local communities and the world, sharing prayers and thoughts for peace.



3.4.1 Voyagers and Navigators, aged between 11 and 18, meet annually for a four day programme of themed activities; in 2007 *Pilots Under Siege*, took place at Barnes Close, Bromsgrove. A medieval theme prevailed and the four days had a serious look at how young people can find themselves under siege in today's world. The event involved games, crafts, Bible work, a visit to Tamworth Castle and much more, including a costumed medieval banquet on the last night.

3.5 This year's theme is Christmas and will focus on the events around the Christmas story. In August 2008 Pilots will gather at Kintbury, near Hungerford, each day echoing the traditional Christmas break with the first day of the event being Christmas Eve and focusing on the preparation for the birth of Christ. Throughout the four days we will look at various parts of the story, how it relates to us today and enjoy Christmas from a completely different view point; whilst still having Christmas dinner, a snowball fight and a Christingle service at some point during the event.



3.6 On May 17<sup>th</sup> 2008, thousands of Pilots from all over the United Kingdom will meet to enjoy 'Pilots on Safari at Longleat' – this is also an opportunity for the whole church family to be 'Pilots for a day'. The day will involve visiting the various attractions at Longleat and will finish with worship for everyone on the lawns of Longleat House.

3.7 Pilots meet in many churches in several denominations; if you are not already thinking about Pilots in your church, now is the time to get involved, learn more and serve the children and young people in your area with the gift of **Pilots**. (www.pilots.org.uk)

## 4 Youth work in the United Reformed Church – the last two years...

**Secretary for Youth Work:** John Brown



4.1 The **Fellowship of the United Reformed Youth** has, over the past two years, seen many changes in the way it is structured and the way in which information is made available to synods and local churches. FURY Council has been replaced by the FURY Advisory Board, made up of three free-standing groups: FURY Executive responsible for organising FURY Assembly, FURY Forum and FURY Communications Group. Leading this new re-structured FURY we now have a FURY moderator who is elected at FURY Assembly each January.

4.2 FURY Assembly 2008 was (according to the evaluation forms) the best in the recent past and we plan to build on this positive experience. Last year's FURY Forum focused on a resolution brought to General Assembly on Climate Change, which was developed by the FURY task group. Task groups will be set up to take forward any resolutions from Assembly and report regularly to the Advisory board. The topic for this year's Forum will be '**The image of young people**'. Another youth event will be focusing on **Essene-tial Spirituality**, a weekend exploring the Qumran scrolls. This year a small task group worked with the Racial Justice Multicultural Ministry programme in developing the resolution 32 coming to General Assembly.

4.3 The FURY Communications Group is responsible for producing F2 and maintaining the **website**. F2 (the **Reform** insert) has been very good at spreading the good news of work being done with, and by, young people in our churches. Later this year we will see a change, with more articles on youth work appearing in the new style *Reform* magazine. F2 will continue to be available to all those who wish to receive a copy quarterly. The work on F2 and the website has been done in close collaboration with the *Reform* office.

4.4 Collaboration is a key word in the developments over the past two years. Collaboration with local churches has led to young people experiencing trips as individuals or in groups to places such as Ghana, Jamaica, Hungary, Tibet, Taiwan, Kenya and we currently have three United Reformed Church young people living and working in the Amsterdam Mission House through Council for World Mission Europe.



## Youth and Children's Work

Our biggest annual commitment is towards a young people and children's programme in Palestine. For the past two years we have facilitated a programme and provided leadership training for over 60 Palestinian Christian young people through the **Kids For Hope** Project.

4.5 Collaboration with both the Children's Work Development Officer and the Pilots Development Officer has enabled young people to be involved in events such as the Children's Assembly and the Voyagers and Navigators events providing an opportunity to develop a co-ordinated approach in the whole field of youth and children's work.

4.6 Our commitment to good quality work with young people is reaping its rewards as more young people come forward to serve on our committees and also groups such as the British Youth Council, European Ecumenical Forum and we even have a young person on the Board of Trustees for the United Reformed Church. The impact of quality youth work is also being seen within the local Church, for example, all of the group who came on the Pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 2007 are now serving in some capacity within a local United Reformed Church.

4.7 Youth work in the United Reformed Church is exciting and vibrant and 2009 will get off to a great start as FURY Assembly takes its lead from **Vision4Life**. Using the theme of the Bible offers a chance for young people to explore and deepen their faith.



FURY at General Assembly 2007

## 5 Youth and Children's Work Training team

5.1 This is just a flavour of what has been happening around the synods and for Assembly. A number of synods have been running camps for children and young people of all ages. For example, West Midlands brought together 35 young people and 15 youth workers sharing time as a community of Christians, living, eating and worshipping together.

5.2 Right across the three nations, young people have been getting together for evenings, days and weekends of sharing and exploring faith, training and fun. Events such as **MMM** (Mission Means Me), **GOGI** (Go On Get Involved) and **Xplosion** (bands and fireworks). The YCWT team helped produce a pack in 2006 on the theme of **Worship** and in 2007 a DVD was produced and made available to churches exploring the theme of **Discipleship**.

5.3 Alongside all this, training is a significant part of the programmes. *Core Skills for Children's Workers* has been widely used and continues to be a significant part of training events. You could also find sessions on managing behaviour, children and spirituality, creative Bible studies, culture media and faith, and the ever present child protection, safeguarding and good practice advice and support. Support also comes in the shape of exploring with a church its role in the community and specifically, advice on the employment of youth/children's workers.

5.4 Other work has included **WDYT?** (What Do You Think?) a pre-Assembly programme preparing young people for participation in the issues, discussions and decisions of General Assembly. For 2007 there was also a Children's Assembly running concurrently with General Assembly, enabling children to participate in Assembly and debate many of the issues of the Church.

5.5 Pilots continues to be a very strong part of the youth and children's work of the United Reformed Church and YCWT involvement has included training for Pilot's officers, writing for *Compass* (Pilots manual), supporting events such as the very successful V+N (Voyagers and Navigators – the two senior groups of Pilots).

5.6 For many children, young people and workers, involvement in these events, or the support provided, has led to renewed enthusiasm, new ideas and continued connection with the United Reformed Church and, more importantly, their faith. Creative projects and a continued improvement in the quality and diversity of the work with children and young people have seen very positive outcomes.

## 6 Conclusion

6.1 Amidst the challenges that we face today, there is much to be celebrated across the United Reformed Church – especially in our Children's and Youth work. In concluding our report on the past two years, we recognise and thank all who have given their time and talents in serving the YCWC through its various meetings and task groups.



# A vision for youth and children's work across the United Reformed Church

The Youth and Children's Work committee wants to prioritise its work around these core areas. We offer them to synods and local churches as pointers for local adaptation and engagement.

## A Worship

Our worship should inspire and nurture all on their faith journey by:

- being inclusive and open to all;
- being meaningful, relevant to today and be the best it can be;
- inspiring and building confidence in God's presence and the Gospel;
- enabling children and young people to offer worship and leadership;
- developing the spirituality of children and young people.

### How?

**Child Friendly Church**  
**Charter for Children**  
**Introducing new ways of being church, café church**  
**Interchurch visits to experience other forms of worship**  
**Godly Play**  
**Messy Church**  
**Labyrinth**  
**Inspiring and modelling excellence**  
**Using big events to bring people together**  
**Offering resources for all age worship such as children and**  
**Communion, Baptism, Membership**  
**Paying special attention to transitions and drop off points.**

## B Talking about God

We will enable and encourage *all* to talk about God by:

- developing our understanding of God;
- sharing the story of Faith;
- valuing the spirituality of children and young people;
- continuing to explore what it means for all ages to believe and belong in the United Reformed Church;
- creating opportunities for people to engage faithfully with the world around them.

### How?

**Listening to children and young people**  
**Listening to the marginal voices**  
**Sharing stories**  
**Acknowledging the reality in which children and young people live**  
**Challenging the church to think about children and young people**  
**as full members of the family of God (eg children and**  
**Communion, coming into membership, sharing in church**  
**meetings)**  
**Providing resources to help churches engage in theology**  
**and action.**

## C Growth

Growth is often seen numerically; we recognise that growth in quality is equally important:

- growth of the individual;
- growth of groups within the church;
- growth of engagement with the local community, including schools;
- growth of the local church;
- growth of God's kingdom.

### How?

**Training, including CORE Skills for Children's Workers  
Developing Pilots companies, youth groups, children's groups  
Engaging creatively with extended schools  
Encouraging faith development (eg Youth Alpha).**

## D Youth and Children's Work committee: telling our stories

The United Reformed Church has a message of hope to share. We must communicate effectively to connect, advocate and support children, young people and leaders:

- publications – both resources and advertising;
- developing networks and resources for the whole church;
- using websites;
- communicating ecumenically;
- developing further communication methods.

### How?

**Through Bridge, Reform, Update, local and synod newsletters,  
pod casts, text services  
Communicating 'need to know' information about  
Safeguarding, government policy developments  
Producing resources for use in the wider church.**

## E Community

All churches are based within communities. Our vision is to enable and encourage the church to reach out to local and world communities:

- helping churches to build community through pastoral care, particularly of those on the fringe;
- building the confidence of churches in their own Christian identity;
- helping churches to engage in the community in which they serve;
- involvement with the world church;
- recognition of the needs of different cultural/faith communities.

### How?

**Supporting and resourcing local church communities  
Working more closely with church related community workers  
Developing a Charter for Children in the Community  
Recognising and responding to community needs  
(eg extended schools)  
Advertising and advocating what the church can offer  
Sharing stories of Church within communities  
Continuing to participate in the *Belonging to the World Church* programme.**

### **Vision for Youth and Children's Work across the United Reformed Church**

There are many challenges and possibilities for the United Reformed Church's ministry with children and young people. Some congregations have strong work with good numbers of children and young people. Some have very few children and young people with whom they are in touch intermittently. Some have no regular contacts. There is a need to support and resource existing work so that it is the best we can offer. There is a need to help refresh work that might feel tired or increasingly inappropriate. Where there are no children and young people in local churches there is a need to move away from guilt at our perceived failures to appreciating how much our world has changed. And, travelling on, there is the chance to look at new possibilities and to experiment. As a central committee we do not pretend to be able to create the local mission. That is for others. But we can offer the very best possible resources, training and hopeful ideas to encourage and equip local mission. We can tell stories of what is happening and of what God is doing amongst us. We can sow seeds.

## Resolution 36

General Assembly welcomes the *Vision for Youth and Children's Work across the United Reformed Church* and commends it to local churches and synods as a way of prioritising and shaping ministry with children and young people.



# Review of the Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Programme in the United Reformed Church

## 1 Context for the Review

1.1 During 2000 the Youth and Children's Work committee of the United Reformed Church instigated a review of youth and children's work within the denomination. This included work which was part of the Youth and Children's Work Trainers (YCWT) programme. It was asked 'to review the YCWT programme, its synodical management and relationship to the national church, its relationship to the whole work with children and young people, and to make any recommendations for change'.

1.2 A report was presented to General Assembly in 2002. This report commented positively on the work of the YCWT programme and recommended its continuation. It also suggested that there should be a full review of the YCWT programme in four years' time. Consequently, a review group was set up in the summer of 2007 and was asked to report by the end of 2007.

1.3 The United Reformed Church has a longstanding commitment to working with children and young people and the work is overseen by the Youth and Children's Work Committee (YCWC). The Church currently employs three staff based in Church House for youth and children's work. They are the Children's Work Development officer, the secretary for Youth Work, and the Pilots Development officer. There is a Children's Charter and the United Reformed Church has been committed to working with ecumenical partners in this area.

1.4 In the early days of the United Reformed Church a group of Youth Leadership Training Officers (YLTOs) was appointed; a full-timer being responsible for two synods and a part-timer for one. The National Youth Secretary was the team co-ordinator and leader, bringing the YLTOs together for regular meetings. At that time the United Reformed Church did not contribute to the cost. The work was supported by a grant from the then Department for Education and Science (DES) and from other trust fund bodies, each YLTO having their own volunteer fundraiser.

1.5 In 1988 General Assembly passed a resolution which affirmed the ideal of the appointment of one full time YLTO in each province (now synod) – these YLTOs to be involved in other training work. In 1990, General Assembly, recognising the increasing significance of children's work, changed the name to Youth and Children's Work Trainer (YCWT).

1.6 To support the synods the United Reformed Church agreed to provide half of the funds as DES funding decreased. Although the work would be primarily synod based, there was an agreement that the YCWTs would spend 25% of their time on work for the whole Church. Most synods opted into this scheme – described as the YCWT programme. Currently 11 of the 13 synods are part of the scheme. One of these synods employs an additional youth and children's work officer.

1.7 As the number of officers grew in the 1980s it was decided that the co-ordination of the group was too big a job for the National Youth Secretary. One of the YLTOs was appointed as half time manager with the other half of his time working in his synod. On his retirement a full time manager was appointed and this role continued until 1997. The line management of the YCWTs then passed to synods.

1.8 A very useful Staff Development Policy was drawn up at that time in order to provide consistency for the whole YCWT programme and support for the officers in post and those who manage them. The document was revised in 2003 following the 2002 review. It contains a generic job description which can be adapted to meet the needs of individual synods but it clearly states that 25% of the time should be spent on Assembly initiated work.

1.9 In 1992 the role was concerned with training, supporting and resourcing voluntary workers. The 2002 review group recommended that synods encourage the developmental aspect of the role, and suggested that the word 'development' be added to the job title. While different titles exist for individuals in different synods, the preface to the Staff Development Policy refers to the Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Officers (YCWTDOs) and this report will follow that lead and refer to the Youth and Children's Work Training and Development (YCWTD) programme and YCWTDOs.

1.10 The core Assembly-level tasks include: child protection issues; Good Practice; organising 'What do you think?' prior to General Assembly and OASIS at General Assembly; Children's Assembly; training and advocacy for Pilots; Pilots' big events; Core skills training (the ecumenical resource for children's workers); work with FURY; Theatre Week; preparing resources.

1.11 Financial considerations have recently become more apparent as the United Reformed Church has been seeking ways to balance its budget. From 2008, synods in the scheme will pay 75% of the costs with a possible move to 100% in the future.

1.12 The 2007 review group is very conscious that the context has changed in other ways since 2002 and is still changing. In 2002 it was noted that there were fewer volunteers in churches so there was less need for direct training than when the YCWTD programme was set up. Sadly this is even truer than it was then. There is a need to learn from and build on the past and to think about the mission of the church for the next 10 years or so and especially its ministry to children and young people and their involvement in the life of the Church.

1.13 The United Reformed Church has been engaged in the *Catch the Vision* process which is moving into a new phase – **Vision4Life** – and it has a new training strategy (agreed at General Assembly in 2006) which is based on the premise that the United Reformed Church is a learning Church involving the whole people of God. This must, by definition, involve the young as well as those who are older. The United Reformed Church has created three Resource Centres for Learning (RCLs) and ministerial and lay training is also being developed ecumenically in Regional Training Partnerships (RTPs). With all this change, it is appropriate to be discussing the YCWTD programme and the contribution this, or professional officers, could make to the Church in the future.

## 2 The remit of the 2007 Review

This review group was asked to answer the crucial question:

**'What value is the Church gaining from the YCWTD programme?'**  
and it was also asked to:

- look at the whole YCWTD programme; and
- compare and contrast ways of working across the synods.



### **3 Summary of the main findings of the review**

#### **3.1 Has the Church gained from the YCWTD programme?**

3.1.1 Much has been achieved in children and young people's ministry through the work of the YCWTDs and synods are generally very supportive of their work although there are significant variations.

3.1.2 At its best, the programme has had a very positive impact on the work of the United Reformed Church. A large number of adults working with children's and youth groups have received training. 'What do you think?' has been a very successful way of helping young people to have their voices heard and to feel part of the wider church. The Federation of United Reformed Youth (FURY) Assembly has helped young people to think about key issues and frame resolutions for Assembly. The first Children's Assembly in 2007, although the initiative of the Children's Work Development Officer, utilised the skills of some YCWTDs.

3.1.3 The work of the YCWTDs in their synods has helped to build up the confidence of younger people as well as the leaders and other volunteers in local churches. Work that was already good has flourished and developed further. Leaders have been well resourced and have received support, guidance and encouragement. Young people have been given a wider view of the Church through synod and/or Assembly events.

3.1.4 Very valuable work has been carried out in synods in relation to statutory work and the generic job description, in the Staff Development Policy, states that they should offer advice, support, advocacy and guidance on implementation of the Church's child protection policy in local churches and councils of the church. If the YCWTDs were not employed, the United Reformed Church would have to pay others to carry out the work and check that the policy was being implemented – or rely on very good volunteers whose work would need monitoring by someone. The YCWTDs carry a heavy responsibility in this respect on behalf of the whole Church.

3.1.5 Work with local churches has usually been appreciated, but many churches are not touched by the work in spite of publicity. One factor may be because the churches say that they have very few or no children and young people on Sundays. There is a need for synods to consider how they raise awareness about the work of the YCWTD and how they could become more pro-active in engaging with churches.

3.1.6 YCWTDs are valued for their involvement in the whole life of the church and have used their individual skills, for example in information and communications technology, to help their synods.

3.1.7 The participation of some YCWTDs in the training of ministers of word and sacraments and church related community workers has been appreciated and they could contribute to new patterns of training in the future.

3.1.8 The YCWTD Programme is the envy of ecumenical partners and the wider Church has gained much from cooperative working. The YCWTDs have helped to show churches in other denominations that the United Reformed Church takes youth and children's ministry seriously and some local churches have said that they have been given a wider ecumenical dimension through the work led by YCWTDs.

#### **3.2 Has the Church obtained 'value for money'?**

3.2.1 This is not easy to evaluate because of a lack of criteria against which to measure. However, in the light of the many positive responses, the answer must, in general, be 'yes' but there is scope for improvement in the way the group of YCWTDs works together for the United Reformed Church as a whole and how their work in synods relates to agreed strategies there.

3.2.2 Pilots has been very successful and continues to grow. The 2002 Review acknowledged that one Assembly staff member was not sufficient and that there should be more paid resources as the work developed. Additional support has been provided by YCWTDs but more could be achieved if the Pilots Development Officer could call on dedicated time from some of them each year.

3.2.3 The strength of having such professional officers in synods is that they should be able to come together to work for the whole church but there is a lack of clarity about what constitutes Assembly work. While it is inevitable that the boundary between synod and Assembly work is fuzzy, greater clarity would be helpful.

3.2.4 The YCWTDs are Assembly appointments and they are a relatively expensive resource. The United Reformed Church, however, has not made as much use of their experience and skills as it could have done. In the past they have not been asked to make a report to General Assembly either directly or through the YCWC; they were not directly involved in early *Catch the Vision* discussions. It is hoped that recent offers to help to produce child-friendly material for **Vision4Life** will be taken up so that the vision of education and learning for the whole people of God can be realised.

3.2.5 It has been suggested by some that the United Reformed Church does not get 'value for money' in its ecumenical youth and children's work as 'we give more than we receive'. Others have suggested that this is a major and positive contribution that the United Reformed Church makes.

### **3.3 Leadership and management**

#### **A Synodical management**

3.3.1 Since 1997 the line management of the YCWTDs has been the responsibility of synods. This has generally worked well although several synods have spoken of the difficulty of finding appropriate people to serve as synod managers; many people with the required experience and skills are already too busy. Particular synod structures also affect the way the managers are able to operate; some managers are more involved in the general life and decisions of the synod than others.

3.3.2 The recommendation that new synod managers receive some training has not been implemented although managers are invited once or twice a year by the secretary for Youth Work to meet together to share good practice and discuss matters of concern. It has proved difficult to find dates when all synod managers can attend meetings. It would be helpful if there were greater clarity about what was expected of the managers not only from synods but also from the United Reformed Church.

#### **B Management of the Assembly programme**

3.3.3 The review group's main concern was about the management of the central programme. Overall, the work of the YCWTDs for the whole Church has not been as efficient or effective as it could have been mainly because of a lack of strategic planning at Assembly level and because earlier recommendations about the management (in the 2002 report) of the Assembly programme have not been implemented. As a consequence, the YCWTDs do not function as a team. There is a sense in which this is not a 'YCWTD programme' at all but a set of posts with some collaborative work. There is a need to explore how the work could be more cohesive.

3.3.4 Individual officers have many skills and talents and the potential for outstanding work through greater team work is there, but nobody has an overview of their skills and talents, or of areas for development, in spite of the production of three-yearly appraisal reports which are sent to Church House. There is a need to have systems that try to ensure that the Church has work of a consistently high quality, and to support colleagues when it is not of the required standard.

3.3.5 Not all YCWTDOS spend the same proportion of time on Assembly work so some synods make greater contributions than others. There are questions about how tasks are allocated to, or chosen by, the YCWTDOS and how the work is coordinated. The YCWTDOS met with the three Church House staff to discuss the work that needed to be done for the Assembly programme and volunteered for tasks. This is not a satisfactory way to work if skills are to be used effectively and if the development needs of individual officers are to be considered. This can only be done centrally and it requires more than co-ordination. It is about effectively managing the time and skills of a field force of staff for the good of the whole Church.

3.3.6 It has not been part of the remit of the Church House staff to communicate with the synod managers about the extent and quality of the central work, except if asked as part of the formal three-year appraisal system.

3.3.7 Most of the current YCWTDOS have a background in youth rather than children's work and there is a need to address this imbalance in any future work/appointments. However, with good overall management and planning, development opportunities for the YCWTDOS could easily be provided within the Assembly programme of work.

3.3.8 The *Staff development policy* includes information about professional and personal development, appraisals and reviews as well as a generic job description which synods use as a basis for their own. There is a need to raise awareness about this document so that the policies are carried out consistently across synods. The policy handbook was last revised in 2003 and needs to be reviewed again.

3.3.9 The YCWTDOS' 'team' meetings are self-managed and a lack of accountability can appear to have led to an air of complacency. Time at the meetings is not used as effectively as it could be for training or sharing ideas. Are the three residential meetings a year, as currently organised, justified from a time and financial point of view? It is not always clear to whom they are accountable for different aspects of their work.

3.3.10 The YCWC has a significant role to play in directing the work of the team through its strategic planning but it has not always been seen as supportive by the YCWTDOS. When, for example, it decided on the last five year plan for its work the YCWTDOS were not asked initially to take part in its development. Following a later YCWC request some YCWTDOS took the initiative and produced a much appreciated DVD. The current YCWC is developing a new strategic plan and intends to ask the YCWTDOS, through their managers, to carry out specific tasks. This is an important and valuable step forward.

## 4 Other issues

4.1 The budget for the whole programme is held by the secretary for Youth Work. At present there is an imbalance in the funding of children's and youth work, but there is no clear identification of how the money is split. It has been argued that more should be spent on children's work because there are more under-10s linked to the churches.

4.2 Two synods do not have YCWTDOS. One synod (Northern) has chosen not to be part of the programme because of dissatisfaction in the past and, therefore, does not receive any funding for its (part-time) children's worker and, consequently, she is not involved in the YCWTDOS team meetings or in other communications. Young people from the synod have, however, been involved in sessions led by the secretary for Youth, have shared in Youth Executive meetings with the North Western synod, and benefited from attending FURY Assembly and other events led by YCWTDOS.

- 4.3 The synod of Wales is currently reviewing the situation but, again, activities have been organised by other officers at the request of the synod.
- 4.4 The title of Youth and Childrens' Work Development Officer is too complicated; something like Youth and Children's Officer (YCO) would be more helpful though the development aspect of the role should not be lost.
- 4.5 There is no system in place to ensure that the policy on 'Safeguarding' is up to date, or that the quality of training given in synods is of an acceptable standard.
- 4.6 It has been suggested by some that the role of a YCWTDO should be considered and recognised as a form of ministry that supports the mission of the whole Church.

## 5 Vision for the future

- 5.1 Most respondents were in favour of continuing with the programme but suggested that this was a time for a significant change because of the evolving needs and priorities of the Church and because of the management problems highlighted earlier. There would need to be changes to current job descriptions and related training and development.
- 5.2 Part of the change would be to explore how the faith is passed on to the next generation, and how adults, even in churches where there are currently no children, can be challenged to think about the role of the church in an increasingly secular society and how it engages with the spiritual dimension of the lives of children and young people.
- 5.3 The work of YCWTDOs initially involved working with adults (youth and children's workers) rather than directly working with the children and young people. Many respondents have suggested that there should be more direct work with children and young people in the future.
- 5.4 Professional officers are needed to provide inspirational leadership and help others to find new ways of being Church. They are said by some to be 'vital if the church is to grow' and 'central to the life of the church'.
- 5.5 Increasing statutory requirements will be placed on voluntary workers in local churches in the near future under the government's *Every Child Matters* agenda and professionals are needed to ensure that the Church and its policies are up to date. It is probable that further checks and training will be required for all United Reformed Church volunteers working with children, and eventually young people as well. Could the Church afford to rely on well meaning volunteers instead of paid officers?

## 6 Recommendations

**Recommendation 1: for the future mission of the United Reformed Church, the review group recommends the continuation of a central programme.**

**However it has certain provisos.** They are that:

- there is a clear focus and strategy for youth and children's ministry from the YCWC, to which synods can link; and
- current ineffective leadership and management issues are resolved.

- 6.1 As part of *Catch the Vision*, and now *Vision4Life*, as well as the new education and learning strategy, it is essential that the United Reformed Church employs professionals to lead work with children and young people in synods and across the whole Church. It is also essential if the United Reformed Church is to keep abreast of new and changing statutory requirements. However, there needs to be a rethink of

current practice because of changes since the start of the YCWT programme – and because of the changing needs as the United Reformed Church seeks to be a missionary Church in this part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Recommendation 2: a simpler title is used, such as Youth and Children's Officer (YCO).**

**Recommendation 3: the United Reformed Church takes seriously the need for co-ordinated leadership and management of all youth and children's work and accepts Scenario 1 (in section 10, page 108) and discusses with synods the possible funding arrangements.**

6.1 To be effective, Assembly driven work must be co-ordinated and managed centrally with clear lines of accountability. The work must be shared across the YCWTDOS so that their existing skills and experience are used, and also to provide developmental opportunities for them. The review group discussed several options (see the related working paper – section 10, page 107) but concluded that the best option (Scenario 1) was that all the staff employed by the United Reformed Church for youth and children's work, be managed by one person, and that this should not be linked to one of the Church House youth and children's work posts because of the existing work loads. The cost of an overall manager could be shared by synods.

6.2 Synod management would continue as now but with clearer links to the Assembly appointed manager, and with relevant induction and training.

**Recommendation 4: in order that recommendations which are accepted by the Church are actually implemented, an action plan be drawn up, giving deadlines and naming responsible people. Progress on its implementation should be monitored.**

**Recommendation 5: there should be one such officer in each synod, working to synod priorities but contributing to the whole Church on an agreed basis.**

6.3 There is no reason why the United Reformed Church should hold on to the historical reasons for the YCWTDOS group so it makes sense to involve all employed in synods for youth and children's ministry to come together as an Assembly team. The funding arrangements would need to be reviewed and revised.

**Recommendation 6: a regular system of updating and training for the YCWTDOS be developed as well as a system of monitoring and evaluating the training on safeguarding issues.**

**Recommendation 7: a small group of, say, three (including an HR person) is asked to draw up a set of minimal standards to be used in the appraisal/ review process and sets out a clear mechanism for dealing with work which is not of the required quality.**

**Recommendation 8: the systems being developed in the Church with its new committee structure ensure that there is joined-up thinking across the various departments/committees of the Church so that YCWTDOS are seen as an integral part of the resources for the Church.**

6.4 The United Reformed Church has stated that it wants to be a learning Church and the YCWTDOS need to feel and be seen as part of the overall provision that the United Reformed Church has for education and learning. The team's role should be integral to the whole life of the church; it should be central not sidelined. This means there should be more joined-up thinking across the various departments/committees of the Church.

### **Recommendation 9: there is greater clarity about the budget for youth and children's work.**

6.5 The YCWC has not always been as clear as it needs to be about the priorities and sharing of central funding across both youth and children's work, and about how limited funds can best be utilised against strategic plans. This lack of clarity is being rectified.

### **Recommendation 10: that the United Reformed Church and individual synods decide on the commitment to working with ecumenical partners. Should other Churches pay for the use of the United Reformed Church's personnel?**

## **7 Evidence base**

- a. The review group looked at the whole YCWTD programme and compared and contrasted ways of working across the synods. It also sought the views of those synods which do not have a YCWTD or its equivalent.
- b. Evidence was sought in a variety of ways. Letters were sent to synods, FURY Executive, ecumenical partners; Regional Pilots Officers, the three Resource Centres for Learning and one was placed in *Reform* inviting responses.
- c. Members of the group have:
  - met with the three Assembly appointed staff in July;
  - attended a meeting of synod moderators in September;
  - attended a meeting of YCWTDs in September, and later met with small groups of YCWTDs in October;
  - attended a meeting of the synod managers in October, which was also attended for part of the time by the Human Resources and Facilities Manager;
  - met with the secretary for Education and Learning in November;
  - met with the deputy general secretary in December;
  - examined the recommendations of the previous review group;
  - compared the job descriptions of YCWTDs in different synods and read responses in a questionnaire from YCWTDs and their managers about work carried out in the previous year;
  - read the written responses from synods, FURY Executive, some ecumenical partners, some Regional Pilots Officers, the three Resource Centres for Learning, and some individuals both ministers and lay people.

## **8 The Review Group**

Kathleen Cross	Convener	NW Synod YCWTD Manager
Suzanne Adofo	Church House	CRCW (Assembly Staff)
Anthea Coates	Member of YCWC	SW Synod YCWTD Manager
Revd Dr Jack Dyce	Synod of Scotland	Principal of the Scottish College
Anne Hatch	NW Synod	Regional Pilots Officer
Peter Pay	Wessex Synod Clerk	Wessex YCWTD Manager
Doug Swanney	Methodist Church	Children's Work Development Officer
Revd Stephen Thornton	Wessex Synod	
Revd Neil Thorogood	Convener of the YCWC	

## 9 Recommendations from the 2002 Report

### Youth and Children's Work Training Programme

We recommend that:

1. The YCWT programme is continued with its present funding arrangements.
2. Synods encourage the developmental aspect of the role; the word Development could be added to the job title where this has not already happened.
3. Responsibility for the programme, its professional management and coordination and its contribution to Assembly programmes should be transferred from the Training committee to the Youth and Children's Work committee, and in particular to the job description of the secretary for Youth Work.
4. The secretary for Training be invited to participate in the regular meetings of the YCWT team.
5. Synods should continue to manage the local work of YCWTs within an overall strategy for training and for the development of youth and children's work in the synod.
6. Volunteer managers working with YCWTs in synods should receive initial training and continue to be advised and resourced by the secretary for Youth Work.
7. Synods work with the YCWTs to improve advocacy of their role with districts/ areas and local churches.
8. There should be a full review of the YCWT programme in four years' time.

## 10 Possible future scenarios

10.1 This is time for a rethink. These different scenarios assume that the United Reformed Church has a continued commitment and vision to work with children and young people as part of its mission in the next 10 or so years, and there is a clear strategy for the Assembly work and related accountability.

10.2 In all cases, scrap the 'team' as now – the YCWTD Programme as it was created no longer exists and Government funding disappeared many years ago. Ideally involve all synods.

10.3 This is time to think afresh and build a new team with clear leadership and lines of management for the Assembly tasks. The team would, ideally include all officers appointed in synods (including Northern synod's children's officer) plus the three Church House officers, who would be seen as project managers for particular pieces of Assembly work. This would involve amending job descriptions but should not be difficult. There is a need for better communication with the synod managers about the extent and quality of the central work.

10.4 As in the current generic job description each synod YCWTD would be involved in work for the Church outside their synod, with an agreed proportion. These specific tasks would normally be managed (on a project management basis) by one of the three Church House based officers if the tasks were part of their agreed Assembly programmes. Synods would be consulted/informed before the work was undertaken setting out expectations in terms of objectives, role, timescales and time requirements together with reasons for their involvement; for example, existing expertise or personal development. Reports would also be sent at the end of the project on outcomes and performance. This would build in some level of accountability.

10.5 In any new structure there is a need to ensure that Assembly work is carried out as requested; that the strengths of members of the team are fully utilised for the wider church, and that personal and professional development of the officers, and their career development, takes place. This is the duty of a good employer.

### Scenario 1

Overall, the strategy for youth and children's work will only be effective if someone is appointed to lead and manage the team of Church House and synod based officers. This manager should have a good overview of work with both children and young people and would work closely with the YCWC which determines the overall strategy. Sound central management should ensure that the United Reformed Church as a whole gets very good value for money.

YCWTDOS would still have a manager and support person in their synod, who would also link to the Assembly appointed manager. The synod line manager would need to ensure that the work and priorities of the YCWTDOS are in line with an agreed synod strategy. This probably means that the manager should be closely integrated into the synod structure.

This is an expensive option and for that reason alone may be rejected. However, the review group believes that the overall management of the Assembly tasks and the oversight of the whole group of YCWTDOS, which has been raised in previous reviews and not really tackled, need to be addressed very seriously.

### Scenario 2

If the central management post for the team cannot be resolved, or afforded, then another option is to scrap the notion of an Assembly team and leave it to synods. YCWTDOS would work in synods, according to synod strategies, contributing to Assembly work as requested (as ministers, training officers and others do) and with the synod's agreement. It is hoped that job descriptions would still include work for the Church outside the synod so that the Church has access to the expertise available. YCWTDOS would carry out work linked to safeguarding and other legal requirements in their synods but on behalf of the United Reformed Church.

It is probable that some synods would not release their officers for Assembly tasks. There would no longer be much chance of Church-wide strategic planning, oversight, development and accountability which would be a sad loss. Synods have not always found it easy to provide adequate management and support internally and many have called for stronger (not less) central oversight and support. The whole Church would lose out as YCWTDOS may not be available for important work or events which rely on good knowledge of the United Reformed Church.

### Scenario 3

The current system continues as now, but one of the three Church House based officers is appointed to manage the YCWTDOS for the central church work, as suggested in the 2002 review. Management training would be vital for this significant change of role and emphasis and new job descriptions would need to be drawn up. [It is noted that the Children's Work Development Officer's post expires at the end of 2009 and the secretary for Youth's post is to be reviewed in 2008.]

Some may see this as an easy solution but if one of the officers were to carry out the management role there would need to be on-going leadership and management training. The relationship between the manager and the YCWTDOS team would be very different from that which currently exists, so there needs to be very significant changes. The task, if done properly, could take up a significant amount of time. Where does this time come from – and at what cost to the existing, and proposed, tasks? The Review Group would still want to see the YCWTDOS and the Church House staff working as a team but this could be difficult if one of the latter is the overall manager of the YCWTDOS.



## **11 Responding to the review: consultations across the United Reformed Church**

Having received the draft report of the Review early in 2008 the YCWC has explored its findings and consulted widely across synods. The report has been discussed at appropriate committees within synods, at a meeting of synod YCWTD managers, at the synod treasurers' consultation and at Mission Council in March. All of these responses have been received by the YCWC. It is out of this process of consultation that the YCWC presents the following resolutions. We believe that these resolutions represent a balance between the need to deal properly with vital issues raised through the review and realities (especially about funding) fed back to the YCWC from across the United Reformed Church. The YCWC believes there is clear affirmation for the programme and its continuation. It is also vital that long-standing issues of leadership and management of the Assembly-level work are addressed, and there is further detailed work for the YCWC to do for this to be achieved.

### **YCWTD programme**

The clear conclusion of the Review was that this is an important area of work that needs to continue. This was also affirmed across synods through the consultations. The YCWC recognises that the Review set two provisos alongside recommending continuation. The first was for a clear strategy for future work with children and young people, within which the work of YCWTDs and others can be set and against which progress can be assessed. The YCWC offers General Assembly its vision for future work in a separate part of this Book of Reports. We have prepared this in parallel to work undertaken by the Review, and see this set of priorities guiding our work, and that of staff, in the coming years. We are creating specific goals around each priority.

### **Resolution 37**

General Assembly, reaffirming the importance of resourcing and equipping local churches in their ministries with children and young people, agrees to continue the Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Officer programme.

### **A YCWTD in every synod**

The YCWC is aware that some synods are exploring the possibilities of having more than one person in post, and/or of splitting responsibilities for children's and youth work across more than one post. We would hope that synods be given flexibility to establish the best ways of implementing this resolution within their specific contexts, but in ways that allow for integration with the Assembly-level programme.

### **Resolution 38**

General Assembly, believing that it is desirable that there be at least one Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Officer in each synod, request every synod where such an officer does not exist to explore the possibility of making an appointment by 2011.

## Line management

Although the Review clearly favoured the creation of a new Church House manager this was widely rejected across synods during the subsequent consultations as an unjustifiable additional cost. Only one synod registered strong support for the recommendation to employ a new manager. Whilst deeply regretting this response the YCWC recognises that we have to work within the limits of resources available. But the YCWC also fully accepts the need to respond to the Review's and synods' clear concerns that ineffective leadership and management be addressed. This resolution, and resolution 41, recognises that the existing Church House staff will need to take on new roles and responsibilities. There is much detailed work to be done to ensure that current job descriptions are redrawn, existing work reassigned and a new culture and way of working successfully established. Whilst the YCWC is very aware of the demand for a single member of staff at Church House to take on this function we need to do further work to identify what will work best.

### Resolution 39

General Assembly agrees that Synods should be responsible for the line management of their respective Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Officers. Youth and Children's Work staff at Church House, in conjunction with the respective synod line managers, will allocate, monitor and evaluate Assembly-level work undertaken by the Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Officers.

## Task Group

Both the Review and the subsequent consultations have stressed the need to establish better ways of leading and managing the programme and a much improved way of integrating Assembly work with synod priorities and management. There is a need to revise the existing Staff Handbook and to ensure that best practice in line management and staff development of YCWTDOS is applied across all of the posts. This substantial work needs to be done if we are to meet the Review's recommendations and ensure we take this opportunity to set a sound foundation for the future.

### Resolution 40

General Assembly instructs the Youth and Children's Work committee to create a task group to:

- a) ensure that any appropriate training is provided to Church House staff for this changed role and responsibility;
- b) put in place the necessary procedures to ensure that synod line management and Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Officer staff development and appraisal are effective;
- c) ensure that Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Officer job descriptions confirm and maintain that an agreed share of each of their time is devoted to Assembly-level work;
- d) report to Mission Council in March 2009.

## Funding arrangements

Funding issues were explored in consultation with synod treasurers and the United Reformed Church's treasurer. It was noted that the current funding arrangements introduce an administrative complexity. It was felt sensible to phase out over the next three years the split funding arrangement for those synods which choose to have YCWTDOS. To avoid any risk that releasing YCWTDOS for Assembly tasks on YCWC priorities might suffer as a result of this change the treasurers noted that this shift in funding should be accompanied by clarity in the YCWTDOS job descriptions to confirm that a share of their time would still be devoted to Assembly-level work. This change would mean an elimination of the relevant YCWTDOS cost line in the United Reformed Church's central budget so that the M&M request to synods with YCWTDOS would be proportionately lower than it would otherwise have been.

### Resolution 41

General Assembly agrees that the current split funding arrangements for Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Officers be phased out by 2011, with all costs then being paid via synod funds.

## Children's and Youth Officers?

There is unanimous agreement across synods of the need for a simpler title. Many suggestions have been tried! The YCWC believes that Children's and Youth Officer commends itself as simple, clear and logical. The need for the posts to focus upon development can continue to be made clear through job descriptions and the strategic goals that are established at Assembly and synod levels.

### Resolution 42

General Assembly agrees that the title of Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Officer be simplified to Children's and Youth Officer (CYO).





## From law.....to love

'A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.'

*John 13 v 34 and 35 Today's New International Version*

- Encourage enthusiasm
- Question assumptions
- Updated policy
- Advocate action
- Liaise with other committees and individuals
- Open conversations
- Produced guidelines
- Promote best practice
- Support change

## from law.....to love

Our sincere thanks go to our retiring secretary Revd Derek Hopkins for all his hard work and support. We also acknowledge with gratitude the valuable contributions made to the work of the committee by Revd Sue Macbeth and Dr Ruth Shepherd who have both completed their official term of service with us.



# Equal Opportunities Policy

## Introduction

The United Reformed Church believes that all people are created in God's image and are loved by God. In his ministry Jesus showed God's love by his openness to all people, including those who were marginalised in his day.

## Statement of intent

The United Reformed Church affirms its commitment to show the same openness to all people in today's world. It intends, in spirit and in deed, to promote equality of opportunity and diversity in all spheres of its activity and is committed to behaving as an equal opportunity organisation. It acknowledges that people are called to be diverse and lively, inclusive and flexible through the sharing of the gospel.

## Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy Statement

Exclusion and discrimination can occur on many grounds including those recognised in law, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, colour, ethnic or national origin, age, marital status and disability. The United Reformed Church seeks to eradicate less favourable treatment in these areas by endeavouring to:

- build inclusive communities where all will be treated with dignity and respect and have equality of opportunity to contribute their gifts to the common life;
- identify and remove barriers to participation in employment, training, promotion, leadership and representation on church committees and in the attitudes and actions of every congregation;
- take positive action to counter attitudes and practices contrary to this statement of intent;
- define within the law when being of a particular religion or belief is or is not a requirement for any post within the church;
- develop detailed policies to give effect to these requirements; and
- monitor and report on progress in fulfilling these requirements.

This policy is the overarching equality and diversity direction of the United Reformed Church and should be read in conjunction with the United Reformed Church's declaration that it is a multicultural Church and its equality policies on employment, church activities, membership, committees and councils.

*October 2006*





# Equal Opportunities and Diversity Guidance

## **An Equal Opportunities Policy. What does this mean and what are its implications for the United Reformed Church?**

Such a policy affects the United Reformed Church as a whole as we strive to celebrate and implement God's all-encompassing love. His justice demands that we do this inclusively and equally with all people in Christ, regardless of human distinctions.

It must be remembered that there is the potential for discrimination to occur in every aspect of the life of the Church, whether in the construction of buildings, the delivery of the service and services, employment of individuals and running of projects, to name a few.

This guidance is intended to provide a greater understanding of how an equal opportunities and diversity policy works, the issues involved, general considerations and where to find further help and advice if required. It is important that if in doubt the law as a whole is considered and appropriate advice obtained.

## **What does Equal Opportunities mean?**

This is about treating everybody equally and providing the same opportunity to all, irrespective of their gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, race/colour, age, marital status or disability.

## **Discrimination explained**

In a nutshell, discrimination may occur by 'treating someone worse than others for some reason' (Disability Rights Commission).

### Types of discrimination

This occurs in two ways: direct and indirect. When considering whether discrimination is present, remember that what may be considered to be well-established, tried and tested procedures should also be questioned.

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| Direct   | This is where one person is treated less favourably than another, the reason being because of their sexual orientation, race, disability, etc., e.g. there are two people with equal qualifications who are both equally capable of performing a job/task, the job/task is given to the man and not the woman, solely because of her sex.   |
| Indirect | Such discrimination often occurs as an unintended consequence. It occurs where the effects of certain requirements, conditions or practices have a disproportionately adverse impact on one group/individual as opposed to another, e.g. a post is advertised and it is specified that only mature applicants need apply. Such an advert constitutes age discrimination against younger applicants. |

What if we believe that there is a particular need for a specific type of person? In a situation where a particular post or project specifically requires a particular type of person in relation to sex or race, then provided that it can be shown that there is requirement for a genuine occupational qualification (GOQ) for the post, then the law can recognise this as an exception to the general position in relation to discrimination, e.g. a woman is required to work with women who have been subjected to physical/sexual abuse. It is also possible in some situations to discriminate in relation to age if there is a good 'business' reason for doing so, e.g. a task may require specific experience and qualifications which a younger person would not have. Such a reason is referred to as a 'genuine occupational requirement'. In the case of religion/belief this need is referred to as a genuine occupational requirement (GOR). **(See Annex C page 124)**

### **Diversity**

This is the taking into account and encompassing the values, attitudes, cultural experiences and differences of individuals in order not only for them to be included within the operations of an organisation but also to enrich the operation and values of that organisation by the knowledge and experience that is brought by all and also to encourage open-mindedness, flexibility and respect for all.

### **Discrimination in relation to people with a disability**

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 provides that the Church should take reasonable steps to alter or remove features of their premises which make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for a person with disabilities to make use of the facilities that the Church provides.

The Church is therefore under a duty to:

- i) take reasonable steps in all circumstances to remove any practices, policies or procedures or to make the necessary changes which make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to take part in Church activities; and
- ii) provide reasonable alternative methods of taking part in Church activities where they are unable to do so by reason of physical features or, if appropriate, to provide aids or services as may be reasonable to enable or make it reasonable for them to take part in Church activities.

### **What is meant by 'reasonable'**

There is no legal definition of 'reasonable' within the act. When considering if a failure to make adjustments was reasonable, issues that can be considered are:

- could anything reasonable have been done to remove the obstacle;
- how practicable would it have been to do it;
- what financial and/or other resources were available to achieve this.

It must be remembered that disability or impairment has a wide application and includes problems with mobility, visual impairment, speech, dyslexia, hearing, mental illness and learning disabilities. It is therefore important that not only are the physical features of church premises considered, but also the way in which services are provided and the general practices, policies and procedures that need to be considered so that it can be demonstrated that the legal obligations provided by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 have been met, e.g. the provision of a ramp to enable wheelchair access to a building would be considered under the DDA 1995 as providing a reasonable means of providing disabled access to the building, as would the provision of an induction loop to assist those with hearing difficulties. For further issues for consideration please refer to **Annex A page 12.**

## How to try and ensure that the equal opportunities and diversity policies (including disability discrimination) are being followed

It is recommended that an audit is carried out of practices, policies, procedures and buildings. This can be done in a variety of ways. Outside organisations can be used and/or materials obtained which will provide resources to enable an audit to be made. This can identify both immediate and more long-term needs.

Alternatively, an audit/assessment can be made using the template shown at **Annex B**. This template is intended as a guide and can be amended as appropriate. The intention is that it will enable issues to be identified which can be considered further and if appropriate positive steps then taken to amend/correct the situation. An access audit on buildings should also be considered. Assistance can be provided by the Church's Action on Disability (CHAD) on this.

If your church is a community building, then it may be the case that other user groups will have suggestions and be able to provide assistance with this. Assessments should also be considered under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and the Workplace (Health Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992.

## Develop detailed policies to give effect to these requirements

A number of policies have already been developed and are available for churches to access on contacting the Human Resources office at Church House and discussing their needs with the staff.

### **Policies available include:**

Adoption leave, Age Discrimination, Alcohol Policy, Capability Procedure, Data Protection, Disciplinary Procedure, Employment Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy, Flexible Working Policy, Grievance Procedure, Guidelines on leave, Harassment Policy, Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave policies, Religion or Belief Discrimination Policy, Sexual Orientation Discrimination Policy, Stress Management Policy and Violence and Abuse Guidelines.

### **Future Prevention**

- Provide or review existing training to all those involved in areas where discrimination may occur.
- Encourage those with responsibilities in these areas to attend training courses and obtain appropriate resources in support.
- Constantly review and up-date procedures so as to be compliant with changes in the law (monitoring). (**See Annex C page 124**)

# Annex A

## Examples of particular disabilities or impairments and issues for consideration

Matter for consideration	Issues
<b>Employment</b>	
Advertisement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) worded so as to avoid potential discrimination</li> <li>(ii) if there is a GOQ, can this be justified before being specified</li> </ul>
Job Application Form	Should avoid references to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) age</li> <li>(ii) marital status</li> <li>(iii) disability</li> </ul>
Interview	Avoid same issues as with advertising
Terms of Employment	There should be equality in terms of benefits, etc., to ensure no discrimination on grounds of sex, etc.
<b>Management of Project/Membership of Committee/etc.</b>	
In order to avoid causing disadvantage/discriminating against a certain group, consider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) timing of meeting, e.g. to avoid school run</li> <li>(ii) location of meeting, e.g. on 1<sup>st</sup> floor where there is no lift</li> <li>(iii) access, e.g. public transport?</li> </ul>
<b>Training</b>	Available to all on equal basis
<b>Mobility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Lightweight doors</li> <li>(ii) Rails</li> <li>(iii) Ramps or lift</li> <li>(iv) Chair with armrest available</li> <li>(v) Steps highlighted</li> <li>(vi) Good lighting level</li> <li>(vii) Accessibility for wheelchairs and walking frames</li> <li>(viii) Space in sanctuary for wheelchairs to be accommodated</li> <li>(ix) Aisle lighting and highlighting</li> <li>(x) Explore the possibility of having a wheelchair/walking stick/walking frame available in church</li> <li>(xi) Ensure torches are available for power cuts/lighting failure</li> <li>(xii) Easy-use taps</li> <li>(xiii) Flooring suitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs</li> </ul>
<b>Visual Impairment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Level of lighting</li> <li>(ii) Handrails</li> <li>(iii) Steps highlighted</li> <li>(iv) Large Print hymn books and Bible</li> <li>(v) Use of coloured paper</li> <li>(vi) Large font size on acetates and Powerpoint</li> <li>(vii) Simple background rather than busy or picture</li> </ul>

<b>Hearing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Loop systems</li> <li>(ii) Speak clearly</li> <li>(iii) Level of lighting appropriate for lip reading</li> <li>(iv) Use microphones whenever possible especially during services and meetings</li> </ul>
<b>Learning Disabilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) A greater use of visual resources</li> <li>(ii) Greater use of drama, music, dance, the arts</li> <li>(iii) Develop an awareness within the congregation to need (this also applies in all the above situations)</li> <li>(iv) Pastoral Support network</li> <li>(v) A service outline which has a familiar pattern particularly at the start and finish; try to avoid being patronising, remember that when these people are involved in worship it is as participants too and they are not just performers</li> </ul>
<b>Dyslexia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Familiar pattern to service</li> <li>(ii) Use of the arts – less reliance on written word</li> <li>(iii) Colour of paper e.g. yellow preferred</li> <li>(iv) Easily accessible font as recognised by British Dyslexia Association e.g. Arial or Comic Sans font size minimum 12</li> </ul>
<b>Race</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Seek, as with other minority groups to ensure that the councils of the Church at all levels represent the composition of the congregation</li> <li>(ii) Work through the Racial Justice and Multicultural Toolkit</li> </ul>
<b>Age</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Suitability of the service for all age worship</li> <li>(ii) Suitability of the building for all ages</li> </ul>
<b>Members unable to attend church for health reasons</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Pastoral Visits for support and/or prayer</li> <li>(ii) Sacramental visits for communion</li> <li>(iii) Business visits to update on important issues – this may be done during a pastoral visit</li> <li>(iv) Taped services</li> <li>(v) An invitation to send in views – on important issues – to church meeting</li> </ul>
<b>Car Park</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) No hazards or obstructions to visually impaired people</li> <li>(ii) The surface should be smooth and level</li> <li>(iii) Parking spaces for the disabled near accessible entrance</li> </ul>
<b>Physical access to and within the building</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Handrails or ramps to steps</li> <li>(ii) Sufficient width of access and doors</li> <li>(iii) Remove obstacles (e.g. especially at low level or not easily visible)</li> <li>(iv) Marking edge of steps</li> <li>(v) Replace worn out steps</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2

<b>Toilets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Have a toilet suitable for disabled people with or without wheelchair</li><li>(ii) Level and close to main meeting area</li><li>(iii) Thermostatic control on temperature of water,</li><li>(iv) For young children, have steps available to help with toilet height</li></ul>
<b>Seating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Spaces for wheelchairs</li><li>(ii) Some chairs with arms should be available</li></ul>
<b>Lighting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Well lit access</li><li>(ii) Suitably sited for book and lip reading</li></ul>
<b>PA System</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Regularly maintained loop system or infra-red system</li><li>(ii) Recording for people confined to home</li></ul>
<b>Books, ohp and Powerpoint</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Large print (suitable typeface at least 16 point and Braille if required)</li><li>(ii) OHP acetates at least 30 point type</li><li>(iii) Clear visibility of screen</li><li>(iv) Uncluttered background for Powerpoint</li></ul>
<b>Noticeboards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) For text use both upper and lower case</li><li>(ii) Contrasting colour paper (e.g. black on white or black on pale yellow). Matt paper helps people with dyslexia</li><li>(iii) Clear signs</li><li>(iv) Consider font size and clarity of information displayed</li></ul>
<b>Church Website</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Keep number of fonts to a minimum</li><li>(ii) Backgrounds white or pale pastel colours</li><li>(iii) Fonts should be large enough</li><li>(iv) Accessibility for visually impaired/blind</li></ul>



# Annex C

## Detailed Legal Explanations

Discrimination on grounds of sex, race, religion or belief is not an easy one for churches to address. However, it would be unlawful to have a general policy of discriminating by preferring church people when recruiting staff.

### Religion and Belief

The Employment Equality (Religion and Belief) Regulations 2003 made discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief unlawful in employment. The 2003 Religion and Belief Regulations allow a limited exception to the general duty not to discriminate. This may apply in cases where being of a particular religion or belief is a genuine occupational requirement (GOR) for a particular post. A typical example where this applies would be the appointment of a Christian Chaplain by a hospital trust to tend to the needs of patients who are mainly Christian.

The United Reformed Church may well have a post to fill that has a GOR. If so, care will need to be taken that this is really the case, such a requirement can be justified and that the job description and terms and conditions reflect them. There are obviously many posts within the United Reformed Church for which there is clearly no GOQ, (for example, a receptionist's position).

Volunteers are not employed and therefore the law about employees does not strictly apply to them. However, good practice should be followed which is to equate the conditions under which they work and are recruited with those of employees.

### Sex and Race

Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (as amended 1986) (Discrimination on grounds of sex)  
 Equal Pay Act 1970 (equal pay for men and women when doing same or similar work)  
 The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of sex or because you are married.

**Exceptions:** There are situations when it is appropriate for a job only to be offered to a man or woman – these are referred to as a 'Genuine Occupational Qualification' (GOQ)

**Some examples:**

- for reasons of privacy and decency
- where a person has to live on work premises and there are no separate sleeping areas
- job in single sex institution
- jobs in private homes
- job has real physical need
- where job requires married couple

### Discrimination due to race

The Race Relations Act 1976

A complaint does not have to show an intention to discriminate on racial grounds but only that it took place.

Racial grounds include

- colour
- race
- nationality
- ethnic or national origins



**Exceptions** as to when it *may* not be discriminatory:-

**Employment** – genuine occupational qualification (GOQ), e.g. hostel for Asian women who suffered violence requires Asian women on grounds that they would be able to easily communicate and relate to people of the same racial group

**Facilities and services** – Clubs, associations and charities set up for people of a particular ethnic/national group allowed to discriminate on basis of nationality, ethnic/national origin; **NB not colour.**

## Monitor and report on progress in fulfilling these requirements

### Why do we need to monitor?

By having an Equal Opportunities Policy we acknowledge not only our need to comply with the law, but also our responsibility and commitment to be better informed whether or not black and minority ethnic groups, women, people of all ages and people with disabilities are fairly represented in the many different facets of the life of the church. Sometimes this can be done informally but in other situations formal monitoring will be needed. Monitoring also helps us to make informed decisions about what needs to be changed or improved to ensure that our policies are effective both now and for the future.

Asking people to complete monitoring forms may seem a chore, but they are very important. When all the data from the individual forms is collated we can begin to see a clear picture of how the Church is made up in all its parts. Monitoring from year to year allows us to make comparisons and see how things are changing over time.

Monitoring gives evidence to ensure that we are carrying out the policies we have agreed and that we are also complying with the law.

Just as with any accounting process creating an 'audit trail' is important. Keeping records to show what you have done to ensure that you have followed the United Reformed Church's Equal Opportunities Policy is as important as your financial accounting.

Every synod and church should have an Equal Opportunities Policy and a record of all that they have done to operate it and to ensure that it is working.

### Checklist

- Has your church/synod adopted a Equal Opportunities Policy? General Assembly Equal Opportunity policy is available on the United Reformed Church website?
- Has your church/synod explored the implications of this policy and applied it?
- What 'positive action' does your church/synod need to take?
- What 'detailed policies' does your church/synod need to adopt and implement?
- What steps does your church/synod need to take to ensure effective 'monitoring' takes place?
- Do your church/synod structures and committees reflect the make up of your community?
- What good employment practices does your church/synod need to adopt and implement?

### Sources of further information

**The Commission for Equality and Human Rights** (formerly the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality)

Manchester: Arndale House, The Arndale Centre, Manchester, M4 3AQ  
Telephone 0161 829 8100; Fax 01925 884 000  
info@equalityhumanrights.com

London: 3 More London, Riverside Tooley Street, London, SE1 2RG  
Telephone 020 3117 0235; Fax 0207 407 7557  
info@equalityhumanrights.com

Cardiff: 3rd floor, 3 Callaghan Square, Cardiff, CF10 5BT  
Telephone 02920 447710; Fax 02920 447712  
wales@equalityhumanrights.com

Glasgow: The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow, G2 8DU  
Telephone 0141 228 5910; Fax 0141 228 5912  
scotland@equalityhumanrights.com

**Church Action on Disability (CHAD)**, 50 Scrutton Street, London, EC2A 4PH  
Telephone 0207 452 2085

**The Baptist Union Initiative for people with Learning Difficulties (BUILD)**  
David Buckingham, Secretary, 37, Sandon Avenue, Newcastle under Lyme, Staffs, ST5 3QB  
buildtogether@northern.org.uk

**Department for Work and Pensions** – [www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)

**Disability Discrimination Act 1995** – [www.directgov.uk](http://www.directgov.uk) – useful links

**Disability Rights Commission (DRC)** – closed 28.09.07

but website still available with useful info

**Equality Act 2006**

**Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006**

**Race Discrimination Act 1976**

**Race Relations Act 1976**

**Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000**

**Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (as amended 1986)**

**Local Authority Access Officers** (provide help, assistance and advice in relation to access to buildings)

[www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk](http://www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk)



# Section P Part II – Incapacity Procedure

**PART II – not subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure  
(governed by General Assembly Function 2(6)(A)(xii) of the Structure  
of the United Reformed Church)**

## **A. General**

A.1.1 The following is a list of definitions of terms as used in the Incapacity Procedure:-

- **'Appeals Commission'** means the Commission constituted under the Disciplinary Process for the purpose of hearing and deciding each appeal dealt with under that process
- **'Appeals Review Commission'** means the Commission consisting of three person constituted for the purpose of hearing and deciding upon each appeal under Part II, Section L of the Incapacity Procedure
- **'Assembly Commission'** means the Commission constituted under the Disciplinary Process for the purpose of hearing and deciding upon each case dealt with under that process
- **'Basis of Union'** means the Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church
- **'Church'** means the United Reformed Church
- **'Commencement Notice'** means the Notice sent or delivered to the Secretary of the Review Commission in accordance with Part II, Paragraph B.3 in order to initiate the Incapacity Procedure
- **'Consultation Group'** means the group of persons required to be consulted in accordance with Part II, Paragraph B.1 in order to initiate the Incapacity Procedure
- **'CRCW'** means a person whose name is on the Roll of Church Related Community Workers who is under consideration within the Incapacity Procedure (and see also Paragraph A.1.2)
- **'Decision Record'** means the record of the Decision made by the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission as the case may be in the case of any Minister or CRCW under consideration within the Incapacity Procedure
- **'Disciplinary Process'** means the Process operated by the Church for the purpose of exercising discipline in respect of persons whose names are on either the Roll of Ministers or the Roll of CRCWs, such process being contained in Section O of the Church's Manual

## Appendix 3

- **'Enquiry'** means the enquiry carried out by the Review Commission in accordance with Part II, Section G
- **'Hearing'** means any Hearing conducted by the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission under Part II, Sections J or L
- **'Incapacity Procedure'** means the whole Procedure set out in Parts I and II hereof for dealing with cases of ministers or CRCWs falling within Part I, Paragraph 1 hereof
- **'Minister'** means a person whose name is on the Roll of Ministers and who is under consideration within the Incapacity Procedure (and see also Paragraph A.1.2)
- **'Minister's Representative'** means any person appointed to represent a Minister in accordance with Part II, Paragraph A.7 (and see also Paragraph A.1.2)
- **'Notice of Appeal'** means a Notice of Appeal lodged by or on behalf of a Minister or a CRCW in accordance with Part II, Paragraph L.1.1
- **'Outside Organisation'** means any body or organisation outside the Church by which the Minister or CRCW is employed or with which the Minister or CRCW holds any position or post or has any involvement, paid or unpaid, where such body or organisation would have a reasonable and proper expectation of being made aware of the particular step(s) being taken and/or the particular recommendation(s) or guidance being issued under the relevant paragraph of these Rules of Procedure in which the reference to the expression 'Outside Organisation' appears
- **'Press Officer'** means the person appointed to act for the Church and to be its spokesperson as regards its interaction with the Press and other media bodies
- **'PRWC'** means the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee which operates under the General Assembly of the Church (and shall include any committee or body which may be set up in succession to the PRWC)
- **'Record of the Hearing'** means the Secretary's Minute together with any verbatim record made and transcribed in accordance with Part II, Paragraph J.9
- **'Review Commission'** means a Commission consisting of five persons selected as described in Part II, Section D for the purpose of hearing and deciding upon each case dealt with under the Incapacity Procedure

- **'Roll of CRCWs'** means the Roll of Church Related Community Workers defined in the first paragraph of Schedule F, Part II to the Basis of Union (and see also Paragraph A.1.2)
- **'Roll of Ministers'** has the meaning given to it in Paragraph 1 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union (and see also Paragraph A.1.2)
- **'Secretary of the Review Commission'** means the person appointed to act as the Secretary of the Review Commission in accordance with Part II, Paragraph D.2
- **'Secretary's Minute'** means the summary minute of the Hearing prepared by the Secretary of the Review Commission in accordance with Part II, Paragraph J.9
- **'Special Appeals Body'** means the body appointed to hear appeals under Part II, Section H against a proposed reference back and recommendation to commence the Disciplinary Process.
- **'Standing Panel'** means the panel of four persons constituted in accordance with Part II, Section C who will form part of each Review Commission
- **'Statement of Reasons'** means a statement appended to the Decision Record setting out the reasons for the Decision
- **'Structure'** means the Structure of the United Reformed Church
- **'Suspension' and 'to Suspend'** shall have the meanings given to them in Paragraphs 3 and 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union and the third and fourth paragraphs of Schedule F to the Basis of Union
- **'Synod'** means that Synod which in relation to any Minister or CRCW exercises oversight of that Minister or CRCW in accordance with its function under Paragraph 2(4)(A)(xv) of the Structure

A.1.2 For the avoidance of repetition, whenever the word 'Minister' or the expressions 'the Roll of Ministers' or 'the Minister's representative' or any word or expression relating to a minister or ministry appears in the Incapacity Procedure, it shall be taken as being equally referable to a CRCW or to the Roll of CRCWs or to the office of CRCW or to a CRCW's representative as the case may be, unless such construction is precluded by the context.

A.2 The Incapacity Procedure needs to move along in a timely manner so that feelings of frustration and unfairness do not arise as a result of unexplained delays and also so as to reduce the period of maximum stress for the Minister and all those involved. Yet, of equal importance, the issues have to be explored sensitively to enable wise and thoughtful decisions to be taken. Thus the Review Commission must at all times be mindful of the need to balance proper expedition on the one hand with the need to achieve natural justice both for the Minister and the whole Church and an outcome which is fair and properly considered.

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- A.3 Subject to the exception contained in Paragraph A.4 all statements, whether written or oral, made during and in the context of the Incapacity Procedure shall be regarded as being made in pursuance of that object and for no other reason and shall be treated as confidential within the framework of the Incapacity Procedure.
- A.4 The Review Commission may, with the consent of the person or group making it, pass on any statement falling within Paragraph A.3 to any person or group within the Church, provided that the Review Commission satisfies itself that any statement so passed on will remain within the confidential forum of the recipient(s).
- A.5 In any case where a person authorised or required to take some action regarding the appointment of persons to the Standing Panel or to any Review Commission or in the initiation of the consultation specified in Paragraph B.1 or as a member of the Consultation Group\* or in the subsequent issue of a Commencement Notice\* or some other administrative or procedural matter under the Incapacity Procedure is unable for any reason to do so, then, unless the Incapacity Procedure already makes specific provision for such a situation, that person's duly appointed deputy shall take such action in his/her place. This paragraph does not permit any member of a Review Commission or an Appeals Review Commission to appoint his/her own deputy.
- A.6 In any case where the Secretary of the Review Commission or the General Secretary in the case of appeals) is unable for any reason to carry out the duties of that office, his/her place shall be taken by a deputy duly authorised by or in the name of the General Assembly.
- A.7.1 Any Minister coming within the Incapacity Procedure shall be entitled to appoint another person to act as the Minister's Representative\* in receiving and responding to any forms, letters or other documents, in dealing with any other procedural matters and in attending any meeting or Hearing\*, with or without the Minister.
- A.7.2 In the case of any Minister who, by reason of his/her incapacity, may be incapable of understanding the implications of his/her involvement in the Incapacity Procedure or the nature and substance of the Commencement Notice\*, or of dealing with any procedural issues or of taking any active part in any meetings or at any Hearings, the Review Commission, or the Appeals Review Commission, as the case may be, may, in response to an application made on the Minister's behalf, agree to the appointment of an appropriate person to act as the Minister's representative for the purposes set out in Paragraph A.7.1.
- A.7.3 In the case of a Minister coming within Paragraph A.7.2 on whose behalf no such application is made under that Paragraph, the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission may invite the PRWC\* to advise whether such an appointment would be appropriate in the Minister's best interests and, if so, to recommend a person for appointment and may thereupon appoint the person so recommended as the Minister's representative for the purposes set out in Paragraph A.7.1.
- A.7.4 In the event that the PRWC for whatever reason does not respond to the invitation contained in Paragraph A.7.3, the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission may, following consultation with the Moderator of the Synod\*, itself appoint a person as the Minister's representative for the purposes of Paragraph A.7.1.

- A.8 The Church recognises that, from time to time, cases falling within the Incapacity Procedure may attract the attention of the national or local press and other media organisations and authorises Synod Moderators, Assembly Officers and the Secretary of the Review Commission to supply to the Press Officer\* such information as s/he may reasonably require to deal with all press/media enquiries in a tactful and discreet manner so as to protect the interests of the Church, the Minister and all others involved in the case. This paragraph is intended to take effect independently of and in addition to those paragraphs throughout this Part II under which the Press Officer has been identified as one of the persons to whom specific information is given at various points in the Procedure.

## **B. Initiation of the Incapacity Procedure**

- B.1. B.1.1 If at any time the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary believes that a particular Minister may be incapable of exercising (or of continuing to exercise) his/her Ministry on any of the grounds specified in Paragraph 1 of Part I, s/he shall consult with the other of them and with the Convener of the PRWC and those persons ('the Consultation Group\*') shall together consider whether the Incapacity Procedure should be initiated.
- B.1.2 The Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary may, if s/he considers that there are strong and urgent reasons for so doing, and only so long as s/he forthwith invokes the consultation procedure set out in Paragraphs B.1.1 and B.2, suspend\* the Minister with immediate effect, either orally or in writing. Suspension\* imposed orally shall be immediately confirmed in writing to the Minister. As to the contents of the Notice of Suspension, see Paragraph E.6.
- B.1.3 The person issuing the suspension under Paragraph B.1.2 shall forthwith (i) give written notice of the Minister's Suspension to the Moderator of the Synod (if s/he is not the person issuing the suspension), the Synod Clerk, the General Secretary, the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries and the Convener of the PRWC, and (ii) make a written disclosure of the Minister's Suspension to the responsible officer of any relevant Outside Organisation\* (as defined in Paragraph A.1). The Notice shall stress to all the recipients the sensitive nature of the information imparted and the need to exercise care and discretion as to how it is used. In order to preserve confidentiality any notice or disclosure given under this Paragraph shall not disclose any reason for the imposition of the Suspension. However, any such notice or disclosure shall contain a statement explaining the effect of Suspension as outlined in either Paragraph 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union or the fourth paragraph of Part II of Schedule F to the Basis of Union whichever is relevant and shall (if such be the case) state that the Police have been apprised of the matter giving rise to the Suspension.
- B.2. As part of that consultation they must satisfy themselves as to the following matters:-
- B.2.1 that all reasonable steps to rehabilitate the Minister have been made; and
- B.2.2 that the procedures for ill health retirement do not apply or that there is no reasonable prospect of their implementation or of the resignation of the Minister; and
- B.2.3 that, if the PRWC has already been involved, that Committee believes that it can do no more for the Minister; and

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- B.2.4 that no case against the Minister is already in progress under the Disciplinary Process.
- B.3. If, having so consulted, the Consultation Group believes, unanimously or by a majority, that the Incapacity Procedure should be initiated, the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary shall forthwith send or deliver to the Secretary of the Review Commission\* a Commencement Notice in order to initiate the Incapacity Procedure, setting out the reasons for the issue of such notice and at the same time inform the Minister that this step has been taken. As to the procedures to be followed regarding suspension, see Section E of this Part II.
- B.4. In the event that the Consultation Group decides that a Commencement Notice should not be issued, the suspension shall immediately be terminated and written confirmation thereof sent by the Moderator of the Synod or Deputy General Secretary as the case may be to the recipients of the Notice of Suspension under Paragraph B.1.3(i) and to any Outside Organisation to whom a written disclosure was made under Paragraph B.1.3(ii).
- B.5. On the initiation of the Incapacity Procedure the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary shall put in train appropriate procedures to ensure pastoral care for the Minister, his/her family and the local church(es) involved.
- B.6. Should the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary receive in accordance with the provisions applicable to the Disciplinary Process a recommendation falling within Paragraph 4 of Part I, s/he shall forthwith invoke the consultation procedure set out in Paragraph B.1 and B.2 and, unless the Consultation Group considers, either unanimously or by a majority, that there are compelling reasons to the contrary, the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary receiving the said recommendation shall forthwith initiate the Incapacity Procedure in accordance with Paragraph B.3 and shall attach to the Commencement Notice a copy of such recommendation. S/he shall send a copy of the Commencement Notice to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission\* or the Appeals Commission\* as the case may be to enable that commission to make a final order declaring the proceedings under the Disciplinary Process to be concluded.

### **C. Standing Panel**

- C.1 Appointment to the Standing Panel shall be by resolution of General Assembly on the advice of the Nominations Committee, who shall in considering persons for appointment select one person from each of the following categories, namely (i) a former moderator of General Assembly (who shall also have the responsibility of consulting with the officers of the General Assembly for the purposes set out in Paragraph D.4.1, (ii) a Synod Moderator or a minister in local pastoral charge or a CRCW serving in a local situation, (iii) a doctor with experience of general medical practice and (iv) a person with some legal, tribunal or professional experience or other similar background (see also Paragraph D.6.1).
- C.2 Subject to the age limit imposed by Paragraph C.3, members of the Standing Panel shall be appointed for a term not exceeding five years as the General Assembly shall in each case think fit with power to the General Assembly to determine any such appointment during its term or to renew any such appointment for successive terms not exceeding five years each.
- C.3 When any member of the Standing Panel reaches the age of seventy, s/he must forthwith resign from the Standing Panel and shall no longer be eligible to serve on any new Review Commission, but any person who reaches his/her seventieth birthday whilst serving on a Review Commission in a case in progress may continue so to serve until the conclusion of that case.



## **D. Review Commission**

- D.1 No person shall sit as a member of the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission in the hearing of any case in which s/he has any involvement whether as a member of any local Church or Synod connected with the case or whether on account of some personal or pastoral involvement as a result of which it is considered by the officers of General Assembly or by the proposed person him/herself that it would not be appropriate for him/her to take part in the hearing of the case.
- D.2 A Secretary shall be appointed by resolution of General Assembly, on the advice of the Nominations Committee, to be responsible for all secretarial and procedural matters laid upon him/her by the Incapacity Procedure, including the servicing of the Review Commission, and the period and terms of office shall be such as General Assembly shall decide.
- D.3 On receipt of a Commencement Notice, the Secretary shall forthwith take the following steps (marking every envelope containing papers despatched in connection with the Incapacity Procedure with the words 'Private and Confidential'):
- D.3.1 Acknowledge receipt of such Notice and
- D.3.2 Send to the Minister copies of the Commencement Notice and any supporting documentation, together with a Notice giving the Minister the opportunity to submit a written response within a period of one month from the date of the Commencement Notice and
- D.3.3 Send to each member of the Standing Panel a copy of the Commencement Notice and any supporting documentation, together with a Notice drawing attention to Paragraph D.4 and requesting confirmation that the addressee is unaware of any circumstances which in the present case might prevent him/her from serving on the Review Commission.
- D.4.1 The member of the Standing Panel in the first category mentioned in Paragraph C.1 (or the member in the second, third or fourth categories (in that order) if the member(s) in the preceding category(ies) is/are unable to participate in the particular case) shall forthwith consult with the officers of General Assembly and jointly with them appoint as the fifth member of the Review Commission a person (not already a member of the Standing Panel) chosen on account of particular expertise or experience in the subject matter of the case, ascertaining through the procedures set out above that no conflict of interest or other reason would prevent such person from serving upon the Review Commission.
- D.4.2 In the event that any member of the Standing Panel shall be unable to take part in the particular case, the Secretary shall invite the officers of General Assembly to appoint another person as his/her replacement on the Review Commission, making every effort to appoint someone with similar experience/expertise.
- D.5 When the identity of all five members of the Review Commission has been provisionally ascertained, the Secretary shall notify the Minister or the Minister's representative in writing thereof and invite him/her to state within 14 days of receipt of the Notice whether s/he has any objection to any of the persons serving upon the Review Commission and, if so, the grounds for such objection. Any such objection shall be considered by the officers of General Assembly, whose decision on whether to uphold or reject the objection shall be final.
- D.6.1 The Review Commission shall appoint its own convener who shall be a member of the Church and who shall normally be the person appointed to the Standing

Panel by virtue of his/her legal, tribunal or professional experience or other similar background under Paragraph C.1(iv).

- D.6.2 The Convener of the Review Commission shall not have a casting vote, unless the Review Commission shall in circumstances arising under Paragraph D.7.1 consist of an even number of members.
- D.7.1 In the event that any member of the Review Commission shall be unable to carry out his/her duties on that Commission, the remaining members shall continue to act as the Review Commission, subject to there being a minimum of three members.
- D.7.2 Once a Review Commission has been duly constituted and has taken any steps to investigate the case, no person shall subsequently be appointed to serve on that Review Commission.
- D.7.3 In the event that the Review Commission shall be reduced to fewer than three members at any time after it has taken any steps to investigate the case under the Incapacity Procedure, that Review Commission shall stand down and be discharged and a new Review Commission shall be appointed under this Section D which shall have access to all information (including documentation available to the former Review Commission).
- D.7.4 If the Convener of the Review Commission is unable to continue to serve for the reason stated in Paragraph D.1, the remaining members shall appoint one of their number to be the Convener in his/her place.

### **E. Suspension**

- E.1 If the Minister has already been suspended before the case has come into the Procedure, the Review Commission must, as soon as it has been constituted, decide whether the suspension should be continued or lifted, and inform all those concerned.
- E.2 If the Minister has not already been suspended, the Review Commission may, either immediately upon its appointment or at any time during the continuance of the case, resolve that the Minister be suspended.
- E.3 Any suspension, whenever imposed, may be lifted by the Review Commission at any time during the continuance of the case.
- E.4 The Secretary of the Review Commission shall forthwith (i) give written notice of any decision regarding Suspension made by the Review Commission under Paragraph E.1, E.2 or E.3 to the Minister, the General Secretary, the Synod Moderator, the Synod Clerk, the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries, the Convener of the PRWC (and the Deputy General Secretary if s/he issued the Commencement Notice under Paragraph B.3) and (ii) make a written disclosure of the Minister's Suspension to the responsible officer of any relevant Outside Organisation, unless notice thereof has already been given to that Outside Organisation under Paragraph B.1.3. The Notice shall stress to all the recipients the sensitive nature of the information imparted and the need to exercise care and discretion as to how it is used. In order to preserve confidentiality any notice or disclosure given under this Paragraph shall not disclose any reason for the imposition of the Suspension. However, any such notice or disclosure shall contain a statement explaining the effect of Suspension as outlined in either Paragraph 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union or the fourth paragraph of Part II of Schedule F to the Basis of Union whichever is relevant and shall (if such be the case) state that the Police have been apprised of the matter giving rise to the Suspension.

- E.5 An existing suspension continued under Paragraph E.1 or a new suspension under Paragraph E.2 shall remain in force until either:-
- E.5.1 the Review Commission makes a subsequent decision relative to that suspension or
- E.5.2 the Review Commission reaches a decision under Paragraph K.4.2 that the name of the Minister be retained on the Roll of Ministers\*, in which case the suspension automatically ceases on the date upon which that decision is formally notified to the Minister or
- E.5.3 the Review Commission reaches a decision under Paragraph K.4.3 that the name of the Minister be deleted from the Roll of Ministers, there being no appeal within the period allowed, in which case the suspension shall continue up to the date of deletion (i.e. the date of expiry of such period under Paragraph K.4.3) or
- E.5.4 there is an appeal against the decision of the Review Commission, in which case the suspension shall continue throughout the appeal proceedings and automatically cease on the date of the formal notification of the Appeals Review Commission's decision to the Minister (whether this be that his/her name be retained on or deleted from the Roll of Ministers, in the latter case the termination of the suspension coinciding with the deletion).
- E.6 The Notice of Suspension, whether issued under Paragraph B.1.2 or Paragraph E.4, shall inform the Minister that any conduct on his/her part during such Suspension which breaches or contravenes either Paragraph 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union or the fourth paragraph of Part II of Schedule F to the Basis of Union whichever is relevant may be taken into account by the Review Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Review Commission in reaching its decision under Section F or Section G as the case may be.
- E.7 For the avoidance of doubt, in the case of a suspension first imposed under the Disciplinary Process upon a Minister who then enters the Incapacity Procedure through the issue of a Commencement Notice, the provisions of the Incapacity Procedure, and not those of the Disciplinary Process, shall thereafter govern all aspects of that suspension. Conversely, in the case of a suspension first imposed hereunder upon a Minister who then enters the Disciplinary Process as a result of the steps set out in Section H, the provisions of that Process shall thereafter govern all aspects of that suspension.

## **F. Initial Review**

- F.1 The members of the Review Commission shall consult together as soon as possible to consider the information laid before them and to agree upon the course which their enquiry\* should take (as to which, see Section G below).
- F.2 At the outset the Review Commission will need to address the following questions:
- F.2.1 Have all the steps outlined at Paragraphs B.1 and B.2 been taken?
- F.2.2 How has the Minister responded, if at all, to the issues raised in the Commencement Notice, particularly those relating to his/her conduct and/or behaviour or to any other concerns and/or problems expressed about his/her ministry and will it be necessary to meet with other persons with knowledge of any relevant events or circumstances to test the accuracy and weight of these matters and their importance to the enquiry?

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- F.2.3 Should an early meeting with the Minister be sought or should this be deferred pending further enquiry?
- F.2.4 Is specialist advice and guidance relevant as to the question of whether, based on the criteria set out in Part I, Paragraphs 1 and 5, the Minister is or is not capable of exercising, or of continuing to exercise, ministry? If so, what steps should be taken to ensure that such advice and guidance are available for consideration by the Review Commission?
- F.2.5 Are there any special factors in the particular case which should be taken into account at this stage? This is particularly relevant in cases coming into the Procedure following a recommendation from the Disciplinary Process.
- F.3 Having carried out its initial review and agreed on its modus operandi, the Review Commission will move into the enquiry stage of its proceedings.

### **G. Conduct of enquiry**

- G.1 The Review Commission shall have control of all procedural matters, including the gathering of information and any issues relating to the Minister's suspension. The Review Commission shall also have discretion as regards the extent to which written statements, reports, videos, recorded interviews and other recordings and transcripts may be taken into account.
- G.2 The members of the Review Commission will need to pay constant attention to all the issues referred to in Paragraph F.2 and any other factors present throughout the whole progress of the case.
- G.3 Where cases come into the Procedure following a recommendation from the Disciplinary Process, information may already have been considered within that Process. However, the Review Commission must always carry out its own enquiry and cannot rely upon such information simply because it was presented and considered within the Disciplinary Process.
- G.4 In the light of Paragraph 1 of Part I the Review Commission should, as early as possible in its investigation and wherever possible or practicable, take the following steps:
- G.4.1 meet with the Minister or, if circumstances render this impossible or impracticable, with the Minister's representative, either or whom may, if s/he wishes, have a friend present with him/her and
- G.4.2 seek the written permission of the Minister or his/her representative (but only so far as the latter has the authority in law to grant such permission on behalf of the Minister) to apply for copies of all the Minister's medical notes, records and reports from his/her General Practitioner and copies of the reports from any specialist who may have examined or been consulted by the Minister.
- G.5 If the Review Commission is unable to follow the steps outlined in Paragraph G.4 in any given case, it will need to consider the underlying reasons very carefully and be prepared to proceed with its enquiry in the light of the best information available.
- G.6 As envisaged in Paragraph F.2.2, the Review Commission may also meet with other persons during the course of its enquiry and should inform each such person that s/he may be called later to give evidence and answer questions at a Hearing with the Minister present. If any such person refuses or expresses

an unwillingness to attend any Hearing in person, the Review Commission may invoke the provisions of Paragraph G.1.

- G.7 The Review Commission shall be entitled to call for and consider all minutes of meetings, correspondence, notes, reports and documents which it considers appropriate to its enquiry. This provision shall not apply where those from whom such documentation is requested can show that it is protected by confidentiality, but instead they would be asked to supply a written report which would also be available to the Minister.
- G.8 Should the Review Commission consider that at any time the Minister might, whether or not deliberately, be in danger of infringing any of Paragraphs K.1.5/8, it shall, wherever practicable, draw this to the attention of the Minister or his/her representative.

## **H. Recommendation for referral to the Disciplinary Process**

- H.1 If it considers that, in a case within the Incapacity Procedure, the circumstances relating to the Minister may fall within the ambit of Paragraph 1 of Part I of the Disciplinary Process, the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission may, at any time during the Incapacity Procedure and whether or not a Hearing has taken place, adopt the following procedure:
- H.2 It shall instruct the Secretary of the Review Commission or the General Secretary as the case may be to inform the Minister by written notice of its intention to refer the case back to the person who initiated the consultation under Paragraph B.1 with the recommendation that the Disciplinary Process should be commenced in respect of the Minister, stating its reasons for such recommendation. This Notice shall inform the Minister that if s/he is dissatisfied with this proposed reference back s/he may within a period of twentyone days from the receipt of the said Notice give written notice to the Secretary of the Review Commission (or the General Secretary if the reference back is proposed by the Appeals Review Commission) of his/her intention to appeal against the proposed reference back. If at the end of the period no such notice of intention to appeal has been received then the procedure set out in Paragraphs H.14 and H.17 shall be followed.
- H.3 In the event of such appeal, the Secretary of the Review Commission or the General Secretary as the case may be shall request the Officers of the General Assembly to appoint a Special Appeals Body of three persons to hear the appeal against the proposed referral, whereupon the said Assembly officers shall within fourteen days (or such further time as they may reasonably require) appoint the Special Appeals Body, which shall in turn appoint its own Convener.
- H.4 In making such appointment the Assembly officers shall have full regard to the safeguards and the criteria for appointment contained in Paragraphs D.1, L.3.2/4, L.4, L.5 and L.6 (with the necessary changes).
- H.5 The Assembly officers shall also appoint a person to act as the secretary of the Special Appeals Body for the hearing of the appeal.
- H.6 The Special Appeals Body shall consider the recommendation of the Review Commission/Appeals Review Commission and any representations made by the Minister in response thereto and any other papers relevant to the issue of the proposed reference back and shall invite the Minister by written notice to submit any further written representations within a period of twentyone days from the date of receipt of the said Notice.

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- H.7 Whether or not the Minister submits further representations under Paragraph H.6, the Special Appeals Body may meet with the Minister or, if circumstances render this impossible or impracticable, with the Minister's representative, either of whom may, if s/he wishes, have a friend present with him/her and, if the Minister does submit representations under that paragraph, the Special Appeals Body should normally meet with the Minister unless there are strong reasons for not doing so.
- H.8 The Special Appeals Body shall invite the PRWC to comment on the appeal and shall have regard to any representations by it.
- H.9 Unless the Minister makes a request for a formal hearing or the Special Appeals Body of itself decides to convene one (in which case the provisions of Section L shall apply (with the necessary changes)), the Special Appeals Body shall decide the matter having had regard to the written material referred to in Paragraph H.6, any representations made by the Minister or the PRWC and any meetings held under Paragraph H.7.
- H.10 In the event that a formal hearing does take place, the Rules applicable thereto shall, so far as possible, accord with the Rules set out in Section J for the conduct of hearings before the Review Commission.
- H.11 In recording its decision, the Special Appeals Body shall append a statement of its reasons for reaching its decision and, if the decision is to reject the appeal, it may indicate what papers, if any, should be passed with the notice of the decision to the person to whom the reference back will be made.
- H.12 As soon as the Special Appeals Body has reached its decision, the Secretary of that body shall give written notice thereof, and of any reasons appended to the decision, to the Secretary of the Review Commission or the General Secretary as the case may be, who shall in turn inform the members of the Review Commission/Appeals Review Commission thereof.
- H.13 If the decision of the Special Appeals Body is to allow the appeal and to reject the proposed reference back, the Incapacity Procedure shall immediately be resumed and the Secretary of the Review Commission/General Secretary shall send to the Minister a notice advising him/her of that fact and a copy of the notice of the decision and the statement of reasons appended to the decision.
- H.14 If the decision of the Special Appeals Body is to reject the appeal and to uphold the decision to refer the case back to the person who initiated the consultation under Paragraph B.1 with the recommendation that the Disciplinary Process should be commenced in respect of the Minister, or if there is no appeal against the reference back, the Incapacity Procedure shall stand adjourned pending the outcome of that recommendation and the Secretary of the Review Commission/General Secretary shall send to the Minister (i) a notice advising him/her of that fact, (ii) a copy of the notice of the decision and the statement of reasons appended to the decision, (iii) a copy of the Notice to the person who initiated the consultation procedure under Paragraph B.1 (see Paragraph H.17) and (iv) copies of any papers being sent with the last mentioned Notice in accordance with Paragraph H.11.
- H.15 Once the decision of the Special Appeals Body has been made and the requirements of Paragraph H.11 have been duly complied with, the roles of the Special Appeals Body and of its secretary are concluded and they have no further part to play in the case.

- H.16 The decision of the Special Appeals Body on the matter of the proposed reference back is final and binding.
- H.17 If the decision is to reject the appeal and uphold the reference back, or if there is no appeal against the reference back, the Secretary of the Review Commission/General Secretary shall forthwith send or deliver to the person who initiated the consultation procedure under Paragraph B.1 (i) a written notice setting out the decision of the Special Appeals Body on the appeal, signed by the Convener and incorporating both the recommendation and a statement of the reasons given for making the recommendation and (ii) such other papers (if any) as are referred to in Paragraph H.11.
- H.18 That Notice shall state that the proceedings under the Incapacity Procedure shall stand adjourned to await the recipient's response and shall also state the time, which shall be not be longer than twentyone days, within which the recipient must notify the Secretary of the Review Commission/General Secretary in writing whether the recommendation contained in the Notice has been accepted or rejected.
- H.19 The Secretary of the Review Commission/General Secretary shall at the same time send copies of the said Notice (but not the accompanying documentation) to the Moderator of the Synod (in any case where s/he is not already the recipient of the Notice under Paragraph H.17), the Synod Clerk, the General Secretary, the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries and the Convener of the PRWC.
- H.20 If written confirmation is received from the recipient of the Notice, countersigned by the Secretary of the Assembly Commission who operates within the Disciplinary Process, that the recommendation contained in the Notice has been accepted and that the Disciplinary Process has been initiated in respect of the Minister, the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission as the case may be shall declare the case within the Incapacity Procedure to be concluded and no further action shall be taken in respect thereof.
- H.21 The Secretary of the Review Commission/General Secretary shall give written notice to this effect to the Minister and the persons specified in Paragraph H.19 above, and also the responsible officer of any Outside Organisation to whom notice of the Incapacity Procedure has already been given.
- H.22 If written notification is received from the recipient of the Notice that the aforesaid recommendation has been rejected, the case shall forthwith be resumed within the Incapacity Procedure. The Secretary shall give notice to this effect to the Minister and the persons specified in Paragraph H.19.
- H.23 No recommendation for referral to the Disciplinary Process shall be made in any case which enters the Incapacity Procedure as a result of a recommendation from the Disciplinary Process.
- H.24 As to the position regarding the suspension of a Minister to whom this Section H applies, see Paragraph E.6.
- H.25 For the avoidance of doubt, decisions taken by the Special Appeals Body under the provisions of this Section H are not subject to the requirement to report to General Assembly contained in Section N of this Part II.

*For the avoidance of confusion, there is no Section I.*

### **J. Hearings**

- J.1 The Review Commission shall decide when it is appropriate for a Hearing to take place and whom it requires to attend, whereupon the Secretary shall consult with the Convener, the other members of the Review Commission, the Minister and any other such persons as might be required to attend as to the venue, date and time for the Hearing and, when these are fixed, shall give written notification thereof to all concerned with the request that they confirm their intention to attend and, in the case of the Minister, state whether it is his/her intention to have a person to accompany him/her.
- J.2 The Hearing shall be conducted in private and only the following persons shall be permitted to attend:
- The members of the Review Commission
  - The Secretary or a duly appointed Deputy
  - The Minister
  - A person chosen by the Minister to accompany him/her
  - Any medical, specialist, expert or other witnesses, but only while giving evidence, unless the Review Commission otherwise directs
  - Any persons notified by the Secretary of the Review Commission under Paragraph J.1 that they are required to attend (and see Paragraph J.5)
  - Any persons whom the Minister intends to call as a witness, the Minister having already given prior written notice to the Secretary of the Review Commission of his/her intention so to do (and see Paragraph J.5)
  - A representative of the Church's Legal Advisers, if requested to attend by the Review Commission.
  - Any person responsible for operating the recording equipment or otherwise preparing a verbatim report of the proceedings referred to in Paragraph J.9.
  - Any other persons at the discretion and by the direction of the Review Commission (and see Paragraph J.5)
- J.3 Subject to ensuring that the rules of natural justice are observed, the Convener should ensure that the proceedings are as relaxed and informal as possible.
- J.4.1 All witnesses called by the Review Commission to give evidence shall be subject to questioning by the Convener (and by other members of the Review Commission with the Convener's permission). The Minister shall be entitled to ask questions of such witnesses.
- J.4.2 When the process described in Paragraph J.4.1 has been completed, the Minister or his/her representative may invite witnesses called by him/her to give evidence and may question them, as may the Convener and other members of the Review Commission with the Convener's permission.
- J.5 Unless the Review Commission directs otherwise, witnesses shall only be present while giving evidence.
- J.6 When all the witnesses have given evidence, the Minister or the Minister's representative may if s/he wishes address the Review Commission.
- J.7 In the special circumstances of any case the Convener may, if s/he considers it appropriate and helpful, vary any of the above procedures at his/her discretion.
- J.8 In considering the evidence and information before it, the Review Commission shall apply a standard of proof on the balance of probability.



- J.9 The Secretary of the Review Commission shall prepare a summary minute of the proceedings at the Hearing ('the Secretary's Minute\*'). Where possible, a verbatim record of the proceedings shall also be made by electronic recording, or by such other means as shall be directed by the Convener. The Record of the Hearing\* shall consist of the Secretary's Minute together with any such verbatim record, which shall be transcribed in the event of an appeal.
- J.10 At the conclusion of the Hearing the members of the Review Commission will wish to deliberate upon their final decision, together with any guidance and/or recommendation(s) which they may wish to append to their decision. The Convener will inform those present that the decision will not be made that day but that written notification of the decision will be given within ten days to the Minister, the General Secretary, the Synod Moderator, the Synod Clerk, the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries, the Convener of the PRWC, the responsible officer of any relevant Outside Organisation (and the Deputy General Secretary if s/he issued the Commencement Notice in accordance with Paragraph B.1). The Hearing is thus concluded.

## **K. Review Commission's decision and its notification**

- K.1 Following the conclusion of the Hearing, the Review Commission shall, all meeting and deliberating together, but in the absence of the Minister and all other persons, consider all the information concerning the Minister which has been before them during the case for the purpose of reaching a decision in accordance with Paragraph K.2. In particular they must make a careful and detailed appraisal of all of the following:
- K.1.1 the circumstances which have led up to the commencement of the case as indicated in the Commencement Notice and
  - K.1.2 any expert opinion of a medical, psychological or similar or related nature in respect of the Minister which has been sought by the Review Commission or which has in any way been presented to it during the case and
  - K.1.3 information supplied by the Minister and others within the Procedure, whether or not on the Minister's behalf and
  - K.1.4 reports and other documentation requested by the Review Commission from other persons or bodies within or outside the Church with whom the Minister, through the exercise of his/her ministry, might have had a particular involvement, such as ecumenical posts, chaplaincies or positions within public bodies and
  - K.1.5 Any obstruction or unreasonable delay on the Minister's part in complying with the procedural steps prior to the Hearing and
  - K.1.6 The failure by the Minister to attend at any meeting or at the Hearing without satisfactory explanation and
  - K.1.7 Any obstruction caused by the Minister or the Minister's Representative to the Review Commission in the conduct of any such meeting or the Hearing itself and
  - K.1.8 Any conduct on the part of the Minister during his/her Suspension under the Incapacity Procedure which breaches or contravenes either Paragraph 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union or the fourth paragraph of Part II of Schedule F to the Basis of Union whichever is relevant and

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- K.1.9 all other factors properly coming within the scope of the review being undertaken by the Review Commission and
- K.1.10 the weight to be attached to each of the factors in the case as indicated above, bearing in mind the manner in which the information was provided and, where appropriate, whether the Minister or his/her representative had the opportunity of challenging or commenting upon it.
- K.2 The purpose of the deliberation referred to in Paragraph K.1 is to enable the Review Commission to reach (either unanimously or by a majority) a decision in accordance with Part 1 Paragraph 5 as to whether, having full regard to the Basis of Union and in particular Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto or the second paragraph of Part II of Schedule F thereto whichever is relevant, the name of the Minister in the particular case should remain upon, or be deleted from, the Roll of Ministers.
- K.3 The Review Commission shall record its decision (the Decision Record\*) and, in doing so, shall state whether it was reached unanimously or by a majority and shall append a statement of its reasons (the Statement of Reasons\*) for the decision, but shall not be obliged, unless it wishes to do so, to comment in detail on any of the matters considered by it.
- K.4.1 The decision so taken shall conclude the involvement of the Review Commission in the Procedure except as to the discharge of its responsibilities under Paragraph N.2 and shall have the effect provided for in Paragraph K.4.2 or Paragraph K.4.3, whichever is applicable.
- K.4.2 If the Review Commission/Appeals Review Commission decides to retain the Minister's name on the Roll of Ministers, his/her status is unchanged.
- K.4.3 If the Review Commission decides to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll of Ministers, no appeal having been lodged by or on behalf of the Minister within the period specified in the notification referred to in Paragraph K.8.1, deletion shall take effect on the date of expiry of such period.
- K.5.1 Every decision reached under the Incapacity Procedure (whether or not on appeal) is made in the name of the General Assembly and is final and binding on the Minister and on all the Councils of the Church.
- K.5.2 If the decision is that the name of the Minister shall remain on the Roll of Ministers, the Review Commission may in its Decision Record (see Paragraph K.6) append such recommendations to its decision as it considers will be helpful to moderators of synod, synods, local churches, the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary, the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries, the PRWC and others within the Church and also to any relevant Outside Organisation. It is emphasised that any such recommendations must relate to the future ministry of the Minister only and that they are of an advisory nature and do not form part of the decision.
- K.5.3 If the decision is to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll of Ministers, the Review Commission is particularly requested to include appropriate guidance concerning any restrictions which it considers ought to be placed upon any activities involving the Minister after his/her deletion with the object of assisting moderators of synod, synods, local churches, the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary, the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries, the PRWC and others within the Church and also any relevant Outside Organisation. It is emphasised that any such guidance is of an advisory nature and does not form part of the decision.

- K.6 Within ten days of the date of the Review Commission's decision the Secretary shall send or deliver to the Minister or the Minister's representative written notification of the decision and copies of the Decision Record, the Statement of Reasons and any recommendations or guidance issued with the Decision Record.
- K.7 Where the decision is that the Minister's name be retained on the Roll of Ministers, the Secretary shall at the same time send or deliver notice of that fact and of the consequent termination of the Minister's Suspension under Paragraph E.5.2 to the General Secretary, the Moderator of the Synod, the Synod Clerk, the Deputy General Secretary (but only if s/he issued the Commencement Notice), the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries, the Convener of the PRWC and the responsible officer of any relevant Outside Organisation and shall at the same time send to those persons copies of the Decision Record and the Statement of Reasons and any recommendations appended to the Decision (as regards any Outside Organisation, only those recommendations which it expressly states to be its wish that such be passed on to that Outside Organisation) and sent to the Minister in accordance with Paragraph K.6, stressing to all the recipients the sensitive nature of the information imparted and the need to exercise care and discretion as to how it is used.
- K.8 Where the decision is that the Minister's name be deleted from the Roll of Ministers, then:
- K.8.1 The written notification shall draw the Minister's attention to his/her right of appeal and specify the precise date by which notice of appeal must be lodged by the Minister with the Secretary.
- K.8.2 The Secretary shall, at the same time as taking the action required under Paragraph K.6, send to the General Secretary, the Moderator of the Synod, the Synod Clerk, the Deputy General Secretary (but only if s/he issued the Commencement Notice), the Press Officer, the Secretary of the Ministries Committee and the Convener of the PRWC a Notice to the effect that a decision has been made by the Review Commission that the Minister's name be deleted from the Roll of Ministers. Such Notice shall not contain any further information other than that the decision is still subject to appeal and that a further Notice will be sent when it is known whether there is to be an appeal or not. The Notice shall stress to all the recipients the sensitive nature of the information imparted and the need to exercise care and discretion as to how it is used.
- K.8.3 If by the date specified in the written notification to the Minister under Paragraph K.6 as the final date for the lodging of an appeal no appeal has been lodged by the Minister, the Secretary of the Review Commission shall send or deliver notice of the Minister's Deletion and of the consequent termination of the Minister's Suspension under Paragraph E.5.3 to the General Secretary, the Moderator of the Synod, the Synod Clerk, the Deputy General Secretary (but only if s/he issued the Commencement Notice), the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries, the Convener of the PRWC and the responsible officer of any relevant Outside Organisation and shall at the same time send to those persons copies of the Decision Record and the Statement of Reasons and any guidance appended to the Decision and sent to the Minister in accordance with Paragraph K.6 (as regards any Outside Organisation, only such guidance as it expressly states to be its wish to be passed on to that Outside Organisation), stressing to all the recipients the sensitive nature of the information imparted and the need to exercise care and discretion as to how it is used.
- K.8.4 If the Minister lodges a Notice of Appeal\*, the procedure set out in Section L applies.

### **L. Appeals Procedure**

- L.1.1 Should the Minister wish to appeal against the decision of the Review Commission to delete his/her name from the Roll of Ministers, s/he or his/her representative must lodge written notice of such Appeal with the Secretary of the Review Commission within 21 days of receipt by the Minister of the written notification of the decision under Paragraph K.6 (which shall set out the grounds of the appeal either in detail or in summary form as the Minister chooses).
- L.1.2 The Secretary of the Review Commission shall forthwith notify the General Secretary that an Appeal has been lodged, at the same time passing on to the General Secretary the Notice of Appeal together with the body of papers laid before the Review Commission in hearing the case and the Record of the Hearing as defined in Paragraph J.9. The General Secretary shall thereupon act in a secretarial and administrative capacity in all matters relating to the Appeal.
- L.1.3 At the same time the Secretary of the Review Commission shall also notify the Moderator of the Synod, the Synod Clerk, the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries, the Convener of the PRWC and the responsible officer of any relevant Outside Organisation (and the Deputy General Secretary if s/he issued the Commencement Notice in accordance with Paragraph B.3) that the Minister has lodged an Appeal against the decision of the Review Commission. The Notice shall stress to all the recipients the sensitive nature of the information imparted and the need to exercise care and discretion as to how it is used.
- L.1.4 A Notice of Appeal which is outside the time limit specified in Paragraph L.1.1 will not normally be accepted. The General Secretary may, however, at his/her discretion accept a Notice of Appeal which is not more than twentyeight days out of time, but only if s/he is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances which would justify the exercise of discretion by the General Secretary to allow the appeal out of time.
- L.1.5 The Rules set out in this Part II as applicable to the Review Commission shall also apply to the Appeals Review Commission (with the necessary changes), except for those which by their context are inappropriate for the Appeals Procedure.
- L.1.6 No-one apart from the Minister shall have a right of appeal against a decision of the Review Commission.
- L.2 On receipt of the Notice of Appeal lodged under Paragraph L.1, the General Secretary shall as soon as possible acknowledge receipt of the Notice of Appeal and send to the Minister a copy of the Record of the Hearing before the Review Commission (see Paragraph J.9).
- L.3.1 The Officers of the General Assembly shall within 14 days of receipt by the General Secretary of the Notice of Appeal under Paragraph L.1.2 (or within such further time as they may reasonably require) appoint the Appeals Review Commission, which shall consist of three persons, in accordance with Paragraphs L.3.2 and L.3.3.
- L.3.2 The three persons to be so appointed shall be (i) a person with some legal, tribunal or other professional experience or other similar background (being a member of the Church but not necessarily a member of General Assembly), who shall normally act as Convener of the Appeals Review Commission, (ii) a former Moderator of the General Assembly and (iii) either a person with general medical experience or one with professional expertise in the condition(s) giving rise to the subject matter of the case (such person not necessarily being a member of the Church).

- L.3.3 In the event that for any reason it is inappropriate for the person in the first category specified in Paragraph L.3.2 to be the Convener of the Appeals review Commission, the convenership shall be assumed by the person in the second category thereof.
- L.3.4 Persons appointed to an Appeals Review Commission are subject to Paragraph D.1.
- L.4.1 The General Secretary shall send or deliver to each of the proposed appointees a written invitation to serve on the Appeals Review Commission for the hearing of the Appeal, naming the Minister concerned but supplying no further information about the case.
- L.4.2 The invitation shall draw the attention of each proposed appointee to Paragraph D.1 and shall request confirmation that s/he is willing to accept appointment and that s/he is unaware of any circumstances which in the present case might prevent him/her from serving on the Appeals Review Commission.
- L.4.3 The Invitee shall within seven days of receipt of the invitation to serve notify the General Secretary in writing whether s/he is able and willing to accept appointment and, if so confirming compliance with Paragraph L.4.1.
- L.5.1 The General Secretary shall notify the Minister or the Minister's representative in writing of the names, addresses and credentials of each proposed appointee, drawing attention to Paragraph D.1 and pointing out that any objection to any of the proposed appointees must be made to the General Secretary in writing within fourteen days, setting out the grounds of such objection.
- L.5.2 To ensure that the appeals process moves along in a timely manner, any such objection received outside the period allowed will not normally be considered unless very good reason can be shown for its late delivery.
- L.5.3 The officers of the General Assembly shall consider every objection properly notified and shall decide whether to uphold or reject it.
- L.5.4 If they reject the objection, the General Secretary shall notify the Minister or the Minister's representative.
- L.5.5 If they uphold the objection, the General Secretary shall give written notification thereof to the Minister or the Minister's representative and to the person to whom the objection has been taken and the above procedure shall be repeated as often as is necessary to complete the appointment of the Appeals Review Commission.
- L.6.1 In the event that any member of the Appeals Review Commission shall be unable to carry out his/her duties on that Commission, the remaining members shall continue to act as the Appeals Review Commission, subject to there being a minimum of two members, in which event, but not otherwise, the Convener shall have a casting vote.
- L.6.2 In the event that, for the reasons stated in Paragraph L.6.1 the Appeals Review Commission shall consist of fewer than two members at any time after that Commission has taken any steps in connection with the Appeal, the Appeals Review Commission so appointed shall stand down and be discharged and a new Appeals Review Commission shall be appointed in accordance with the procedure laid down in this Section L to hear the Appeal.

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- L.6.3 Once the Appeals Review Commission has been validly constituted and has taken any steps in accordance with this Section L, no person shall be subsequently appointed to serve on that Appeals Review Commission.
- L.7 Each member of the Appeals Review Commission when appointed shall receive from the General Secretary copies of the following:
  - L.7.1 The Decision Record and
  - L.7.2 The Statement of Reasons and
  - L.7.3 The Notice of Appeal, setting out the grounds of the appeal and
  - L.7.4 The body of papers considered by the Review Commission and
  - L.7.5 The Record of the Hearing
- L.8 The members of the Appeals Review Commission, when constituted, shall consult together as soon as possible to review the information laid before them and to agree upon the course which their conduct of the appeal shall take, following the procedures set out in Sections F and G (and Section H if they deem it appropriate). In addition, they may, if the circumstances so require, consider any of the following, particularly if any such issues are raised in the Notice of Appeal:
  - L.8.1 Whether there is or may be new information which has come to light and which could not have reasonably been available to the Review Commission before it made its decision under Section K.
  - L.8.2 Whether any such new information would in its opinion have been material in that, had it been tested and proved to the satisfaction of the Review Commission, it might have caused it to reach a different decision.
  - L.8.3 Whether there may have been some procedural irregularity or breach of the rules of natural justice or serious misunderstanding by the Review Commission of the information before it or of any aspect of the Procedure itself.
- L.9.1 Before reaching its decision on the Appeal, there shall be a Hearing before the Appeals Review Commission which the Minister shall normally be expected to attend.
- L.9.2 The General Secretary shall consult with the Convener and the other members of the Appeals Review Commission and, where possible, with the Minister or his/her representative as to a suitable venue, date and time for the Hearing and, having so consulted, shall decide thereupon and shall notify all concerned in writing of the arrangements for the Hearing.
- L.9.3 The General Secretary shall (unless excluded for the reasons specified in Paragraph D.1) attend the Hearing for the purpose of giving such procedural advice to the Appeals Review Commission as may be appropriate and of keeping a formal record of the Hearing. S/he shall not be present when the Appeals Review Commission deliberates and decides on the case.
- L.9.4 If the General Secretary cannot for any reason be present at the Hearing, the Appeals Review Commission shall itself appoint such person as it considers appropriate to deputise for him/her for that purpose, ascertaining beforehand that such person is not excluded for reasons specified in Paragraph D.1. Such person will carry out the duties set out in Paragraph L.9.3 but shall not be present when the Appeals Review Commission deliberates and decides on the case.

- L.9.5 The General Secretary or his/her Deputy appointed under Paragraph L.9.4 shall prepare a summary minute of the proceedings at the Hearing (the Secretary's minute). Where possible, a verbatim record of the proceedings shall also be made by electronic recording or by such other means as shall be directed by the Convener of the Appeals Review Commission. The Record of the Hearing shall consist of the Secretary's minute together with any such verbatim record.
- L.9.6 A representative of the Church's legal advisers may, at the invitation of the Appeals Review Commission, attend the Hearing in order to advise it on matters relating to procedure, evidence and interpretation, but s/he shall not take any part in the decision reached by the Appeals Review Commission, nor shall s/he be present when it deliberates and decides upon the case.
- L.9.7 The conduct of the Hearing of the Appeal is in the hands of the Appeals Review Commission whose Convener will at the outset of the Hearing read out the decision of the Review Commission.
- L.9.8 At some point during the Hearing the Convener will invite the Minister or his/her representative to address the Appeals Review Commission on the subject matter of the Appeal.
- L.10.1 The members of the Appeals Review Commission shall at the conclusion of the Hearing, all meeting and deliberating together but in the absence of the Minister and all other persons consider and arrive at their decision in accordance with Paragraph L.10.2. In so doing they are required to make a careful and detailed appraisal of all the factors set out at Paragraphs K.1.1 to K.1.6 and of all the information, reports, representations and other factors forming the subject matter of the appeal.
- L.10.2 The purpose of their deliberation is to enable them to reach (either unanimously or by a majority vote) a decision in accordance with Paragraph 5 of Part I of the Procedure as to whether, having full regard to the Basis of Union and in particular Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto or the second paragraph of Part II of Schedule F thereto whichever is relevant, the name of the Minister in the particular case should remain upon, or be deleted from, the Roll of Ministers.
- L.10.3 There shall be no appeal from the decision of the Appeals Review Commission which is final and binding on the Minister and on all the Councils of the Church.
- L.11.1 The Appeals Review Commission shall record its decision (the Decision Record) and, in doing so, shall state whether it was reached unanimously or by a majority and whether its decision upholds or reverses the decision of the Review Commission and shall append a statement of its reasons for the decision (the Statement of Reasons), but shall not be obliged, unless it wishes to do so, to comment in detail on any of the matters considered by it.
- L.11.2 The decision so taken shall conclude the involvement of the Appeals Review Commission in the Procedure except as to the discharge of its responsibilities under Paragraph N.2.
- L.11.3 If the decision is that the name of the Minister shall be deleted from the Roll of Ministers, such deletion takes effect with immediate effect.
- L.12 Within ten days of the date of the Appeals Review Commission's decision the General Secretary shall:

- L.12.1 Send or deliver to the Minister or his/her representative written notification of the decision and copies of the Decision Record and the Statement of Reasons and any recommendations or guidance issued with the Decision Record.
- L.12.2 Send or deliver notice of that fact and of the consequent termination of the Minister's Suspension under Paragraph E.5.4 to the General Secretary, the Moderator of the Synod, the Synod Clerk, the Deputy General Secretary (but only if s/he issued the Commencement Notice), the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries, the Convener of the PRWC and the responsible officer of any relevant Outside Organisation and shall at the same time send to those persons copies of the Decision Record and the Statement of Reasons and any recommendations or guidance appended to the Decision and sent to the Minister in accordance with Paragraph L.12.1 (as regards any Outside Organisation, only such recommendations or guidance as it expressly states to be its wish to be passed on to that Outside Organisation), stressing to all the recipients the sensitive nature of the information imparted and the need to exercise care and discretion as to how it is used.

### **M. Forms, sending/delivery of documents and miscellaneous**

- M.1 Model forms have been prepared to assist those concerned with the Procedure. The forms may be amended from time to time and new forms introduced. Use of the model forms is not compulsory and minor variations in the wording will not invalidate them, but it is strongly recommended that the model forms be used and followed as closely as possible to avoid confusion and to ensure that all relevant information is supplied at the proper time.
- M.2 Any form, letter or other document required to be sent or delivered to a person under the Procedure shall be assumed to have been received by that person if sent or delivered in any of the following ways:
- M.2.1 By delivering the same personally to the person concerned or
- M.2.2 By delivering the same or sending it by first class pre-paid post or by Recorded Delivery post addressed to the last known address of the person concerned in a sealed envelope addressed to that person or
- M.2.3 In such other manner as the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission (in the latter case if the sending or delivery relates to the Appeals Procedure) may direct having regard to the circumstances.
- M.3 Any form, letter or document required to be sent or delivered to the Secretary of the Review Commission or on the General Secretary (in the case of an appeal) shall be delivered or sent by first class pre-paid post or by Recorded Delivery post addressed to the Secretary of the Review Commission or the General Secretary as the case may be at the address given in the current issue of the Year Book or subsequently notified or (in the absence of any such address in the Year Book) in an envelope addressed to that person at Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT and marked 'Ministerial Incapacity Process'.
- M.4 All documents required to be served shall be placed in a sealed envelope clearly addressed to the addressee and marked 'Private and Confidential'.



- M.5 Where any form, letter or other document is sent by first class pre-paid post, it shall be assumed to have been received by the recipient on the third day after the posting of the same.
- M.6 Where any issue or question of procedure arises whilst the matter is under the jurisdiction of the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission, that Commission shall resolve each such issue or question or give such directions as shall appear to it to be just and appropriate in the circumstances.
- M.7 Deletion as a result of the Incapacity Procedure shall have the effect of terminating any contract, written or oral, between the Minister and the United Reformed Church or any constituent part thereof in relation to his/her ministry.

## **N. Report to General Assembly, costs and retention of records and papers**

- N.1 The General Secretary shall report to the General Assembly all decisions reached by the Review Commission and the Appeals Review Commission (other than decisions made by the Special Appeals Body under Section H of this Part II) in the following manner:
  - N.1.1 If a decision of the Review Commission to delete the name of a Minister from the Roll of Ministers is subject to appeal, the Report shall simply state that a decision has been reached in a case which is subject to appeal and shall not name the Minister.
  - N.1.2 If a decision of the Review Commission to delete is not subject to appeal, the Report shall so state.
  - N.1.3 If a report has already been made to the General Assembly under Paragraph N.1.1 and the Appeals Review Commission reverses the decision of the Review Commission and allows the name of the Minister to remain on the Roll of Ministers, the General Secretary shall report the decision of the Appeals Review Commission to the next meeting of the General Assembly without naming the Minister.
- N.2 The cost of operating the Incapacity Procedure and the reasonable and proper expenses of persons attending a Hearing and the costs of any reports obtained by or on the authority of the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission or any other costs and expenses which the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission deem to have been reasonably and properly incurred in the course of the Procedure (but excluding any costs of representation) shall be charged to the general funds of the Church, and the Report of each case to the General Assembly shall state the total cost incurred in that case.
- N.3 The Secretary of the Review Commission shall be responsible for the keeping of the record of decisions taken by the Review Commission and by the Appeals Review Commission, and for the custody of all papers relating to concluded cases, which shall be kept in a locked cabinet at Church House.





# Section O Process Part II – Rules of Procedure Section O

## PART II – Rules of Procedure (governed by General Assembly Function 2(6)(A)(xii) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church)

### A. General

A.1 These are the Rules of Procedure referred to in Paragraph 5 of Part I.

A.2 A.2.1 In the interests both of the Minister or CRCW as the case may be and of the whole church, the Section O Process once begun should be conducted and concluded as expeditiously as possible, consistent with the proper conduct of the procedures.

A.2.2 To this end, these Rules impose time limits for the various steps which have to be taken. However it is equally in the interests of all that the Section O Process once begun should not be aborted, delayed or hindered by an unduly narrow or restrictive application of the time limits or indeed of any other aspects of these Rules.

A.3 Accordingly if any of the time limits specified in these Rules of Procedure are not complied with, the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission may in its discretion allow a reasonable further period for such compliance, except as regards the strict time limit imposed upon the right of appeal (Paragraph G.1). In other cases, if the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission considers that sufficient time has been allowed and the action required has still not been carried out or that there has been an unreasonable delay in the carrying out of the action (whether or not these Rules imposed a time limit in such case), it may proceed and attach whatever weight it believes appropriate in the circumstances to such failure to comply, or to any delay in compliance.

A.4 The sole object of the Section O Process is to enable a decision to be reached in accordance with Section F, or Section G in the event of an appeal. All statements, whether written or oral, made during and in the context of this process shall be regarded as being made in pursuance of that object and for no other reason. All such statements shall be treated as confidential within the framework of the Section O Process.

A.5 For the purpose of Parts I and II of this Section O, a reference to any of the Sections A to J shall mean a reference to that Section of this Part II and the following words and expressions carry the following meanings:-

A.5.1 **'Appeals Commission'** shall mean the Commission constituted for the hearing of each Appeal in accordance with Section G.

A.5.2 **'Appointers'** shall mean, for the purposes of the appointment of (i) the Assembly Commission or (ii) the Special Appeal Body, the Convener and the Deputy Convener of the Commission Panel Provided that (i) if either of them shall be unable to act the General Secretary shall substitute for that one and act jointly with the other and (ii) if both shall be unable to act the Appointers shall be the General Secretary and the Moderator of the General Assembly.

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- A.5.3 **'Assembly Commission'** shall mean a Commission consisting of five (5) persons selected from the Commission Panel for the purpose of hearing and deciding each case dealt with under the Section O Process.
- A.5.4 **'Basis of Union'** shall mean the Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church.
- A.5.5 **'Commission Panel'** shall mean a Panel consisting of a maximum of fifty (50) members of the United Reformed Church from whom shall be chosen the persons to form the Assembly Commission to hear each case being dealt with under the Section O Process.
- A.5.6 **'Commission Stage'** shall mean that part of the Section O Process initiated in accordance with Paragraph B.9.1 and continuing until the conclusion of the case.
- A.5.7 **'Council'** shall mean the council of the Church whose Mandated Group is called in to act on its behalf under these Rules of Procedure.
- A.5.8 **'CRCW'** shall mean a person whose name is on the Roll of Church Related Community Workers who is under consideration within the Section O Process (and see also Paragraph A.10).
- A.5.9 **'Deletion'** and **'to delete'** shall mean the removal of/to remove the name of a Minister or a CRCW from the Roll of Ministers or Church Related Community Workers as the case may be other than at the request of the Minister or CRCW concerned or by the acceptance of his/her resignation or by his/her death.
- A.5.10 **'Hearing'** shall mean the Hearing conducted by the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission under Section E or Section G.
- A.5.11 **'Incapacity Procedure'** shall mean the Procedure operated by the United Reformed Church for the purpose of dealing with cases involving the incapacity of Ministers or CRCWs and contained in Section P of the Church's Manual (and for the avoidance of doubt this is the definition referred to in Paragraph 1.3.1 of Part I).
- A.5.12 **'Initial Enquiry'** shall mean the enquiry conducted by the Mandated Group, in conjunction with the person calling in the Mandated Group in accordance with the provisions of Section B, during the period beginning when it is so called in and ending when it serves either a Notice of Non-Continuance or a Referral Notice in accordance with these Rules of Procedure.
- A.5.13 **'Investigation'** shall mean the process of investigation carried out by the Mandated Group as set out in Section D.
- A.5.14 **'Joint Panel'** shall mean the Panel as defined in Paragraph B.2.2 from which one person shall be appointed to be a member of the Mandated Group.
- A.5.15 **'Mandated Group'** shall mean the group mandated to act in the name of a Synod or General Assembly (or Mission Council acting on its behalf) under Section B of these Rules of Procedure.
- A.5.16 **'Minister'** shall mean a person whose name is on the Roll of Ministers who is under consideration within the Section O Process (and see also Paragraph A.10).
- A.5.17 **'Notice of Appeal'** shall mean a Notice specified in Paragraph G.1 whereby either of the parties in any case indicates his/her/its intention to appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission.

A.5.18 **'Notice of Non-Continuance'** shall mean a Notice served under Paragraph B.8.2 at the conclusion of the Initial Enquiry by the Mandated Group on the person calling it in to indicate that the Mandated Group does not intend to proceed further with the disciplinary case against the Minister or CRCW.

A.5.19 **'Notice of Reference back'** shall mean a Notice from the Appeals Commission of any reference back for a re-hearing by the Assembly Commission under Paragraph G.11.7.

A.5.20 **'Outside organisation'** shall mean any body or organisation outside the Church by which the Minister or CRCW is employed or with which the Minister or CRCW holds any position or post or has any involvement, paid or unpaid, where such body or organisation would have a reasonable and proper expectation of being made aware of the particular step(s) being taken and/or the particular recommendation(s) or guidance being issued under the relevant paragraph of these Rules of Procedure in which the reference to the expression 'Outside Organisation' appears.

A.5.21 **'Parties'** shall mean (i) the Council, which for the purpose of the Section O Process shall act solely and exclusively through the Mandated Group, and (ii) the Minister or CRCW.

A.5.22 **'Press Officer'** shall mean the person appointed to act for the Church and to be its spokesperson as regards its interaction with the Press and other media bodies.

A.5.23 **'Referral Notice'** shall mean a Notice specified in Paragraph B.10.1 whereby a case involving a Minister or CRCW is referred into the Commission Stage and shall include any statement of reasons for such referral which may be appended to it.

A.5.24 **'Roll of CRCWs'** shall mean the Roll of Church Related Community Workers defined in the first paragraph of Schedule F, Part II to the Basis of Union (and see also Paragraph A.10).

A.5.25 **'Roll of Ministers'** shall have the meaning given to it in Paragraph 1 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union (and see also Paragraph A.10).

A.5.26 **'Rules of Procedure'** shall mean the Rules of Procedure governing the system of ministerial or CRCW-related discipline commencing with the exercise by the Synod or General Assembly of its function as set out in Paragraph 2(4)(A)(xvii) or Paragraph 2(6)(A)(xxiii) of the Structure as the case may be and continuing throughout the Section O Process such Rules being contained in this Part II of Section O.

A.5.27 **'Secretary of the Assembly Commission'** shall mean the person appointed by the General Assembly on the advice of the Nominations Committee to be responsible for all secretarial and procedural matters laid upon him/her by virtue of the Section O Process, and the period and terms of office of that person shall be such as the General Assembly shall decide.

A.5.28 **'Section O Process'** shall mean the whole Process set out in Parts I and II of this Section O (subject to such variations as shall from time to time be made).

A.5.29 **'Special Appeals Body'** shall mean the body appointed to hear appeals under Paragraph E.5.3 against a proposed reference back and recommendation to commence the Incapacity Procedure.

A.5.30 **'Structure'** shall mean the Structure of the United Reformed Church.

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A.5.31 **'Suspension'** and **'to suspend'** shall have the meanings assigned to them in Paragraphs 3 and 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union and the third and fourth paragraphs of Part II of Schedule F to the Basis of Union.

A.5.32 **'Synod'** shall mean that Synod which in relation to any Minister or CRCW exercises oversight of that Minister or CRCW in accordance with its function under Paragraph 2(4)(A)(xv) of the Structure.

A.5.33 **'Synod Panel'** shall mean the Panel referred to in Paragraph B.2.1 from which persons shall be appointed to be members of the Mandated Group.

A.6 A.6.1 Subject to the age limit imposed by Paragraph A.6.4, appointment to the Commission Panel shall be by Resolution of the General Assembly on the advice of the Nominations Committee (or such other committee as may in the future perform the functions of the Nominations Committee), who shall in considering persons for appointment take into account (i) the need for balance and for a variety of skills and specialisations, particularly in the following areas – experience in ministerial oversight, theology and doctrine, law, counselling, psychology, mental health, experience in conduct of meetings and tribunals, and (ii) the advantages of including on the Commission Panel persons from a variety of ethnic minority backgrounds.

A.6.2 Subject to the age limit imposed by Paragraph A.6.4, members of the Commission Panel shall be appointed for such term not exceeding five (5) years as the General Assembly shall in each case think fit with power for the General Assembly to determine any such appointment during its term or to renew any such appointment for successive terms of five (5) years each, 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.

A.6.3 The General Assembly shall appoint from the Commission Panel one member to be the Convener of the Commission Panel and one member to be the Deputy Convener of the Commission Panel, each (subject to the provisions of Paragraph A.6.2) to serve for such period as General Assembly shall decide.

A.6.4 When any member of the Commission Panel reaches the age of seventy, s/he must forthwith resign from the Commission Panel and shall no longer be eligible to serve on any new Assembly Commission, but any person who reaches his/her seventieth birthday whilst serving on an Assembly Commission in a case in progress may continue so to serve until the conclusion of that case.

A.7 In any case where a person authorised or required to take some action regarding (i) the appointment of persons to any Mandated Group or (ii) the calling in of a Mandated Group or (iii) some other administrative or procedural matter under the Section O Process is unable for any reason to do so, then, unless the Section O Process already makes specific provision for such a situation, that person's duly appointed deputy shall take such action in his/her place. This Paragraph does not permit any member of an Assembly Commission, an Appeals Commission or a Mandated Group to appoint his/her own deputy.

A.8 In any case where the Secretary of the Assembly Commission (or the General Secretary in the case of Appeals, save where Paragraph G.10.5 applies) is unable for any reason to carry out the duties of that office, his/her place shall be taken by a deputy duly authorised by or in the name of General Assembly.

A.9 Where any issue or question arises relating to procedure or to the proper expedition of the Process whilst the matter is under the jurisdiction of the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission that Commission shall resolve each such issue or question or give such directions as shall appear to it to be just and appropriate in the circumstances.

A.10 For the avoidance of repetition, whenever the word 'Minister' or the expression 'the Roll of Ministers' or any word or expression relating to a Minister or ministry appears in the Section O Process, it shall be taken as being equally referable to a CRCW or to the Roll of CRCWs or to the office of CRCW as the case may be, unless such construction is precluded by the context.

A.11 The Church recognises that, from time to time, cases falling within the Section O Process may attract the attention of the national or local press and other media organisations and authorises Synod Moderators, Assembly Officers and the Secretary of the Assembly Commission to supply to the Press Officer such information as s/he may reasonably require to deal with all press/media enquiries in a tactful and discreet manner so as to protect the interests of the Church, the Minister and all others involved in the case. This paragraph is intended to take effect independently of and in addition to those paragraphs throughout these Rules of Procedure under which the Press Officer has been identified as one of the persons to whom specific information is given at various points in the Process.

## **B. Appointment and role of Mandated Group and initiation of Section O**

B.1 B.1.1 To enable them to carry out their respective functions under Paragraphs 2(4)(A)(xvii) and 2(6)(A)(xxiii) of the Structure, every Synod and the General Assembly shall act solely through a group of three persons ('the Mandated Group') which shall have mandated authority to act in the name of the Synod or the General Assembly as the case may be in every matter requiring consideration under those respective functions.

B.1.2 The Mandated Group called in to deal with any particular case under the provisions of this Section B has no pastoral role to fulfil and its precise functions are described in Paragraphs B.8 and B.9.

B.2. B.2.1 Every Synod shall appoint and maintain a panel ('the Synod Panel') of persons from that Synod and, in considering persons for appointment, regard shall be had for achieving as wide a geographical representation within the Synod as possible.

B.2.2 There shall also be a standing panel ('the Joint Panel') consisting of a maximum of thirteen persons, of whom one shall be nominated by each Synod and selected preferably on account of some legal, tribunal or professional experience or other similar background, which would equip them for assuming a role as part of a Mandated Group. The list of those currently on the Joint Panel shall be held by the Synod Moderators.

B.3.1 In cases arising under Paragraph 2(4)(A)(xvii) of the Structure (Synods), 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 or under the authority of that Synod, s/he shall forthwith in the name of the Synod appoint two persons from the Synod Panel for that Synod and one person from the Joint Panel as provided in Paragraphs B.2.1 and B.2.2 to constitute the Mandated Group for the particular case and at the same time inform the Minister that this step has been taken and follow the procedure laid down in Paragraphs B.6.1/4.

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B.3.2 In cases arising under Paragraph 2(6)(A)(xxiii) of the Structure (General Assembly or Mission Council on its behalf)), if at any time the Deputy General Secretary, in consultation with such other officers of the General Assembly as s/he considers appropriate, believes that there is or may be a disciplinary issue in respect of any Minister s/he shall forthwith in the name of General Assembly appoint three persons as provided in Paragraph B.3.3 to constitute the Mandated Group for the particular case and at the same time inform the Minister that this step has been taken and follow the procedure laid down in Paragraphs B.6.1/4.

B.3.3 In cases arising under Paragraph B.3.2, the Deputy General Secretary, in consultation with such other officers of General Assembly as s/he considers appropriate, shall constitute the Mandated Group by the appointment of all three persons, each of whom shall be selected from either the Joint Panel or any of the Synod Panels (at least one from the Joint Panel and at least one from the Synod Panels).

B.3.4 Should the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary receive in accordance with the provisions applicable to the Incapacity Procedure a recommendation falling under Paragraph 3.2 of Part I, s/he may regard this as a sufficient indication of a possible disciplinary issue as to justify the calling in of the Mandated Group under the provisions of Paragraph B.3.1 or Paragraph B.3.2.

B.3.5 On any occasion throughout the Section O Process where notices and papers are required to be sent to the Moderator of the Synod, then in a case proceeding under Paragraph B.3.2 they shall also be sent to the Deputy General Secretary.

B.4 If any member of a Synod Panel or the Joint Panel is a member of a local church connected with a case or has any pastoral or personal involvement in a case or is the subject of a disciplinary complaint, that person shall not form part of the Mandated Group for that case.

B.5 B.5.1 If any member of a Synod Panel or the Joint Panel is disqualified under Paragraph B.4 or is for any other reason unable to act in a particular case, the person calling in the Mandated Group shall appoint another member from the same panel to serve as a member of the Mandated Group for that case. The Mandated Group for all matters relating to that case shall be its remaining member(s) together with the person(s) appointed under this Paragraph. If only one such person is disqualified or otherwise unable to act, then, until any such further appointment is made, the mandate shall continue to be held by the remaining two members of the Mandated Group. If two members of the Mandated Group are disqualified or otherwise unable to act, there is no mandate for the remaining member to act alone.

B.5.2 No person shall serve as a member of or as the spokesperson for a Mandated Group in connection with any case where s/he would fall within any of the restrictions contained in Paragraph C.3.1.

B.6 B.6.1 In constituting the Mandated Group, the person so doing shall follow the procedures set out in Paragraph B.3.1 or in Paragraphs B.3.2 and B.3.3, whichever procedure is appropriate to the particular case, advising the members of the Mandated Group of the identity of the Minister but giving no further information at that point.

B.6.2 In the event that any of the proposed appointees on to the Mandated Group is/are 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 three members has been duly constituted.



B.6.3 The commencement of the steps set out in Paragraphs B.3, B.4 and B.5 to constitute the Mandated Group marks the commencement of the Section O Process and the completion of those steps marks the calling in of the Mandated Group for the purposes of these Rules of Procedure.

B.6.4 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.

B.7.1 In cases of extreme emergency, the Moderator of the Synod or other person entitled to call in the Mandated Group may, if s/he considers that there are strong and urgent reasons for so doing and only so long as s/he forthwith calls in the Mandated Group, suspend the Minister with immediate effect either orally or in writing. Suspension imposed orally shall be immediately confirmed in writing to the Minister.

B.7.2 The person imposing the Suspension under Paragraph B.7.1 shall forthwith (i) give written notice of the Minister's Suspension to the Moderator of the Synod (if s/he is not the person calling in the Mandated Group), the Synod Clerk, the General Secretary, the Press Officer and the Secretary for Ministries, and (ii) make a written disclosure of the Minister's Suspension to the responsible officer of any relevant Outside Organisation (as defined in Paragraph A.5.20). The Notice shall stress to all the recipients the sensitive nature of the information imparted and the need to exercise care and discretion as to how it is used. In order to preserve confidentiality any notice or disclosure given under this Paragraph shall not disclose any reason for the imposition of the Suspension (see also Paragraphs B.9.2 and B.11). However, any such notice or disclosure shall contain a statement explaining the effect of Suspension as outlined in either Paragraph 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union or the fourth paragraph of Part II of Schedule F to the Basis of Union whichever is relevant and shall (if such be the case) state that the Police have been apprised of the matter giving rise to the Suspension.

B.7.3 If a Minister entering the Section O Process has already been suspended under the Incapacity Procedure, that suspension shall continue until it is terminated in accordance with these Rules of Procedure and meanwhile shall be governed by them.

B.7.4 Suspension imposed under Paragraph B.7.1 shall continue during the Mandated Group's initial enquiry period referred to in Paragraph B.8.1. If at the end of that period the Mandated Group serves a Referral Notice on the Minister, it must also serve on him/her a Notice confirming the continuance of the Suspension during the Commission Stage.

B.7.5 In the event that the initial enquiry period terminates without the issue of a Referral Notice, the Minister's Suspension under Paragraph B.7.1 shall automatically cease on the issue of a Notice of Non-Continuance under Paragraph B.8.2, whereupon the person imposing the Suspension under Paragraph B.7.1 shall give written notice of the cessation of the Suspension both to the Minister and to the persons specified in Paragraph B.7.2.

B.8 The functions of the Mandated Group called in by the person authorised for that purpose under Paragraph B.6 in any particular case are described in this Paragraph B.8 (as regards the initial enquiry) and in Paragraph B.9 (as regards the Investigation):

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B.8.1 The Mandated Group shall carry out its own initial enquiry with all due expedition in consultation (where practical and appropriate) with the person calling in the Mandated Group for the sole purpose of ascertaining whether the Commission Stage should be initiated. Having done so, it must bring its initial enquiry to a conclusion in accordance with Paragraphs B.8.2 and B.8.3.

B.8.2 If the Mandated Group decides as a result of its initial enquiry not to proceed any further with the matter, it shall serve on the Moderator of the Synod or other person calling it in a notice to that effect (a Notice of Non-Continuance), which shall have the effect of discharging from further involvement in that case the Mandated Group itself (subject to due compliance by it of Paragraph H.4) and the Council in whose name it conducted the initial enquiry.

B.8.3 On receipt of a Notice of Non-Continuance the person calling in the Mandated Group shall forthwith notify the Minister, the Moderator of the Synod (if s/he was not the person calling in the Mandated Group) and the Synod Clerk that the Mandated Group is not proceeding any further and if the person calling in the Mandated Group has already suspended the Minister under Paragraph B.7.1, s/he must notify all the persons, bodies and organisations specified in Paragraph B.7.2 that disciplinary proceedings against the Minister and the Minister's Suspension are terminated with immediate effect.

B.8.4 If on the other hand the Mandated Group decides as a result of its initial enquiry to initiate the Commission Stage, it shall follow the procedure laid down in Paragraphs B.9.1 and B.9.3 whereupon the Commission Stage will be initiated.

B.9 B.9.1 Whenever the Mandated Group, having as a result of its Initial Enquiry become aware of any information relating to the Minister concerned which might require disciplinary investigation, concludes unanimously or by a majority that this is indeed so, it shall forthwith in the name of the Synod suspend the Minister (unless s/he has already been suspended under Paragraph B.7.1, in which case the Mandated Group shall serve on the Minister a notice that his/her Suspension shall continue during the Commission Stage) and initiate the Commission Stage in accordance with Paragraph B.10. Suspension under this Paragraph shall take effect when the Minister receives Notice thereof from the Mandated Group either orally or in writing. Suspension imposed orally shall be immediately confirmed in writing (as to the contents of the written notice of Suspension, see also Paragraph B.11).

B.9.2 Suspension, whether imposed under Paragraph B.7.1 or B.9.1, does not imply any view about the correctness or otherwise of any allegations made concerning the Minister, nor does it affect the Minister's stipend or the CRCW's salary or the Minister's or CRCW's pension arrangements under the relevant United Reformed Church Pension Scheme.

B.9.3 The Mandated Group shall forthwith, by written notice to the person who called it in, advise him/her of the issue of the Referral Notice and the Notice of Suspension, and that person shall in turn forthwith (i) give written notice thereof to the Moderator of the Synod (if s/he is not the person calling in the Mandated Group) the Synod Clerk, the General Secretary, the Press Officer and the Secretary for Ministries, and (ii) make a written disclosure of the Minister's Suspension to the responsible officer of any relevant Outside Organisation, unless notice thereof has already been given to that Outside Organisation under Paragraph B.7.2. The Notice shall stress to all the recipients the sensitive nature of the information imparted and the need to exercise care and discretion as to how it is used. In order to preserve confidentiality any notice or disclosure given under this Paragraph shall not disclose any reason for the imposition of the Suspension (see also Paragraphs B.9.2 and B.11). However, any such notice or disclosure shall contain a statement explaining the effect of Suspension as outlined in either Paragraph 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union

or the fourth paragraph of Part II of Schedule F to the Basis of Union whichever is relevant and shall (if such be the case) state that the Police have been apprised of the matter giving rise to the Suspension.

B.9.4 During the Commission Stage it is the responsibility of the Mandated Group to conduct the Investigation in accordance with Section D, to comply with all procedural matters under the Rules of Procedure and to present the case against the Minister at the Hearing under Section E and at the Hearing of any Appeal under Section G.

B.10 To initiate the Commission Stage pursuant to Paragraph B.9.1, the Mandated Group in the name of the Council shall take the following steps:

B.10.1 Serve on the Secretary of the Assembly Commission a duly completed Referral Notice which should clearly state the reasons why the Mandated Group believes that a breach of ministerial discipline has or may have occurred and which should also include where possible a summary of the supporting information on the basis of which the Mandated Group has issued the Referral Notice and which must disclose the name and address of any Outside Organisation notified of the Minister's Suspension under either Paragraph B.7.2 or Paragraph B.9.3.

B.10.2 Serve on the Minister notice of the issue of the Referral Notice and of his/her Suspension (or of the continuance of his/her Suspension if Paragraph B.7.1 applies).

B.11 The Notice of Suspension, whether issued under Paragraph B.7.1 or Paragraph B.9.1, shall inform the Minister that, in accordance with these Rules of Procedure, any conduct on his/her part during such Suspension which breaches or contravenes either Paragraph 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union or the fourth paragraph of Part II of Schedule F to the Basis of Union whichever is relevant may be taken into account by the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission in reaching its decision under Section F or Section G as the case may be.

B.12 Once a Referral Notice has been issued by a Mandated Group in any case, no further Referral Notice shall in any circumstances be issued in respect of the subject matter of that referral, save only where the Minister has been the subject of an earlier disciplinary case in which the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission issued a written warning under the provisions of Paragraph F.2.2 or Paragraph G.11.3.

## **C. Reference to and constitution of the Assembly Commission**

C.1 On receipt of either a Referral Notice or a Notice of Reference back, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall forthwith take the following steps:

C.1.1 Acknowledge receipt of such Notice.

C.1.2 In the case of a Referral Notice, serve on the Minister a copy of the Referral Notice and a Notice which shall invite the Minister's preliminary response.

C.1.3 In the case of a Notice of Reference back, invite any comments from the Parties regarding the Notice and accompanying statement received by them from the General Secretary in accordance with Paragraph G.14.1.

C.1.4 Inform the Convener and the Deputy Convener of the Commission Panel (or, in their absence or the absence of either of them, the other person or persons specified in Paragraph A.5.2) ('the Appointers') of the receipt of the Referral Notice or

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the Notice of Reference back and pass to such person or persons copies thereof and of any other papers which accompany such Notice.

C.1.5 Inform the General Secretary, the Moderator of the Synod, the Synod Clerk, the Press Officer and the Secretary for Ministries and the responsible officer of any relevant Outside Organisation of the receipt of the Referral Notice but not of the contents thereof, apart from the name of the Minister.

C.1.6 On receipt of the Minister's response under Paragraph C.1.2 and any documents which may accompany it, provide the Mandated Group with copies thereof.

C.1.7 In any case arising as a consequence of a Notice of Reference back, where comments are received from either of the parties as a result of the invitation contained in Paragraph C.1.3, provide the other party with copies thereof.

C.2 C.2.1 The Appointers shall, within 7 days of compliance by the Secretary of the Assembly Commission with Paragraph C.1.4 (or within such further time as they shall reasonably require), jointly appoint five (5) persons from the Commission Panel to constitute the Assembly Commission for the hearing of that case, and in making such appointments they shall have regard to the provisions of Paragraphs C.2.2 and C.3.

C.2.2 The Appointers shall (so far as possible) (i) appoint at least one man and at least one woman and at least one minister and at least one lay person onto the Assembly Commission and (ii) have regard to the nature of the case, the need for balance and the skills, specialisation and cultural understanding of the members of the Commission Panel.

C.3 C.3.1 No person shall be appointed to sit as a member of the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission in the hearing of any case in which he/she has any involvement, whether as a member of any local church or Synod connected with the case or (in the event of a re-hearing under Paragraph G.11.7) a member of the previous Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission, or whether on account of some personal or pastoral involvement as a result of which it is considered by those responsible for selecting the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission for that case or by the proposed appointee him/herself that it would not be appropriate for him/her to hear the case.

C.3.2 Under the Rules of Procedure, either of the parties may object on any of the grounds set out in Paragraph C.3.1 to the proposed appointment of any person to the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission for the hearing of his/her case and, in the event of any such objection, the decision of those charged under the Section O Process with making the appointment shall be final and binding.

C.4 C.4.1 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall send to each member of the Commission Panel whom the Appointers propose to appoint to the Assembly Commission notice of his/her proposed appointment, stating the name of the Minister but containing no further details of the case. The Notice shall draw the invitee's attention to Paragraph C.3.1 and shall request confirmation that the invitee is willing to accept appointment and that s/he is unaware of any circumstances which in the present case might prevent him/her from serving on the Assembly Commission.

C.4.2 The Invitee shall within 7 days of receipt of such Notice serve on the Secretary of the Assembly Commission a Notice indicating whether s/he is able and willing to accept appointment and, if so, confirming compliance with Paragraph C.3.1.

C.5 C.5.1 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall serve notice on the Parties setting out the name and office or credentials of each proposed appointee, drawing attention to Paragraphs C.3.1 and requiring notice of objection

to any of the proposed appointees under that Paragraph to be served upon the Secretary of the Assembly Commission within 14 days of the service of the Notice given under this Paragraph.

C.5.2 Any such Notice of Objection must state the grounds for such objection.

C.5.3 To ensure that the Commission Stage is moved along in a timely manner, any Notice of Objection received outside the period allowed will not normally be considered unless very good reason can be shown for its late delivery.

C.5.4 The Appointers shall consider any objection properly delivered and shall decide whether to uphold or reject the objection.

C.5.5 If they reject the objection the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall serve notice thereof on the objector.

C.5.6 If they uphold the objection, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall serve notice thereof upon the objector, the person to whom the objection was taken and the other Party upon whom the Notice referred to in Paragraph C.4.1 was served.

C.5.7 In the event of any objection being upheld, the procedure outlined in Paragraphs C.2 to C.5 shall be repeated to complete the appointment of the Assembly Commission and to give notice to the Parties of the person appointed.

C.6 The Appointers shall appoint one member of the Assembly Commission to be its Convener, but s/he shall not have a casting vote, unless the Assembly Commission shall in circumstances arising under Paragraph C.7.1 of these Rules consist of an even number of members.

C.7 C.7.1 In the event that during the Commission Stage any member of the Assembly Commission shall be unable to carry out his/her duties on the Assembly Commission, the remaining members shall continue to act as the Assembly Commission, subject to there being a minimum of three members.

C.7.2 In the event that in the terms of Paragraph C.7.1 the Assembly Commission shall be reduced to fewer than three members at any time after it has taken any steps under Section E the Assembly Commission so appointed shall stand down and be discharged and a new Assembly Commission shall be appointed under this Section C.

C.7.3 Once the Assembly Commission has been duly constituted and has taken any steps under Section E, no person shall subsequently be appointed to serve on that Assembly Commission.

C.7.4 If the Convener of the Assembly Commission is unable to continue to serve for the reasons stated in Paragraph C.7.1, the remaining members shall, following consultation with the Appointers, appoint one of their number to be the Convener in his/her place.

## **D. Investigation by the Mandated Group**

D.1 It shall be the role of the Mandated Group to investigate the matters which are the subject of the Referral Notice with a view to presenting the case in the name of the Council at the Hearing.

D.2 D.2.1 In the course of the Investigation, the Mandated Group shall normally interview the person or persons lodging the initial complaint (if any) and the Minister concerned and shall make all other investigations which it considers necessary.

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D.2.2 Any person being interviewed in accordance with Paragraph D.2.1 may, if s/he so wishes, have a friend present with him/her at such interview.

D.3 In conducting its Investigation and preparing for the Hearing, the Mandated Group shall at all times have in mind the statement set out in Paragraph A.2.1 regarding the proper expedition of the Section O Process (and see also Paragraph E.4 as to the role of the Secretary of the Assembly Commission in this respect).

D.4 In cases where Paragraph E.7.1 applies, the Mandated Group may itself monitor the criminal proceedings, but shall otherwise for the period specified in that Paragraph suspend its own investigation of any matter under the Section O Process which might also be related to the criminal proceedings.

D.5 In cases coming into the Section O Process following a recommendation from the Incapacity Procedure, the Mandated Group shall have regard to the following matters:

D.5.1 The Mandated Group must carry out its Investigation fully and must not rely upon any information simply because it was presented and considered within the Incapacity Procedure.

D.5.2 The Mandated Group should pay careful attention to any special factors involved in a case which has first been within the Incapacity Procedure.

### **E. Formal procedures up to and including the Hearing**

E.1 E.1.1 The Assembly Commission's sole purpose in conducting the Hearing under this Section E is to establish whether or not there has been a breach of ministerial discipline, having regard to Paragraph 3 of Part I.

E.1.2 The object of Paragraphs E.2, E.3, E.4, E.5.1 and E.5.2 is to ensure that the Parties are aware beforehand of the evidence which will be presented at the Hearing and that they have time to consider the same.

E.2 E.2.1 Unless the case is subject to compulsory adjournment under Paragraph E.7, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall as soon as practicable after the appointment of the Assembly Commission:

E.2.1.1 provide the Convener and the other members of the Assembly Commission with (i) copies of the Referral Notice, (ii) the Minister's response under Paragraph C.1.2 and (iii) any documents which may accompany it and

E.2.1.2 in the case of any Assembly Commission appointed as a consequence of a Notice of Reference back, provide the Convener and the other members thereof with copies of (i) the Notice of Reference back, (ii) the documents, statements and information delivered to the previous Assembly Commission in accordance with these Rules of Procedure and (iii) any comments received from the parties as a result of the invitation contained in Paragraph C.1.3.

E.2.2 Having complied with Paragraph E.2.1, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall forthwith serve on each of the Parties a notice which shall:

E.2.2.1 notify the Parties that the Referral Notice and any statement from the Minister lodged in response to the Notice referred to in Paragraph C.1.2 will be part of the documentary evidence at the Hearing,

E.2.2.2 call upon the Parties to lodge copies of any documents or of any further statements relating to matters to which they may wish to refer at the Hearing (the Notice should indicate to the Parties that copies of any such documents or statements will be made available to the other Party),

E.2.2.3 call upon the Parties to state the names of persons whom they propose to invite to attend the Hearing and, briefly, the purpose of their attendance and the approximate length of time which each of the Parties will require at the Hearing,

E.2.2.4 call upon the Mandated Group to nominate a spokesperson (who need not be a member of the Mandated Group) to act on its behalf in the questioning of witnesses and in the general presentation of the case and indicate the name and status of such person,

E.2.2.5 call upon the Minister to state whether s/he wishes to have a person present with him/her at the Hearing pursuant to Paragraph E.10.1 and, if so, call upon the Minister to indicate the name and status of such person and whether s/he will be present to give the Minister support and advice under Paragraph E.10.1.1 or to present the Minister's case under Paragraph E.10.1.2.

E.3 E.3.1 Within 14 days of the service of the Notice under Paragraph E.2.2, the Parties shall comply with Paragraphs E.2.2.2 and E.2.2.3 by serving on the Secretary of the Assembly Commission the documents, statements and information requested, whereupon the Secretary shall forthwith provide copies thereof for the Convener and the other members of the Assembly Commission.

E.3.2 As soon as possible after the expiration of such period of 14 days referred to in Paragraph E.3.1, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall provide each Party with copies of the documents, statements and information delivered by the other Party under Paragraph E.3.1.

E.3.3 The Parties shall respond to the respective invitations contained in Paragraphs E.2.2.4 and E.2.2.5 no later than 14 days prior to the date set for the Hearing and copies of each Party's response shall thereupon be sent by the Secretary of the Assembly Commission to the other Party.

E.4 Having in mind the statement regarding proper expedition set out in Paragraph A.2.1 but taking account of the need for the Parties to make their due preparations for the Hearing, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall, when it seems most appropriate to him/her:

E.4.1 consult with the Convener and the other members of the Assembly Commission as to a suitable venue, date and time for the Hearing and, where possible, with the Parties as to a suitable date and time for the Hearing and, having so consulted, decide thereupon and

E.4.2 having complied with Paragraph E.4.1, forthwith serve on each of the Parties a notice stating the date, time and place of the Hearing.

E.5 E.5.1 It shall be for the Assembly Commission to decide on all procedural and evidential matters, both before and during the Hearing. It may make such directions as it deems appropriate regarding such matters and fix a time for compliance with such directions, if necessary postponing or adjourning the Hearing to enable such compliance to be made. Such matters shall include the following:

E.5.1.1 All matters relating to the form of the written material lodged by the Parties in accordance with Paragraph E.3.1 and the extent to which the same may be later amended or supplemented, and to which further written material may be introduced and disclosed and

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E.5.1.2 The extent to which written statements, videos and other recordings and transcripts shall in exceptional circumstances be admitted as evidence at the Hearing.

E.5.2.1 Having notified the Parties prior to the Hearing, the Assembly Commission may invite any person with expert or specialist knowledge in any particular field to attend the Hearing with a view to that person giving evidence at the Hearing and may issue such requests and directions in that connection as it considers appropriate.

E.5.2.2 The legal advisers to The United Reformed Church shall be available for the purpose of advising the Assembly Commission on matters relating to procedure, evidence and interpretation at any point in the Section O Process.

E.5.3 If it considers that, in a case within the Section O Process, the circumstances relating to the Minister fall within the ambit of Paragraph 1 of Part I of the Incapacity Procedure, the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission may, either on its own account or on a written request from the Mandated Group, stating the reasons for making the request, at any time during the Commission Stage and whether or not a Hearing has taken place, adopt the following procedure:

E.5.3.1 It shall instruct the Secretary of the Assembly Commission or the General Secretary as the case may be to inform the Parties by written notice of its intention to refer the case back to the person who called in the Mandated Group with the recommendation that the Incapacity Procedure should be commenced in respect of the minister, stating its reasons for such recommendation. This Notice shall inform the Parties that if either of them is dissatisfied with this proposed reference back that Party may within a period of twentyone days from the receipt of the said Notice give written notice to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission (or the General Secretary if the reference back is proposed by the Appeals Commission) of that Party's intention to appeal against the proposed reference back. If at the end of the period no such notice of intention to appeal has been received then the procedure set out in Paragraphs E.5.3.11 and E.5.3.14 shall be followed.

E.5.3.2 In the event of such appeal, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission or the General Secretary as the case may be shall request the Appointers to appoint a Special Appeals Body consisting of three persons drawn from the Commission Panel to hear the appeal against the proposed referral and when so appointed the Special Appeals Body shall appoint its own Convener.

E.5.3.3 In making such appointment the Appointers shall have full regard to the safeguards set out in Paragraphs C.2.2, C.3, C.4 and C.5.

E.5.3.4 The Appointers shall also appoint a person (not necessarily a member of the Commission Panel) to act as the Secretary of the Special Appeals Body for the hearing of the appeal.

E.5.3.5 The Special Appeals Body shall consider the recommendation of the Assembly Commission/Appeals Commission and any representations made by the parties in response thereto and any other papers relevant to the issue of the proposed reference back and shall invite the Parties by written notice to submit any further written representations within a period of twentyone days from the date of receipt of the said Notice.

E.5.3.6 Unless either of the Parties makes a request for a Hearing or the Special Appeals Body of itself decides to convene a Hearing the Special Appeals Body shall decide the matter on the basis of the written material referred to in Paragraph E.5.3.5.



E.5.3.7 In the event that a Hearing does take place, the Rules applicable thereto shall, so far as possible, accord with the Rules set out in Paragraph G.10 for the conduct of hearings before the Appeals Commission.

E.5.3.8 In recording its decision, the Special Appeals Body shall append a statement of its reasons for reaching its decision and, if the decision is to reject the appeal, it may indicate what papers, if any, should be passed with the notice of the decision to the person to whom the reference back will be made.

E.5.3.9 As soon as the Special Appeals Body has reached its decision, the Secretary of that body shall give written notice thereof, and of any reasons appended to the decision, to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission or the General Secretary as the case may be, who shall in turn inform the members of the Assembly Commission/ Appeals Commission thereof.

E.5.3.10 If the decision of the Special Appeals Body is to allow the appeal and to reject the proposed reference back, the Section O case shall immediately be resumed and the Secretary of the Assembly Commission/General Secretary shall send to the Parties a notice advising them of that fact and a copy of the notice of the decision and the statement of reasons appended to the decision.

E.5.3.11 If the decision of the Special Appeals Body is to reject the appeal and to uphold the decision to refer the case back to the person who called in the Mandated Group with the recommendation that the Incapacity Procedure should be commenced in respect of the Minister, or if there is no appeal against the reference back, the Section O Process shall stand adjourned pending the outcome of that recommendation and the Secretary shall send to the Parties (i) a notice advising them of that fact, (ii) a copy of the notice of the decision and the statement of reasons appended to the decision, (iii) a copy of the Notice to the person who called in the Mandated Group (see Paragraph E.5.3.14) and (iv) copies of any papers being sent with the last mentioned Notice in accordance with Paragraph E.5.3.8.

E.5.3.12 Once the decision of the Special Appeals Body has been made and the requirements of Paragraph E.5.3.8 have been duly complied with, the roles of the Special Appeals Body and of its secretary are concluded and they have no further part to play in the case.

E.5.3.13 The decision of the Special Appeals Body on the matter of the proposed reference back is final and binding.

E.5.3.14 If the decision is to reject the appeal and uphold the reference back, or if there is no appeal against the reference back, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission/General Secretary shall forthwith send or deliver to the person who called in the Mandated Group (i) a written notice setting out the decision of the Special Appeals Body on the appeal, signed by the Convener and incorporating both the recommendation and a statement of the reasons given for making the recommendation and (ii) such other papers (if any) as are referred to in Paragraph E.5.3.8.

E.5.3.15 That Notice shall state that the proceedings under the Section O Process shall stand adjourned to await the recipient's response and shall also state the time, which shall be not be longer than twentyone days, within which the recipient must notify the Secretary in writing whether the recommendation contained in the Notice has been accepted or rejected.

E.5.3.16 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission/General Secretary shall at the same time send copies of the said Notice (but not the accompanying documentation) to the Moderator of the Synod (in any case where s/he is not already the recipient of the Notice under Paragraph E.5.3.14), the Synod Clerk, the General Secretary,

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the Press Officer and the Secretary for Ministries. The Notice shall stress to all the recipients the sensitive nature of the information imparted and the need to exercise care and discretion as to how it is used.

E.5.3.17 If written confirmation is received from the recipient of the Notice, countersigned by the Secretary of the Review Commission who operates within the Incapacity Procedure, that the recommendation contained in the Notice has been accepted and that the Incapacity Procedure has been initiated in respect of the Minister, the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission as the case may be shall declare the case within the Section O Process to be concluded and no further action shall be taken in respect thereof.

E.5.3.18 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission/General Secretary shall give written notice to this effect to the Parties and the persons specified in Paragraph E.5.3.16 above, and also the responsible officer of any Outside Organisation to whom notice of the Section O proceedings has already been given. The Notice shall stress to all the recipients the sensitive nature of the information imparted and the need to exercise care and discretion as to how it is used.

E.5.3.19 If written notification is received from the recipient of the Notice that the aforesaid recommendation has been rejected, the case shall forthwith be resumed within the Section O Process. The Secretary shall give notice to this effect to the Parties and the persons specified in Paragraph E.5.3.16.

E.5.3.20 No recommendation for referral to the Incapacity Procedure shall be made in any case which enters the Section O Process as a result of a recommendation from the Incapacity Procedure.

E.5.3.21 For the avoidance of doubt, decisions taken by the Special Appeals Body under the provisions of this Paragraph E.5.3 are not subject to the requirement to report to General Assembly contained in Section J of these Rules of Procedure.

E.6        E.6.1    Either Party may at any time request an advancement or postponement or adjournment of the Hearing, setting out his/her/its reasons for such request.

E.6.2    The Assembly Commission may at any time advance, postpone or adjourn the Hearing as it considers it appropriate, whether of its own accord or at the request of either Party, but always having regard to the need to conclude the Section O Process as expeditiously as possible. Notice of the amended hearing date, time and place shall be served on the Parties by the Secretary of the Assembly Commission.

E.6.3    Any advancement of the hearing date shall normally require the consent of both Parties.

E.7        E.7.1    Where (i) the Minister is the subject of a criminal charge for an alleged offence falling into any of the categories set out in Paragraph E.7.2 below relevant to the subject matter of the Section O Process or (ii) information has been laid before the Police which may result in such relevant criminal charge being brought against him/her, in either such event the Assembly Commission shall (unless the circumstances of Paragraph E.9.1 apply) postpone or adjourn its own proceedings pending the verdict of the criminal courts (whether or not on appeal) on the charges brought against the Minister (as to which see Paragraph E.7.7) or the withdrawal of the charge (in relation to alternative (i) above) or the notification that no charge is to be brought (in relation to alternative (ii) above).

E.7.2    The categories of criminal offence relevant to adjournment under Paragraph E.7.1 are:

E.7.2.1 unlawful killing, or deliberate or reckless, actual or threatened, infliction of physical injury to the person or damage to the property of another,

E.7.2.2 rape, sexual abuse or any other offence of a sexual nature,

E.7.2.3 criminal offences relating to stalking and/or sexual harassment,

E.7.2.4 fraud, blackmail, robbery, theft or burglary,

E.7.2.5 all drugs- and drink-related offences.

E.7.3 If the case falls within this Paragraph E.7, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall, as soon as practicable after the appointment of the Assembly Commission, notify the Parties of the compulsory adjournment of the case.

E.7.4 It shall be the responsibility of the Mandated Group to procure a duly certified Court record or memorandum of the decision of the criminal or civil court in connection with any such case and to lodge it with the Secretary of the Assembly Commission, whereupon the Section O Process shall be re-activated and the case brought to a Hearing as soon as possible, unless the Minister shall have lodged with the Secretary of the Assembly Commission within twenty-eight days of the passing of the sentence in the criminal case, written evidence that s/he has lodged an appeal against the verdict of the criminal court on the charges brought against the Minister (as to which see Paragraph E.7.7).

E.7.5 In the event of the Minister being convicted of any criminal offence, whether or not within the categories listed in Paragraph E.7.2, the Assembly Commission shall for the purposes of the Section O Process regard the commission of such offence(s) as proved.

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.

E.7.7 The purpose of this Paragraph is to make clear that the compulsory adjournment of a Section O case in circumstances falling within Paragraph E.7.1 ceases immediately the criminal court has reached a verdict (whether or not on appeal) as to whether the Minister is guilty of the offence(s) with which s/he has been charged and will not continue during any extended period in a criminal case where the court, having reached its verdict, has deferred sentencing to a future date or where the Minister is appealing against the sentence only and not against the guilty verdict itself.

E.8 Any of the following may be taken into account by the Assembly Commission in reaching its decision under Paragraph F.2 that is to say:

E.8.1 Any obstruction or unreasonable delay on the part of either of the Parties in complying with the procedural steps prior to the Hearing and/or

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- E.8.2 The failure by the Minister to attend at the Hearing without satisfactory explanation and/or
- E.8.3 Any obstruction caused by either of the Parties to the Assembly Commission in the conduct of the Hearing itself and/or
- E.8.4 Any conduct on the part of the Minister during his/her Suspension under the Section O Process which breaches or contravenes either Paragraph 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union or the fourth paragraph of Part II of Schedule F to the Basis of Union whichever is relevant and/or
- E.8.5 Any failure, unnecessary delay or obstruction on the part of the Minister in complying with the requirements of Paragraph E.7.6.
- E.9 E.9.1 The Assembly Commission has no power to accept the voluntary resignation of a Minister. A Minister may however at any time during the Section O Process and of his/her own free will make a written statement to the Assembly Commission admitting the truth of some or all of the facts or circumstances alleged, on the basis of which the Assembly Commission would consider it correct to make a decision to delete under Paragraph F.2.1 or to issue a written warning under Paragraph F.2.2. In such circumstances the Assembly Commission can, if it considers it appropriate so to do and having informed the Minister that the consequences of such admission might be a decision to delete or to issue a written warning, convene, conduct and conclude the Hearing and on the basis of that admission reach its decision in accordance with Paragraph F.2.
- E.9.2 If as a result of its investigation during the Commission Stage, the Mandated Group unanimously comes to the view that no breach of discipline on the part of the Minister has occurred or at least that no breach can be established to the standard of proof required, it may give written notice to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission before the Hearing date that as a consequence it does not intend to press the case against the Minister. Thereupon the members of the Assembly Commission shall consult together to decide whether they still require the Parties to attend a formal Hearing before them or whether in the circumstances their attendance can be dispensed with. If they elect for the former, the Hearing will take place as planned. If they elect for the latter, they may in consultation together dispense with the formal Hearing and come to the decision to allow the name of the Minister to remain on the Roll of Ministers under Paragraph F.2.1. If this procedure is adopted, the said consultation shall constitute the Hearing and its decision shall be effective for all purposes as though a formal Hearing had taken place.
- E.9.3 Paragraph E.9.2 shall not apply where the Mandated Group, whilst not pressing the case for Deletion, requests the Assembly Commission to issue a written warning under Paragraph F.2.2. In such a case a formal Hearing shall take place.
- E.10 E.10.1 The Minister may invite one person to accompany him/her at the Hearing ('the accompanying person') in which case either of the following shall apply:
- E.10.1.1 If the Minister elects to present his/her response, the accompanying person may give him/her support and advice but shall not address the Assembly Commission nor question the Minister or any of the witnesses nor present the Minister's response nor take any active part in the Hearing.
- E.10.1.2 If the Minister elects to invite the accompanying person to present the Minister's response, the Minister will not be permitted in the interests of the good ordering of the procedures at the Hearing to question the witnesses nor present the response himself/herself.

E.10.2 Neither the spokesperson nominated by the Mandated Group in accordance with Paragraph E.2.2.4 nor the Minister's accompanying person invited to present his/her response under Paragraph E.10.1.2 shall be permitted to give evidence in the case or personal testimony as to the Minister's character, either by written statement or orally at the Hearing. Where the Minister has invited a person to be present at the Hearing to give support and advice only under Paragraph E.10.1.1, the Assembly Commission may, in its absolute discretion if it sees fit, consider a written statement received from such person prior to the Hearing strictly limited to personal testimony as to the character of the Minister, but shall not permit him/her to give evidence in the case or oral testimony as to character at the Hearing.

E.11 All members of the Assembly Commission or, if Paragraph C.7 shall apply, those persons, not fewer than three, who are acting as the Assembly Commission shall attend the Hearing, which may only proceed provided that the Assembly Commission remains quorate throughout the Hearing. No member of the Assembly Commission who does not attend the whole of the Hearing shall play any part in the making of the decision reached under Paragraph F.2.

E.12 E.12.1 The Hearing must be conducted in private and only the following persons shall be permitted to attend:

The Members of the Assembly Commission

The Secretary of the Assembly Commission or a duly appointed Deputy  
(see Paragraphs A.8 and E.12.3)

The Minister

The accompanying person defined in Paragraph E.10.1

The members of the Mandated Group

The Spokesperson for the Mandated Group (if not already a member of the Mandated Group)

Any witnesses (but only while giving evidence, unless the Assembly Commission otherwise directs)

A representative of the Church's legal advisers (see Paragraph E.14.3)

Any persons responsible for operating the recording equipment or otherwise preparing the verbatim record of the proceedings referred to in Paragraph E.12.4

Any other person by the direction of the Assembly Commission and with prior notification to the Parties.

E.12.2 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall (unless excluded for reasons specified in Paragraph C.3.1) attend the Hearing for the purpose of giving such procedural advice to the Assembly Commission as may be appropriate and of ensuring compliance with Paragraph E.12.4. S/he shall not be present when the Assembly Commission deliberates and decides on the case.

E.12.3 In the event that the Secretary of the Assembly Commission cannot for any reason be present at the Hearing, the Assembly Commission shall itself appoint such person as it considers appropriate to deputise for him/her for that purpose, ascertaining beforehand that such person is not excluded for reasons specified in Paragraph C.3.1. Such person shall carry out the duties set out in Paragraph E.12.2 but shall not be present when the Assembly Commission deliberates and decides on the case.

E.12.4 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission or his/her deputy shall prepare a summary minute of the proceedings at the Hearing (the Secretary's minute). Where possible, a verbatim record of the proceedings shall also be made by electronic recording or by such other means as shall be directed by the Convener of the Assembly Commission. The Record of the Hearing shall consist of the Secretary's minute together with any such verbatim record, which shall be transcribed in the event of an appeal.

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- E.13 E.13.1 The conduct of the Hearing is in the hands of the Assembly Commission and, subject to the Assembly Commission's overriding discretion, the order of procedure shall be as follows:
- E.13.2 The Mandated Group through its spokesperson shall be given the opportunity to make an opening submission and then to present its evidence and question its witnesses. Persons called to give evidence by the Mandated Group are open to questioning by the Minister or his/her spokesperson as the case may be.
- E.13.3 If the Minister is presenting his/her own case, s/he shall then be given the opportunity to present his/her evidence in person, following which s/he is then open to questioning by the spokesperson for the Mandated Group.
- E.13.4 If a spokesperson is appearing for the Minister, that spokesperson shall be given the opportunity of questioning the Minister, who shall then be open to questioning by the spokesperson for the Mandated Group.
- E.13.5 The Minister may if s/he wishes remain silent and furthermore cannot be compelled to attend the Hearing of the Assembly Commission and it is a matter for the Assembly Commission in considering its decision as to what weight should be attached to the Minister's silence or non-attendance.
- E.13.6 The Minister or his/her spokesperson shall then have the opportunity of questioning any further witnesses whom s/he wishes to call and when each one has given his/her evidence that witness shall then be open to questioning by the spokesperson for the Mandated Group.
- E.14 E.14.1 The members of the Assembly Commission shall be entitled to ask questions and also to interject during the examination of witnesses if they consider the questioning to be oppressive or immaterial to the matter in hand or if for any other reason they consider it appropriate so to do.
- E.14.2 Persons who have already been questioned may be asked to answer further questions later in the Hearing if it appears to the Assembly Commission that this would be helpful and appropriate in the circumstances.
- E.14.3 A representative of the Church's legal advisers shall normally be present at the Hearing (unless his/her attendance has been expressly dispensed with by the Assembly Commission) in order to advise and address the Assembly Commission on matters of procedure, evidence and interpretation, but s/he shall not take any part in the decision reached by the Assembly Commission, nor shall s/he be present when the Assembly Commission deliberates and decides upon the case.
- E.15 At the Hearing the Parties shall be allowed to question any such person as attends the Hearing under Paragraph E.5.2.1 and to comment on any evidence, information, opinion or advice offered by him/her.
- E.16 E.16.1 E.16.1.1 In all cases the burden of proving the case against the Minister shall fall upon the Mandated Group.
- E.16.1.2 In considering the evidence before it, the Assembly Commission shall apply the civil standard of proof, which requires that decisions on disputed allegations shall be reached on the balance of probability.
- E.16.2 During the Commission Stage of any case brought against a Minister, the Assembly Commission cannot take cognisance of any matter which has already been part of the body of evidence laid before any Assembly Commission or Appeals Commission during the Commission Stage of any previous case brought against that

Minister unless (i) the decision reached in the previous case (whether or not on appeal) fell within Paragraph F.2.2 and (ii) such matter in the opinion of the current Assembly Commission falls within the scope of the conduct, statement, act or omission in respect of which the written warning referred to in that Paragraph was issued. The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall have authority to inspect the papers of that earlier case for the sole purpose of ensuring compliance with this Paragraph.

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

E.17 No person appearing in any capacity before the Assembly Commission at the Hearing (as distinct from those serving the Assembly Commission in compliance with Paragraph E.12.4) shall make any record of any part of the proceedings at the Hearing by means of any tape recording system or other mechanical or electronic recording device or system.

E.18 When the process of presenting and examining the evidence at the Hearing has been concluded, the spokesperson for the Mandated Group and the minister or the accompanying person as appropriate (in that order) shall be given the opportunity to address the Assembly Commission, following which the Convener of the Assembly Commission shall announce to the Parties that the members of the Assembly Commission would at that point retire to consider their decision which would not be announced that day but would be notified to the Parties in accordance with Paragraph F.3. The Hearing is thus concluded.

## **F. The decision of the Assembly Commission**

F.1 F.1.1 Following the conclusion of the Hearing, the Assembly Commission shall, all meeting together but in the absence of the Parties, consider the evidence presented to it, in order first to determine whether the allegations (or any of them) made against the Minister have been proved to its satisfaction and, if so, whether they are sufficiently serious as to amount to a breach of discipline by the Minister in the light of Paragraph 4 of Part I and in particular either Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union or the second paragraph of Part II of Schedule F to the Basis of Union whichever is relevant.

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

F.2.1 Having completed the process set out in Paragraph F.1, the Assembly Commission shall reach its decision (either unanimously or by majority vote) which shall, in the absence of a decision to refer under Paragraph E.5.3, be either to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll of Ministers or to allow his/her name to remain on the Roll of Ministers.

F.2.2 If the Assembly Commission considers that there has been some conduct, statement, act or omission on the part of the Minister which, although not sufficiently serious to justify deletion, is nevertheless of sufficient concern to justify lesser disciplinary action against the Minister it may, whilst allowing the name of the Minister

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to remain on the Roll and as part of its decision, issue a written warning to the Minister that any continuance or repetition of any of the disciplinary matters complained of might be considered a cause for deletion by a future Assembly Commission.

F.2.3 If the decision is that the name of the Minister shall remain on the Roll of Ministers, whether or not it also decides to issue a written warning, the Assembly Commission may in its written statement (see Paragraph F.3.3) append such recommendations to its decision as it considers will be helpful to Moderators of Synod, Synods, local churches, the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary, the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries and others within the Church and also to any relevant Outside Organisation. It is emphasised that any such recommendations must relate to the future ministry of the Minister only and that they are of an advisory nature and do not form part of the decision.

F.2.4 If the decision is to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll of Ministers, the Assembly Commission is particularly requested to include appropriate guidance concerning any restrictions which it considers ought to be placed upon any activities involving the Minister after his/her deletion with the object of assisting Moderators of Synod, Synods, local churches, the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary, the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries and others within the Church and also any relevant Outside Organisation. It is emphasised that any such guidance is of an advisory nature and does not form part of the decision.

F.3 In recording its decision the Assembly Commission shall comply with the following:

F.3.1 It shall state whether its decision is unanimous or by a majority.

F.3.2 It shall set out any written warning issued to the Minister under Paragraph F.2.2.

F.3.3 It shall append a written statement of its reasons for reaching its decision, but shall not be obliged (unless it wishes to do so) to comment in detail on all or any of the matters of evidence laid before it.

F.4 The decision so taken shall conclude the involvement of the Assembly Commission in the Section O Process, except as to the discharge of its responsibilities under Paragraph J.2, and shall have the effect provided for in Paragraph F.7.

F.5 F.5.1 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall within 10 days of the date of the decision serve on the Minister and the Mandated Group notice of the decision and of the written Statement of Reasons given under Paragraph F.3.3. Such notice shall draw the attention of the Minister and the Mandated Group to the strict time limit for serving Notice of Appeal under Paragraph G.1.1.

F.5.2 If Paragraph F.2.2 applies, s/he shall at the same time (i) serve on the Minister any written warning referred to in that Paragraph, (ii) send a copy thereof to the Mandated Group and (iii) send to the Minister and the Mandated Group copies of any recommendations or guidance appended to the decision of the Assembly Commission under Paragraph F.2.3 or Paragraph F.2.4.

F.6 F.6.1 At the same time as s/he serves on the Minister and the Mandated Group the documents referred to in Paragraphs F.5.1 and F.5.2, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall send to the General Secretary, the Moderator of the Synod, the Synod Clerk, the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries and, in a case arising under Paragraph B.9.3, the Deputy General Secretary a Notice to the effect that a decision has been reached by the Assembly Commission, simply stating whether the decision of the Assembly Commission has been to delete or to retain the name of the



Minister on the Roll of Ministers, and, if the latter, whether or not a decision to issue a written warning was also made. Such notice shall not contain any further information other than that the decision is still subject to the possibility of an appeal being lodged and that a further Notice will be sent under Paragraph F.6.3 (if there is no Appeal) or under Paragraph G.1.2.1 or Paragraph G.1.2.2 (if there is an Appeal).

F.6.2 If an appeal is lodged by either Party, the procedure contained in Section G shall apply.

F.6.3 If within the time specified in Paragraph G.1.1 no appeal is lodged by either Party, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall within 10 days of the expiration of such period (or within 10 days of the decision itself if the first proviso to Paragraph F.7.2 applies or immediately upon receipt by him/her of irrevocable notices from both parties of the waiver of their rights of appeal if the second proviso to Paragraph F.7.2 applies) send to the Minister and the Mandated Group and the persons referred to in Paragraph F.6.1 notice of that fact and of the consequent termination of the Minister's Suspension in accordance with Paragraph F.7.1 or F.7.2 whichever is applicable and at the same time shall send to those persons copies of the Statement of Reasons sent to the Minister and the Mandated Group in accordance with Paragraph F.5.1. At the same time the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall send to all those persons copies of the documents sent in accordance with Paragraph F.5.2, stressing to all the recipients the sensitive nature of the information imparted and the need to exercise care and discretion as to how it is used. The Mandated Group shall thereupon comply with Paragraph H.4.

F.6.4 At the time of compliance with Paragraph F.6.3, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall also send to the responsible officer of any relevant Outside Organisation notice of the decision of the Assembly Commission (including, in the event of a decision not to delete, the date of cessation of the Minister's Suspension), together with copies of the Statement of Reasons sent to the Minister and the Mandated Group in accordance with Paragraph F.5.1 and details of any recommendations or guidance issued by the Assembly Commission as appended to its decision which it expressly states to be its wish to pass on to such Outside Organisation, stressing the sensitive nature of the information imparted and the need to exercise care and discretion as to how it is used.

F.7 F.7.1 In the event of the Assembly Commission deciding to delete and there being no appeal against that decision under Paragraph 4.1 of Part I within the period allowed under Paragraph G.1, the Suspension shall continue up to the first day after the expiration of such period, on which day the deletion shall automatically take effect. The Section O case shall be regarded as concluded on such day.

F.7.2 In the event of the Assembly Commission deciding not to delete and there being no appeal against that decision under Paragraph 4.2 of Part I within the period allowed under Paragraph G.1, the Suspension shall automatically cease on the first day after the expiration of such period and the Section O case shall be regarded as concluded on that date, provided that (i) where the Mandated Group has formally signified to the Assembly Commission under Paragraph E.9.2 that it does not intend to press the case for any disciplinary action to be taken against the Minister and the Assembly Commission decides not to issue a written warning, the Assembly Commission may as an appendage to its decision not to delete state that the Minister's Suspension shall terminate with immediate effect and in that case the Section O case shall be regarded as concluded on the date on which the Assembly Commission formally notifies its decision to the Parties under Paragraph F.5 or (ii) where the decision is to allow the Minister's name to remain on the Roll of Ministers and no written warning is issued and where both parties within the time allowed for an appeal to be lodged state in writing and irrevocably that they waive their rights of appeal, the Minister's Suspension shall cease and the Section O case shall

be concluded, both events taking place on the date on which the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall have received such statements from both parties (as to the notification of the cessation of the Suspension, see Paragraphs F.6.3 and F.6.4).

### **G. Appeals procedure**

G.1 G.1.1 Any Notice of Appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission given under Paragraph 4 of Part I must be served on the Secretary of the Assembly Commission no later than 21 days from the date of service of the decision of the Assembly Commission on the appellant and for this purpose time shall be of the essence, and such Notice shall state the grounds of the appeal (which may be in detail or in summary form as the appellant chooses).

G.1.2 G.1.2.1 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall forthwith notify the General Secretary that an Appeal has been lodged, at the same time passing on to the General Secretary the Notice of Appeal together with the body of papers laid before the Assembly Commission in hearing the case and the Record of the Hearing as defined in Paragraph E.12.4. The General Secretary shall thereupon act in a secretarial and administrative capacity in all matters relating to the Appeal.

G.1.2.2 At the same time the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall also notify the Moderator of the Synod, the Synod Clerk, the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries and, in a case arising under Paragraph B.3.2, the Deputy General Secretary that an Appeal has been lodged against the decision of the Assembly Commission.

G.1.3 Except for those Rules which by their context are inappropriate for the Appeals Procedure, the Rules set out in Section E shall also apply to Section G (with the necessary changes).

G.2 On receipt of the Notice of Appeal served under Paragraph G.1, the General Secretary shall as soon as possible take the following steps:

G.2.1 Acknowledge receipt of the Notice of Appeal, send to the Appellant a copy of the Record of the Hearing (see Paragraph E.12.4) and follow the procedure set out in either Paragraph G.2.2 or Paragraph G.2.3.

G.2.2 (If the Appeal is brought by the Minister under Paragraph 5.1 of Part I) serve Notice of the receipt of the Appeal on the Mandated Group, attaching to such Notice a copy of the Notice of Appeal served under Paragraph G.1.1 and of any accompanying statement of reasons and a copy of the Record of the Hearing (see Paragraph E.12.4) and call upon the Mandated Group to submit within 21 days from the date of service of the Notice under this Paragraph a counter-statement containing any comments which the Mandated Group wishes to make in connection with the Appeal or

G.2.3 (If the Appeal is brought by the Mandated Group under Paragraph 5.2 of Part I) serve Notice of the receipt of the Appeal on the Minister, attaching to such Notice a copy of the Notice of Appeal served under Paragraph G.1.1 and of any accompanying statement of reasons and a copy of the Record of the Hearing (see Paragraph E.12.4) and call upon the Minister to submit within 21 days from the date of service of the Notice under this Paragraph a counter-statement containing any comments which the Minister wishes to make in connection with the Appeal.

G.3 G.3.1 The Officers of the General Assembly shall within 14 days of receipt by the General Secretary of the Notice of Appeal under Paragraph G.1.1 of these Rules (or within such further time as they shall reasonably require) appoint the Appeals Commission in accordance with Paragraph G.3.2 and Paragraphs G.4 to G.7.

- G.3.2 The Appeals Commission for the hearing of each such appeal shall consist of the following five persons:
- G.3.2.1 A Convener who shall be a member of the United Reformed Church (but not necessarily a member of the General Assembly) with legal and/or tribunal experience to be selected by the officers of the General Assembly and
- G.3.2.2 The Moderator of the General Assembly or if for any reason he/she should be unable to serve, a former Moderator of the General Assembly to be selected by the officers of the General Assembly and
- G.3.2.3 Three other members of the General Assembly to be selected by the officers of the General Assembly.
- G.3.3 The relevant date for ascertaining whether persons qualify for appointment under Paragraph G.3.2 is the date on which under the Rules of Procedure the Secretary of the Assembly Commission notifies the General Secretary that an appeal has been lodged against the decision of the Assembly Commission.
- G.3.4 In selecting persons for appointment to the Appeals Commission in accordance with Paragraph G.3.2, the officers of the General Assembly shall, so far as possible, apply the same criteria as are set out in Paragraphs A.6.1 and C.2.4 in relation to appointments to the Commission Panel and to Assembly Commissions.
- G.3.5 All persons proposed for appointment to an Appeals Commission, in any capacity, are subject to Paragraph C.3.1.
- G.4 G.4.1 The General Secretary shall send to each of the proposed appointees for the Appeals Commission an invitation to serve on the Appeals Commission for the hearing of the Appeal in that case, naming the Minister concerned but supplying no further information about the case.
- G.4.2 The Notice of Invitation to serve shall draw the attention of each proposed appointee to Paragraph C.3.1 and shall request confirmation that s/he is willing to accept appointment and that s/he is unaware of any circumstances which in the present case might prevent him/her from serving on the Appeals Commission.
- G.4.3 The Invitee shall within 7 days of receipt of the Notice of Invitation serve on the General Secretary a Notice indicating whether s/he is able and willing to accept appointment and, if so, confirming compliance with Paragraph C.3.1.
- G.5 G.5.1 The General Secretary shall serve notice on the Parties, setting out the name and office or credentials of each proposed appointee, drawing attention to Paragraphs C.3.1 and C.3.2 and requiring notice of objection to any of the proposed appointees under Paragraph C.3.2 to be served upon the General Secretary within 14 days of the service of the notice given under this Paragraph.
- G.5.2 Any such Notice of Objection must state the grounds of such objection.
- G.5.3 To ensure that the appeals process is moved along in a timely manner, any Notice of Objection received outside the period allowed will not normally be considered unless very good reason can be shown for its late delivery.
- G.5.4 The Officers of the General Assembly shall consider every objection properly notified and shall decide whether to uphold or to reject the objection.
- G.5.5 If they reject the objection, the General Secretary shall serve notice thereof on the objector.

## Appendix 4

G.5.6 If they uphold the objection, the General Secretary shall serve notice thereof on the objector, the person to whom the objection was taken and the other Party on whom the Notice specified in Paragraph G.5.1 was served.

G.5.7 In the event of any objection being upheld, the procedure outlined in Paragraphs G.4 and G.5 of these Rules shall be repeated to complete the appointment of the Appeals Commission and to give notice to the Parties of the person appointed.

G.6 The Convener of the Appeals Commission shall not have a casting vote, unless the Appeals Commission shall, in circumstances arising under Paragraph G.7.1, consist of an even number of members.

G.7 G.7.1 In the event that any member of the Appeals Commission shall be unable to carry out his/her duties on the Appeals Commission, the remaining members shall continue to act as the Appeals Commission, subject to there being a minimum of three members.

G.7.2 In the event that for the reasons stated in Paragraph G.7.1 the Appeals Commission shall consist of fewer than three members at any time after the Appeals Commission has taken any steps in connection with the Appeal, the Appeals Commission so appointed shall stand down and be discharged and a new Appeals Commission shall be appointed in accordance with Paragraphs G.3 to G.7 to hear the Appeal.

G.7.3 Once the Appeals Commission has been validly constituted and has taken any steps in accordance with this Section G, no person shall be subsequently appointed to serve on that Appeals Commission.

G.7.4 If the Moderator of the General Assembly is unable to serve, the remaining members shall, following consultation with the Officers of the General Assembly, appoint a former moderator of the General Assembly to be the Convener of the Appeals Commission in his/her place.

G.7.5 Notwithstanding that, during the conduct of the appeal, a new person may assume the office of Moderator of the General Assembly, the person previously holding such office shall continue to serve as a member of the Appeals Commission to the exclusion of his/her successor in that office.

G.8 Each member of the Appeals Commission when appointed shall receive from the General Secretary copies of the following:

G.8.1 Notice of the Assembly Commission's decision.

G.8.2 Any statement of reasons given by the Assembly Commission.

G.8.3 Any written warning issued.

G.8.4 Any recommendations or guidance appended to the decision in accordance with Paragraph F.2.3 or Paragraph F.2.4 as the case may be.

G.8.5 The Notice of Appeal, containing the grounds for the appeal.

G.8.6 Any counter-statement received under Paragraph G.2.2 or Paragraph G.2.3.

G.8.7 The body of papers laid before the Assembly Commission in hearing the case.

G.8.8 The Record of the Hearing. (See Paragraph E.12.4)

G.9 The Appeals Commission when constituted shall consider the following matters:

G.9.1 Whether there is or may be new information which has come to light and which could not reasonably have been available to the Assembly Commission before its decision was taken under Paragraph F.2.

G.9.2 Whether any such new information would in its opinion have been material in that, had it been tested and proved to the satisfaction of the Assembly Commission, it might have caused it to reach a different decision.

G.9.3 Whether there may have been some procedural irregularity or breach of the rules of natural justice or serious misunderstanding by the Assembly Commission of the information before it or of any aspect of the Section O Process itself.

G.10 G.10.1 Before reaching its decision on the Appeal, the Appeals Commission shall constitute a Hearing at which the Parties shall attend before the Appeals Commission.

G.10.2 The General Secretary shall consult with the Convener and the other members of the Appeals Commission as to a suitable venue, date and time for the Hearing and, where possible, with the Parties as to a suitable date and time for the Hearing and having so consulted, shall decide thereupon and shall forthwith send a notice to the Parties informing them of the arrangements for the Hearing.

G.10.3 At the Hearing of the Appeal, there shall be no further investigation or re-hearing of the evidence nor any further evidence introduced, except for the purpose of considering whether there are sufficient grounds for referring the case for re-hearing in accordance with Paragraph G.11.7.

G.10.4 The General Secretary shall (unless excluded for the reasons specified in Paragraph C.3.1) attend the Hearing for the purpose of giving such procedural advice to the Appeals Commission as may be appropriate and of keeping a formal record of the Hearing. S/he shall not be present when the Appeals Commission deliberates and decides on the case.

G.10.5 If the General Secretary cannot for any reason be present at the Hearing, the Appeals Commission shall itself appoint such person as it considers appropriate to deputise for him/her for that purpose, ascertaining beforehand that such person is not excluded for reasons specified in Paragraph C.3.1. Such person will carry out the duties set out in Paragraph G.10.4 but shall not be present when the Appeals Commission deliberates and decides on the case.

G.10.6 The General Secretary or his/her deputy appointed under Paragraph G.10.5 shall prepare a summary minute of the proceedings at the Hearing (the Secretary's minute). Where possible, a verbatim record of the proceedings shall also be made by electronic recording or by such other means as shall be directed by the Convener of the Appeals Commission. The Record of the Hearing shall consist of the Secretary's minute together with any such verbatim record.

G.10.7 A representative of the Church's legal advisers shall normally be present at the Hearing in order to advise and address the Appeals Commission on matters relating to procedure, evidence and interpretation and issues arising under Paragraph G.10.3, but s/he shall not take any part in the decision reached by the Appeals Commission, nor shall s/he be present when the Appeals Commission deliberates and decides upon the case.

## Appendix 4

G.10.8 The conduct of the Hearing of the Appeal is in the hands of the Appeals Commission whose Convener will at the outset of the Hearing read out the decision of the Assembly Commission.

G.10.9 The Convener will then invite the Parties (commencing with the appellant) to make oral representations to the Appeals Commission on the subject matter of the Appeal.

G.10.10 The Hearing will then be concluded.

G.11 The Appeals Commission shall at the conclusion of the Hearing and all together but in the absence of the Parties and of the General Secretary and of the legal adviser consider and arrive at any of the following decisions (which may be taken unanimously or by a majority vote) always having in mind Paragraph 4 of Part I and in particular either Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union or the second paragraph of Part II of Schedule F to the Basis of Union whichever is relevant:

G.11.1 It may uphold the decision of the Assembly Commission to delete or

G.11.2 It may uphold in its entirety the decision of the Assembly Commission not to delete (whether or not this also includes a decision to issue a written warning to the minister under Paragraph F.2.2) or

G.11.3 It may uphold the decision of the Assembly Commission not to delete, but in addition may issue a written warning to the Minister in the terms of Paragraph F.2.2 if the Assembly Commission has not itself already done so or

G.11.4 If the Assembly Commission has decided not to delete but has issued a written warning to the Minister under Paragraph F.2.2 the Appeals Commission may uphold the decision not to delete but may direct that the written warning be withdrawn or

G.11.5 It may reverse the decision of the Assembly Commission not to delete or

G.11.6 It may reverse the decision of the Assembly Commission to delete, but may if it considers it appropriate issue a written warning to the Minister in the terms of Paragraph F.2.2 or

G.11.7 It may refer the case for re-hearing by another duly constituted Assembly Commission (but only if it considers that there has been some procedural irregularity or serious misunderstanding by the Assembly Commission of the information before it or of any aspect of the Section O Process itself or if material new information becomes available which could not reasonably have been produced before the Assembly Commission).

G.12 There shall be no appeal from the decision of the Appeals Commission and (unless Paragraph G.11.7 applies) the decision of the Appeals Commission shall bring the Minister's Suspension to an end.

G.13 In recording its decision the Appeals Commission shall comply with the following:

G.13.1 It shall state whether its decision is unanimous or by a majority.

G.13.2 It shall set out any written warning issued to the Minister under Paragraph G.11.2, G.11.3 or G.11.6.

G.13.3 It shall append a written statement of its reasons for reaching its decision, but shall not be obliged (unless it wishes to do so) to comment in detail on all or any of the matters of evidence laid before it.

G.13.4 If the decision is that the name of the Minister shall remain on the Roll of Ministers, whether or not it also decides to issue a written warning, the Appeals Commission may in its written statement (see Paragraph G.13.3) append such recommendations to its decision as it considers will be helpful to Moderators of Synod, Synods, local churches, the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary, the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries and others within the Church and also to any relevant Outside Organisation. It is emphasised that any such recommendations must relate to the future ministry of the Minister and that they will be advisory only and are not part of the decision.

G.13.5 If the decision is to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll of Ministers, the Appeals Commission is particularly requested to include in its written statement (see Paragraph F.3.3) appropriate guidance concerning any restrictions which it considers ought to be placed upon any activities involving the Minister after his/her deletion with the object of assisting Moderators of Synod, Synods, local churches, the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary, the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries and others within the Church and also any relevant Outside Organisation. It is emphasised that any such guidance is of an advisory nature and does not form part of the decision.

G.13.6 In addition to its power to make recommendations or to offer guidance under Paragraph G.13.4 or Paragraph G.13.5 respectively, the Appeals Commission may if it sees fit endorse, overrule, vary or modify in any way any recommendation made or guidance offered by the Assembly Commission in the case in question. For the avoidance of duplication, the Decision Record shall in every case set out in full any recommendations or guidance issued by the Appeals Commission, even where they simply endorse those issued by the Assembly Commission in their entirety.

G.14 As regards the notification of the decision, the General Secretary shall comply with the following:

G.14.1 S/he shall within 10 days of the date of the decision serve on the Minister and the Mandated Group notice of the decision and of the written Statement of Reasons given under Paragraph G.13 and such Notice shall (unless Paragraph G.11.7 applies) state that the Minister's Suspension ceased on the date of the Appeals Commission's decision.

G.14.2 If the decision is taken in accordance with either Paragraph G.11.3 or Paragraph G.11.6, the General Secretary shall at the same time serve on the Minister the written warning referred to in those Paragraphs and shall send a copy thereof to the Mandated Group.

G.14.3 If the decision is taken in accordance with Paragraph G.11.4, the General Secretary shall at the same time serve on the Minister and on the Mandated Group notice that the written warning issued following the decision of the Assembly Commission is withdrawn.

G.14.4 S/he shall at the same time send to the Minister and the Mandated Group copies of any recommendations or guidance appended to the decision of the Appeals Commission under Paragraph G.13.4 or Paragraph G.13.5 as the case may be.

G.14.5 S/he shall at the same time send to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission, the Moderator of the Synod, the Synod Clerk, the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries and the Deputy General Secretary copies of the documents served on the Minister and the Mandated Group under Paragraphs G.14.1 to G.14.4

and, unless Paragraph G.15 applies, stressing to all the recipients the sensitive nature of the information imparted and the need to exercise care and discretion as to how it is used. The Mandated Group shall thereupon comply with Paragraph H.4.

G.14.6 At the time of compliance with Paragraph G.14.5, the General Secretary shall also send to the responsible officer of any relevant Outside Organisation notice of the decision of the Appeals Commission (including, in the event of a decision not to delete, the date of cessation of the Minister's Suspension), together with copies of the Statement of Reasons sent to the Minister and the Mandated Group in accordance with Paragraph G.14.1 and details of any recommendations or guidance issued by the Appeals Commission as appended to its decision which it expressly states to be its wish to pass on to such Outside Organisation, stressing the sensitive nature of the information imparted and the need to exercise care and discretion as to how it is used.

G.15 If the decision is taken in accordance with Paragraph G.11.7, the Notice served by the General Secretary under Paragraph G.14.1 shall constitute a Notice of Reference Back. The Assembly Commission appointed for the re-hearing of the case shall not be given any information relating to the conduct of the previous Hearing but may have sight of the documents, statements and information delivered to the Assembly Commission under the provisions contained in Section E.

G.16 The decision so taken shall conclude the involvement of the Appeals Commission in the Section O Process, except as to the discharge of its responsibilities under Paragraph J.2, and shall have the effect provided for in Paragraph F.7.3.

G.17 The attention of the Mandated Group is particularly drawn to Paragraph H.4

## **H. Forms, service of documents and miscellaneous matters**

H.1 Model forms of Notice have been prepared to assist those concerned with the Section O Process. The forms of Notice may be amended from time to time and new forms introduced. Use of the model forms is not compulsory and minor variations in the wording will not invalidate the Notice being given, but it is strongly recommended that the model forms be used and followed as closely as possible to avoid confusion and to ensure that all relevant information is supplied at the proper time.

H.2 H.2.1 Service of any document required to be served on an individual shall be deemed to have been properly effected in any of the following ways:

H.2.1.1 By delivering the document personally to the individual to be served.

H.2.1.2 By delivering the document or sending it by first class pre-paid post or by Recorded Delivery post addressed to the last known address of the individual to be served in a sealed envelope addressed to that individual.

H.2.1.3 In such other manner as the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission (if service relates to the Appeals Procedure) may direct having regard to the circumstances.

H.2.2 Service of any document required to be served on any Mandated Group shall be deemed to have been properly effected in any of the following ways:

H.2.2.1 By delivering the document personally to that member of the Mandated Group who has been nominated in the Referral Notice to accept service or in the absence of such nomination to the person who signed the Referral Notice, provided that in either case such person is still a member of the Mandated Group when such service is required to be effected.



H.2.2.2 By delivering the document or sending it by first class pre-paid post or by Recorded Delivery post addressed to the person referred to in Paragraph H.2.2.1 at the address specified in such nomination or, in the absence of such nomination, at the address given in the Referral Notice.

H.2.2.3 In such other manner as the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission (if service relates to the Appeals Procedure) may direct having regard to the circumstances.

H.2.3 Service of any document required to be served on the Secretary of the Assembly Commission or on the General Secretary shall be deemed to have been properly served if delivered or sent by first class pre-paid post or by Recorded Delivery post addressed to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission or the General Secretary as the case may be at the address given in the current issue of the Year Book or subsequently notified or (in the absence of any such address in the Year Book) in an envelope addressed to that person at Church House, 86 Tavistock Place London WC1H 9RT and marked 'Section O Process'.

H.2.4 All documents required to be served shall be placed in a sealed envelope clearly addressed to the addressee and marked 'Private and Confidential'.

H.2.5 In the case of service of documents by first class pre-paid post, service shall be deemed to have been effected on the third day after the posting of the Notice.

H.3 Deletion as a result of the Section O Process shall have the effect of terminating any contract, written or oral, between the Minister and the United Reformed Church or any constituent part thereof in relation to his/her ministry.

H.4 Within one month of the conclusion of each case as provided in Paragraph F.7, 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 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.

*For the avoidance of confusion, there is no Section I, the Rules of Procedure moving directly from Section H to Section J.*

## **J. Report to General Assembly, costs and retention of records and papers**

J.1 The General Secretary shall report to the General Assembly all decisions reached by the Assembly Commission and the Appeals Commission (other than decisions made by the Special Appeals Body under Paragraph E.5.3) in the following manner:

J.1.1 If a decision of the Assembly Commission is subject to appeal, the Report shall simply state that a decision has been reached in a case which is subject to appeal and shall not name the Minister.

J.1.2 If a decision of the Assembly Commission is not subject to appeal and is to delete under Paragraph F.2.1, the Report shall so state and name the Minister.

## Appendix 4

J.1.3 If a decision of the Assembly Commission is not subject to appeal and is to allow the name of the Minister to remain on the Roll of Ministers under Paragraph F.2.1 with or without the issue of a written warning under Paragraph F.2.2, the Report shall so state without naming the Minister.

J.1.4 In any case which goes before the Appeals Commission, if the decision is to delete, the Report shall accord with Paragraph J.1.2 and if the decision is to allow the name of the Minister to remain on the Roll of Ministers with or without the issue of a written warning, the Report shall accord with Paragraph J.1.3.

J.2 The cost of operating the Section O Process and the reasonable and proper expenses of persons attending a Hearing and the costs of any reports obtained by or on the authority of the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission or any other costs and expenses which the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission deem to have been reasonably and properly incurred in the course of such process (but excluding any costs of representation) shall be charged to the general funds of the Church, and the Report of each case to the General Assembly shall state the total cost incurred in that case.

J.3 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall be responsible for the keeping of the record of decisions taken by the Assembly Commission and by the Appeals Commission, and for the custody of all papers relating to concluded cases, which shall be kept in a locked cabinet at Church House.



# Declaration towards a Safe Church

## A Charter for Action and Statement of Intent

We are all made in the image of God and Christ came that we may have life in all its fullness. It is our hope that anyone could find nourishment for their Christian pilgrimage in safety in our church.

***A safe church is one in which:***

- the dignity of each person is respected;
- verbal, physical, emotional, sexual, racial and spiritual harassment or abuse is challenged;
- allegations of abuse are taken seriously and appropriate authorities contacted;
- every effort is made to ensure that sufficient support is available to those in need.

We know that both harassment and abuse in all their forms happens in the church, as it does in wider society. Such behaviour mars the community and causes people pain.

**We endeavour to promote right relationships and to be a place of healing and growth by:**

- educating ourselves about harassment and abuse in all their forms;
- informing ourselves about support agencies available locally and publicising them;
- in all areas of our life, by teaching and example, emphasise that harassment and abuse is wrong;
- welcoming those who have experience of harassment or abuse into the church;
- helping those who are abused to get help and support;
- helping those who have perpetrated abuse to get help and support;
- taking the necessary steps to ensure that appropriate action is taken following all allegations of harassment or abuse.

*The contact telephone numbers for someone to talk to are to be inserted here*



# The United Reformed Church Retired Ministers' Housing

## Provision for Housing Retired Ministers and CRCWs (**'The Guidelines'**)

### **1 Preamble**

At the 1979 General Assembly the United Reformed Church accepted a moral obligation to provide housing for retired ministers and ministers' widows who could not otherwise be adequately housed. The relevant clauses of the resolution read as follows:

'The United Reformed Church delegates to its Finance and Administration department the responsibility for providing housing for retired ministers and ministers' widows and this it exercises through the United Reformed Church Retired Ministers' Housing Society Limited, an independent Company operating within the Finance department.

The Church regards it as a matter of integrity that retired ministers and ministers' widows should be adequately housed and supports the Housing Society in its appeal for funds and its objects.

The Assembly approves the appointment of a 'Retired Ministers' Housing Committee' within the Finance and Administration department to have oversight of matters concerned with the provision of retirement housing for ministers and ministers' widows and to manage the properties held on behalf of the United Reformed Church.'

These Guidelines were produced and have been revised periodically including a major revision in 1985. An appeal to the whole church was made in 2006 to secure further funds.

2 By this action Assembly did not institute an entitlement to retirement housing as of right. A minister and his/her spouse who have the finance necessary to provide for housing in their retirement (whether completely or as an equity share) may reasonably be expected to do so. Given our limited liquid capital position, the provision of housing by the Housing Society is for those who would not otherwise have any way of being adequately housed, and policies regarding use of capital are thus heavily weighted in that direction.

### **3 Parameters of the Scheme**

The ministers covered by this Scheme are ministers of Word and Sacraments and CRCWs who are on the United Reformed Church Roll and in receipt of a stipend.

### **4 Ministers**

Normally an applicant must be a minister of the United Reformed Church and must meet the following conditions:

## Appendix 6

- (1) All applicants must be in the stipendiary service of the Church at:  
EITHER (a) age 65;  
OR (b) less than age 65, but having completed 40 years service since ordination and been allowed to retire on pension without early retirement deduction;  
OR (c) less than age 65, but having been permitted to retire early on grounds of physical or mental incapacity, duly certified by a medical practitioner to the satisfaction of the Maintenance of the Ministry committee.
  - (2) The Housing committee will meet at least annually to decide a ceiling for each county or comparable area. This will be the maximum amount which the Society can make available for housing to the applicant, subject to their need being established. At the time of retirement, a minister, having served a minimum of 15 years and needing housing assistance will be offered 1/40 of that sum multiplied by the years of his/her service, up to the maximum. This will be introduced gradually during the ten years to 2018. Ministers can apply directly to the Housing Society for special consideration if their financial circumstances mean that they could not be housed using this formula.
  - (3) Where a minister satisfies the requirements above but moves into part-time service immediately upon ceasing full-time service, the entitlement to consideration for assistance will be carried forward until final retirement.
  - (4) Equivalent full-time service is pro rata part-time service (i.e. ten years of 50% scoped service is equivalent to five years full-time service)
  - (5) An application from any minister whose service falls just outside these guidelines may be considered nine months before retirement in the light of the merits of the case and the resources available at the time.
- 5 Service for this purpose will be full-time and stipendiary in an appointment for which the terms of service include the provision of housing by the Church or other body, and within one or more of the following categories:
- (1) Service with the United Reformed Church (URC) AND/OR the Congregational Church of England and Wales AND/OR the Presbyterian Church of England AND/OR the Re-formed Association of Churches of Christ and their predecessors, either in pastoral charge, in an Assembly, synod or district appointment or in a special ministry. Service with The Congregational Union of Scotland prior to 2000, by agreement at the time, is excluded.
  - (2) Service in a national ecumenical council OR agency in the United Kingdom (UK) in which the URC is directly involved and in which the terms of service are comparable to those of ministers in the URC. Normally such service shall not exceed ten years.
  - (3) Service with a county OR regional ecumenical body in the UK in which the URC is directly involved either as full-time service or as part-time service coupled with service in a URC Pastorate. Normally such service shall not exceed ten years.
  - (4) Service in a Local Ecumenical Project (LEP) in which the URC is a full participant: such LEP being duly registered as a local congregation or group of congregations in the British Council of Churches or the successor bodies' registers and recorded as a Local Church in the URC.

- (5) Service overseas since July 1977 through the Council for World Mission OR through the Mission committee of the URC, as full-time ministerial service.
- (6) Service as a chaplain in hospitals, schools, colleges or universities, industry or the armed forces which is full-time ministerial service on terms which are comparable with those of full-time URC ministers and in which the URC is directly involved. Normally, only the first ten years of such service shall count towards calculation of housing assistance.
- (7) Service with Mansfield, Northern, The Queen's, Westminster and Scottish Congregational Colleges on terms comparable with the conditions of service of full-time URC ministers.
- (8) Such other service rendered by a URC minister as may from time to time be agreed by the Retired Ministers Housing committee to constitute qualifying service.

It is in the interest of a minister, who is considering taking up an appointment involving service as outlined in sub-paragraphs (2) to (7) above OR in any other activity and at retirement will require assistance with housing, to consult the secretary of the Retired Ministers Housing committee.

## 6 Widows and Widowers

- (1) The widow, widower or registered civil partner of a minister who dies in retirement as a tenant of a Society property will be granted the transfer of the tenancy on the same terms as the deceased minister providing that the marriage/registration took place before the minister's 65<sup>th</sup> birthday, or the date of retirement if later.
- (2) The widow, widower or registered civil partner of a minister who dies in full-time service and whose service meets or could have met the requirements of paragraph 4(1) above by his or her 65<sup>th</sup> birthday, will be assisted with housing (except where personal financial resources are sufficient to provide for this).
- (3) In all other cases the needs of a minister's widow, widower or registered civil partner will be considered in the light of the circumstances of each case.

## 7 Part-time Pastorates

- (1) It is not the responsibility of the Society to provide housing for ministers in part-time stipendiary pastorates. Therefore, a minister who moves from a full-time to a part-time stipendiary pastorate at the age of 65 or later can have no expectation of assistance with retirement housing at this stage, but will be considered for retirement housing when finally retiring from pastoral charge, subject to the qualifying service requirements in sections 4 and 5 above being met.
- (2) Should a retired minister who is already a tenant of the Society, or of a property managed by the Society on behalf of the URC, be called to a part-time stipendiary pastorate, or his/her period of charge be extended beyond that initial call, the Society will consider continuation of the tenancy subject to consideration by the pastorate making the call to pay the rent surcharge appropriate to that property if possible.





TLS students at a residential meeting



# Students sent by synods

(Information as of February 2008)

## Northern

### Non-stipendiary

Kate Baxter (SURCC)  
 Alison Mills (NEOC)  
 Helen Weatherley (NEOC)

### CRCW

Ann Honey (Northern)

## North Western

### Stipendiary

Mark Bates (Northern)  
 Alan Crump (Northern)  
 Michele Jarmany (Northern)

### Non-stipendiary

Michael Aspinall (Northern)  
 Doreen Goodship (Northern)  
 Alan McGougan (Northern)  
 Wendy White (synod Placement)

## Mersey

### Stipendiary

Caroline Andrews (Northern)  
 Hilary Bell (Northern)  
 Jeff Hughes (Northern)

### Non-stipendiary

Allison Claxton (Northern)

## Yorkshire

### Stipendiary

Philip Baiden (Northern)  
 Paul Robinson (Northern)

## South Western

### Stipendiary

Paul Ellis (SWMTC)  
 Timothy Searle (Mansfield)

### Non-stipendiary

Sue Cossey (STETS)  
 Peter Scott (Westminster)

## East Midlands

### Stipendiary

Debbie Brown (Northern)  
 Janet Hopewell (Westminster)  
 Jenny Mills (Mansfield)  
 Elizabeth Thomson (Westminster)

### Non-stipendiary

Julian Sanders (EMMTC)

### CRCW

Jennie Crane (Northern)

## West Midlands

### Stipendiary

Helen Carr (Queen's)  
 Kim Plumpton (Westminster)  
 Timothy Mullings (Northern)

## Eastern

### Stipendiary

Mark Bish (Westminster)  
 James Church (Westminster)  
 Claire Gouldthorp (Queen's)  
 Kate Hackett (Westminster)  
 Andrew Mann-Ray (Queen's)  
 Matthew Stone (Westminster)  
 James Taylor (Westminster)

### Non-stipendiary

Mary Playford (Westminster)  
 Andrew Royal (ERMC)

### CRCW

Mark Tubby (Northern)

## Wessex

### Stipendiary

Andrew Hall (Northern)  
 Mark Meatcher (STETS)  
 Hilary Nabarro (Westminster)

### Non-stipendiary

Nicky Gilbert (Westminster)  
 John Lee (STETS)

### Thames North

#### Stipendiary

Lucy Berry (Northern)  
Heather Cadoux (Westminster)  
Sohail Ejaz (Westminster)  
Shirley Knibbs (Westminster)  
Peter Little (Westminster)  
Sue McCoan (Westminster)  
Iain McLaren (Mansfield)  
Findelvh McMahon (Westminster)  
Graham Tarn (Westminster)

#### CRCW

Karen Campbell (Northern)

### Southern

#### Stipendiary

Sue Fender (Westminster)  
Romilly Micklem (Westminster)  
Mark Robinson (Westminster)

#### Non-stipendiary

Ian Gow (SEITE)  
Bernard Fidler (STETS)  
Rosemary Shirley (STETS)  
Darryl Sinclair (STETS)  
Wendy Swan (SEITE)

### Scotland

#### Stipendiary

Steven Manders (SURCC)



# Statistics of Students in Training

# Appendix 8

General Assembly 2008

	Students in Training				Anticipated entry into URC Service			
	Feb 2005	Feb 2006	Feb 2007	Feb 2008	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>STIPENDIARY</b>								
<b>Full-time courses</b>								
Mansfield College	6	6	5	3	2	1		
Northern College (RCL)	16	17	14	10	5	2	2	1
Queen's Foundation	6	6	3	3	1	1	1	
SURCC (RCL)	4	4	1	2		1	1	
Westminster College (RCL)	18	14	20	19	6	3	7	3
<b>Part-time courses</b>								
NEOC	1	1	1					
Northern College (RCL)			3	2			1	1
STETS	1	1						
SURCC (RCL)								
SWMTC	2	2	1	1	1			
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>CRCW</b>								
Northern College (RCL)	5	6	4	4	1	2		1
<b>NON-STIPENDIARY</b>								
<b>Part-time courses</b>								
ERMC	2	2	1	1		1		
EMMTC	1		1	1			1	
Northern College (RCL)	5	7	3	4		2		2
NEOC	1	2	2	2		1	1	
SEITE	3	3	2					
STETS	6	5	7	6		2	4	
SWMTC	1							
Synod		1	3	3	3			
Westminster College (RCL)		1	1	3		2		1
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>9</b>

ERMC Eastern Region Ministry Course  
 EMMTC East Midlands Ministry Training Course  
 NEOC North East Ordination Course  
 SURCC Scottish United Reformed and Congregational College  
 SEITE South East Institute for Theological Education  
 STETS Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme  
 SWMTC South West Ministry Training Course  
 (RCL) Resource Centre for Learning

## Appendix 8

When recently ordained/commissioned ministers and CRCWs were together in November 2007 at the new ministers' conference (which orientates them to Church House and committee staff) some of them gave us a few words describing their excitement and anticipation as they made the transition from their initial training into their new roles and service:

### **Pat Oliver** studied at Northern College and is now a CRCW at Tonge Moor, Bolton



Looking back at the variety of life experience I have accumulated I can see how God called me into the church related community work ministry. From lab technician to keep-fit trainer, mother to counselling skills tutor, community worker to inner-city church warden, all laying the groundwork for my current ministry at Tonge Moor Church-in-Community. We are in partnership with the new Children's Centre, built on the site of the original church, and are setting up an intergenerational project called 'Building Bridges'. Our prayerful hope is to help reduce alienation between the generations locally and to support all those working to truly empower our local community and we believe deeply that 'God will delight when we are creators of justice and joy'.

### **Annette Haigh** studied at Northern College and is now a stipendiary minister within the Halifax Group of Reformed Churches

My training for ministry began on the day I was born – into a manse (my father is Conrad Husk). The last four years of formal training have brought me to the beginning of formal ministry. This is a really exciting time of finding my feet in a role that my whole life has shaped me for, and in which I am finding the privilege of sharing my faith journey within the Halifax Group of United Reformed Churches. I am enjoying the privilege and responsibility of walking alongside the congregations and colleagues in this team ministry and anticipating the good things God will do.



### **Dominic Grant** studied at Westminster College and is now a stipendiary minister at Crowborough United Reformed and Wadhurst Methodist Churches, West Sussex



After four exhilarating years at Westminster College, I have been called to a pastorate where in each of the churches there's a strong sense of being on the threshold of a new stage in the journey. At Crowborough, we're exploring how we may use our recently redeveloped halls and sanctuary as a mission resource – beyond simply relying upon rental income from outside groups. At Wadhurst, there is the opportunity to develop rural outreach and to build upon existing provision for older folk. It's a vibrant and exciting place to be, with plenty for this born-and-bred 'townie' to learn. I'm conscious of the privilege and am relishing the challenge.

**Ann Sheldon** studied at *Westminster College* and is now minister at *Sutton Coldfield United Reformed Church*



I'm very grateful for my time at Westminster which gave me space to think and grow. I'm excited about beginning my new post and having the opportunity of exploring with the congregation what God is calling us to be and do in our busy town centre location.

**Philip Brooks** studied at *Northern College* and is now a stipendiary minister at *Christ Church, Littlelever and Wharton Church*

I have just joined the United Reformed Church/Methodist LEP in Littlelever and two churches in Little Hulton, Salford (one United Reformed Church, one Methodist) which are part of the Farnworth and Worsley Methodist Circuit. During training served as Town Centre Chaplain in Bolton. Really interested in how the church becomes a relevant community partner.



**Caroline Vodden** studied at *Mansfield College* and is now a stipendiary minister at *Broadstone and Lytchett Minster, Dorset*



Training at Mansfield College was a privilege and the fulfilment of a life-long dream to study in Oxford. Sadly my final year was overshadowed by the tragic death of our 11 year old son, Ben. So I enter my pastoral ministry in Broadstone and Lytchett Minster weakened and scarred by personal tragedy yet confident of God's call, convinced of God's goodness and reliant on God's strength. We have much to explore and learn together about how to be God's people in a world of both outstanding beauty and deep suffering.

**Helen Higgin-Botham** studied at Westminster College and is now a stipendiary minister at Fulwood URC and Christ Church LEP, Lancs



After living in the South for over 20 years and then training at Westminster College, Cambridge, it was a great surprise and a blessing to be called back to my 'roots' (I grew up in the North East of Lancashire and now am minister in the North West of Lancs). Being on my 'home turf' once more is both exciting and nostalgic as I seek to minister in this place and find out what God has planned for the folks at Fulwood and Longridge.

**John Potter** studied at Queen's Foundation and is now a stipendiary minister at the Church of the Cross, Thamesmead

I am married to Pauline Rate who is a United Reformed Church minister and we have a son Daniel. My former profession was a newspaper photographer working in the Midlands. We lived in Gloucester where Pauline was the minister of two churches and I trained for the ministry at the Queen's Foundation in Birmingham. In September 2007 I was ordained and inducted into the ecumenical ministry team in Thamesmead, with pastoral charge of Church of the Cross. It is an exciting multicultural area to serve with plenty of opportunities and challenges to come.



**Diane Farquhar** studied on the Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme and is now a non-stipendiary minister at Christ Church, Tonbridge



I've gained so much from training with people from a wide variety of Christian traditions on the STETS course and realising our unity in the mission of God's Kingdom. I'm now excited to begin a non-stipendiary ministry in Tonbridge (combined with my personal version of 'tentmaking' which is my part-time job as an editor and translator), where the focus of my ministry is community outreach in partnership with other churches in the town.

**Lesley Moseley** studied at Mansfield College and is now a stipendiary minister at Giffnock Church, Scotland



After former roles in health and education, mostly overseas, travelling to Giffnock from the East Midlands didn't seem so far. I'm enjoying learning and growing with new friends as we seek to do God's will in, what for me, are, new and exciting ways.

**Don Nichols** studied on the Eastern Region Ministry Course and is now a non-stipendiary minister at Southwold United Reformed Church and North Lowestoft United Reformed Church, Suffolk

Following my internship in a small rural village I've been ordained and inducted into a community ministry role on the East Coast of Suffolk and Waveney Valley. It's a very exciting role involving ecumenical relationships, emerging church and youth work (with those to whom the church is an alien culture). I've found that there is no substitute for spending time with people and showing that you care, that Jesus cares.



**Rosalind Selby** studied at Northern College and is now a stipendiary minister at Wanstead and Gants Hill United Reformed Churches, in London and Essex



Having lived in various parts of England, I have now returned to Greater London. I have a passion for the Bible and helping others to open its pages and discover its relevance in their own lives. I also want to continue to explore what it means to be a church in the 'leafy suburbs' – I believe this is an under-acknowledged challenge in the Church.

**Stuart Radcliffe** studied at Northern College and is now a stipendiary minister at Edgeley Road and The Heatons United Reformed Churches, Cheshire



Working within two United Reformed churches in Stockport both investing the possibilities of Ecumenical links. Looking forward to discovering how God can use us all to further God's mission with and in local communities.

**Craig Jesson** studied at Scottish United Reformed and Congregational College and is now a stipendiary minister at Airdie Park and Coatbridge Churches, Lanarkshire

I've discovered that the challenges I was expecting to face were not as difficult as I imagined. However some of the challenges I was not expecting to face have proven to be problematic but also enlightening, educational and inspiring!





# Reports from Colleges

## Mansfield College, Oxford Ministerial Training Course

1        Though we continue the process of running down the ministerial training course—with three ordinands in training this academic year, and one ordinand next year—we endeavour to maintain a high standard of ministerial formation for those remaining. There is certainly no lack of commitment or enthusiasm from the ordinands that remain. Jenny Mills and Tim Searle are in their final year of training and both have received calls from pastorates to which they will be inducted and ordained in the summer. Iain McLaren will be our final ordinand, due to complete his course in 2009, and his training will be delivered principally by Regent's Park College. Arrangements are in hand to ensure that either through the college chaplain who will be appointed later this year or by other means Iain's formation will be maintained. Erna Stevenson continues to fulfill an important role as chaplain to the small ordinand community. The Baptist staff and students for the ministry at Regent's Park College continue to be supportive and provide counterparts and teachers for our combined pastoral studies programme and the Bachelor of Theology degree course.

2        At the end of last academic year two ordinands were awarded leaving certificates and were ordained and inducted to pastorates: Caroline Vodden to Broadstone, Poole, and Lytchett Minster; Lesley Moseley to Giffnock. We also bade farewell to Walter Houston who retired having been director of the ministerial training course and chaplain to the college for seven years. Friends, colleagues, former students, and family attended a farewell reception, and tributes were paid to Walter's long and distinguished service to the Church, theological education, ministerial training, and Old Testament scholarship. Julian Templeton has been acting director of Ministerial Training during 2007-08 and finishes this summer. Benjamin Williams has been acting chaplain to the college for the same period. John Muddiman continues to tutor ordinands in New Testament, and Peggy Morgan tutors ordinands in the study of Religion. The Principal, Dr Diana Walford, continues to support the ministerial training course, and John Proctor provides strong, thoughtful and able chairmanship of the Ministerial Education and Training committee (METC) which continues to have oversight of the ordinands' training.

3        The ordinands have continued to be at the centre of the worshipping life of the college, regularly preparing the chapel for worship and leading worship. With the encouragement of the acting chaplain and John Muddiman, associate chaplain, an undergraduate chapel choir has been formed. The new choir, under the direction of John Oxlade, has enhanced the worship offered in the chapel and has significantly increased undergraduate attendance. Though having been formed for only six

months, the choir, augmented by visiting singers and an orchestra, gave a creditable presentation of Bach's St John's Passion during Lent. A survey has been done of the chapel organ revealing that a great deal of money will need to be expended to refurbish and maintain this fine instrument for the future.

4 At the time of writing, the closing date for applications for the new part-time Chaplain-Fellow has passed and it is hoped that the successful applicant for this vacancy will offer both pastoral care and leadership of worship in the college, as well as being a point-of-contact for the United Reformed Church. 2008-09 will be the final academic year of the ministerial training course at Mansfield College. The college intends to mark and celebrate the 123 years of its contribution to ministerial training with a service of thanksgiving and a reception in 2009. Alumni and supporters will be advised of the details of this event by the development office.

5 The college continues to admit students on a full-time or part-time basis for the MTh in Applied Theology. This is suitable as an in-service course for ministers and CRCW's at EM3 level. The University of Oxford admits research students in theology for the MPhil full-time and DPhil both full-time and part-time. We welcome United Reformed Church ministers and others to join the college to study for these as well as for the MTh.

6 As the ministerial training course draws to a close we would appreciate your prayers for ordinands and staff as they endeavour to maintain course quality, commitment and community with a very small cohort. Pray also for the nearly 300 students and over 30 staff of Mansfield College reading and tutoring a wide range of subjects, including theology, that they would continue to be formed by a spirit of open-minded inquiry. Pray for the new Chaplain-Fellow, that the worship of God and witness to the gospel would continue to be offered regularly in accordance with the college's constitution and the intention of its Congregational founders. Finally, pray that the United Reformed Church's Education and Learning committee and Mansfield College's Governing Body will together find the most appropriate way in which the college can continue to be of service to the United Reformed Church.

# Northern College

## a Resource Centre for Learning

Here's a flavour of the fast pace of developments as we continue exploring what it means to be a United Reformed Church RESOURCE CENTRE for LEARNING:

### Renewable resources

#### New courses

1.1 Our widely-respected 'Faith in Living' course is currently being replaced with the new 'Learning for Mission and Ministry' course – a new but related course designed to allow ownership by both Luther King House and the three local Anglican Dioceses. Our Manchester MA degree in Contextual Theology is similarly being refreshed as we introduce a number of new modules to make it even more appropriate and attractive for serving ministers and others interested in exploring their faith by working at Masters level.

#### New library

1.2 As part of a major refurbishment of our shared home (Luther King House) we now have a splendid new library with an easily-accessible array of shelving for all our books and a separate long, low, scarlet reading room that really makes you want to stay, read and research using our book collection or our computers or your own laptop on line.

#### New possibilities

1.3 The offer from North Western United Reformed Church synod that we might house their resource collection invites us to consider developing our library as an attractive and accessible centre for learning resources for churches of all denominations across our region.

#### New students

1.4 We continue to be grateful for the ministry students sent to us by the United Reformed Church. We are delighted to welcome Allison Claxton, Jennie Crane, Alan McGougan and Paul Robinson who joined us in September 2007.

### Collaborative centres

#### New facilities

2.1 As well as a new library, the remodelling of Luther King House has allowed us to fit a large new lounge off the reception area across from the dining room, a new conservatory-style corridor from the main entrance to the chapel (which is now completely separate from the library), new (and more) toilets near the front door and a new, bright entrance lobby. The whole place is much more attractive, welcoming and appropriate for our students, for conferences and as a residential centre. It all looks, feels and works so much better!

#### New colleagues

2.2 We've been sharing teaching programmes with Baptist, Methodist and Unitarian colleagues in Luther King House for many years, but in September 2007 we started teaching a shared weekend and part-time programme with the three local Anglican dioceses – Chester, Liverpool and Manchester. This has involved getting to know a whole host of new colleagues and students. The first year of the new course has about 80 starting students.

### **New centres**

2.3 Sharing this new weekend course has meant teaching outside Luther King House at weekend courses in Liverpool Hope University and the University of Chester as well as welcoming lots of new students to our own home base. Weeknight teaching is also spread across the region in Liverpool, Wigan, Bury, Chester, Macclesfield and Luther King House. We also develop placements for practical learning for all our students all through their courses in settings close to their own homes. At present this means enabling and supporting learning in such diverse places as Norwich, London, Nottingham, Derby, Sheffield, Newcastle, Blackburn, Liverpool, the Wirral and Shrewsbury.

### **New coalitions** (United Reformed Church)

2.4.1 College staff have always contributed widely to the life of the United Reformed Church.

2.4.2 John Parry's contributions in the arena of interfaith studies is one obvious example. He has recently been on sabbatical leave updating his PhD thesis on the encounter of Sikhs and Christians with a view to publishing. It appears that it is the only work of its kind, there being no other history and analysis of the subject from India, Europe or the States. He spent the early part of the sabbatical in Amritsar as a guest of the Diocese. This enabled him to discuss with Sikhs and Christians there the nature of recent developments. He gave a lecture at Guru Nanak Dev University. He has also spent time in the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan amongst some of the Northern College's former MA students whilst leading a group of United Reformed Church visitors to Taiwan. The richness of this engagement will continue to inform John's contribution to the Church.

2.4.3 In the realm of community work a friend of the college, Professor Paul Ballard has collaborated with tutor Lesley Husselbee on the book *Community and Ministry: An Introduction to Community Development in a Christian Context*, which was published by SPCK in October 2007.

2.4.4 *INSPIRE* (a Methodist Publication) have recently published an anthology for *CHASTE* (the churches campaign against sex trafficking) edited by Carrie Pemberton, Alison Myers and one of our students, Lucy Berry. Both Lucy and John Campbell have a number of pieces in this publication.

2.4.5 Meanwhile Jan Berry is working on a book for Equinox publishers, based on her doctoral research, which is due to be submitted in October of this year. It looks at the ways in which women are creating their own rituals and liturgies to mark significant life passages, and has the provisional title of *Ritual Making Women*. She is involved in teaching and redevelopment of the MA and is also contributing to Training for Learning and Serving courses on worship. She was guest editor of the December 2007 edition of *Reform*, which focused on education and learning within the United Reformed Church, and included a book of worship resources. She is also contributing prayers and worship resources to the **Vision4Life** programme, and to next year's *Prayer Handbook*.

2.4.6 But becoming a Resource Centre for Learning has added an exciting dimension to staff contribution to the Church. We've delighted in the closer relationships and co-operation we're developing with Westminster College, Cambridge and the Scottish College. We're also enjoying developing (with those two Colleges) our shared links with learning enablers in all the synods and with the national centre at Windermere. It's good to be part of trying to build wider coalitions for learning. Together we can plan to make efficient use of all the church's creativity to enable every one of us in the United Reformed Church to go further with our own life-long faith learning.

## Limitless learning

### Learning on-line

3.1 Associated with our new course, so we can teach students all across the country between the weekends when they travel to be with us in the North West, we've begun putting class materials on our own learning website (so far only accessible to registered students). This has meant the fast assimilation of lots of new skills that we hope will help us if we need to develop on line materials for church people too.

### Whole church learning

3.2 Already we are sharing in new dimensions of whole church learning, most notably the new United Reformed Church initiative **Vision4Life**. We find a real privilege in being a part of this process that is a significant experiment in how we can best resource all our churches to rediscover the roots of our faith in a way that encourages and enables us to be church more effectively – and hopefully in a way that encourages us all too!

### Learning by living

3.3 One of the delights of being in a centre for learning (even as a teacher) is that you get wonderful opportunities to learn alongside everyone else. Pastors from overseas (this year from Madagascar and Nigeria) who come to study on our MA programme also contribute to our learning, as do UK students who bring all the wealth of their own perspectives, skills and experience in family, church and work life.

### Longing for more learning

3.4 In the midst of all our encouragements and excitements we share a big sadness. We wish there were more people offering for the ministries of the United Reformed Church – not just because we'd like more students, but because we fear for the Church in the future if we do not raise up, encourage and enable more of us to share in active ministries.

### Leaving to continue learning

3.5 We're happy to be part of the great chain of learning that enables ministry, but we know people must move on. This year we said farewell to a number of students who have now moved out to ministry with the United Reformed Church (and one with the Moravian Church). We wish them all God's blessing in their new ministries:

Philip Brooks	SM	Little Lever and Little Hulton (North Western synod)
Ashley Evans	SM	Plaistow and Stratford (Thames North synod)
Annette Haigh	SM	Halifax Group (Yorkshire synod)
Liz Kam	CRCW	United Reformed Church Norwich (East Midlands synod)
Maloney Robert	NSM	Coventry and Warwickshire area (West Midlands synod)
Marcus Hargis	SM	Burslem and Clayton (West Midlands synod)
Michael Newman	SM	Baildon Moravian Church (Yorkshire)
Pat Oliver	CRCW	Tonge Moor (North Western synod)
Stuart Radcliffe	SM	The Heatons (North Western synod)
Rosalind Selby	SM	Wanstead and Gants Hill (Thames North synod)
Carolyn White	SM	Hereford Team Ministry (West Midlands synod)

# The Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education

## Overview

1 This academic year continues to be a good one for Queen's. Keywords that can describe the present and continuing mood include: excitement; energy; and creative and strategic thinking. One of the implications is that ongoing changes continue to characterise life at Queen's – a place and space dedicated to excellence in theological education, personal formation, mission studies and research for the whole people of God. The most recent inspection by the churches, which has been largely positive, has affirmed all of this and has also come up with a few suggestions that will enhance Queen's Business Plan. Yet the diverse and ecumenical nature of, and the fact that Queen's Foundation sits outside common perceptions of what a theological college or course are like, presented the inspectors with a huge challenge.

## Celebrating and modelling unity in diversity

2.1 At Queen's we not only attempt to celebrate and model unity in diversity, through a community that is international, multicultural, and ecumenical: within the confines of available resources, Queen's continue to 'walk the talk' of enabling Christians to deepen their spiritual life, to grow in a faith that is generous, enquiring, deeply rooted and creative in thought and practice, and is passionate for God's work in God's world.

2.2 In this context of a vibrant, growing and diverse community, the work of the Foundation as a single institution presently revolves around three centres – Ministerial Formation, Mission Studies and Graduate and Research – all actively engaged in expanding their work. The single staff team, and a single management structure and budget maximises resources for all and provides an institution with potential for further development. The Foundation is thereby fulfilling the targets and aspirations of the sponsoring churches to bring together in creative ways diverse but mutually complementary forms of theological education and training. The next phase of development for the Foundation builds on this secure basis and seeks to expand the diversity and scope of the 'centres' within the Foundation.

## Training for ministry in a multicultural, multifaith context

3 Queen's has a long commitment to nurturing and developing theological education for Black and Asian students and candidates and fostering research and educational methodologies that draw on and value the experiences, insights and perspectives of Black and Asian people. Set within the multi-ethnic, diverse context of Birmingham, Queen's is unique among British theological education institutions in having a staff group of diverse ethnicities and four members of staff whose specialist work is in the field of Black and Asian theological studies. We are the lead institution in this field in the UK and indeed internationally, as evidenced by the fact that the Black Theology Journal is edited by staff from Queen's. The Black Theological Forum and the Black Religious Scholars' Support Group, meets at Queen's under the leadership of staff here. One of the exciting projects that builds on this expertise is the development of a new Centre for Mission and Ministry in multifaith and multicultural contexts to serve both historic and Black led/majority churches.

**We hope that this will become a resource for ALL the churches.**

## The Cost of success

4.1 The success of the last few years has also brought new issues as a result of working at capacity in many areas. With a growing student in-take, class sizes in a range of core subjects are very large; numbers on a Tuesday evening, when part-time students gather alongside full-time students, are already over a comfortable limit and cannot be increased further; workloads are at maximum levels for academic and administrative staff; the campus has very little unused accommodation, and rooms are frequently 'hot-bedded'; 'external' conferences are at a minimum as Foundation activities mean the campus is used seven days a week for most parts of the year. Plans are already afoot to invest in upgrading the campus and improve accommodation and teaching and administration facilities.

4.2 A significant encouragement is the way the Church of England and the Methodist Church are committed to Queen's to train both full and part-time ordinands. Moreover, we are greatly encouraged by the discussions taking place with Black Majority Churches and their desire to use Queen's in the training and education of their pastors and lay leaders. We look forward to continue providing for the remaining two United Reformed Church ordinands who will complete their training at Queen's.

## A library for all

5 A real treasure of Queens is our library, which is a first class resource for all students and staff. It holds about 50,000 books, 65 print journals (with access to another 300 online). A full time professional librarian is employed who provides an excellent level of service to all users. The library seeks to complement the resources at the University of Birmingham, which are also available to students, and is actively responding to the challenges of widening access within the region.

## Writing theology

6 In the midst of the busy life of the Foundation, Queen's academic staff (15 in total) continue to make significant contribution to research, conferences and publications. Recent and forthcoming publications include the following: David Allen, *Deuteronomy and Exhortation in Hebrews* (Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Michael Jagessar and Anthony Reddie (eds), *Black British Theology: A Reader* (Equinox, 2007); Nicola Slee, *The Book of Mary* (SPCK, 2007); Nicola Slee, Michael Jagessar and Stephen Burns, *The Edge of God: New Liturgical Texts and Contexts in Conversation* (Epworth, 2008/2009); Joshva Raja, *Did Jesus feed five thousand people? : hermeneutical secrets of John's Gospel!* (SPCK, 2007).

# Scottish United Reformed and Congregational College

## a Resource Centre for Learning

### Partnership with the United Reformed Church

1.1 For the last ten to fifteen years, the College has been working with the synod of Scotland (and its predecessor the Congregational Union of Scotland) towards a more integrated strategy and programme of learning for all. The Principal carries out the full range of responsibilities of a synod training officer and acts as its educational adviser through engagement across its committees. Though some specific learning programmes are offered to particular learner groups (eg lay preachers), most learning is in wider groups drawn from across church life.

1.2 The college and synod of Scotland have now agreed a fresh partnership arrangement in which the college is resourced and recognised to provide a range of educational services to the synod. This 'new' agreement of course follows on from two centuries of close collaboration, going back into the life of the then Congregational Union of Scotland. We welcome this re-affirmation of the church's trust in the college as an educational provider and adviser. In Education for Ministry 1, we are delighted to work also with the Northern synod and to have an ordinand from them in the college community.

1.3 Though we have very limited resources, we do seek to be involved in serving the wider denominational community. We are glad that in 2009 one of the ministerial 'refresher' courses will be in Scotland and that we will have a role in hosting that programme. With the other RCLs, we are seeking to find ways of sharing in resources and in collaboration. It is inevitable that there is some business, eg the support of regional training partnerships in England, which are naturally the business of our sister RCLs while we have a particular focus on relating to educational issues and engagements north of the border. We are anxious however that we should be as fully involved as we can in conversations and collaborations that embrace the whole of the United Reformed Church and its educational partners. We hope that we can bring to that not only the Scottish perspective but our particular experience and gifts.

### Programme

2.1 Formal academic training for ordinands which in Scotland is provided through partnership with the universities is complemented by a denominational programme provided largely on Wednesday and open to all in the synod and ecumenically. A glimpse at some of the course and events provision for 2008-09 perhaps better than description gives some flavour of what we are about.

2.2 Through our Wednesday programme we bring together ordinands, ministers and lay people from the churches. Courses in the coming year are to include:

- **Wisdom** – What is it? – the Wisdom of the Desert – Wisdom in the Old Testament – Grassroots wisdom – Nurturing wisdom – Living wisely.
- **Contemporary hymn writing.**
- **Sacred space** – The significance of place – Space apart – Architecture and worship space – Nurturing the space within.
- **Ministry with men** – Masculinity, metrosexuality and meaning – Men's experience of church – Men and spirituality – Men and later life – Men are missing.



- **Reformed ministry** – The ministry of the faithful – The preaching ministry – The sacramental ministry – Ministry ever reforming.
- **Hedgehogs and foxes** – The death of big ideas – Pluralism in a world that fears difference – Liberty in a surveillance society – Nations and nationalism out-dated and dangerous? (Isaiah Berlin centenary).
- **Memories** – Memory is what makes us – Churches' memories, from restraint to resource – Passing on the story – Memory, reminiscence and biography in later life – Memory, loss and identity – Creating community through shared meaning.
- **Stocktaking** in three units – appreciative inquiry with congregations to help them reflect on what has gone well– PESTLE: an analysis tool to survey the context of church life – ministry development in the United Reformed Church.
- **Preaching** – Exploring different models of preaching practice for all who preach in the synod.
- **Psalms** – Comment on the Psalms with Brueggemann.
- **Story** – Units include Story and pastoral care, Biblical story telling, Life story in later life, Our story and the greater story.
- **Nurturing** – A course in nurturing congregations in their fellowship together.
- **Creativity** – Inquiry and questioning.
- **Spirituality.**
- **Prayer** – Units include The Jesus Prayer, The Lord's Prayer, Julian of Norwich, the Psalms.

2.3 Our retreat programme is planned to include retreats around *The Sound of Silence* (after Simon and Garfunkel), Scottish religious music through the ages, Eucharist, the Celtic saints, the liturgical music of Messiaen (his centenary), Water, a celebration of Robert Burns (b1759) and of William Blake, prophet, poet and painter. We hope also to offer a number of continuing education courses, particularly in the fields of ministry with older people and biblical storytelling, as well as training for ministers and others who are asked to take on companion ministries (eg appraisal partners or pastoral advisers).

## Ecumenical developments in Scotland

3 With the ending of the last major church adult learning collaboration in Scotland a number of years ago, we are beginning to see the early signs of renewed ecumenical collaborative commitment in Scotland. An informal lay learning group has been coming together, at first focused primarily on mutual support and information-sharing, but now beginning to be the forum for inter-denominational planning and collaboration. We recognise that we are still largely at the stage of preparing our own programmes and then welcoming others to share in them rather than engaging ecumenically in the identification of and responding to needs. The Resourcing Churches website has been slow to take off as a space for making our educational resources the resources of the whole church community in Scotland, but has potential that may be better realised as we learn to use it more effectively. We are heartened by signs that at least some of the churches in Scotland may have a serious interest in the potential for the TLS programme here. In a sense, of course, it would be a 'bringing it home', though we are conscious that it has developed significantly since its early days here. The college in partnership with the synod has had difficulty in creating viable learning groups in localities across Scotland but an ecumenical collaboration would make these possible as well as enriching the breadth of perspectives that learners would encounter. The United Reformed Church in Scotland is engaged in ecumenical conversations with the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Methodist Church in Scotland. We are pleased that the partners have identified ministerial and lay learning as areas in which they want particularly to encourage further working together (without weakening wider ecumenical links).

### Vocations

4 Our role and responsibility is not simply to welcome candidates whom the church has already recognised and sent into training for ministry. We are working particularly with the synod of Scotland to foster vocational awareness, both for ministry of Word and Sacraments but in other forms of service also. Both parties are conscious that no-one from the synod has offered for the ministry of church related community work. With the lay preaching commissioner, we are seeking to bring more people in lay preaching and worship-leading and to broaden the profile of that group. We are mindful too of a responsibility to facilitate thinking in the church about future patterns of ministry. At the synod of Scotland meeting this year, we facilitated a workshop on local collaborative ministry, exploring thinking from and experience in the Scottish Episcopal Church. The response from synod members attending was positive and enthusiastic. This has sparked off thinking about how we can work with congregations to discover their capacity for being empowered grassroots churches. We are exploring with development team staff the learning implications of this and hope to begin making educational provision to support this work in the coming academic year. Experience at assessment conferences and in other parts of the candidating process has given rise to the development of a series of materials connected to this aspect of vocations. For enquirers and candidates, we are working on a *God's People of Potential* workbook to complement a more structured set of experiences for them. For church meetings, ministers, link groups and synod interviewers, we are close to publishing a set of good practice material *Listening for God's Call*.

### Staffing

5 At the end of this academic year, the Revd George Sykes retires from the college staff. His breadth of reading (and remembering what he has read), his fund of stories and his meticulous working have been gifts that he has brought to the College community. We thank him and we wish him well. We welcome for the coming academic year the Revd Frances Wattman Rosenau BA MDiv, a minister of the Presbyterian Church of the USA who is currently serving with Morningside United Church and Christ Church Episcopal Church in Edinburgh. Originally from Tulsa, Oklahoma, Frances has previous experience in the Church in India and is a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary. Through the Special Category Ministry provisions of the United Reformed Church, we are (together with Morningside United Church) seeking to make an appointment to an associate ministry post specialising in ministry with older people. The post is a collaborative one and will involve both pastoral ministry with older people and a teaching role in spiritual work with the elderly. A major research interest of the principal has been the contribution of the thinking of NFS Grundtvig, the 19 century bishop, theologian and educational thinker. This study has contributed to shaping the college's commitment to theological education that seeks to take seriously grundtvigian ideas about national context, about learning for life, about an interdisciplinary conversation in learning and about grassroots experiential learning. The Principal's research work was acknowledged as a principal source for the chapter on NFS Grundtvig and the Danish Folk High School movement in Dr Tom Steele's book *Knowledge is Power! The Rise and Fall of European Popular Educational Movements 1848-1939* (pub Peter Lang: Bern). He is currently working with the Centre for Scandinavian Studies at the University of Aberdeen on the national hymns and songs of Grundtvig.

# Westminster

## a Resource Centre for Learning



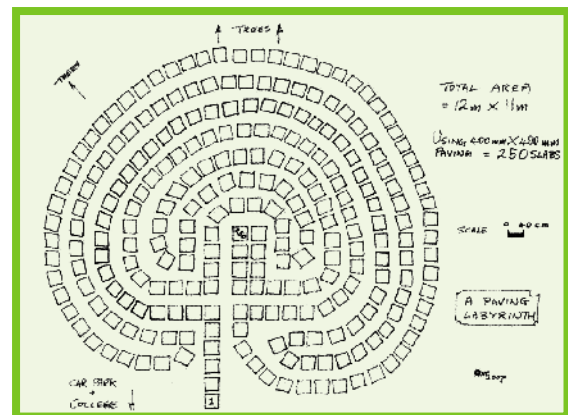
Susan Durber

### Being Westminster...

1 People ask me, 'How many students do you have?' and it's a difficult question to answer! You can be part of this community in all sorts of ways; as a ministerial student, or as someone who wants to study theology through a university course for the love of it. You can be part of it by coming to Training for Learning and Serving or lay preachers' conferences or for a church day or by doing a Professional Doctorate, an MA or a PhD part time, or by coming here on sabbatical or for a study day and on it goes.... Westminster is a place where people come to stay and to study, but it's also a community which you can be part of at a distance, whether you are preparing for the ministry of Word and Sacrament or wanting some help with an event local to you. We are proud to be one of three resource centres for learning for the United Reformed Church. Listen to some of the voices of Westminster...

### Neil Thorogood

2 With ministerial students I take a key role in Westminster's in-house programme which gets students to draw together all their experiences and learning around the vital question: 'What does all of this mean for my future ministry and the United Reformed Church's future mission?' With all sorts of people at the short courses at Westminster and as a visitor to other places I enjoy any opportunity I get to explore and lead worship in a wide range of styles. I tend to use art a lot because that is a passion and because it invites us all to take space and time to ponder for ourselves what God is up to. I have been heavily involved in the plan to create a prayer labyrinth at Westminster and will take a lead in the building work. And I keep on discovering how much there is to learn about the most exciting journey of all: that of being Christian in contemporary Britain amongst the glorious family of God's people.



Prayer labyrinth plan

### John Bradbury

3 'You'll do a session with the lay preachers on music in worship with John Turner, a local organist, won't you?'. That was the first hint that my new job might not be quite so dry as the job-title had suggested. The excitement of working with people who want to explore God's ways with the world is amazing. It is my passionate conviction that only when we engage our past – the good, the bad and the ugly – can we be God's people in new ways for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. What makes the Church the Church, and what that means for so-called *Fresh-Expressions* of Church are questions close to my heart. Whatever the answers, if we are talking of God, from God and to God, which is what theology is, we are being faithful. Its wonderful – and just at the moment I would not want to be doing anything else.

### Janet Tollington

4 Each day is fascinating. Our community is enriched by those who come here for study leave, whether for several months or an occasional over night stay. Teaching and learning about the Old Testament and enabling students from across the Cambridge Theological Federation to discover the benefits of reading some of these texts in their original language, deepens my own and their experience of God. There is a thirst for knowledge about the scriptures across the Church. With colleagues at Westminster it is a privilege to share in such a wide programme of education and learning among the people of God.

### John Proctor

5 Teaching in Westminster is like living in a greenhouse. The place is full of windows. Not just the stained glass in the college chapel, but the chance to look out in many different directions. We see much of the United Reformed Church, both in the people who come to us and through our visits elsewhere. We also see the world of study, in two large and very different universities, Cambridge and Anglia Ruskin, with whom we work. We see the worlds of other churches, through daily contact with teachers and students from other theological colleges and courses in Cambridge and the East Anglian region. And for me, in recent years, there has been a window into the Holy Land, through co-leading a large ecumenical group of theological students, supported by the British Trust for Tantur. I have tried to learn as well as to teach, and to see God more clearly for myself through the light that others have helped me find in the New Testament.

### Margaret Thompson

6.1 The College acquired an attic archive room, named in memory of Buick Knox, whose history of the College has been re-published with additional material contributed by Martin Cressey, Stephen Mayor and Stephen Orchard. Two medieval Pentateuchs which Mrs Lewis and Mrs Gibson gave to the College have been sold at auction, on the authority of the Governors, with the intention of devoting the proceeds to urgent maintenance needs. On Commemoration Day in June Professor Stephen Orchard marked the anniversary of the birth of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon in 1707. His lecture explored her life and spiritual values; knowledge of her slave-worked plantation in Georgia, left to her by George Whitefield, had resonances when Dr John Campbell from Northern College discussed the Bible and Slavery at a community evening in November.

6.2 United Reformed Church members and ministers contributed to and learned from a conference devoted to *Reforming Worship*. The College Library and that of the URC History Society hold a wealth of resources. Any member of the United Reformed Church can request reading rights.

### Ministerial students

7 'I came during my time with TLS, so I knew the college already.'

'Our teachers within the Federation are so evidently committed to the faith we share – they speak the love of God'.

'Ecumenical life here is more than nominal – this is practical ecumenism'.

## Susan Durber – Principal

8.1 For all of us involved with Westminster, the past year has been one of profound reflection and prayer. We have been given a new commission by the church we serve and we are rising to the challenge. As part of the Cambridge Theological Federation we work in one of the most inclusive ecumenical partnerships anywhere and our contribution to that is considerable and valued. Working with two universities, we offer a wide range of opportunities for students near and far. We are learning to be a much more flexible community – part-time, dispersed ministerial students are as much a part of us as those who are resident full time. We work hard to offer training patterns that root students in the contexts of their own experience and in the realities of local church life, and we seek to open up the world through overseas placements and by being a multicultural community alive to the diversity of the world. We're a place of learning, but also a place of prayer. We may look like a traditional college, but we're becoming something much more like a resource centre. We work increasingly in partnership with colleagues at Northern College, the Scottish College and the Windermere centre, with synod training officers and with all our colleagues who engage in education and learning within the whole of the Church.

8.2 The past year has been marked by farewells and welcomes. Westminster expressed warm thanks to Stephen Orchard at the end of his term as Principal and best wishes for his retirement and for his term as moderator of General Assembly. The college has also graciously welcomed me and my colleague John Bradbury with a colourful service of induction in a transformed dining hall. Westminster gave thanks and prayed for those who left to enter God's service as ministers this year: Anne Dove (Bournemouth), Dominic Grant (Crowborough), Helen Higgin-Botham (Preston) and Ann Sheldon (Sutton Coldfield). We are also delighted that one of last year's leavers, Pauline Main, has now been ordained and inducted to serve in the Local Ecumenical Partnership of Wolvercote with Summertown. We have been pleased to welcome new students in a growing variety of training patterns and look forward to welcoming an even more diverse group this coming year.

8.3 This summer we will say thank you to Revd Professor David Thompson as he completes his service to us as convener of Governors. David has given wise and devoted service to the college in this way, and in many others. We will welcome Professor Sir Anthony Bottoms in David's place and look forward to working with him.

8.4 We anticipate a rapidly changing future at Westminster. We hope to make staying here more comfortable, to let more light into some of the dark corners and to make more of the gardens. We hope to welcome a wider variety of people through the doors and not just in 'vacations'. As our motto says, we are 'serving the United Reformed Church'.





## Ratification of Incapacity Procedure (Section P Part I)

### Resolution 1

**General Assembly agrees to ratify its decision taken under Assembly Resolution 12 of 2007 to introduce a Procedure for dealing with cases of incapacity involving ministers of Word and Sacrament or church related community workers (CRCW) who are regarded as being incapable of exercising, or of continuing to exercise, their respective ministries on account of (i) medical and/or psychiatric illness and/or (ii) psychological disorder and/or (iii) addiction and approves the Introduction and Part I of that Procedure in the form set out below:**

### SECTION P

#### **PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH CASES OF INCAPACITY INVOLVING MINISTERS OR CHURCH-RELATED COMMUNITY WORKERS**

*The Introduction which follows does not form part of the text of the Incapacity Procedure*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Procedure which follows allows the Church to deal with the cases of ministers of Word and Sacrament or church related community workers (CRCWs) who are regarded as being incapable of exercising, or of continuing to exercise, their respective ministries on account of (i) medical and/or psychiatric illness and/or (ii) psychological disorder and/or (iii) addiction. It is not a disciplinary process and will only be invoked in situations where the Assembly Pastoral Reference and Welfare committee, if that committee has been involved, has said that it can do no more. Whilst considered as a last resort, the Incapacity Procedure will nevertheless enable the Church to take decisive action in cases where the continued exercise of ministry would undermine the promises made by the minister at ordination or, in the case of a CRCW, at his/her commissioning.

**PART I** – subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure (governed by General Assembly Function 2(6)(a)(xi) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church)  
Note: The words and expressions marked \* (the first time they appear) are defined in Part II of this Procedure.

1 Under the provisions of this Incapacity Procedure (herein called 'the 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\* or church related community workers (CRCWs)\*, whilst not perceived to have committed any breach of discipline, are nevertheless regarded as being incapable of exercising, or of continuing to exercise, ministry on account of (i) medical and/or psychiatric illness and/or (ii) psychological disorder and/or (iii) addiction.

## Resolution 1

2 The Review Commission, the Standing Panel\*, the Appeals Review Commission, and all aspects of the 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(6) of the Structure\* to amend, enlarge or revoke the whole or any part of this Incapacity Procedure, save only that, as long as that Procedure remains in force, the decision reached in any particular case (whether or not on appeal) and any orders made in accordance with the Incapacity Procedure shall be made in the name of the General Assembly and shall be final and binding on the minister or CRCW and on all the councils of the Church\*.

3 Subject only to Section H of Part II, when the case of any minister or CRCW is being dealt with under the 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.

4 The Incapacity Procedure shall not be initiated in respect of any minister or CRCW if his/her case is currently being dealt with under the Disciplinary Process, save only where the Incapacity Procedure is initiated as a result of a recommendation from the Disciplinary Process, giving rise to a short transitional overlap between the commencement of the case within the Incapacity Procedure and the conclusion of the Disciplinary Process in relation to that minister or CRCW.

5 Although the operation of the Incapacity Procedure is not based upon the conscious breach by the minister or CRCW of the promises made at ordination or commissioning, the Review Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Review Commission shall, in considering the matter and reaching its decision, in every case have full regard to the Basis of Union\* and in particular (in the case of ministers) Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto and (in the case of CRCWs) Paragraph 2 of Schedule F, Part II thereto which state the responsibilities undertaken by those who become ministers and CRCWs of the Church and the respective criteria which they must apply in the exercise of their ministries.

6 Save only as provided in Paragraph 7, this Part I of the Incapacity Procedure is subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure.

7 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 Incapacity Procedure as are, on the advice of the legal advisers to the 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 and any such changes as are made under this Paragraph shall be reported to the next annual meeting of the General Assembly.

*If Resolution 1 is passed by the Assembly then Resolutions 2, 3, 4 and 5 will be taken and Resolutions 6, 7 and 8 will be withdrawn.*

*If Resolution 1 fails then Resolutions 2, 3, 4 and 5 will be withdrawn and Resolutions 6, 7 and 8 will be taken.*



## Rules of Procedure for the Incapacity Procedure (Section P Part II)

### Resolution 2

**General Assembly resolves to adopt the Rules of Procedure for the Incapacity Procedure (Part II of Section P) contained in Appendix 3 (page 127).**

## Ratification of replacement of Section O (Part I)

### Resolution 3

**General Assembly agrees to ratify its decision taken under Assembly Resolution 16 of 2007 to replace the whole of the existing Part I of Section O with the following:**

## SECTION O

### PROCESS FOR DEALING WITH CASES OF DISCIPLINE INVOLVING MINISTERS AND CHURCH-RELATED COMMUNITY WORKERS

**PART I** – Substantive Provisions (governed by General Assembly Function 2(6)(A)(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 or a church-related community worker (CRCW) has committed a breach of discipline and, if the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission should so decide, whether on that account his/her name should be deleted from the Roll of ministers or CRCWs as the case may be or alternatively whether a written warning should be issued to him/her. The Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission may also decide to make a recommendation/ referral in accordance with provisions of Paragraph 1.3. Under the Disciplinary Process (known as 'the Section O Process') the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals 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 or CRCW 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.

## Resolution 3

- 1.3.1 If it considers that the situation concerning a minister or CRCW involved in a case within the Section O Process relates to or involves a perceived incapacity on the part of that minister or CRCW which might render him/her unfit to exercise, or to continue to exercise, the ministry of Word and Sacrament or the ministry of church related community work on account of (i) medical and/or psychiatric illness or (ii) psychological disorder or (iii) addiction, 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 or other person who called in the Mandated Group with a recommendation that the Incapacity Procedure (as defined in Section A of Part II) be initiated in respect of the minister or CRCW concerned, whereupon the Section O Process 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 or other person who called in the Mandated Group and under those Rules s/he 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 Incapacity Procedure was initiated, whereupon the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission shall make a further Order declaring the Disciplinary case to be concluded, subject only to the continuation of the minister's or the CRCW's Suspension until the issue of his/her Suspension has been resolved in accordance with the 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 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(6) 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 or the CRCW and on all the councils of the Church.
3. 3.1 Subject only to Paragraph 3.2, the Section O Process shall not be initiated in respect of any minister or CRCW if his/her case is currently being dealt with under the Incapacity Procedure.
- 3.2 The Section O Process may be initiated in respect of a minister or CRCW as a result of a recommendation issuing from the Incapacity Procedure, in which case there may be a short transitional overlap between the commencement of the Disciplinary case and the conclusion of the case within the Incapacity Procedure.
4. 4.1 In considering the evidence and reaching its decision, the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission shall in every case have full regard to the Basis of Union and in particular (in the case of ministers) Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto and (in the case of CRCWs) Paragraph 2 of Schedule F, Part II thereto which state the responsibilities undertaken by those who become ministers and CRCWs of the United Reformed Church and the respective criteria which they must apply in the exercise of their ministries.

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 or CRCW occurring prior to his/her ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament or his/her commissioning to the ministry of church related community work as the case may be which, in the Commission's view and when viewed in the light of Schedule E or Schedule F to the Basis of Union, would have prevented, or was likely to have prevented, him/her from becoming ordained or commissioned, where such conduct was not disclosed by the minister or CRCW to those responsible for assessing his/her candidacy for ordination or commissioning.

5. 5.1 A minister or CRCW may appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission to delete his/her name from the Roll of ministers or CRCWs 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 at Part II, 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 or CRCW from the Roll of ministers or CRCWs 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 or CRCW.

5.3 No-one other than the Parties has any right of appeal from the decision of the Assembly Commission.

6. Procedural matters 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.

## Replacement of existing Section O Process (Part II)

### Resolution 4

**General Assembly agrees to replace the existing Part II of the Section O Process with that included as Appendix 4 (page 151).**

## Indemnity for the Section O Process and Section P Procedure

### Resolution 5

**General Assembly resolves that the United Reformed Church shall provide a full indemnity for those persons who either as members of any Church-related Panel, Commission, Committee, Council or Group or by virtue of the office held by them within the Church are called upon to fulfil any function within or related to the Disciplinary Process set out in Section O of the Church's Manual or the Incapacity Procedure introduced by virtue of Resolutions 1 and 2 and to be set out in Section P of the Manual or who are appointed by Mission Council to any voluntary role within or related to either of these.**

*The following Resolutions 6, 7, and 8 shall be put to Assembly ONLY if Resolution 1 fails.*

## Ratification of replacement of Section O (Part I)

### Resolution 6

**General Assembly agrees to ratify its decision taken under Assembly Resolution 17 of 2007 to replace the whole of the existing Part I of Section O with the following:**

#### **SECTION O**

Process for dealing with cases of discipline involving ministers and church related community workers.

#### **PART I – Substantive Provisions**

(governed by General Assembly Function 2(6)(A)(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 or a church related community worker (CRCW) has committed a breach of discipline and, if the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission should so decide, whether on that account his/her name should be deleted from the Roll of ministers or CRCWs as the case may be or alternatively whether a written warning should be issued to him/her. Under the Disciplinary

Process (known as 'the Section O Process') the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission is also able to make recommendations and offer guidance but only within the limits prescribed in Section F of Part II.

1.2 Once the disciplinary case of any minister or CRCW 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.

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(6) 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 or CRCW and on all the councils of the Church.

3. 3.1 In considering the evidence and reaching its decision, the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission shall in every case have full regard to the Basis of Union and in particular (in the case of ministers) Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto and (in the case of CRCWs) Paragraph 2 of Schedule F, Part II thereto, which state the respective responsibilities undertaken by those who become ministers or CRCWs of the United Reformed Church and the criteria which they must apply in the exercise of their ministries.

3.2 As part of such consideration, the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission shall be entitled to have regard to any conduct on the part of a minister or CRCW occurring prior to his/her ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament or his/her commissioning to the ministry of church related community work as the case may be which, in the Commission's view and when viewed in the light of Schedule E or Schedule F to the Basis of Union, would have prevented, or was likely to have prevented, him/her from becoming ordained or commissioned, where such conduct was not disclosed by the minister or CRCW to those responsible for assessing his/her candidacy for ordination or commissioning.

4. 4.1 A minister or CRCW may appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission to delete his/her name from the Roll of ministers or CRCWs 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 at Part II, stating the ground/s of such appeal.

4.2 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 or CRCW from the Roll of ministers or CRCWs 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 or CRCW.

4.3 No-one other than the Parties has any right of appeal from the decision of the Assembly Commission.

5. Procedural matters shall in every case be dealt with in accordance with the Rules of Procedure as contained in Part II.

## Resolutions 6–8

6. 6.1 Save only as provided in Paragraph 6.2, this Part I of the Section O Process is subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure.

6.2 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.

6.3 All such changes to the Section O Process as are made by Mission Council under Paragraph 6.2 shall be reported to the next meeting of the General Assembly.

## Replacement of Section O (Part II)

### Resolution 7

**General Assembly agrees to replace the existing Part II of the Section O Process with that included as Appendix 4 with the following differences:**

**A.5.2** Replace the words **'(i) the Assembly Commission or (ii) the Special Appeals Body'** with **'the Assembly Commission'**.

**A.5.11, A.5.29, B.3.4, B.7.4, D.5, E.5.3** in its entirety. All deleted.

*[Later sub-paragraphs to be re-numbered as a consequence of these deletions.]*

**F.1.2** Delete the words **'in the absence of a decision to refer under Paragraph E.5.3,'**.

**G.2.2, G.2.3** On the first line of these two paragraphs, the reference will be to Paragraph 4 of Part I, not Paragraph 5.

**J.1** Delete the words **'(other than decisions made by the Special Appeals body under Paragraph E.5.3)'**.

## Indemnity for Section O Process

### Resolution 8

**General Assembly resolves that the United Reformed Church shall provide a full indemnity for those persons who either as members of any Church-related Panel, Commission, Committee, Council or Group or by virtue of the office held by them within the Church are called upon to fulfil any function within or related to the Disciplinary Process set out in Section O of the Church's Manual or who are appointed by Mission Council to any voluntary role within or related to Section O.**

## Reappointment of the Revd Adrian Bulley as Wessex Synod Moderator

### Resolution 9

**General Assembly reappoints the Revd Adrian Bulley to serve as Moderator of the Wessex synod from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2009 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2014.**

## Reappointment of the Revd Terry Oakley as East Midlands Synod Moderator

### Resolution 10

**General Assembly reappoints the Revd Terry Oakley to serve as Moderator of the East Midlands synod from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2010 to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2012.**

*Resolutions 9 and 10 will be brought to Assembly in the name of the Nominations committee*

## CRCW membership of synods

### Resolution 11

**General Assembly appoints all serving Church Related Community Workers currently in post or commissioned between this date and the next ordinary meeting of the General Assembly to serve as additional members of the synod in which they are based.**

# Equality of opportunity for women

1.1 In 2017 we shall be celebrating the centenary of the ordination of women in one of the traditions which makes up the United Reformed Church, so the appointment of Roberta Rominger as our new general secretary is a welcome sign of our equal opportunities policy in action. But from 1972 to 1990, all 29 appointments of synod moderators were men. Since 1990 five women and fifteen men have been appointed. Two more men come into post this year and one appointment process is pending so by the end of 2008 we could have only one woman synod moderator and 12 men.

1.2 This is just one, highly visible example of a lack of healthy gender balance within our structures. At congregational level, research on gender, membership and elders reported to General Assembly in 2006 showed that in every synod women outnumber men by more than 2 to 1 in membership terms. The National Youth and Children's Work Training team has 10 men and one woman, there are only two female synod clerks and 11 men, all the synod treasurers are men and of the synod training officers five men have full time posts, two men are part time, three women full time and one woman part time. We have no mechanism for ensuring overall balance in the teams of post holders that are created.

1.3 Since 2005 the Nominations committee has been monitoring, for equal opportunities purposes, the gender balance and racial diversity of the appointments of synod moderators, Assembly appointed staff, Westminster College staff and the conveners of Assembly committees. Despite the greater balance of those on appointment groups it has not been possible for Nominations to make an appreciable difference to the balance of those who are appointed.

1.4 There is nothing unique about the need to find a healthier sharing of tasks and responsibilities between women and men. In many parts of society men seem to predominate in leadership roles, including the judiciary, business, politics and the media. Having more women present in the picture is a step forward from the world as it was 40 years ago, but if they are confined to the edge of things then the whole community is losing out on valuable gifts.

1.5 Gender is only one aspect of equality. We fall short of our ideals in many other areas as well. In our search for justice we have created an Assembly post focused on Black and Minority Ethnic issues but we have never had such a post on women's issues. This fact was commented on by the visitors from the Council for World Mission's team on Community of Women and Men in Mission who visited the United Reformed Church in January 2008. They also commented on the reticence in British church culture about addressing gender issues and observed how little theological reflection we do on gender and power or articulation of the biblical basis for gender justice.

## Resolution 12

**The United Reformed Church, despite its commitment to women's ministry, has been unable to achieve equality of opportunity, proper gender equality and participation by women at all levels of the Church's life.**

**Therefore General Assembly instructs its Equal Opportunities and Nominations committees to work together to discover the theological, cultural and structural reasons why this is the case.**

**Assembly requests that procedures and policies to address this imbalance be brought to the 2010 General Assembly.**



## Good Practice

1.1 The synod of Scotland task group charged with looking at how the *Safe Church* declaration and policy should be implemented felt strongly that 'Safe' should encompass more than just matters concerning sexual abuse and harassment. There was anecdotal evidence that a similar approach to 'Good Practice' was recommended: ie it was generally acknowledged that it was not just relevant to churches working directly with children and young people, but had aspects that should be applied to all churches taking health and safety responsibly.

1.2 The group was concerned that having too many different documents, declarations and policies would become confusing for local churches, who would select only those they believed applied to them, with some selecting none.

1.3 There is recognition that the Church needs to have specialist advisors on a range of subjects, but at a local level the need is for a practical resource that can help a congregation become what it should and could be – a place where all can feel safe: safe to explore the big questions of life, safe to expose some of their deepest needs, safe to be who they are, and, by no means least, safe in every practical sense, as far as possible, from injury and abuse.

1.4 Accordingly, the synod of Scotland recommends that, when *Good Practice* needs revising (the last revision was in 2004), it should be expanded to cover the whole of church life and it asks Mission Council to take this into consideration at the earliest opportunity.

### Resolution 13

**The General Assembly of the United Reformed Church refers to Mission Council the development of the next edition of *Good Practice* to include, not only working with children and vulnerable adults, but all aspects of vulnerability and safety in church life and seek thereby to produce a clear and down to earth resource for use in congregations of all sizes.**

## Trinity Church Mill Hill (United Reformed and Methodist)

### Resolution 14

**General Assembly welcomes the uniting of Trinity United Reformed Church (St James's, Union, Watling) with Mill Hill Methodist Church and agrees that the new church should be named Trinity Church Mill Hill (United Reformed and Methodist).**

## Christ Church Newham United Reformed Church

### Resolution 15

**General Assembly welcomes the amalgamation of the Plaistow Christian Church and the Brickfields Christian Centre to form Christ Church Newham United Reformed Church.**

## Further conversations with the Methodist Church

1.1 It is some years since consideration was given to Methodist/United Reformed Church relationships. During that time there has been much experience gained in working together. Since this was last looked at new ecumenical developments have taken place in England, Scotland and Wales, including the Covenant between the Methodist Church in England and the Church of England. These initiatives are developing ecumenical relations which this resolution seeks to complement. We look to Conference and General Assembly to guide us whether there is a desire in the Methodist and United Reformed Churches to explore how we might work closer together. If Conference and General Assembly are so minded we are suggesting the setting up of a group to bring further proposals to both the Conference and the General Assembly, at a time appropriate to the group. This is not a proposal to move to organic union, unless this emerged as the direction in which the Spirit is leading. It is a proposal to explore further joint working for the sake of shared mission.

1.2 Issues that might be considered by the group are:

- Since church governance is very different in our two churches can we create a structure that minimises ecumenical meetings but facilitates diversity? This might be less than full union but closer than we are now. Areas that would need addressing include the Connectional nature of the Methodist Church together with the role of circuits, alongside the United Reformed Church emphasis on the role of elders and church meetings.
- In view of United Reformed Church structures changing with synods playing the main intermediate role between the Assembly and the local church, and circuits being enlarged within the Methodist church, together with the changing role of the district, is there possibility of a joint structure at district/synod level?
- Is there value in a joint governing conference? Eg a joint meeting between Methodist Conference and United Reformed Church General Assembly, with some sessions overlapping and some held separately.
- Can resources be used more effectively together enabling us to put more resources into mission and outreach? Eg in the areas of training, finance, ministerial deployment and lay leadership.
- What effect would any such moves have on other ecumenical relations? We want to see this as adding another strand to effective ecumenical working rather than competing with existing work.

1.3 This is not intended as an exhaustive list, rather examples of what might be worth looking at.

## Resolution 16

**The West Midlands synod, notes the large number of Local Ecumenical Partnerships and increasing numbers of ecumenical areas, where Methodists and members of the United Reformed Church work closely together, the success of the Joint Public Issues Team, new initiatives such as the proposed interfaith reference group, the similarity of worship patterns, and the shared understanding of church life in many local Methodist and United Reformed churches. We call upon Assembly to engage in further conversations with the Methodist Church to see how we can work closer together using more efficiently the resources of the two churches to increase our effectiveness in mission and outreach and to respond in obedience to Jesus' prayer that we may be one.**

## Closure of local churches and mission projects

## Resolution 17

General Assembly receives notice of the closure of the local churches and mission projects listed on page 31 and gives thanks to God for their worship, witness, and service.

## General Assembly 2010

## Resolution 18

**Assembly agrees that the General Assembly in 2010 will meet at Loughborough University from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> July.**

## Equal Opportunities updated policy

## Resolution 19

**General Assembly urges all churches, synods and United Reformed Church committees to embrace the General Assembly updated Equal Opportunities Policy (as adopted on General Assembly's behalf by Mission Council in October 2006) by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2010 and thereafter to implement said updated policy.**

## Trustee's Report and Annual Accounts

1 The report of the United Reformed Church Trustees includes a Financial Review and Accounts for the year.

### Resolution 20

**General Assembly receives the Trustee's Report and adopts the Annual Accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007.**

## Appointment of Auditors

### Resolution 21

**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 the Assembly and that their remuneration be fixed by the Finance committee.**

## Giving to the Ministry and Mission Fund

1 In 2007 over £20m was given to the Ministry and Mission Fund. Behind this lies much Christian commitment as well as careful work by hundreds of church treasurers, synod officers and others. The Assembly is invited to express its gratitude and make sure that the message is heard in local congregations.

2 The Finance committee is also aware that in some places the M&M assessment is a cause for concern. Giving per member to the Ministry and Mission Fund was higher in 2007 than in 2006 but, with a declining membership base, the total giving did not rise sufficiently to cover inflation. In the longer term, if membership does not grow the Church either has to make giving more attractive or reduce the core costs of providing stipendiary ministry.

### Resolution 22

**General Assembly gives gratitude to God for the giving of local churches to the Ministry and Mission Fund and expresses its thanks to all those who have made this possible.**

## Challenge to the Church

*This resolution will be presented in the name of Ministries committee.*

### Context

1 The *Equipping the Saints* report called on the Church to explore new patterns of ministry and service within the Church to enable and equip the people of God to be a creative and effective force in their communities. It particularly looked for imagination and flexibility in the best use of ministers of the Word and Sacraments, and for development and extension to build on the successful experiments and effective forms of local church leadership to create a flexible framework for the pastoral care of local congregations.

2 The *Catch the Vision* process has encouraged the councils of the Church at all levels to take seriously that God has a future purpose for the United Reformed Church, and that obedient discipleship involves a deepening of our spirituality, radical changes in the patterns of our life, witness and worship, and the exploration of how to bring the treasures of our Reformed heritage to bear on the current national and community scene in order to make a difference.

3 Mission Council has given Ministries committee the task of overseeing the process whereby minister numbers are made to track the movement of membership numbers. The current presumption is that this means a reduction of approximately 3% per annum on the current number base which was accepted uncritically in 1998.

3.1 It is anticipated that, in the course of the next 10 years, the number of ministers will actually decline at a faster rate than that. This will be particularly affected by a larger-than-normal number of expected retirements in 2012 and 2013.

3.2 Therefore, in order to maintain the life and operation of the Church as currently perceived, there will be the need for some strenuous recruitment. Encouragement of vocations undertaken in the course of 2007 will not start to deliver people into ministry much before 2013. So the committee has already agreed to offer a number of certificates of eligibility whereby ministers of other Churches are admitted to the roll of ministers of the United Reformed Church.

4 The Ministries committee believes that there is an inconsistency between the imaginative thinking involved in *Equipping the Saints* and *Catch the Vision* on the one hand and the task with which it has been entrusted. The committee does not wish to oversee the management of decline. We prefer to challenge the United Reformed Church to develop new patterns of ministry in order to enable and deliver a vision of God's tomorrow in line with the challenge and opportunities offered by **Vision4Life**.

### Reflection

5.1 We have drawn on research that suggests that congregations which are creative and growing tend to have something of a mix of the following four factors in common:

- quality of worship and depth of spirituality;
- a small group culture that nurtures members and helps develop skills of individual leadership and mutual care;
- clarity of purpose;
- strong local leadership, often where the church is the sole responsibility of one person.

5.2 Our listening to synod moderators and the *Catch the Vision* task group indicates that churches want effective local ministry, usually identified as a need for a minister.

5.3 We have shared the anxiety of many in the Church about the pressure on full-time stipendiary ministers to manage ever-larger pastorates. Too often this means that ministers do not have the time and space to think and reflect, to dig deep into the treasures of theology and biblical studies. Consequently their ability to enable and challenge members of their congregations to plumb the depths of faith and

spirituality is significantly reduced.

5.4 We have heard something of the rich experience of ministry teams where ordained ministers work in collaboration with local church leaders, lay preachers and those who lead local congregational worship groups. Such teams are a particular feature of some sister Reformed Churches in other parts of the world where they are the source of energy for development and growth.

### **A challenge to the Church**

6 We are looking for a strategy within the Church that would:

- i) support, encourage and develop local churches that are currently vibrant and growing;
- ii) create fresh patterns of Christian presence both by recasting the life and work of less lively churches, and by establishing new groups or networks of people.

In each case this would require provision of ministry that equips and enables the congregation or group:

- a) to support and nurture each other through worship, prayer, study and care;
- b) to present a corporate witness and service to the place where they are set;
- c) to make a difference as the dispersed church where each member exercises a Christian presence in the workplace, leisure place, community involvement or neighbourhood.

7.1 Therefore we propose that there should be provision of appropriate local church leadership in each congregation or group which is the focus of Christian presence, on the basis of a strategy created by the synod for identifying the needs and opportunity for the provision of such leadership.

This leadership would be rooted in the shared responsibility on ministers and elders, especially recognising the renewed commitment and enthusiasm for affirming and developing the role of elder made by General Assembly in 2007.

Within this we feel the need for the recognition of an individual who would have a pastoral and teaching role, would be the first point of contact in the event of pastoral need, would provide continuity of worship and nurture, and would be the focus of the Christian presence in the wider community.

Depending on the identified degree of need in each place, the local church leader might be a stipendiary or self-supporting minister, an elder or lay preacher drawn from within the congregation or among neighbouring churches, or a specifically identified local church leader following on from the thinking and work that started in some synods from 1998.

7.2 We think that such provision might best be delivered in team pastorates with a flexibility of leadership patterns. This would involve team working of full-time and part-time ministers, local church leaders, lay preachers and worship groups. Such a team would plan the worship and nurture programme of the pastorate, along with the training and equipping of the church members, utilising the mix of gifts, skills and experience the team comprised. The creation of the team would usually involve a deployment pattern which would enable one member of the team to provide oversight ministry to the team members and the pastorate churches.

7.3 There should be a challenge for calling and recruitment of i) people to offer as local church leaders to serve congregations in worship, nurture, witness and service; and ii) for ministers who would provide pastoral and oversight ministry towards a grouping of congregations and groups and local leaders from a well-based skill set of theology, biblical studies, training and leadership abilities.

8.1 Synods will encourage the development of team pastorates of local churches and other recognised mission opportunities. They will establish the criteria for scoping and identification of the level of ministerial input appropriate for each local situation and for the appointment of team pastorate ministers.

8.2 Synods will arrange for a process of regular review as part of the ministerial development of all ministers and local church leaders serving team pastorates or local churches or projects.

## Further Work

9 If General Assembly gives approval for these outline proposals, there will be a number of pieces of work to help them to work.

9.1 The Assessment Board and the Ministries committee will prepare criteria for the recruitment and assessment of candidates for training for the range of ministries in the Church.

9.2 The Ministries committee would work together with the Education and Learning committee to identify appropriate forms of such training.

9.3 Papers will be produced to assist in the promotion of the proposals. These would probably include possible models or scenarios, and Bible studies to help develop the thinking and change the culture in local congregations.

## Timescale

July 08	General Assembly consideration.
October 08	Synods report on their assessment of needs regarding: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) the numbers of stipendiary ministers required for service as team pastorate ministers, and to serve in local pastorates;</li> <li>ii) the number of part-time stipendiary posts required;</li> <li>iii) the number of local church leaders required.</li> </ol>
Nov 08	Ministries committee will establish the base number of full-time equivalent stipendiary ministers of Word and Sacraments required to provide appropriate leadership in team and local pastorates.
Jan 09	Deployment consultation between Ministries committee, synod moderators and other representatives of synods to confirm the base number and agree appropriate sharing of ministerial numbers between synods. Launch of recruitment programme for candidates for self-supporting ministry, part-time stipendiary ministry and local church leaders.
March 09	Report to Mission Council on the nature of the process and progress to date.
Jan 10	All plans for the recruitment and calling of ministers should be within the context of team ministry within team pastorates as described in the proposals.
July 10	Report to General Assembly of nature of the process and progress to date.

## Resolution 23

### General Assembly:

- i) **believes that each congregation and mission group has a need of its own local leader to work in partnership with the elders' meeting to challenge, enable and equip the saints and be a focus of Christian presence in the local community; and**
- ii) **affirms the value of team pastorates in providing pastoral support, encouragement and training for those in local leadership;**
- iii) **therefore requests synods**
  - a) **to identify and quantify the leadership needs of each local situation,**
  - b) **make arrangements for the recruitment, training, calling and support of local leaders, and**
  - c) **to encourage the development of team pastorates to provide pastoral support, encouragement and training.**

# Grievance Procedure for Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers

## 1 Introduction

1.1 The United Reformed Church recognises the need for good practice and natural justice when resolving grievances from ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers. Ministerial grievances could arise as a result of any matter that the minister is dissatisfied with in relation to ministry and could involve problems within the local church/post, between ministerial colleagues or between the minister and the synod moderator or synod officers. The aim of this procedure is to provide an effective means by which the grievance can be aired and where possible, resolved fairly, swiftly and as near as possible to the source of the grievance.

1.2 It is hoped that most issues will be capable of being resolved *informally*. It is in the interest of both the United Reformed Church and the minister/church related community worker raising the grievance to reach an informal solution to a problem. Grievances will be investigated fairly and impartially respecting the confidentiality of information that is provided during the course of any proceedings.

## 2 Scope of the procedure

This grievance procedure applies to ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers.

## 3 General Principles

Nothing in this procedure should prevent a minister or church related community worker from raising any matter of concern and an informal discussion can often resolve a problem without the need for a written record to be made if a more formal solution was sought. It is therefore encouraged that where a minister has a grievance, in the first instance, every effort should be made to resolve the matter *informally* with the person(s) involved. It is at the point that this approach fails that the grievance procedure is initiated.

## 4 The Grievance procedure

### Assistance to Ministers/Church Related Community Workers

The minister has the right to representation within the grievance process and may be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative at any stage of the grievance process.

### Stage 1

- i) If a minister/church related community worker has an issue with any matter relating to their ministry, and the matter cannot be resolved informally, the minister should raise the issue in writing with their synod moderator. If the issue(s) involves the synod moderator then the minister/church related community worker should write to the general secretary.
- ii) The synod moderator or general secretary, where the grievance is against a moderator, will seek to resolve the matter as *promptly as possible*. In order that the moderator or general secretary may retain an impartial pastoral relationship with the minister/church related community worker and the person, pastorate or post, s/he will instruct a synod pastoral advisers or pastoral committee to arrange a meeting with the minister/church related community worker to discuss and fully investigate the issue.



- iii) Other parties who have involvement in the matter may also be asked to attend the meeting to give their views on the matter. This stage of the process remains informal and pastoral with the aim of seeking a mediated resolution of the issue.
- iv) The pastoral adviser or convener of the synod pastoral committee will confirm the outcome of the meeting to the minister/church related community worker in writing within 10 working days of the meeting.

## Stage 2

- v) If the minister/church related community worker is not satisfied that the grievance has been resolved at Stage 1, they may appeal in writing no later than seven working days (from receiving written confirmation of the outcome of the Stage 1 Hearing) to the synod moderator or general secretary.
- vi) The synod moderator or general secretary will inform the synod clerk and Executive committee and give instructions that a formal hearing of the grievance be arranged. The synod moderator or general secretary will take no further part in the formal hearing concentrating on the provision of pastoral support for the minister/church related community worker.
- vii) The minister/church related community worker will supply the synod clerk with a written outline of the grievance and the reasons why they do not feel there has been a satisfactory outcome following Stage 1.
- viii) The synod clerk will arrange a hearing within *21 working days* of receiving the minister's written outline. During this time the synod clerk will seek a written report from those against whom the complaint has been made. The minister/church related community worker will be invited to attend a meeting. Those other parties that involved in Stage 1 may also be invited to attend. Following the meeting the synod clerk will confirm the outcome of the hearing to the minister/church related community worker in writing within ten working days of the appeal.

### Right of appeal

Should the minister/church related community worker wish to appeal against the outcome of the hearing then s/he should write to the synod clerk within ten days of the receipt of the outcome of the hearing giving notice of the intention to appeal through the Appeals Procedure of the United Reformed Church.

## Resolution 24

**General Assembly approves the Ministerial Grievance Procedure which replaces the current grievance procedure approved by General Assembly 1990.**

# Capability Procedure

## 1 Introduction

1.1 Ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers of the United Reformed Church, as office holders, relate to the Church in terms of the performance of their vocation through the three Councils of the Church. The whole Church through **General Assembly** sets the doctrinal framework, the Basis of Union, within which all ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers agree to serve, and decides stipend levels and terms of service through the Plan for Partnership. The **synod** gives support and oversight to the ministers and CRCWs serving within its geographical boundaries. The local **church meeting** identifies the particular role it wishes individual ministers of Word and Sacrament and church related community workers to carry out, and provides for local expenses in relation to the pastorate/post. The ethos of the relationship between the Councils of the Church and ministers and CRCWs is one of mutual support and accountability.

1.2 The United Reformed Church is committed to introducing best practice in relation to terms and conditions of service for ministers of Word and Sacrament and ministers of Word and Sacrament and church related community workers.

1.3 The Capability Procedure is designed to provide a clear framework of support to all ministers of Word and Sacrament and church related community workers called to serve in the United Reformed Church, and as such should be set alongside the Grievance Procedure for ministers of Word and Sacrament and church related community workers.

## 2 Definition of Capability

2.1 The term capability refers to two key areas:

a) Underperformance

This is where it is believed, by the pastorate/post that the minister/church related community worker is not meeting the role descriptions, individual performance standards and expectations of where he/she is called to serve (see 2.2). This may be due to the minister or church related community worker lacking the necessary skills and aptitude.

The Capability Procedure needs to be read in conjunction with **The Disciplinary Procedure/Section O** where it is believed that the poor performance is due to misconduct. Where the problem may be a result of the minister/church related community worker being physically or mentally unable to do his/her job (incapacity), the **Incapacity on the Grounds of Ill Health Procedure** will need to be followed.

b) Health-related underperformance

If underperformance is due to an identifiable and relatively short term, health related matter the minister/church related community worker should be encouraged to take sick leave and may become a responsibility of the Assembly Pastoral Reference and Welfare committee.

2.2 The United Reformed Church recognises the various roles a call to ministry encompass not least the sacramental, prophetic, community development and leadership roles set within the context of pastoral relationships and responsibilities. It therefore accepts that when addressing issues of underperformance, these areas will be considered as part of the overall performance level of the minister/church related community worker concerned. It will be for the pastorate/post, together with the minister/church related community worker, to identify and agree, the particular

expectations it requires of its ministers/church related community workers. These expectations can be found under the following criteria in accordance with resolution 16 of General Assembly 2006, ministerial development:

- the individual pastorate/post's objectives or mission;
- within the above, the agreed role description of the minister/church related community worker. This should be discussed and agreed prior to induction or commissioning; and, consequent to pastorate/post's objectives and mission and the role description;
- individual agreed performance objectives assigned to the role of the minister/church related community worker.

**2.3** The ministers/ church related community workers cannot be expected to improve on performance if they are not aware of what is expected of them.

### **3 Purpose and Scope of the Procedure**

3.1 This procedure is designed to give ministers/church related community workers, who are not performing to a satisfactory level, the opportunity to improve their performance to an acceptable standard, for them to be formally advised of the effects upon their pastorate/post, and the potential consequences should there be no improvement.

3.2 It is essential that **every attempt** be made to determine the minister/church related community worker's ability to perform the duties, responsibilities and expectations of their calling.

3.3 The Capability Procedure is not a 'quick fix' remedy to address issues of underperformance; it is in place to be used as a tool for working collaboratively with churches, ministers/church related community workers through an agreed process to achieve the best outcome for all concerned.

3.4 If managed correctly underperformance issues may take between 3 and 12 months to resolve. This is not to put an unnecessary burden on the church, minister/church related community worker but to demonstrate that the United Reformed Church is committed to addressing underperformance issues within a system that promotes consistency, impartiality, equality and fairness. At all times throughout the process pastorates/posts are reminded to respond sensitively respecting the privacy and confidentiality of the minister or church related community worker in question.

3.5 The United Reformed Church believes in the necessity to advise those called to serve of the existence of the procedure and the implications thereof should underperformance be identified. It is therefore the Church's responsibility to inform their ministers/CRCWs about the procedure and how it is used.

## **4 Procedure for Handling Capability Issues**

### **4.1 Informal Action**

4.1.1 If a pastorate/post has concerns with a minister/ church related community worker's current level of performance over a period of time, this shall initially be dealt with informally.

4.1.2 If the minister/church related community worker serves a group or joint pastorate, an individual local church must consult with the other churches involved in the pastorate of its concerns and in order to ascertain whether the concerns apply only to one church or are shared by others in the pastorate. If the concerns relate to one church within the pastorate, agreement needs to be reached that in the informal meeting the views of all the churches will be represented.

## Resolution 25

4.1.3 In an LEP, where concerns are raised about a minister of another Church, the appropriate structures within that Church need to be informed of the intention to begin the informal action.

4.1.4 The elders or local management committee in the pastorate/post where the minister/church related community worker serves should discuss the identified shortcomings in relation to the agreed role description and performance objectives. A trusted friend of both pastorate/post and minister/church related community worker, should be designated to act as convener for a meeting between pastorate/post and minister/church related community worker. This might be an elder or minister/church related community worker from a neighbouring local church or a pastoral advisor. At this meeting the following should be achieved:

- the pastorate/post should identify the required standard of performance;
- the pastorate/post should clearly outline the shortcomings in performance to the minister/church related community worker;
- the pastorate/post and the minister/church related community worker discuss the possible causes for the shortcomings in performance levels;
- the pastorate/post and the minister/church related community worker discuss potential remedies eg re-training, break from service/retreat and any changes that might help address the areas of concern, (bearing in mind any additional financial costs, which the church may have to incur);
- the pastorate/post and the minister/church related community worker agree a plan of action which should include the following;
  - agreement on timetable for remedial action to take place (recommended time span of up to 3 months);
  - training and development plan to be worked out with the synod training officer; and
  - the frequency of monitoring (recommended once every 3 weeks). and the review date.

4.1.5 The minister/church related community worker should be informed that failure to improve could lead to formal action being taken. This could lead to the minister/church related community worker's removal from the pastorate/post following a church meeting decision to that effect. At this stage the minister/church related community worker may wish to receive impartial pastoral support from a synod moderator.

4.1.6 A note of the discussions and plan of action should be given to the minister/church related community worker. Copies should be retained by the pastorate/post and a review should follow within or at three months. If the informal review process has worked, no further action will be required and the minister/church related community worker will continue serving the pastorate/post.

## 4.2 Formal Meetings

4.2.1 Where there has been no improvement during the review period, then formal proceedings will need to be invoked. The pastorate/post in question may need to liaise with the synod clerk and the synod Pastoral committee for further advice at this stage and shall inform the synod moderator.

4.2.2 Where the minister in question, serving within an LEP, is a minister of another Church, then the minister's Church must be asked to conduct its own formal capability procedure.

4.2.3 The synod moderator will ensure that the minister/church related community worker and the pastorate/post has adequate pastoral support during the period of the formal meetings.

4.2.4 The formal meetings should be arranged and conducted by the synod pastoral committee. The purpose of this stage of the procedure is to ensure that the minister/church related community worker is formally made aware of the problems that their performance is causing, to provide them with an opportunity for improvement and to make clear the consequences if their performance does not improve.

4.2.5 Fourteen days before the formal meeting, the minister/church related community worker will receive a written detailed account of concerns raised by their performance, so that they may prepare the answers they will give at the meeting. The minister/church related community worker is entitled to be represented by a recognised Trade Union or a colleague. Representation does not extend to legal representation.

4.2.6 All ministers/church related community workers shall have the right of appeal against any decisions taken at the formal stages of the Capability Procedure.

## 4.3 First Formal Review Meeting

4.3.1 The meeting will be confirmed in writing and a date for a second formal review meeting will be scheduled.

4.3.2 The objectives of the meeting will be to:

- formally outline the performance problem;
- identify the gap between performance and the expected standard;
- review provision of support, assistance and training needs;
- outline why current levels of performance are unacceptable;
- discuss why levels of performance have not been met;
- consider any further support and assistance;
- set targets for future performance and;
- The minister/church related community worker may be given a written warning that failure to improve will lead to further action that may lead to the minister/church related community worker's removal from the pastorate/post following a church meeting decision to that effect, or a recommendation that adjustments be made to their ministry.

The minister/church related community worker will be notified of the decisions of the meeting within ten days. The second review meeting should take place three months after the first formal review (providing the minister/church related community worker with another opportunity of reaching the performance levels of the role).

### 4.4 **Second Formal Review Meeting**

The process as above will be repeated. At the end of this review a final written warning shall be given that failure to improve will lead to further action that may lead to the minister/church related community worker's removal from the pastorate/post following a church meeting decision or a recommendation that adjustments be made to their ministry.

The minister/church related community worker will be notified of the decisions of the meeting within 10 days.

### 4.5 **Final Formal Review Meeting**

4.5.1 Where a minister/church related community worker has been formally reviewed on two occasions and there has not been an acceptable level of progress, the synod should call a further meeting. The meeting should follow the procedure described for the first formal meeting (4.3)

4.5.2 If the minister/church related community worker's explanation, for his/her continued gaps in performance levels, is unacceptable, the synod will consider alternative options. These options will be:

- a period of further training/retreat/sabbatical for the minister/church related community worker;
- provide advice and assistance to the minister/church related community worker to seek another pastorate/post more suited to their abilities. Future pastorates/posts should be informed of the use of the capability procedure, of any view that the underperformance was as a consequence of a mismatch between the minister/church related community worker and the previous pastorate/post and the details of any further training undertaken;
- a recommendation to the church meeting that it should consider the termination of service in that particular pastorate/post;
- recommend that the moderator initiate the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure or the Section O Process on the grounds that non-compliance within the Capability Procedure was either the result of mental or physical incapacity or misconduct constituting a breach of the ordination/commissioning promises. If either of these courses is taken the final sanction of removal from the Roll of ministers of Word and Sacraments or List of church related community workers could be imposed.

The minister/church related community worker and the pastorate post will be notified of the decisions of the meeting within 10 days.

## 5 **Recurrence of underperformance**

5.1 If a minister/church related community worker improves their performance for a period beyond the review date at any point during the process but then returns to previous performance levels the capability procedure must begin again from the start of the informal action.

## 6 **Right of Appeal process**

6.1 Ministers/church related community workers wishing to appeal against the decision taken and of the formal stages of the Capability Procedure must write to the moderator of their synod submitting his/her reasons for the appeal within 7 working days of receiving the decision.

6.2 The appeal will be conducted in line with the United Reformed Church's appeals procedure.

## Resolution 25

**General Assembly approves the following Capability Procedure for ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers.**

### Certificates of Limited Service

1 Confusion frequently arises between Certificates of Eligibility and Certificates of Limited Eligibility, approved by Assembly in 2002, because of the very similar wording used. They are, in fact, quite different in nature. It would help the church if the latter could be renamed Certificates for Limited Service. We ask the endorsement of General Assembly for this change.

## Resolution 26

**General Assembly agrees that Certificates of Limited Eligibility should be renamed Certificates for Limited Service.**

### Extension of Certificates for Limited Service

1. The Accreditation sub-committee seeks to apply this provision for the benefit of local churches and posts, and has come to the realisation that the time limit of one year that was originally set can work against the interests of the church. Although applications can be made for Certificates of Limited Eligibility to be renewed for a further period this causes unnecessary administrative work for the local church, the synod and Accreditation sub-committee. In 2008 two applications were made for Certificates of Limited Eligibility for fixed term appointments which, for the reasons already stated the sub-committee approved. We ask the endorsement of General Assembly for this more flexible approach.

## Resolution 27

**General Assembly extends the scope of Certificates of Limited Eligibility (hence to be known as Certificates for Limited Service) to be applied in exceptional cases to fixed termed appointments.**

REFORM

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH JULY 2008

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2.3 *The complementary commitment of local churches is to contribute to the costs of the whole Church's ministry according to the congregation's means. This payment is the first charge on the local church's income. The contributions of local churches will be paid into the Ministry and Mission Fund, from which the stipend of ministers and CRCWs, and other payments detailed in the Plan, will be drawn.*

4.4 *Consistent with this approach to funding ministry, the General Assembly discourages the payment of local stipend supplements.*

### **Sickness Provision**

[6.1.2 Payment during sickness: remuneration shall be paid during sickness for such periods and in such sums as shall be determined from time to time by the MoM sub-committee, which will take into account the regulations and benefit schemes of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

6.1.2.1 Ministers/CRCWs who are unable to work because of sickness or accident shall be paid full stipend (less any Incapacity Benefit Long-term or Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit received) for a period of six months. However, any sickness arising in the twelve months prior to the first day of a new period of illness will be taken into account in the calculation of those six months. At the appropriate times after the beginning of any illness, the MoM sub-committee shall take steps to determine, in consultation with the synod moderator, what further help, if any, should be given when the entitlement to full stipend comes to an end. Ministers/CRCWs who are unable to work for more than three days are required to advise the MoM office as soon as possible during their illness in order that the necessary records can be maintained.

6.1.2.2 Ministers/CRCWs who are sick for periods in excess of twenty eight weeks will claim Incapacity Benefit Long-term from the DWP and should notify the MoM Office of the amount of benefit received in order that the next available stipend payment may be reduced.]

6.1.2 *Payment during sickness: stipend shall be paid during periods of sickness in such sums as shall be determined from time to time by the MoM sub-committee and will take into account the regulations and benefit schemes of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).*

6.1.2.1 *Ministers/CRCWs who are unable to work because of sickness or accident shall be paid full stipend (less any Incapacity Benefit Long-term or Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit received) for a period of six months. However, any sickness arising in the twelve months prior to the first day of a new period of sickness will be taken into account in the calculation of those six months. At the appropriate time after the beginning of any sickness, the MoM sub-committee shall determine, in consultation with the synod moderator, what further help, if any, should be given when the entitlement to full stipend comes to an end.*

6.1.2.2 *Ministers/CRCWs who are unable to work for more than three days because of sickness must advise the MoM Office as soon as possible to ensure that the necessary records can be maintained. The first seven days of sickness may be self certified (by letter, email or telephone) but after that all continuing sickness must be covered by a doctor's certificate, ensuring that the date of return to work is advised. If a period of sickness extends for more than twenty eight weeks ministers/CRCWs will be able to claim Incapacity Benefit Long-term from the DWP. Any benefit received when in receipt of full stipend should be advised to the MoM Office for it to be deducted from the next available stipend payment.*

### **Maternity/Adoption/Paternity provisions:**

3.3.3 Maternity/Adoption/Paternity provisions: [details of arrangements for parental leave and pay can be obtained from the MoM office] *ministers/CRCWs are entitled to statutory pay and leave and full details of the arrangements can be obtained from the MoM office. Although office holders are not entitled to additional maternity/adoption leave and Keeping in Touch (KIT) days, the General Assembly has agreed that these provisions should be extended to ministers/CRCWs.*

### **Broadband provision**

6.3.5 Expenses: the local church or other appropriate body shall reimburse the minister/CRCW for the cost of postage, telephone, *broadband internet connection*, stationery and any other expenses necessarily incurred on church business. This may well include expenses relating to the use of a computer and in some instances the provision of a computer. The reimbursement of expenses will be on the basis of actual cost incurred, and not by a predetermined lump sum.

### **Resettlement Grants** The text will be included when finalized

9.1.1 Every stipendiary minister/CRCW, whether full-time or part-time, shall be entitled to a [full] resettlement grant (see Appendix A) upon settling into their first pastorate and each subsequent pastorate or into an appointment paid under the terms of the Plan and upon final retirement; always provided that the settlement involves a change in the place of residence and that the grant shall not be payable more than once in any period of three years.

9.1.2 Except at the time of a minister/CRCW's initial induction (when a full resettlement grant is payable) where the pastorate is part-time the grant shall be pro rata according to the scoping of the pastorate to be served. [ A full retirement resettlement grant will be paid to ministers/CRCWs who have completed 10 years service up to their retirement. The grant will be reduced pro rata where the minister/CRCW has not been in stipendiary service for 10 years, or the years of service have not been full-time.] *Upon retirement the resettlement grant shall be calculated based on the last ten years of service up to age 65 or earlier retirement. The grant will be reduced pro rata where the minister/CRCW has not been in the stipendiary service of the Church for all of those ten years or those years of service have not all been full-time.*

## **APPENDIX C – REMOVAL COSTS**

The receiving local church is responsible for paying the costs of removal (see para 6.3.3). Where the removal is within the United Kingdom reimbursement of up to 50% of the cost incurred (subject to a maximum reimbursement of [£1,000] *£1,500*) is available from the Ministry and Mission Fund and application should be made via the MoM Office. Where a minister/CRCW is called from abroad reimbursement from that Fund to the local church will be based on the removal costs from the port of entry.

For ministers/CRCWs called to the URC under the Overseas Recruitment programme in conjunction with the Ministries committee, 75% of the cost of removal of themselves, their families, and their baggage from abroad to the pastorate in the UK, up to a maximum of £2,000, will be reimbursed from the Ministry and Mission Fund. A similar reimbursement will be made for their return on termination provided that the period of service has continued for more than three years.

- 1 The Plan for Partnership is a substantial document which sets out the entitlements of ministers and church related community workers, as agreed by past Assemblies. This resolution tidies up some wording, removes any ambiguities and updates the Plan for existing practices.
- 2 **Parental leave and Pay**  
As self-employed office holders, ministers are entitled to receive statutory benefits by virtue of their payment of Class 1 National Insurance contributions (NICs) deducted from stipend payments. Statutory benefits paid by the Church cover Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP), Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP), Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP). Recent changes in legislation have increased the parental pay which is automatically available to ministers and also extended the leave period attaching to these benefits to 52 weeks. However such additional unpaid leave, beyond the statutory pay period, is not applicable to office holders.  
  
Legislation has also introduced 'Keeping In Touch' (KIT) days. This enables women to undertake some paid work during the maternity pay period without losing SMP for that week, up to a maximum of 10 KIT days.  
  
To provide best practice Terms and Conditions of Service, the option of additional unpaid leave and the provision of KIT days will be extended to ministers and CRCWs.
- 3 Revenue and Customs has confirmed that where the broadband internet connection is provided by the employer on the understanding that this is primarily for business purposes with minimal personal use, no taxable benefit will arise.

## A fairer and more affordable system for helping ministers in retirement with housing

### The Background

1 As a committee, and on behalf of the whole Church, the RMHS's responsibility is to help ministers/CRCWs with any financial shortfall they might have in providing for adequate housing in their retirement, within the constraints of available resources. We would want at the outset to assure ministers/CRCWs who have little or no financial resources of their own that we will continue to help and support them as much as we can but we need the whole Church to face up to the challenge of how we can sustain such help into the future. We have sought to partner with individuals, churches and synods in rising to this challenge but we need our ministers/CRCWs to understand more fully our current situation, future projections and the solution we think most fair to sustain our operation in the long term.

2 It is the view of the committee that the current system of help we offer to retiring United Reformed Church ministers/CRCWs is unsustainable. The survey of 2007 showed that a least 60% of serving stipendiary ministers/CRCWs will need help and this at a level which would require some £2 million per annum at today's prices in liquid capital on average over the next 20 years. Of course some of this will be financed by the profit on the sale of existing properties and legacies/donations but

realistically we have to say this is very uncertain. We understand that the Church at General Assembly level would find it difficult to go beyond its £10 million of financing at present because of other mission priorities and a shrinking membership base. The United Reformed Church has never financed this operation directly through its budget and continues its policy of charging interest on part of the capital borrowed (£207K in the first nine months of 2007).

3 As a committee we believe that God provides but we also need to be good stewards of that provision. We are therefore faced with difficult choices: either we find a new income source (eg a substantial supplement to the Ministry and Mission Fund) or we focus our resources more specifically on the most needy people.

4 The circumstances of younger ministers/CRCWs are different today from those of their predecessors when the scheme began. Then typically ministers were ordained young without ever having owned property, served 40 years, and throughout their ministry were the sole breadwinner in the manse. The current scheme was designed for such ministers and has worked well. Thus at present all ministers/CRCWs having completed the minimum qualifying period (15 years) are treated the same, and the full benefits of the Society made available, where required. However, few ministers/CRCWs ordained/commissioned recently have lived according to this traditional pattern and the assumptions underlying the scheme need to be revisited. Those now reaching retirement who have served the full 40 years on the traditional pattern need to be fully protected, but the same arrangements are less obviously the best use of limited funds for many who retire after, say, 20 years in their own career (and house) and 20 years in the ministry.

### **The way forward – revisions to paragraph 4 (2)**

5 We suggest the fairest approach now would be to link the money made available to the number of years of service. The Guidelines (Appendix 6 page 185) have been extensively reviewed and updated and we are proposing a new system of calculating the resources we make available (if needed) based on the number of years served over 15 (as at present). The crucial difference from the current system is that the resources made available are proportionate to the years served rather than, as at present, a minister serving 15 years and one serving 40 years being treated the same.

### **Implementation of new guidelines and revised system (paragraph 4 (2) guidelines):**

6 Given existing expectations, we would want to move gradually towards the new scheme and we therefore seek to implement the new guidelines over the next 10 years from September 2008. Any minister/CRCW who has served for 40 years or more will always have 100% of the Society's County Ceiling (the maximum available in a particular area) made available where needed.

It is important to remember that the Society will always sympathetically consider the case of any minister/CRCW who will have difficulties in becoming satisfactorily housed as a result of these changes.

By 2018 retiring ministers/CRCWs would be fully within the new arrangements which would be as follows:-

Years of service completed	Proportion of 40 years served	Help from Housing Society
15	15 / 40	37.5% of county ceiling
20	20 / 40	50.0% of county ceiling
30	30 / 40	75.0% of county ceiling
40	40 / 40	100 % of county ceiling

In 2008 all retiring ministers/CRCWs having served from 15 years to 40 or more will receive help at 40/40 or 100% of the county ceiling as now.

In 2010 the new arrangements will have gently begun and the position will be as follows:-

Years of service completed	Proportion of 40 years <b>treated as</b> served	Help from Housing Society
15	36 / 40	90 % of county ceiling
20	36 / 40	90 % of county ceiling
30	36 / 40	90 % of county ceiling
40	40 / 40	100 % of county ceiling

Each year the 'guarantee' reduces and by 2015 the new arrangements would be approaching completion as follows:-

Years of service completed	Proportion of 40 years <b>treated as</b> served	Help from Housing Society
15	23 / 40	57.5 % of county ceiling
20	23 / 40	57.5 % of county ceiling
30	30 / 40	75.0 % of county ceiling
40	40 / 40	100 % of county ceiling

In other words, during this implementation period the actual years of service are supported where needed by a gradually reducing guaranteed number of years of service in order to smooth the introduction of the new arrangements.

An example would be as follows:

A minister/CRCW retires having completed 25 years full time service: if retiring in 2010 his/her guaranteed years of service would exceed his/her actual years and so he/she would be treated as having served 36 years and would therefore be 'entitled' to 36/40 of the County Ceiling. If retiring in 2015 his/her actual 25 years is higher than the guaranteed years of service of 23 years and he/she is therefore 'entitled' to 25/40 of the County Ceiling.

7 Extensive research has been undertaken before offering this significant change. The 2007 survey of ministers suggests an exceptional need for funding between 2012–2014 of around £8.5 million. Research into those who have retired in the past ten years suggests that if the new system had been in operation during that period the Society

## Resolutions 30–31

would have had to have provided £14.3m compared to the £16.2m it did: a saving of £1.9m. We believe this to be a fairer system with our limited resources.

8 The current review of the manse system being undertaken by Mission Council highlights the need for better financial advice to be given at the time of ordinands entering theological training and we believe this to be essential.

9 The Society has always worked on the basis of special cases being presented to the committee and we would stress this route especially during the initial period. Our belief is that the Church would wish us to lean our resources towards those who have little or no provision for their retirement and we will continue to make decisions sympathetically on this basis with our limited resources.

10 In our estimation should this proposal be unacceptable to the Church we would need to provide an annual capital sum to be calculated in advance from the central budget and paid for from M&M contributions.

### Resolution 30

**General Assembly accepts the revised guidelines (Appendix 6 page 185) for the provision of Retired Ministers' Housing and their staged implementation over 10 years from September 2008.**

## Retired ministers' housing – synod partnership

1 One of the challenging areas of our finances in the United Reformed Church is that much of our capital is held at synod level. This applies especially in the area of housing for ministers/CRCWs. Such money was originally given to ensure adequate housing for those who serve our churches full-time. With decreasing numbers of full-time servants of the church, manses are becoming redundant and being sold: the proceeds held at either local church or synod trust level. It is right and proper that existing manses be to the Assembly agreed standards and if new manses are required for new work they be purchased. However beyond those needs it would be helpful to consider whether any surplus could be utilised for housing retired ministers. We are really grateful to the synods (four of them so far) who have agreed to give 10% of the proceeds of the sale of redundant Church property and would like to hold conversations on this 'second mile' solution.

### Resolution 31

**General Assembly requests that conversations begin with the synods about possible partnerships in the provision of Retired Ministers' Housing.**

## Representation to General Assembly

See page 69 for supporting text.

### Resolution 32

- a) **General Assembly requests each synod to include at least one black minority ethnic member in their group of representatives to General Assembly as from Assembly 2010.**
- b) **General Assembly instructs Mission Council to monitor and review the representation of black minority ethnic members in General Assembly in relation to the growth trends of the United Reformed Church and report back to the 2012 Assembly.**

## Living Wage

See page 73 for supporting text.

### Resolution 33

**The Church and Society committee calls on all the United Reformed Church's synods and churches:**

- 1. **to support Church Action on Poverty's call for churches to pay a living wage as determined by the Living Wage Campaign;<sup>1</sup>**
- 2. **to ensure that all employees have a written contract of employment;**
- 3. **for the terms and conditions of employment of employees to at least comply with the minimum legal requirements stipulated;**
- 4. **to implement the equal opportunity policy developed by the United Reformed Church;**
- 5. **where contract or agency staff are employed, to engage with contractors and agencies on the payment of their employees to ensure compliance with this resolution.**

1 Currently, £7.20 an hour in London and £ 7.00 an hour elsewhere in the UK (see [www.church-poverty.org.uk](http://www.church-poverty.org.uk) and follow the campaigns link)

## Appointment of the Revd Roy Lowes as West Midlands synod Moderator

### Resolution 34

**General Assembly appoints the Revd Roy Lowes to serve as Moderator of the West Midlands synod from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2015.**

## Nominations

### Resolution 35

**General Assembly appoints committees and representatives of the Church as set out on pages 77–88 of the Book of Reports subject to additions and corrections contained in the Supplementary Report before Assembly.**

## Vision for youth and children's work

See page 98 for supporting text.

### Resolution 36

**General Assembly welcomes *the Vision for Youth and Children's Work across the United Reformed Church* and commends it to local churches and synods as a way of prioritising and shaping ministry with children and young people.**



## YCWTDO programme

See page 109 for supporting text.

### Resolution 37

**General Assembly, reaffirming the importance of resourcing and equipping local churches in their ministries with children and young people, agrees to continue the Youth and Children’s Work Training and Development Officer programme.**

## A YCWTDO in every synod

See page 109 for supporting text.

### Resolution 38

**General Assembly, believing that it is desirable that there be at least one Youth and Children’s Work Training and Development Officer in each synod, request every synod where such an officer does not exist to explore the possibility of making an appointment by 2011.**

## Line management

See page 110 for supporting text.

### Resolution 39

**General Assembly agrees that synods should be responsible for the line management of their respective Youth and Children’s Work Training and Development Officers. Youth and Children’s Work staff at Church House, in conjunction with the respective synod line managers, will allocate, monitor and evaluate Assembly-level work undertaken by the Youth and Children’s Work Training and Development Officers.**

## Task Group

See page 110 for supporting text.

### Resolution 40

**General Assembly instructs the Youth and Children’s Work committee to create a task group to:**

- a) **ensure that any appropriate training is provided to Church House staff for this changed role and responsibility;**
- b) **put in place the necessary procedures to ensure that synod line management and Youth and Children’s Work Training and Development Officer staff development and appraisal are effective;**
- c) **ensure that Youth and Children’s Work Training and Development Officer job descriptions confirm and maintain that an agreed share of each of their time is devoted to Assembly-level work;**
- d) **report to Mission Council in March 2009.**

## Funding arrangements

See page 111 for supporting text.

### Resolution 41

**General Assembly agrees that the current split funding arrangements for Youth and Children’s Work Training and Development Officers be phased out by 2011, with all costs then being paid via synod funds.**

## Children’s and Youth Officers?

See page 111 for supporting text.

### Resolution 42

**General Assembly agrees that the title of Youth and Children’s Work Training and Development Officer be simplified to Children’s and Youth Officer (CYO).**

## Future publications

### Resolution 43

General Assembly agrees that the Communications and Editorial department will confine its publication of new books by United Reformed Church writers to matters of pastoral care, Reformed theology and history, and liturgy or worship. This policy will be reviewed in four years.

## Reform

### Resolution 44

General Assembly celebrates all that *Reform* has given to the United Reformed Church over the past 35 years and urges all church members to read their free copy of the re-launch issue and consider buying it regularly.

## Bookshop

### Resolution 45

General Assembly reaffirms its support for the Church House Bookshop at a time when other Christian bookshops are struggling to stay in business.

REFORM

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH JULY 2008

**COMING TO  
YOUR CHURCH IN JULY...**

# REFORM

- YOUR magazine
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REFORM, the magazine of the United Reformed Church, relaunches with a new look in July 2008.