

# Book of Reports

General Assembly, Loughborough 2010

United  
Reformed  
Church

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Church 2010  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2010



This book of reports sets the scene for the 2010 General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, to be held in Loughborough from 2 to 5 July.

It gives a foretaste of the many important debates members will engage in during our time at Assembly, and lays out some of the work and thinking that has taken place in the past two years in committees, synods and local churches.

The title 'book of reports' scarcely does the material justice and I hope you will feel the excitement of a Church with a new enthusiasm for its work in God's world. *vision2020* sets the scene for our deliberations and our plans for the future. *Vision4Life*, now in its second year, has begun the renewal which will enable us to reach out to people with a new confidence.

In the presentation of the Congregational Community awards we will again celebrate a wide range of innovative community projects that our church has instigated and developed.

We will also enjoy the opportunity of sharing our thinking with members of the children's assembly and look forward to hearing their views as, together, we reflect the broad church that is the United Reformed Church.

We induct two women as Moderators: Mrs Val Morrison and the Revd Kirsty Thorpe who will serve until 2012.

If you are coming to Loughborough, travel safely. We look forward to welcoming you. If you are not, please support our deliberations in prayer.

May God bless our General Assembly.

Martin Hazell  
Director of Communications  
18<sup>th</sup> May 2010

United Reformed Church General Assembly, Loughborough 2010





vision2020

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## 1 Background

1.1 In 2006, General Assembly resolved to bring together the work of six Assembly Committees through the formation of the Mission Committee with a clear mandate to reappraise the mission priorities of the denomination and how they are resourced. Since then considerable progress has been made particularly in relation to the operation of staff secretaries as a 'Mission Team' and also in identifying a series of work priorities for 2009 and 2010. These are detailed in the Mission Committee Report to General Assembly.

1.2 At General Assembly 2008, the Mission Committee introduced the notion of a denominational 'mission strategy' founded upon a series of 10-year 'outcomes'. The Mission Committee report received warm approval and small group discussions about the outcomes indicated significant enthusiasm for the broad thrust of the approach. The primary concerns expressed by members of Assembly related to the need to avoid the imposition of a strategy from the centre and for it to take greater account of issues of spirituality and worship.

1.3 During 2009, the Mission Committee led an extensive consultation with local churches, synods, other Assembly Committees and ecumenical and international partners concerning what has become known as *vision2020: planning for growth in the URC*.

1.4 Following over two years of discussion, this report sets out a framework which can both inspire and support mission planning at every level of the United Reformed Church. To be clear, *vision2020* is a framework and not a programme. It is designed to create a context through which different levels of the Church can inter-relate; it articulates a set of themes within which we can better understand and shape our programmes and plans; and it provides something of a 'routemap' that will enable us to evaluate better our journey as a Church. *vision2020* does not prescribe activity but we offer it to the denomination as a tool and resource that can be applied in almost any situation. We hope that over time *vision2020* will become a type of 'covenant' between every part of the Church that chooses to work within its parameters.

## 2 Feedback from the *vision2020* consultation

2.1 Consultation about *vision2020* took place in two phases throughout 2009. The first phase focused on local congregations and took place in the spring and summer; the second phase involved synods, other networks and ecumenical partners and started in the autumn of 2009. Local churches were asked to give their feedback on the two core ideas: the statements of our mission and purpose and local mission pledges. 538 forms were returned, which represents over a third of all local congregations. The highest number of responses came from the West Midlands, North Western, Yorkshire and Southern synods.

2.2 There was a largely positive response to the statements of our mission and purpose. Three out of every four churches indicated that they thought the current statements outlined the main areas that the Church should prioritise in the next 10 years. The majority of churches (69%) further indicated that they would find the idea of 'Local Mission Pledges' helpful and 64% agreed that such pledges would help synod and Assembly staff plan the kind of support they could offer local churches.

2.3 The consultation highlighted a significant number of churches who are clearly engaged in wide ranging mission activities already and who use their resources creatively for this purpose. We wish to affirm the wonderful work that many United Reformed Churches are engaged with and re-state our intention that *vision2020* should support and build upon these positives.

2.4 The consultation revealed a number of key issues. Significant patterns emerged in response to the statements' themes. These included concern about the lack of reference to children and young people; suggestions to enhance references to Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Bible; a range of strong views about the statement on diversity; and a sense that the statements were too wordy and that some of the language was too technical.

2.5 A number of churches questioned the quantitative nature of many of the suggested activities and in particular the notion of numerical church growth being seen as a measure of success. A number of churches also felt that the phrase 'In the next 10 years ...' which introduces each statement was unhelpful, indicating delayed action for some and an unrealistic time frame for others.

2.6 Many churches used the consultation exercise to express their sense of vulnerability and weakness. In some cases concern focused on small numbers, in others the fact that the congregation is ageing. Lack of capacity was frequently raised and it became clear to us that we did not communicate clearly enough that local churches would not be expected to do everything but to choose one or two things to 'pledge' as part of their local mission plans.

2.7 We have taken on board the issues and concerns raised and have sought to address them within the revised *vision2020* framework.

2.8 The consultation with synods focused on the link between the *vision2020* statements and the synods' own priorities, and how local mission pledges can help synods with their mission planning and enabling. Five synods felt that *vision2020* integrated well with their own plans and another six saw potential for integration but were not yet clear how this would be done in practice. Only one synod responded negatively and one did not respond at all. Some synod responses reiterated local churches' concerns about some of the statements such as the lack of emphasis on the Bible, and concern over the diversity statement. They further expressed the need to consider the implications of *vision2020* for Local Ecumenical Partnerships and for smaller churches.

2.9 Participation in the consultation on the part of Assembly Committees has been mixed. Some have engaged with the material in-depth, not least the Ministries and Education and Learning Committees, while others have given only limited feedback. However, overall the response to *vision2020* has been positive. We also invited the views of our ecumenical and international partners, but had not received any responses when this report went to press.

### **3 The theological basis for a URC mission framework**

3.1 The Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church speaks of the church's responsibility to offer itself and the world to God in worship; to receive and express the renewing life of the Holy Spirit in each place and in its total fellowship; to declare the reconciling and saving power of Jesus Christ, to live out Christ's ministry of caring, forgiving and healing love; and to bear witness to Christ's rule over the nations. Though not explicitly mentioned, it is clear that mission is fundamental to the existence of the church.

3.2 A much stronger focus on mission is visible in the *Growing Up* report, adopted by the 1999 General Assembly. The United Reformed Church was expressing its intention to focus on faithful participation in God's mission, rather than on the future of the URC as a Church. *Growing Up* attempted to reawaken the Church to the fact that it is mission-

shaped and that in the words of Emil Brunner, it 'exists by mission as fire exists by burning'. This found further expression in the strapline of the *Catch the Vision* process in 2004: 'called to be God's people, transformed by the Gospel, making a difference for Christ's sake'.

3.3 *vision2020* builds on this understanding of mission and the church's role in it. It takes as its fundamental starting point that mission is God's activity and entails all that God is doing to transform this world into the reign of God. It is a mission that finds its ultimate expression in Jesus and continues throughout history through the Spirit. The focus and scope of God's mission is the transformation of all of created reality into what God intended in creation.

3.4 The Church is called, sent and empowered by God, through the Holy Spirit, to join in God's mission of transformation. It is the Church-in-mission that is recognisably the community of the followers of Jesus.

3.5 God's mission is to be understood as all that God is doing to transform the world into God's reign. Therefore mission has a comprehensive character. The *Growing Up* report expressed this in the Five Marks of Mission. *vision2020* builds on these in its ten statements of mission and purpose.

3.6 If mission is God's mission and is all that God is doing to transform this world, then mission is contextual. It is the Holy Spirit who helps us discern how God is at work in each place. It is in the power of the Holy Spirit and through constant reflection and prayer that we are enabled to give shape to the Good News in ways that address directly the lives of the people around us. This is reflected in the ten statements, in *vision2020*'s principles and approach and in the concept of the local mission pledges.

3.7 The Mission Committee and Mission Team have sought to express these principles in the Mission Creed (see Annexe 1, page 17).

## 4 Challenges and tensions

As with much theological endeavour, our engagement in mission is not without questions, challenges and apparent contradictions. These have been made explicit in a number of ways as churches, synods and committees have engaged with the *vision2020* materials. Whilst much of the *vision2020* consultation feedback can be reflected in changes to our statements and plans, there are some more fundamental tensions and challenges which cannot be easily resolved. These are challenges that we need to 'live with' and explore as we journey together in God's unfolding mission. Here we highlight three:

- a) *Faithfulness or fruitfulness*  
*vision2020* aims to help the United Reformed Church plan for growth. Growth takes many forms. Every local church will be able to tell a story of how it has developed over the years, how its members have grown in faith, how it has grown part of its neighbourhood. This growth in 'faithfulness' is a key part of what we mean by growth. However, *vision2020* is also concerned about numerical growth, not only because of institutional survival but out of the conviction that a church defined by mission ought to long to increase its shared fellowship in Christ. The growth of communities of faith which are centres of worship of God and where the reign of God is made visible – our fruitfulness – is a key concern in mission. We are called to be both faithful and fruitful.
- b) *Qualitative or quantitative measures*  
*vision2020* seeks to enable churches to be more intentional in their mission planning and engagement. One of the weaknesses identified in the *Growing Up* process was that no clear targets were set. *vision2020* has sought to address this by adding 'indicators' to each of the statements of our mission and purpose. It clearly recognises, however, that key to a church's involvement in mission is the quality of its church life and not the number of activities carried out or people

attending. Therefore, when we identify indicators to help us see where we are on the way, this is done in the recognition that these are only 'signposts on the journey towards greater corporate Christ-likeness' (Robert Warren, 2004). Our involvement in mission is as much about the being of the church as its doing.

c) *Unity and mission*

The United Reformed Church was founded on a vision of unity and many regarded it as a temporary stage on the way to the visible unity of the Christian Church. For some the fact that it still exists is a sign of its failure to live out its founding vision. Both the *Growing Up* report and *Catch the Vision* sought to forge a new identity for the church in the belief that it has something distinctive and vital to contribute. *vision2020* builds on this belief and seeks to help churches develop an identity that is strongly rooted in God's mission: we are called to be God's people, transformed by the gospel, making a difference for Christ's sake. The renewed emphasis on our identity, however, needs to be balanced with our continuing search for visible unity. Our ecumenical division falls far short of Jesus' own vision of the unity of the church, and the need for the continued witness of the United Reformed Church to the hope and goal of Christian unity remains. The aim of *vision2020* is to balance the church's commitment to the unity of all God's people with a similar commitment to share in God's mission. As with fruitfulness and faithfulness, unity and mission are not mutually exclusive goals; indeed they must be nurtured hand in hand.

## 5 Links to other URC programmes

5.1 One of the most common concerns expressed during the consultation was that churches are suffering from 'initiative overload' (although very few local churches expressed this view directly themselves). At the heart of these concerns are four initiatives: *Vision4Life*, *vision2020*, the *Marketing Campaign* and *Challenge to the Church*. Following numerous discussions with the General Secretary, Committee Convenors, working groups and Synod Moderators, a clear pattern has been established as to how these programmes relate.

5.2 The primary focus for local church activity until Advent 2011 is *Vision4Life*. We are presently in the second year of *Vision4Life* with its theme of Prayer. In December 2010 we will move into the Evangelism year during which the *Marketing Campaign* will be launched which, with its focus on evangelism, will act as a resource for and complement to *Vision4Life*. At present, the *Marketing Campaign* and *Vision4Life* steering groups are working together to ensure these initiatives are joined up.

5.3 *vision2020* is an over-arching framework within which URC mission planning at Assembly, synod and local levels can be promoted and understood over a ten year period. Whilst it will have its own branding and relevant resource materials, these will cross-reference other Assembly programmes such as *Vision4Life*, the *Marketing Campaign* and *Commitment for Life* and these resources will be designed to be tailored by synods and local churches to address their regional and local situations. (See Section 11, page 14 for more details).

5.4 There is a strong hope that *vision2020* will provide a framework and resource for synods to develop and adapt their own synod mission strategies and that local churches will use *vision2020* and Synod Mission Strategies as a stimulus for making their own local mission pledges. It is also hoped that there is a clear relationship between synod mission strategies and synod ministerial deployment planning that forms part of the *Challenge to the Church* process. (See Section 9 for more details).

## 6 *vision2020* principles and approach

6.1 *vision2020* is a 'framework' and as such recognises the autonomy of local churches, gathered as synods, to determine their own priorities and plans. The development of a denominational framework represents an attempt to inspire, encourage and co-ordinate and not to coerce or control. To this end, a number of principles have been – and will continue to be – important to our mission planning.

6.2 First, the *vision2020* framework must be seen as a **process rather than a document**. Whilst the different parts of the church will necessarily need to set out their aims, objectives, priorities and programmes in forms of words, the importance of our approach to planning must be as much about the process of discussing, deciding and implementing ideas as it will be about creating a finely worded document.

6.3 Secondly, in-keeping with our denominational tradition, the starting point of any mission framework must be **the local congregation**. Whilst there is a place for Assembly to suggest broad direction and for synods to encourage and guide, this must be a strategy that serves, inspires and is inspired by the local congregation.

6.4 To this end, the third principle is that *vision2020* must be **permissive rather than prescriptive**. Ultimately *vision2020* must enable all of the local plans, developed in an organic and inclusive way, the synod strategies and assembly committee priorities to find their place as part of a coherent whole. The framework is offered to inspire and to guide and not to dictate.

6.5 Finally, *vision2020* must be driven by a **clear set of values** and not become a framework for its own sake. Our Reformed tradition and nearly forty years of history suggest that our framework must be distinctive and, whilst enabling some clear decisions and plans to be made, it must also tell a story of who we are as a denomination and where we are going. We believe that the theological basis, as set out above, with the Mission Creed and the Statements of Mission Purpose, together present a sound basis from which mission planning can develop.

6.6 With these principles in mind, the diagram in Annexe 2 is one portrayal of how different processes within the United Reformed Church might operate together in order to enable a more effective approach to mission. Just as a body with many parts, effective mission planning requires the co-operation of these different parts, from Local Mission Pledges, through Synod Mission Strategies to the overarching Assembly Framework. (See Sections 8-10 for more details).

## 7 Statements of Mission Purpose

7.1 At the centre of the *vision2020* framework are a set of ten 'statements of our mission purpose' which describe the kind of denomination we hope the United Reformed Church will be in the future. Each statement is followed by a short paragraph of additional explanation and a series of 'indicators'.

7.2 There has been much detailed feedback on these statements. Many of these issues have been taken on board and the revised statements appear as Annexe 3. A decision has been taken not to include a separate statement about children and young people but to ensure that reference to the importance of children and young people is woven into each theme, particularly through the 'indicators' (see Section 8 below).

7.3 Concerns were also raised about the relationship between the proposed statements and the Five Marks of Mission. It is the view of the Mission Committee that the two sets of statements are entirely complementary but that the more detailed set of 10 statements set out in *vision2020* will be helpful for churches in their mission planning.

7.4 In the *Hearing Your Views vision2020* consultation booklet each statement began with the phrase: 'In ten years' time ...' Feedback said that this was unhelpful. We have decided to drop that introductory phrase and emphasise the following things:

## Statements of Mission Purpose

- a) Our statements of mission purpose are designed to set out a vision for the development of the United Reformed Church for the next 10 years and beyond. They arise from – and act as a complement to – the Five Marks of Mission.
- b) As statements of purpose we can see many of them working already in all aspects of the life of the United Reformed Church. In this we can rejoice. But they remain both a challenge and an inspiration as beacons on a journey we must make together over the coming decade.
- c) With the coming decade in mind, we see them as statements which can motivate and guide us until at least 2020, but recognise that the mission task is much more urgent. Unless we act immediately, the life and witness of our denomination as we know it is unlikely to thrive beyond the next decade at all.

### 8 Indicators: steps along the way

8.1 An indicator is a sign or signal that we are making progress towards our desired outcome – it is a milestone on a journey. Whilst it can be very helpful for an indicator to be measurable in some way it is not the same as a ‘target’ as a target is normally seen as an end in itself or something by which we are judged or monitored.

8.2 During the *vision2020* consultation we have been struck by the reaction to suggested indicators, not least the apparent fear of using numerical measures. In a culture of targets and league tables which has sometimes led to unnecessary bureaucracy, perverse incentives and unhappy workplaces this reaction is perhaps understandable. But there is a danger of throwing the baby out with the proverbial bathwater and not facing up to our fears. Measurable indicators can be a helpful tool for both celebration and reflection.

8.3 Another concern raised during the consultation was that churches would be expected to address every statement and it would be too much for many to bear. This is not the intention. The idea of having multiple statements and indicators is that churches can use them to help identify a small number of mission priorities which are particularly pressing or relevant to their own context. For smaller churches, the idea of having a range of indicators is that they might pick just one or two to help guide their work.

8.4 The examples of indicators set out in the table in Annexe 3 are intended to act as prompts for discussion and planning. They have been developed by members of the Mission Committee drawing on their own experiences of church life. They are divided into three groups depending upon the ‘level’ of the church at which they might be best applied. They are also separated out by the ten *vision2020* statements. But they are not designed to be used in a rigid fashion. Though we hope some churches and synods might use them as they are, the intention is that they can be adapted to suit different contexts.

### 9 Local Mission pledges

9.1 *vision2020* recognises local mission to be the most important priority for the United Reformed Church. The mission activity of our local congregations represents the cornerstone of our denominational ethos and our future hope. To this end, the *vision2020* consultation indicated significant levels of support for the notion of the *Local Mission Pledge*. Many local congregations expressed their enthusiasm for identifying one or more activities that might give direction to their mission and a number of synods indicated that they would find it helpful to gather and analyse local church priorities with a view to offering appropriate support where possible.

9.2 There was a strong feeling that *Local Mission Pledges* would be best made by local churches as part of their biennial process of *Local Mission and Ministry Review* (LMMR). Each Synod is currently implementing LMMR in its own way and it is proposed that some form of guidance, developed in consultation with synods, might be produced which suggests a unified process for LMMR and the development of *Local Mission Pledges*.

9.3 In summary:

### Local Mission Pledges

- a) Each local congregation will be encouraged to make one or more local mission pledge.
- b) A local mission pledge will be a short statement expressing the mission priority of the local church.
- c) A local mission pledge will be made as part of the biennial process of local mission and ministry review.
- d) A local mission pledge might be stimulated by one or more of the Mission Statements and Indicators set out in the *vision2020* Framework but may be adapted to suit a local mission context.
- e) Together, local mission pledges represent a process of covenanting between churches in a synod.
- f) Synods may gather and use local mission pledges to guide and direct their own mission planning.

## 10 Synod Mission Strategies

10.1 *vision2020* seeks to support and build on synod mission strategies. Feedback from the consultation with synods suggests that there is great diversity not only in the stages of development of synod mission strategies, but also in the understanding of their nature and function.

10.2 Some synods feel that their mission strategy is to encourage, enable and support local churches in their own stated mission priorities. They therefore see no need for the synod to formulate synod mission priorities. These synods suggest that the *vision2020* document might be a point of reference or complementary tool for local churches in their reflection on mission in their own context. Though this approach offers limited scope for engagement with *vision2020*, one synod reported that it uses a particular process which encourages churches to make an action plan and this could form the basis for making *Local Mission Pledges*.

10.3 Other synods are at the beginning of formulating a synod mission strategy and are using *vision2020* to help shape this process. Feedback received suggests that the ten mission statements in particular are being used to help synods identify their own mission priorities. These synods are seeking to link their work on a synod strategy with *vision2020* from the beginning to ensure integration. They see the development of *Local Mission Pledges* as a positive tool in this process.

10.4 The majority of synods have done significant work on identifying mission priorities and in some cases this has resulted in fully formulated mission strategies. Where synods have identified their own mission priorities most indicate that there are clear links between those and the statements in *vision2020*. Some have actively incorporated *vision2020* in their strategies, while others see significant potential for the

two strategies supporting one another. They are intending to integrate the concept of *Local Mission Pledges* in their work on LMMR and the revision of pastorate profiles.

10.5 It is entirely appropriate for each synod to adopt its own approach to mission planning. However, the Mission Committee believes there are already clear benefits in those synods where there is a positive and proactive commitment to integrating their own plans with the *vision2020* process.

10.6 Without wanting to suggest any form of prescription, the following box is intended to indicate how a *Synod Mission Strategy* can become an effective, joined-up mission planning tool.

### Some elements of a *Synod Mission Strategy* might include:

- a) A series of clear mission priorities for the synod with explicit reference to their relationship with the wider *vision2020* framework.
- b) A series of synod-level indicators which can be used to celebrate and reflect on progress in relation to mission priorities and might act as a 'covenant' between synods and with the wider Assembly (these indicators could simply be a 'collation' of all the *Local Mission Pledges*).
- c) A clear relationship between synod mission priorities and the priorities of local churches – as expressed through their *Local Mission Pledges*.
- d) A clear relationship between synod mission priorities and deployment planning.
- e) A clear relationship between synod mission priorities and synod personnel, programmes, training and resources.
- f) A regularly updated synod mission action plan.

## 11 Assembly Framework

11.1 Clearly the *vision2020* framework also has significant implications for the URC as a whole. At the simplest level, *vision2020* provides a framework or context for the work of the Mission Committee. As we move away from the old committee structures the themes of the statements need to guide the work of the Mission Team at Church House. This will involve Mission Committee – informed by synods and local church experiences – reshaping the Mission Team work programme and introducing new programmes of work such as Fresh Expression and the *Marketing Campaign* to support the different statements of mission purpose. In 2010, for example, it will shape the Review of Ecumenical Relations and the new *vision2020* Mission Grants Programme. It will also shape any revision of staff secretary posts. A flavour of this is given in the Mission Committee report to General Assembly.

11.2 Whilst it has been driven by the Mission Committee and has specific relevance to Assembly's Mission Department, it has often been made clear that 'mission' is not the sole domain of the Mission Committee but underlies all other aspects of denominational life. Throughout this document, references have been made to *Challenge to the Church*, synod deployment planning and *Local Mission and Ministry Reviews*. These all lie within the scope of the Ministries Committee and Department and we are beginning to work through the implications of *vision2020* in that regard. Similarly, the Education and Learning Committee have initiated conversations about the impact of *vision2020* on their work: for the *Resource Centres for Learning*, the TLS programme, for EM1/2/3 and for elders. We hope to give more of a flavour of these plans through presentations at General Assembly.



11.3 Finally, for *vision2020* to offer any coherence or inspiration to the different levels of the denomination it needs to have a strong identity and relevant resource materials. It is proposed that we maintain the *vision2020* logo, supported by the successful ‘look and feel’ of the *Hearing Your Views* booklet which itself is based upon the communications approach developed by *Vision4Life*. The URC website will also be an important ‘repository’ for stories, discussions and web-based resources in the coming decade. However, whilst maintaining the unifying logo, statements and overall approach, it is hoped that synods and local churches will themselves adopt, develop and expand *vision2020* according to their own situations.

11.4 In summary:

### The *vision2020* Assembly Framework

- a) *vision2020* is not another resource-intensive programme of Assembly activity but rather a deliberate and systematic attempt to shape – and go on re-shaping – existing and developing programmes of activity in every council and committee of church life.
- b) The Assembly Framework is the combination of the statements of mission purpose, the guiding principles and the resources produced through the Mission department to guide and steer the *vision2020* decade.
- c) It will be supported by the annual Mission Committee Workplan and the activities of the Mission Team and its programmes but its real strength will lie in how far it nurtures and enables mission planning and action in local churches and synods.
- d) A series of Assembly-level indicators can be used to celebrate and reflect on progress and might act as a denominational ‘covenant’ (these indicators could simply be a ‘collation’ of all the synod indicators).

## 12 Implementation / resources / communications

12.1 The implementation of *vision2020* needs to follow the principles set out in the sections above, not least the challenge to every council and committee of the church to work out for itself the implications of the *vision2020* statements of mission purpose for its own context.

12.2 As stated above, all of the work of the Mission Department will be gradually re-orientated around the Assembly Framework and already, for example, the variety of grants under committee oversight has been restructured as a *vision2020* Mission Grants Programme.

12.3 To this end the first priority for *vision2020* implementation will be:

- a) To work with each synod and each Assembly Committee to help them devise their own response to *vision2020*.

Beyond this, key aspects of implementation are as follows:

- b) A simple ‘feedback’ leaflet will be produced thanking those that have participated in the *vision2020* consultation and informing them of the decision of General Assembly and the *vision2020* Assembly framework.
- c) Rather than producing a single communications resource about *vision2020* a series of web-based resources will be developed depending on the needs and demands

of synods and local churches. These might include:

- further reflections and resource materials in relation to each of the statements of mission purpose;
- resources to help churches think through their *Local Mission Pledges*;
- stories and case studies from local churches and synods about how they are engaging with *vision2020*.

- d) As well as these central web-based resources, the Mission department will allocate from within its existing budget a small communications budget to each synod for it to decide how best to communicate *vision2020* amongst its own churches. Mission Committee core members and Mission Team synod links will work closely with each synod to explore how best to do this.
- e) The Mission Committee and the Ministries Committee will work together on further 'guidance' and resources for synods and local churches relating to the Local Mission and Ministry Review process and the next steps for *Challenge to the Church*.

12.4 Finally, the development and implementation of *vision2020* will be subject to regular monitoring and review by the Mission Committee with opportunities for annual review by Mission Council and evaluation at each General Assembly in the coming decade.

## Mission Committee: *vision2020*

### Resolution 1

- a) General Assembly celebrates God's calling to each and every member, local church, synod, council and committee to join in God's transformational journey of good news for all creation.
- b) General Assembly gives thanks for the mission journey of the United Reformed Church in years gone by but recognises the significant challenges ahead in our denomination and in our world.
- c) General Assembly adopts the *vision2020* framework as the primary process of mission planning and church growth for the United Reformed Church in the coming decade.

# Annexe 1

## The Mission Creed

We believe in God's mission:

beginning at creation  
with a word of possibility,  
and a promise of abundance;

breathing us into existence  
to delight in creation,  
and to tread carefully;

we are creatures of the earth,  
reflecting God's diversity,  
interconnected and interdependent.

We believe in God's mission:

bringing good news in person,  
starting where others need to begin  
and finding holiness in every encounter;

bursting through the walls of our churches,  
to reach out to the marginalised  
with unconditional love;

we are called to be a people of resurrection,  
sojourners in this generation,  
dependent on the generosity of God.

We believe in God's mission:

challenging complacency,  
and calling for action,  
through contemplative love;

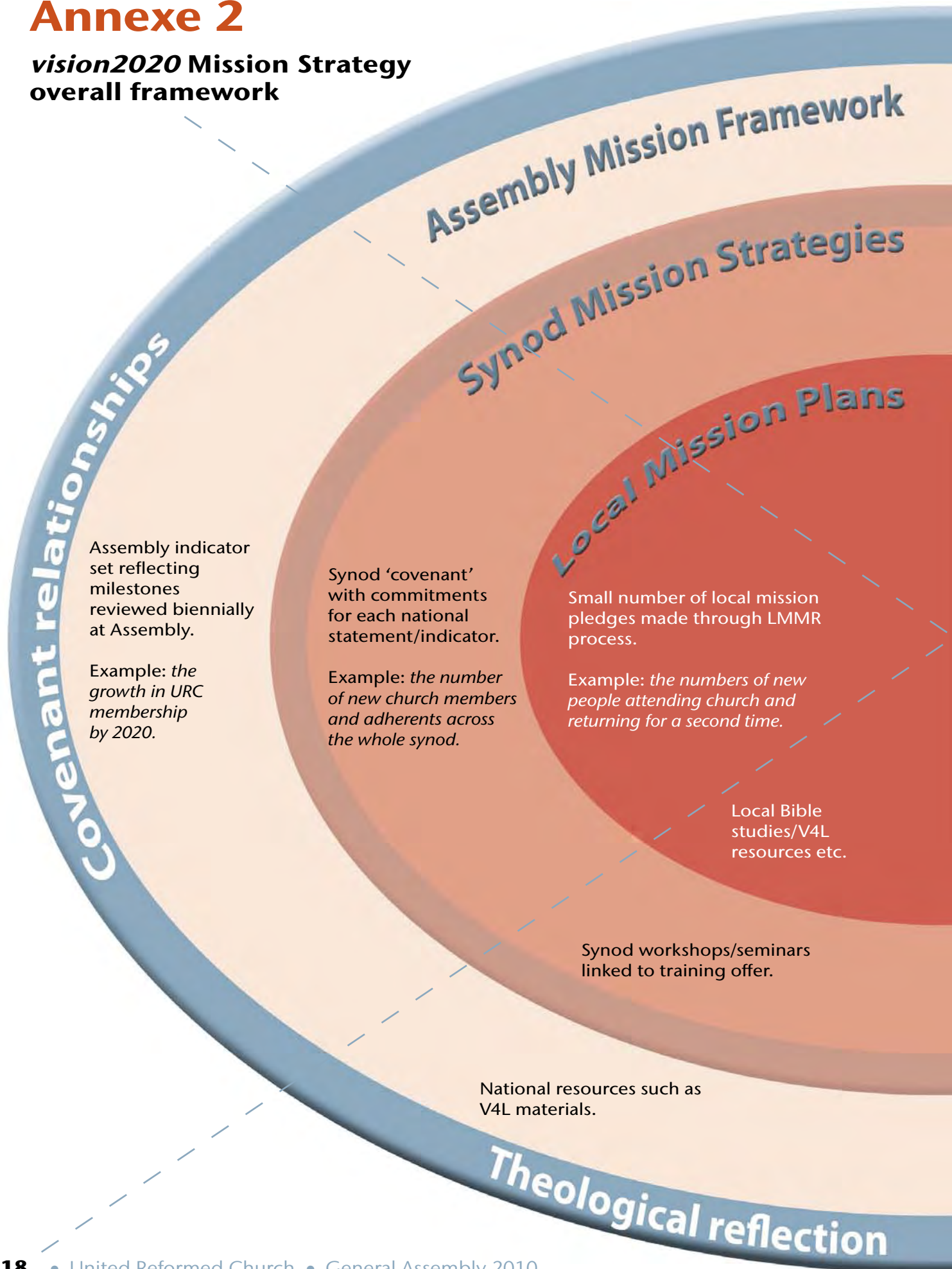
so that we might be at one  
with each other,  
and at peace with the world;

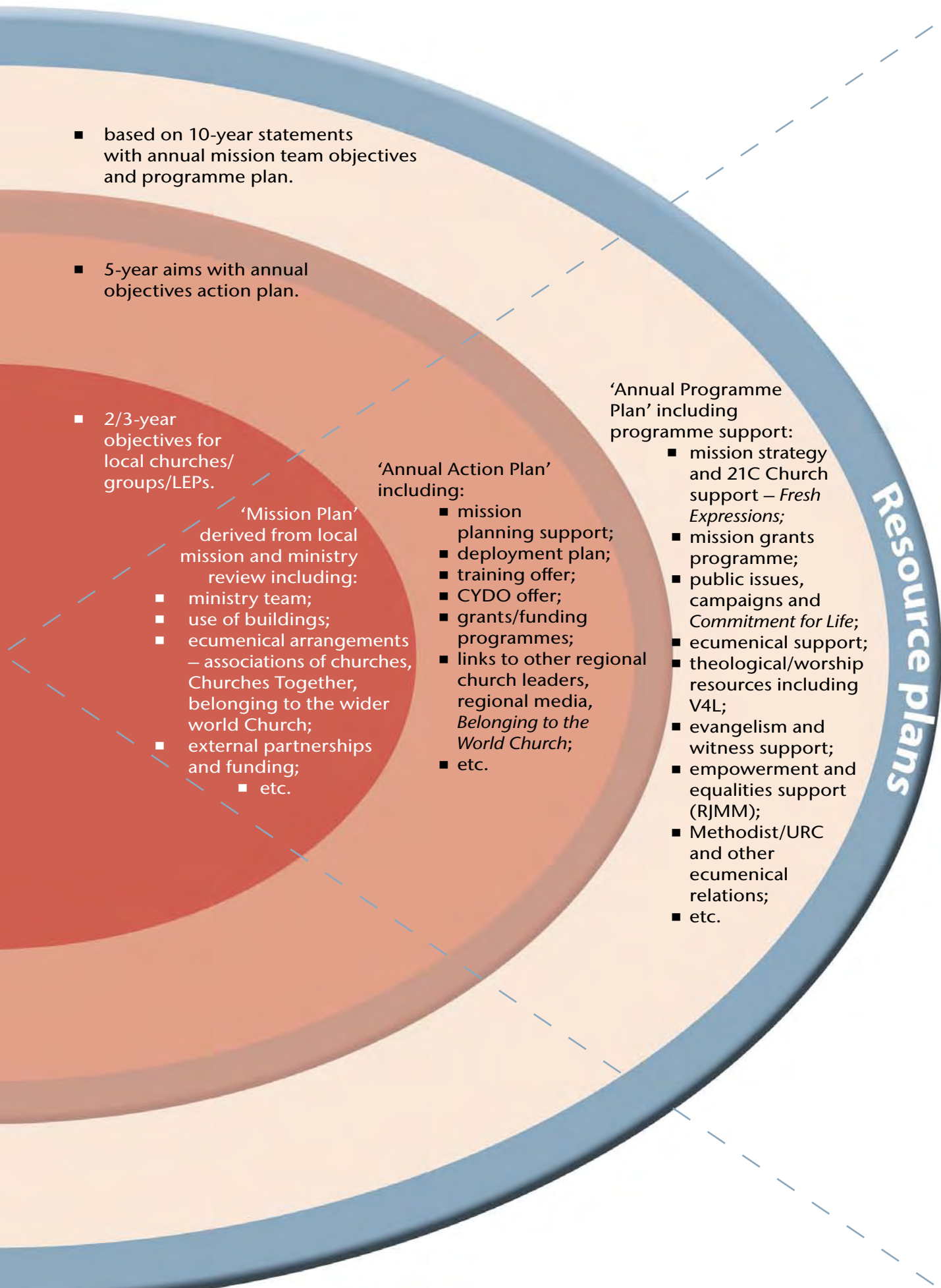
we are commissioned by God,  
Creator, Saviour, Holy Spirit,  
Source of the mission we seek to fulfil.



## Annexe 2

### vision2020 Mission Strategy overall framework





- based on 10-year statements with annual mission team objectives and programme plan.

- 5-year aims with annual objectives action plan.

- 2/3-year objectives for local churches/groups/LEPs.

'Mission Plan' derived from local mission and ministry review including:

- ministry team;
- use of buildings;
- ecumenical arrangements – associations of churches, Churches Together, belonging to the wider world Church;
- external partnerships and funding;
  - etc.

'Annual Action Plan' including:

- mission planning support;
- deployment plan;
- training offer;
- CYDO offer;
- grants/funding programmes;
- links to other regional church leaders, regional media, *Belonging to the World Church*;
- etc.

'Annual Programme Plan' including programme support:

- mission strategy and 21C Church support – *Fresh Expressions*;
- mission grants programme;
- public issues, campaigns and *Commitment for Life*;
- ecumenical support;
- theological/worship resources including V4L;
- evangelism and witness support;
- empowerment and equalities support (RJMM);
- Methodist/URC and other ecumenical relations;
- etc.

Resource plans

# Annexe 3

## vision2020 Statements of mission purpose and indicators

### Statement 1: Spirituality and prayer

**We will grow in our practice of prayer and spirituality, nurturing strength for our witness to Jesus Christ, and developing our discernment of where God is and what God is calling us to do by reading and studying the Bible and through the power of the Holy Spirit.**

Our faith must be at the heart of all we do. Faith is nurtured by worship and prayer, by reading and studying the Bible, by the life of our church community and by how we practice it from day to day. We must therefore seek to engage more deeply with Bible study and prayer, seek to develop worship that is engaging and joyful, seek to live faithfully and hopefully as a church community and as individuals, confident that God still talks to us and shows us how to live.

*Some suggested indicators:*

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Providing opportunities for prayer and Bible study in small groups and in a variety of styles.</li> <li>■ The number of people for whom prayer and Bible study is a natural habit – not just on Sunday.</li> <li>■ Directly involving children and young people in prayer, Bible study and leading worship.</li> <li>■ How far we see all we do as an ‘act of worship’.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How far worship, prayer and Bible study forms a part of all Synod meetings and committees.</li> <li>■ The number of churches supported and resourced to develop their spirituality and prayer.</li> <li>■ The number of churches taking part in specific initiatives to engage more deeply with spirituality and prayer e.g. <i>Vision4Life</i>.</li> <li>■ Demonstrating clear links between policies and plans and spirituality, Bible study and prayer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How far worship, prayer and Bible study forms a part of all Synod meetings and committees.</li> <li>■ The number of churches supported and resourced to develop their spirituality and prayer.</li> <li>■ The number of churches taking part in specific initiatives to engage more deeply with spirituality and prayer e.g. <i>Vision4Life</i>.</li> <li>■ Demonstrating clear links between policies and plans and spirituality, Bible study and prayer.</li> </ul>

## Statement 2: Identity

**The URC will be a Church where every local congregation will be able to say who they are, what they do and why they do it.**

One of our greatest strengths is our diversity and flexibility which allows our churches to serve so creatively and effectively across a wide variety of contexts. However, constant pragmatism can lead to a lack of identity, focus and purpose. Our identity in Jesus Christ is central to our mission. We want to encourage local churches to develop mission plans specific to their local contexts, which are owned by the membership of the church, allowing them to articulate clearly to friends, colleagues and neighbours ‘who they are, what they do, and why they do it.’

### *Some suggested indicators:*

<b>Local Indicators</b>	<b>Synod Indicators</b>	<b>Assembly Indicators</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Having a clear ‘mission plan’ understood and owned by all members.</li> <li>■ Having an up to date ‘Welcome Pack’, noticeboard and website – including resources for children.</li> <li>■ Offering a warm space, warm coffee and warm welcome to people from any background.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Number of churches with a clear mission plan – expressed through a Local Mission and Ministry Review.</li> <li>■ Provision of resources to support, enable and encourage local churches to develop their local mission plans.</li> <li>■ Demonstrating clear links between policies and plans and ‘who we are’ as a denomination.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Number of churches taking part in Vision4Life and the <i>Marketing Campaign</i> programmes exploring URC faith and mission.</li> <li>■ Demonstrable support to synods to nurture and develop their own regional and national identities.</li> <li>■ Demonstrating clear links between policies and plans and ‘who we are’ as a denomination.</li> </ul>

### Statement 3: Christian Ecumenical Partnerships

**We will be more confident in our identity, valuing the treasures of our tradition, discerning when to seek ecumenical partnerships, and when and how to seek the further unity of the Church.**

A lot has developed ecumenically since our unions in 1972, 1981 and 2000; the focus has changed from seeking further union, to forming a wide variety of partnerships – at local and national levels. Whilst our instincts remain deeply rooted in seeking further unity, we do not believe our dreams are served well by lacking in confidence, purpose and identity. Being confident in ourselves and working with others are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, empowered by the Holy Spirit, celebrating and offering our many gifts will make our partnerships stronger and may speed the way to further union.

*Some suggested indicators:*

<i>Local Indicators</i>	<i>Synod Indicators</i>	<i>Assembly Indicators</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Sharing people, finances and buildings with other local churches, e.g. youth work.</li> <li>■ Regular opportunities for worship, prayer and reflection with other local churches for people of all ages.</li> <li>■ Hosting or supporting Christian activities and churches not part of mainstream denominations.</li> <li>■ Coming together with other churches to run local mission projects.</li> <li>■ Speaking with confidence about the gifts of our URC tradition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The number of ecumenical partnerships appropriate to the synod’s context.</li> <li>■ Opportunities provided to learn about our different traditions with Christian ecumenical partners.</li> <li>■ Activities for children and young people to meet with others from different Christian traditions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Opportunities provided to learn about our different traditions with Christian ecumenical partners.</li> <li>■ The amount of Assembly-level activity and resourcing carried out in partnership with ecumenical partners.</li> <li>■ Demonstrating clear links between our national, European and international ecumenical partnerships and the ministry and mission of our local churches.</li> </ul>



## Statement 4: Community partnerships

**We will be a Church that is more active in the life of local neighbourhoods.**

Many churches already have strong and long-standing links with their local communities – but others have become gathered congregations with little connection to the places where they meet to worship. An incarnational understanding of mission calls us to shape – and to be shaped – by the communities in which we worship and serve. We want to encourage local churches to get involved in their local neighbourhoods in new ways, being creative and taking risks in forming active partnerships with other local agencies, working with people of other faiths in the area to seek the benefit of those that live or work in the area.

*Some suggested indicators:*

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Playing an active role to run or support a local community project.</li> <li>■ The number of members actively involved in local civic and political life.</li> <li>■ Support given to members working or volunteering in local community-based organisations.</li> <li>■ Playing an active role in work with children and young people ‘outside’ the church.</li> <li>■ Having a ‘buildings’ policy’ that encourages local groups who share our values and concerns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The number of churches running some form of community project or working in partnership with other local agencies.</li> <li>■ Direct support through grants, training or other resources for community-based mission.</li> <li>■ Involvement with other regionally-based initiatives addressing wider social, economic and environmental issues, e.g. Regional Development Agencies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Direct support through grants, training or other resources for community-based mission.</li> <li>■ Involvement with other national initiatives addressing wider social, economic and environmental issues, e.g. community development networks.</li> </ul>

## Statement 5: Hospitality and diversity

**We will be a Church committed to becoming even more welcoming and hospitable, and embracing all people equally.**

Our story is one of a people from rich and diverse journeys. Differences, not similarities, are the source of our vitality and strength in our common faith in Jesus Christ. This includes our Church heritages, theologies, cultures, national heritages and life experiences. As a multicultural Church we are building on a biblical understanding of God’s mission to which the gospel calls us to living God’s Word, embodying God’s love and promoting God’s justice as we aim to include, affirm and welcome all. We will continue to live our calling of prophetic witness to holiness, hope and reconciliation, as we seek greater participation of all to reflect our rich and diverse journeys in all of our life together as a Church.

*Some suggested indicators:*

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The involvement of children and young people in all aspects of church life.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the congregation reflects the make-up of the local community.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the congregation recognises and affirms other aspects of diversity, including theological diversity.</li> <li>■ The number of members who have undertaken ‘training’ about diversity and inclusiveness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Provision of training and awareness activities about diversity and inclusiveness.</li> <li>■ The number of churches who regularly monitor their membership and eldership to ensure inclusiveness.</li> <li>■ Representation and participation of all minority and excluded groups (as spelt out by our Equal Opportunities policy and the recent Equalities Act 2010) on key councils, committees and task groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ An increase in the diversity of the denomination (measured through church annual returns).</li> <li>■ Appropriate numbers of black and minority ethnic ministers, church-related community workers, staff and candidates.</li> <li>■ Representation and participation of all minority and excluded groups (as spelt out by our Equal Opportunities policy and the recent Equalities Act 2010) on key councils, committees and task groups.</li> </ul>

## Statement 6: Evangelism

**We will be more confident to engage in evangelism, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God with friends, families and strangers, through story and action.**

We need to re-claim an understanding and practice of evangelism. Learning to tell the Christian story and our ever evolving stories of faith needs to be a regular part of church life so that disciples of all ages are equipped and encouraged to share the good news of Jesus Christ in their daily lives. Equipped with a robust and reflective knowledge of the Bible and a commitment to openness, our churches will be communities where faith is explored and the questions of the present day engaged with. The call to ‘go’ into the world and ‘make’ new disciples (Matthew 28:19) being heard and taken up with imagination and creativity inspired by the Holy Spirit.

*Some suggested indicators:*

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Planning and carrying out activities whose primary function is to share the gospel.</li> <li>■ Ensuring that worship regularly includes some form of call to faith.</li> <li>■ The number of local church activities which attract and involve children and young people from outside the church.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The number of churches drawing on synod resources for evangelism training and networking.</li> <li>■ The number of churches actively engaging with Vision4Life and the Marketing Campaign programmes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The number of churches drawing on Assembly resources for evangelism training and networking.</li> <li>■ The number of churches actively engaging with Vision4Life and the Marketing Campaign programmes.</li> </ul>

## Statement 7: Church growth

**We will be a growing Church with an increasing membership.**

The numerical decline of the United Reformed Church raises profound concerns for the denomination’s future sustainability. And yet a significant number of local congregations are growing in number – and other denominations are experiencing local growth points too. Whilst our growth must be qualitative in terms of our spirituality and fellowship (our faithfulness), we should be bold enough to seek quantitative growth too (our fruitfulness). With resources such as the *Vision4Life* evangelism year, the *Marketing Campaign* and *Fresh Expressions* at our disposal we have every reason to be hopeful that our denomination can grow again. We must also explore and embrace new forms of the emerging Church.

*Some suggested indicators:*

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The numbers of new people attending church and returning for a second time.</li> <li>■ The number of new church members.</li> <li>■ The number of children and young people who are actively involved in church life.</li> <li>■ Developing a ‘fresh expression’ or new way of doing church.</li> <li>■ An increased profile and awareness of the church in local media.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The number of new church members and adherents across the whole Synod.</li> <li>■ The number of churches supported to explore <i>Fresh Expressions</i> or new ways of doing church.</li> <li>■ The number of new ‘communities of faith’ within the synod.</li> <li>■ The number of people involved in TLS and similar programmes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The growth in URC membership by 2020.</li> <li>■ The number of people candidating to be ministers and church-related community workers.</li> <li>■ An increased profile and awareness of the URC in national media.</li> <li>■ The number of churches supported to explore <i>Fresh Expressions</i> or new ways of doing church.</li> </ul>

## Statement 8: Global partnerships

**We will be a Church that is an active partner in God’s global mission with other Churches around the world.**

We will continue our active participation in the world Church, knowing that together we will more faithfully discern God’s action and call, and that by sharing our resources we will be able to respond obediently and effectively in the costly struggle for peace with justice.

*Some suggested indicators:*

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ An active and regular link with a church overseas.</li> <li>■ Active participation in the <i>Commitment for Life</i> programme.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The number of churches involved with <i>Commitment for Life</i>.</li> <li>■ The reach and impact of the synod’s Global Partners programme.</li> <li>■ Development of a regular ‘youth exchange’ programme with a global partner.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The number of churches involved with <i>Commitment for Life</i>.</li> <li>■ The take-up of resources to enable children and young people to engage with the world church.</li> <li>■ The number of synods and churches supported to link up with global partners.</li> </ul>



## Statement 9: Justice and peace

**We will be a Church committed to peacemaking and reconciliation that keeps faith with the poor and challenges injustice.**

The kingdom of God is a realm in which compassion, justice and peace prevail. The gospel summons us as peacemakers and calls us to work against poverty and the structures that keep people oppressed. Together with our ecumenical partners we need to influence those in power and equip local congregations to take action against everything that undermines or destroys fullness of life. If the Church, local, across the UK, and international, is to be part of a movement for change in our world, it will need to discern and understand the contexts in which we live and the issues which affect us. Only by developing a sound reputation for intelligent critique and co-ordinated action will we be able to challenge unjust structures and seek economic justice from the local to the global marketplace.

*Some suggested indicators:*

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Having a group which meets regularly to discuss and act on issues of justice and peace.</li> <li>■ Active participation in a particular activity or campaign addressing an issue of justice.</li> <li>■ Support to individuals – especially children and young people – who are involved in particular campaigns.</li> <li>■ Integrating justice issues within worship in a planned and regular way.</li> <li>■ Becoming a fair trade church.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The number of churches actively participating in a synod or Assembly-promoted activity or campaign addressing an issue of justice.</li> <li>■ Endorsement, implementation and monitoring of the revised ethical investment policy of the URC.</li> <li>■ The number of churches supported and equipped to address issues of justice and peace in the local community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The number of churches actively participating in a synod or Assembly-promoted activity or campaign addressing an issue of justice.</li> <li>■ The demonstrable impact of Mission Council or General Assembly resolutions on justice issues.</li> <li>■ Children and young people supported and equipped to address issues of justice and peace through involvement in Children’s Assembly, FURY etc.</li> </ul>

## Statement 10: The integrity of creation

**We will be a Church that has taken significant steps to safeguard the integrity of creation, to sustain and renew the life of the earth.**

The changing climate and its consequences for all life on planet earth cannot be over emphasised as the most significant underlying issue of our time. Being an intergenerational community of faith that trust in the God of creation past, present and to come, it is vital that the Church recognizes the reality and fear present in environmental debates and lives hopefully in the present climate. Too often the ‘prophets’ who see the truth and challenge for change are outside the Church. Our churches, reflecting faith in God the creator and sustainer of life in all its fullness, must discover the radical voice of care for the earth that is supported by the way we live.

***Some suggested indicators:***

<b>Local Indicators</b>	<b>Synod Indicators</b>	<b>Assembly Indicators</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Carrying out an environmental audit and implementing the resulting action plan.</li> <li>■ Giving voice to the God whose life and love is expressed in all creation through worship, Bible study and prayer.</li> <li>■ Involving children and young people in activities focusing on care for the environment.</li> <li>■ Production of a piece of community artwork celebrating the Creator God.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The number of ‘eco-congregations’ or churches with clear environmental action plans.</li> <li>■ Developing and implementing plans to become an ‘eco-Synod’.</li> <li>■ The number of churches receiving training and support on issues of climate justice and environmental care.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Significant year-on-year cuts to the URC’s carbon footprint.</li> <li>■ The development of a FURY strategy responding to the challenge of climate change.</li> </ul>





Church 2010  
**United**  
Church **2010**  
**Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2010



# Relighting the candle: transforming the United Reformed Church

Vision4Life

transformed by the Bible  
transformed by Prayer  
transformed for Evangelism

Transforming the church  
Vision4Life

## 1 Since we last met

1.1 Vision4Life has got underway. Bible Year began in December 2008 followed by Prayer Year in December 2009. By February 2010 there were 650 churches signed up, well over a third of our congregations. These come from every synod and include churches of all sizes and a range of contexts, including LEPs. This diversity is a strength that we celebrate.

## 2 Bible Year

2.1 Let me tell you about Bible Year...

The elders did one of the encountering Mark studies the other week and it was really good with loads of people giving it the thumbs up. We have two extra Bible study groups running as a result of Vision4Life. The material has been helpful and we are now branching out with our own material.

2.2 A menu of items for Bible Year was created to be downloaded from the website, supplemented throughout the year. A booklet and a DVD were produced and sent to all participating churches. The twenty contributors are thanked for their work.

2.3 The aims of Bible Year were

- to enable a fresher, deeper engagement with the Bible;
- to get everyone involved – all can receive insight, all have experience to offer;
- to build confidence.

Feedback we've received encourages us to think that all of the aims were met.

Encouraged me to read the Bible more: excited about the prospect of reading it. Made me dig deeper. It's good to get together and share. Putting flesh on the bones of biblical characters. It was good to learn how to think of the Bible in the now. To see it as a guide to daily living and not so much the big scary book that sits on so many bookshelves unread. I love different ways of encouraging people to engage with the Bible. It was interesting to see how different people look at the same thing. Very suitable for lay leadership; genuinely related to individual life and experience. The emphasis is gentle and on accommodating inclusion. Pooling everyone's knowledge. Gaining new knowledge from each other about the Bible. Has given me some confidence to engage with others. It's not as threatening as I thought. Useful workable things to do with unconfident people. It energized me in a way I haven't experienced before.

This comment on confidence building is the one that gets to the heart of what Vision4Life is about:

It was helpful to suggest that I could do a Bible study because I never thought I could.

### 3    **Onto Prayer Year**

3.1    Resources produced for Prayer Year included two booklets that were sent out to all signed up churches. The first was produced in collaboration with Nationwide Christian Trust and written by Andy Twilley, their director. It is one of the *God's Apprentice* series of booklets, which builds on the notion that all Christians are 'apprentices'. Further copies can be obtained from NCT. Some good feedback about this booklet has been received.

3.2    The Prayer Year Group produced *Praying our Days: Welcome to Prayer Year*. There was a high demand for this material and many churches chose to sign up in order to receive more copies. Less than half way through Prayer Year there were already materials from more than 25 contributors on the website: many thanks to them all.

3.3    Let me tell you...

We have made a prayer jigsaw during our family service. We had the 63 piece jigsaw made by a company on the internet using a photograph of our sanctuary. Members of the congregation were each given a piece and asked to write their names on the back. They then came up and as a prayer activity of the church family assembled the jigsaw together. Any spare pieces were taken and had the names of those who were absent, for example the housebound or those serving in the forces abroad etc. This will then serve as a permanent reminder of our church family.

Through our four house groups we have constructed Prayer Alphabets (an A-Z of things that we pray about). This demonstrated the scope there is for prayer in our fellowship and has been displayed on the walls in the church hall.

During February we will look at the tradition of using prayer beads, rosaries etc and then make a prayer bead bracelet where each bead represents something special to the person.

3.4    24-7 Prayer

Holy Week was the time chosen for a 24-7 prayer event for all Vision4Life churches. For the first hour from 12.00-13.00 hours on Palm Sunday all churches were invited to join in. The rest of the time was then available for churches to choose slots according to their local situation. Here is a response from the event:

We had a 'quiet time' of prayer starting at 12.00 on the first day. About 12 of us reflected on various prayers, which we had put on a table in the shape of a cross. It seemed a wonderful hour of peace in our busy lives and I thought it was powerful to think of all the other churches that were doing something similar at the same time.

## 4 Looking ahead to Evangelism Year

4.1 What do you understand by evangelism? This was the question with which the preparation for the third and final year of Vision4Life began. It seems that some would-be participants find the idea of Evangelism Year the most challenging and perhaps the least attractive. Evangelism has become equated with a range of unhelpful stereotypes which see it as an aggressive single-handed way of selling faith rather than a sensitive and collaborative form of sharing faith.

4.2 Let me tell you...

Welcome is very important at our church. Beryl's grand daughter Anna has a badge saying 'Little Greeter' and she wears it when she stands at the church door with her Grandmother on Sunday mornings. She is very enthusiastic about her role as greeter. When she sees anyone coming up the path she says 'There's another new customer, Grandma', and rushes down the path to welcome them.

For my area of service in TLS I'm going to become a link person for baptism in our church. When families come for baptism I will also meet them and I will try to keep in touch with them, invite them to events and send them cards and regular information about what's going on at our church. If they want to come to a service then I could also meet them at church, sit with them if they feel unsure and generally be a bridge between the church and the family of the newly baptised.

My mother was involved in a prayer shawl ministry at her church. When someone had knitted a prayer shawl it was taken to a person in the local community. This is the bit my mum did. One day she went off with a prayer shawl to take it to a man at a convalescent home. When she got there she went to the room number she had been told, knocked on the door and introduced herself to the man in the room. He welcomed her in and she sat and talked to him, told him about the prayer shawl and gave it to him. He was a bit surprised but was also quite touched and grateful for it and before she left my mum said a short prayer with him. When she got home she got a message to say that the man she should have visited with the prayer shawl wasn't in the home anymore having gone back to his own house. The man she saw was someone else completely different. 'That explains why he'd never heard of our church', said my mum, 'but he was glad to see me and he liked the prayer shawl'.

4.3 We hope you will have some stories of faith sharing to tell. Please get in touch at [admin@Vision4Life.org.uk](mailto:admin@Vision4Life.org.uk). A booklet and web based materials are being produced. Don't forget to sign up in good time if you have not already done so. This helps us to know how many booklets will be required.

## 5 Vision4Life at the Windermere Centre

Since 2008, the Windermere Centre has based its programme around Vision4Life, looking to prepare churches for the relevant year ahead: Bible study leaders, prayer group leaders and people who can begin to unearth the faith stories of local church congregations and their members. The Centre has run courses which look at prayer, Bible study and evangelism from different angles and approaches, supplementing the materials produced by Vision4Life. Importantly, by running events each year on all three aspects of Vision4Life, the Centre's programme is intended to emphasise the interconnectedness of the three year process of re-engagement with our spiritual roots and of renewal and transformation. Please visit the Windermere Centre website for their full programme: <http://windermere.urc.org.uk>

## 6 Not doing Vision4Life

6.1 What about churches that are not doing Vision4Life? Nearly two thirds of the churches are not signed up. However, some of them use the material. The purpose of signing up is to help us to co-ordinate the process, particularly the production of materials and receiving feedback. Even so, some groups are clearly struggling to get started:

I was using a starter [from Bible Year] as opening devotions at a church meeting: some people saw the links with what we were going to discuss. Others were glad when it was over and the business of the meeting could be done. Yet I saw it as part of the business of the meeting and will do it again.

I stopped looking at the website because none/few of the headings linked to anything.

We need more activities which were not there.

### 6.2 Technology-related challenges

6.2.1 It was ambitious to provide the bulk of the materials online without knowing the level of computer literacy of the potential participants. However, this was the only realistic option in terms of budgeting and timing of resources. If nothing else, Vision4Life will also have taken the denomination up a gear towards future web-based learning.

6.2.2 During 2009 the website underwent a complete rebuild. The aim has been to make navigation of the site as simple as possible with multiple ways in to a particular page or item. With such a large site, (we currently have over 60 documents available for the Prayer Year and a total of over 100 items on 105 pages) this is not easy.

6.2.3 Our web manager, Paul Snell, writes:

The Vision4Life website started as an experiment in a different form of communicating materials and engendering enthusiasm and mutual support in a diverse denomination, seeking to grow using 21<sup>st</sup> century means. The success of the experiment can be seen in the number of 'hits' the site now receives on a daily basis. At the highest point in mid October of 2009, the site received 1655 hits in a week, and in February 2010 we received over 4,500 during the month. From August 2009 to date we have received a total of 23,363 visits, and we have averaged so far this year 104 visits per day. This represents a lot of activity from a wide variety of people.

The one area of the site that does not seem to have taken off as we had hoped is the forums. We have tried to encourage people to post their comments and share their ideas on the site forums but this does not seem to appeal to many people. However they remain open and anyone wishing to stimulate a discussion can easily register and kick something off. To try and further direct conversation between Vision4Life participants, we have now set up a Facebook group.

We believe the site has proven that we can use modern technology to make things work and that many people in local churches are willing to run with this and extend their computing know-how to make this happen. It is not the site however that has made Vision4Life fruitful, but the Spirit of God who has moved in us all to encourage us forward into greater faith and growth. For that we praise God!

### 6.3 Time-related challenges

Some comments suggest that our churches are ambitious but struggle with priorities and planning:

There's so much more to explore...There is a need to plan the sessions and to evaluate them....Need more reflection on what to do next.

### 6.4 Attitude-related challenges

Some people found a church based learning process a bit threatening:

Felt like I was back at school...I had expected to do a Bible study not to be told how to do a Bible study.

There were also those who had found it empowering:

I think I can give it a go.

### 6.5 Materials-related challenges

The Vision4Life materials were written by busy volunteers and all had to be tested in local churches before they were posted on the website. Expectations were high and there was a constant demand for more materials. Some churches generated their own. Feedback was predictably wide-ranging, given the diversity of our churches: what some churches wanted more of, others definitely didn't – and vice versa!

### 6.6 Context-related challenges

How to include isolated people?... How do I work with the Bible in church with a majority of 'trendy' young adults?... How do we find out what people outside the church want?

[My church] tried tasters last year [2008] in Sunday morning services then decided there should not be discussion in Sunday worship but wanted to have groups at another time. But when the groups were held attendance was very small. I'll have to think of other opportunities because the Bible is important and Vision4Life material is worth it.

## 7 After Vision4Life

7.1 Vision4Life was planned as a three year process. The steering group is currently discussing what will happen after the Vision4Life Evangelism Year. The *Marketing Campaign* will start in Spring 2011 and continue after the Vision4Life Evangelism Year ends. But the group is also thinking about how to make resources like those prepared for Vision4Life available to churches after 2012. This will also involve collecting further feedback and a more formal evaluation of what has been learnt from Vision4Life during the final year of the process.

7.2 Transformed: how and what for?

As we look ahead it is important we focus on how the process is transforming us and what for. There are already some signs of transformation. More churches getting involved in the process suggests more churches recognising the need for transformation. More materials and feedback being submitted are further evidence of something transformational happening: confidence growing and a greater sense of connection. Please continue to let Vision4Life know how you understand transformation and what is happening in response to the Bible, prayer and evangelism where you are.

Janet Lees is the Vision4Life Coordinator. Contact her on [admin@Vision4Life.org.uk](mailto:admin@Vision4Life.org.uk)



# A marketing and identity campaign for the United Reformed Church

## 1 Introduction

1.1 In 2007 General Assembly received the report of a Communications review which included the recommendation ‘to explore and develop new ways of promoting the United Reformed Church to the world’. Plans are now well underway for an identity and marketing campaign. This campaign will place the good news of a living God into the public arena through appropriate advertising and equipping local churches to participate in the ‘buzz’ this creates. It is designed specifically to address the very secular, media-focused context of the United Kingdom. It will also serve to equip churches to invite, receive and nurture new members. Through identifying the United Reformed Church’s ‘DNA’ the campaign aims to generate enthusiasm amongst church members and give them the means of sharing that enthusiasm with others outside the Church. It will be practical, offering tools and language for speaking about faith. It will be infectious, partly because it encourages local creativity, partly because of its lightness of touch, but mostly because the Christian gospel with its message of love and grace is itself infectious. It draws upon the dynamism of the Reformed tradition for its inspiration: ‘Do not cling to where Calvin and Luther have left us – God has yet more light and truth to break forth from God’s holy Word’ (Pastor John Robinson 1620).

1.2 The United Reformed Church excels in community outreach with no strings attached. We offer the love of Christ through ministry and service of many kinds. Some churches regularly welcome hundreds of people per week to their buildings for a wide range of community activities. But too often our faith is invisible. In some cases people don’t even know they are coming into a church building. They receive our service never knowing that we are Christians. The campaign is intended to bridge the gap between service and the sharing of faith. It is not the goal of the marketing campaign to judge, condemn, browbeat or lure any disinterested non-churchgoer into our churches. The goal is simply to offer a non-intrusive and wide welcome to all; to experience the United Reformed Church as a place that feels like a good spiritual home for them and those they love. In the process, many long-term members will be transformed by engaging with the God who does still speak in our generation. Together, old-timers and newcomers will be energised for the witness of the gospel in the world.

1.3 The campaign also aims to renew the culture of the United Reformed Church itself. It moves faster than we are used to moving in our usual programmes, building momentum and energy, stretching people’s comfort zones, and creating opportunities for small successes in quick succession. Rather than waiting until we are entirely ‘ready’, the campaign encourages us to get going. This means that not every venture will be successful, but each one teaches us something we didn’t know before. New ideas are welcome from all quarters. Churches across the multi-ethnic rainbow of the church can tailor engagement appropriate to their various cultures. The spirit of the campaign is risk-taking and playful, to teach people that evangelism is a joyful activity.

1.4 The campaign seeks to mobilise the energies of the denomination locally, regionally and nationally. It is a key vehicle for delivery of the URC mission priorities put forward in *vision2020* – spirituality and prayer, identity, hospitality and diversity, evangelism and church growth.

## 2 Background

2.1 The URC campaign derives from the experience of the *God is still speaking* campaign in the United Church of Christ USA. (see [www.ucc.org/god-is-still-speaking/about](http://www.ucc.org/god-is-still-speaking/about)) in 2004. This visionary initiative caught the attention of the United Reformed Church in 2006 and serious consultation began about the possibility of a UK version. Ron Buford, the creative mind behind the UCC/USA campaign, worked as a consultant to the URC for two years 2008-10. Originally the proposal was to launch a UK version of the American campaign in partnership with the UCC and approvals for this were given in principle by the Mission Committee and Mission Council of the URC in Autumn 2008. This included authorisation to apply for funding from the Council for World Mission 'Mission Support Programme'.

2.2 The United Reformed Church received a CWM grant of £315,000 over a three-year period (2009-12) to support a URC identity and marketing initiative through its planning and preparation stages to its full launch and subsequent development. This has enabled the employment of a full-time Campaign Coordinator, Denese Chikwendu.

2.3 A Steering Group under the chairmanship of the General Secretary and Lawrence Moore is responsible for the strategic development of the campaign. The Mission Committee and Communications and Editorial Committees are the key points of contact and regular reports are submitted to Mission Council.

2.4 The *God is still speaking* partnership proposal was enthusiastically welcomed by the programme staff and officers of the UCC. However, when it came time to secure copyright permission and enter into a memorandum of understanding, the legal hurdles proved insurmountable. The URC steering group was not prepared to submit all of its work to UCC scrutiny in a restrictive regime of approvals, not least because busy people in the UCC office would not be able to deliver the turnaround times necessary for a dynamic campaign. In April 2010 the decision was taken that the URC would go it alone, drawing upon the inspiration of the American experience but seeking to create its own brand and content.

2.5 Mission Council was clear that the campaign should be integrated with *Vision4Life*. There is active collaboration between the two steering groups (including three members who serve on both). Advertising will begin in April 2011 as a major highlight of the *Vision4Life* evangelism year. The two initiatives are richly compatible, combining the *Vision4Life* emphases on telling the Jesus story and our personal faith stories with the marketing campaign's emphasis on telling the Church's story.

2.6 Collaboration will also be important with *Fresh Expressions* and other adventurous thinking about new forms of church life. The *Marketing Campaign* asserts that church is good and worship is good and that believers need one another if they are to grow in faith. However, we recognise that traditional forms of church will not meet this need for everyone and that church growth is not as simple as expecting new people to become like us.

2.7 As with *Vision4Life*, churches will participate in the marketing campaign by opting in. Each will be required to have a local church website, with set-up assistance provided. Each will also need to demonstrate that training has taken place. While not every congregation will live up to the promise of the advertising, it is important that the aspiration is embraced. We do not have to be perfect for God to use us in touching the lives of others, but we do need to be ready to rise to the challenge of newcomers in our midst.



### 3 Progress so far

3.1 Through 2008 and 2009 Ron Buford held a number of introductory sessions. A dozen churches agreed to participate in 'research and development'. Keen interest was awakened but, in order not to distract from Vision4Life, plans for an identity and marketing campaign held below the radar.

3.2 Interest has been particularly keen amongst the youth and children of the Church. In 2009 both FURY Assembly and What Do You Think centred around the *God is still speaking* theme, and in 2010 FURY Assembly passed a resolution in support of the campaign. Children's Assembly 2009 also engaged with the theme and there has been active encouragement from the Pilots leadership.

3.3 Active preparation for the URC campaign began with Denese Chikwendu's appointment in January 2010.

3.4 The first three months of the year were dedicated to URC identity. Various groups, including Mission Council, were asked to 'tell us about a time when you felt most passionate or excited about something the URC has been or done or said'. The responses fell under several key headings: welcome and inclusiveness, the thrill of our ecumenical achievements, excellence in children's and youth work, contributions to community life even by the smallest congregations, gender equality, creative worship, intellectual vigour and stands for social justice.

3.5 The identity work culminated in a series of 'webinars', one on 24 March for ecumenical partners and the others on 27 March. Altogether over 100 people participated from nearly all the synods and representing the breadth of theologies in the URC. Again, the themes of inclusive welcome, community partnerships and spiritual care came out strongly. For a fuller account of the results, please contact Denese.

3.6 These findings were distilled into a brief which went to advertising agencies in April. It is hoped that some branding materials will be ready in time for display at Assembly.

3.7 The Education and Learning Committee has offered to help create the training materials on invitation and welcome and these should appear soon after the Vision4Life evangelism booklet for use by the churches during the evangelism year.

3.8 Ron Buford filmed a series of conversations involving URC historians in England, Scotland and Wales. It is hoped that the nuggets of gold from these tapes can be extracted as the basis for identity materials highlighting key stories from the past.

### 4 Strategic objectives

4.1 To change the URC's membership decline into growth. Along with most Western European mainline churches, the URC has experienced a decline in membership of 3% per annum on average for the last generation. The first objective is simply to reverse this trend.

4.2 To build capacity in local church members to share their faith and invite friends and neighbours to church. This will be achieved by:

- a) offering a new approach to evangelism which is targeted specifically at people who have not responded to traditional models;
- b) strengthening denominational identity through celebrating the Reformed history of courageous discipleship;
- c) use of a training DVD that teaches faith-sharing and welcome;

## Marketing and identity campaign

- d) advertising the United Reformed Church regionally and (tri-)nationally through the media, thus arousing attention and curiosity into which local churches can speak and act;
- e) encouraging local creativity in producing adverts, posters, welcome leaflets, worship materials, etc.

4.3 To nurture new Christians into committed discipleship through encouraging local church use of existing courses such as Alpha, Emmaus and Living the Questions.

4.4 To increase the ethnic and cultural diversity of the United Reformed Church's membership by making the all-inclusive welcome of Christ explicit with denominational branding.

4.5 To strengthen the United Reformed Church contribution to ecumenical partnerships throughout the UK through deepened understanding of the strengths of the Reformed tradition.

4.6 To share the experience of this new venture with international partners who have indicated that they will be watching with interest.



Church 2010  
**United**  
Church 2010  
**Reformed**  
Church 2010  
**Church**

## 1 A time of transition

1.1 British churches are in transition as we adjust to life and witness for the twenty-first century. But that is neither surprise nor novelty. Transition is part of the atmosphere of the Bible; God has rarely nurtured the status quo and those who walk with God have rarely been called to stand still. God's wholehearted love in Christ is 'an enduring melody',<sup>1</sup> but the way we weave our counterpoint around it is constantly evolving.

1.2 Transition is about movement: movement away from some things towards others, and that is true not least for the transitioning church set in a transitioning world – 'changing world, changing church', as Michael Moynagh has it.<sup>2</sup> We are moving away from bearing Christian witness in a Christian country, towards giving an account of our Christ-centred hope in a different context, where theistic faiths are multiple and atheism is evangelical. We are moving away from post-1945 concerns with Cold War and Welfare State, towards those of the post-millennium era, such as ecology and economy, racial and gender justice, globalisation and a renewed longing for 'peace in our time'. We are moving away from being part of a confident institutional monolith towards being a vulnerable, multicultural, all-ages-embracing pilgrim people who are engaged with the world and pliable to the reign of God.

## 2 A good time

At its best, a process of transition will be liberating. It can bind us together, galvanised by common purpose. We move from one thing to another in order to progress from that which, however fruitful it once was, has become less effective, towards a transformed tomorrow. It is what God offers us in the stirring promise: 'See, I am making all things new.'<sup>3</sup> That is the dream and purpose of *Catch the Vision of God's Tomorrow*, of *Vision4Life* and of *vision2020* – each an Assembly-encouraged instrument of transition in pursuit of transformation. It is also the dream and purpose of every mission-driven initiative by countless local churches and by each of the synods. After all, being perpetually in transition is the essential sign that we are alive. To embrace it is to live; to resist it is to die.

## 3 A difficult time

Inevitably, though, when we are in transition the tectonic plates sometimes shift so radically that we are moved away from the familiar towards the strange. It can confuse, discourage and disillusion. For many of us it feels undesirable and the challenge too great, despite the worthiness of the goal and our intellectual assent to the idea that only death to the old enables rebirth. In addition, in seasons of change our relationships can suffer. All too easily there's an uncertainty, which, unchecked, breeds a culture of suspicion, characterised by some as even a crisis of trust; this can lead to isolation and independency.<sup>4</sup> That the journey may be demanding, painful and risky, however, does not make it the wrong journey, provided it is Spirit-led, prayer-driven and mission-shaped, which is what *Vision4Life's* Bible, Prayer and Evangelism emphases offer us.

1 Mayne, Michael 2006 *The Enduring Melody* London: Darton, Longman and Todd.

2 Moynagh, Michael 2001 *Changing World, Changing Church: new forms of church, out-of-the-pew thinking, initiatives that work* London: Monarch Books.

3 Revelation 21:5.

4 O'Neill, Onora 2002 *A Question of Trust: the BBC Reith Lectures 2002* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Chapter 4.

### 4 Together in transition

Precisely because it is such a roller-coaster, transition requires careful handling. It always has; it always will. Often it feels like what Bill Bridges sums up as, 'a nowhere between two somewheres'.<sup>5</sup> In our engagement with people at the grass roots of our denomination, as Synod Moderators we are as aware as we ever have been of the pastoral element of mission; that we are best enabled to be adventurous risk-takers for Christ when we are persuaded of one another's support and solidarity. Locally that means members, elders, young people, local leaders and ministers being confident of mutual support and solidarity; more widely it means ministers<sup>6</sup>, local leaders and every age group in congregations being confident of the support and solidarity of synod and assembly staff and structures. It's about us reliably encouraging one another on The Way – being together in transition.

### 5 Dependability

5.1 John Azumah, a Ghanaian Presbyterian speaking of the churches' historical mission in Africa, characterises it as having several phases:

- initially many foreign missionaries made indigenous people *dependent*;
- then there was the era when both political and ecclesiastical *independence* was negotiated and achieved;
- later came the recognition that indigenous and incomer alike were incomplete apart and flourished best in a climate of *interdependence*.

5.2 Azumah suggests, however, that all three are less adequate than a mutual *dependability*, which enables the trust, confidence and collaboration that ultimately are wholesome, resilient and fruitful.<sup>7</sup> It echoes the Trinity, where the triune God is understood as being a community of which mutual dependability is a defining characteristic.

5.3 In the United Reformed Church's time of transition, mutual dependability is essential. Total and permanent *dependence* of some upon others is alien to our ecclesiology: all have access to God and all participate in the ministry of God. *Independence* too easily robs us of that partnership which is the hallmark of our life covenanted together. And for all its obvious benefits, *interdependence* is more an aspiration than our way of life. *Mutual dependability*, however, in which we will share both vulnerability and success, is about a commitment and accountability that have the potential to be the hallmarks not just of our survival but of our effective mission for a new world.

### 6 Musical accompaniment

6.1 Music is part of many people's lives, and of many churches. Musicians need to be mutually dependable as together they weave their counterpoint. In particular, none but solo performers are able to shine without dependable accompaniment. Of course, accompaniment might be either a one person function, such as a pianist, or a corporate role for a backing group or orchestra. Either way, its role is varied, but always with the fundamental aim of dependably enabling others in what they offer.

So,

- 6.1.1 sometimes the accompanist introduces a theme for others later to adopt, echo and adapt;
- 6.1.2 sometimes the accompanist plays exactly the same motif as others, supporting and strengthening them;
- 6.2.3 sometimes the accompanist has a contrasting melody, which complements and completes what others offer;

5 Bridges, William 2003 *Managing Transitions: making the most of change* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition London: Nicholas Brealey page 40.

6 The use of the term 'ministers' refers throughout this report to Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Church Related Community Workers.

7 Partnership Meeting for Mission Partners of Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Louisville, KY, October 2007 Address by Dr John Azumah.

- 6.1.4 sometimes the accompanist is in radical contrast to the accompanied, drawing out the best from others by the dialogue, even the dissonance, that s/he enables;
- 6.1.5 sometimes the accompanist is more in a jazz mode, idiosyncratically improvising in spontaneous and flexible response to others;
- 6.1.6 and sometimes the accompanist is silent, enabling others to excel in and of themselves.

## 7 Missiological accompaniment

7.1 The Synod Moderators have come to see that amongst other mission strategies, the idea of each of us in the all-age, culturally diverse United Reformed Church being an accompanist, mutually dependable, offers a rich analogy for the way we weave our counterpoint around God's enduring melody and for how we are best the church for one another and the world.<sup>8</sup> Like the musical counterpart, it is a role that, though frequently fulfilled by individuals, is actually the function of all of us together, acting in harmonious concert.

So,

- 7.1.1 sometimes ecclesiastical accompanists single-handedly introduce an idea or a programme for others then to make their own;
- 7.1.2 sometimes we all work in unison, everyone together with our shoulders to the same wheel for maximum effect;
- 7.1.3 sometimes, like the accompanist doing something different from the soloist, we are variously engaged in different strategies, which, when all are set alongside one another, make for a more comprehensive participation in the mission of God;
- 7.1.4 sometimes we accompany one another by engaging in seriously dissonant debate, though through listening carefully for God in each other's words we eventually reach unity, even if it's a unity that retains an honest and robust diversity, for which richness we can be grateful;
- 7.1.5 sometimes we accompany each other in an ecclesiastical jam session, instinctively responsive to one another so that gradually we get there without previously knowing where 'there' might be;
- 7.1.6 and, of course, there are times when many of us are like the silent accompanist: we are the church passively – though probably better prayerfully – whilst others take the lead.

7.2 In a season of transition each of these modes of accompaniment needs to be found in the church, whether it is the assembly, the synod, the mission partnership, the cluster, the local church, the 'fresh expression', the young people's organisations, the care cell, the Bible Study Group or the one-to-one pastoral encounter.

## 8 Evangelism through accompaniment

8.1 As the V4L Year of Evangelism approaches in 2010/11 we are convinced that there is no accompanying more vital than offering people down-to-earth companionship as they seek to relate to Jesus Christ as disciples. We commend the prayer of St Richard of Chichester, but 'seeing Jesus Christ more clearly, loving him more dearly and following him more nearly' are not often at their best when undertaken alone. And less still for those to whom it is a new mind set or experience. Frequently we Christians meet people who are asking questions, both within and outwith the church; even when we have no answer, we can still accompany one another through the asking. And the confidence to do so emerges from carefully nurtured relationships that create easy conversation and trusting sharing. Whatever else *Vision4Life* and the *Marketing Campaign* cultivate they will achieve most if they boost our confidence to give an account of the hope that is in us.<sup>9</sup> Then we will be able to accompany even as we are also accompanied.

<sup>8</sup> As with all analogies, this one ought not to be pushed too far.

<sup>9</sup> cf I Peter 3.15.

### 9 Leadership as accompaniment

9.1 Accompaniment is a style of leadership that fits well with conciliar governance. So often our leadership is collaborative, echoing the concept that 'leaders are responsible for what happens – and followers are as well.'<sup>10</sup> We are in it together. That is not to say that there is no place for personal initiative, inspiration or activity; moreover, it is undeniable that, increasingly, leaders in the Church need to be adept managers, too. Those are all part of accompaniment, but they are not entire unto themselves.

9.2 We synod moderators can apply this to our own role. Ideally, we accompany in every sense mentioned above, giving us in any week a wide range of profiles, from the up front to the out of the way. Each is leadership, most of all as it demonstrates and enables following of Jesus Christ.

9.3 Ministers and Church Related Community Workers in their daily work are accompanists rather than soloists or conductors, getting alongside folk as they journey, nurturing their faith and following, and being with them amidst life's changing scenes. Accompanying can be a concept key to understanding what both pulpit and pastoral/community ministry are all about. It finds specific application as ministers and CRCWs encourage and enable the ministry of eldership, and other pivotal local church roles, such as those in young people's work. These significant ministries are demanding, and are often undertaken by people bearing many another responsibility. They need accompanying, most especially by ministers and CRCWs who are constantly encouraging and developing leadership teams.

9.4 Throughout the denomination we work alongside women and men whose ministries of accompaniment are dedicated, inspirational, caring and sacrificial. By the same token, it cannot be over-stated that in our synod-wide work we frequently become aware of how important it is that CRCWs and ministers are accompanied themselves. That is especially so during these transitional days when consultation and change dominate the agenda and burden us all – and not least those we call to lead and guide us. We are concerned as moderators about how many ministers and CRCWs are feeling stressed at the moment. It may be that they are best accompanied through local support groups; it may be through the work of Synod Elders, Moderators, Pastors or Pastoral Advisors; it may be through personally arranged spiritual direction. Or it may be through what was Ministerial Accompanied Self Appraisal, which is now becoming Local Mission and Ministry Review and is predicated upon encouraging the mutual dependability of both minister/CRCW and pastorate/post. Whatever the vehicle, just as we urge ministers and CRCWs faithfully to accompany the people they serve, so we want to stress how deeply valuable it is when churches find appropriate ways of accompanying their ministers. Ministers, after all, are like any other accompanist: although sometimes they need to be given the liberty to lead, there are other times when they need the space to be one alongside everyone else, or even to be silent ... if we will.

9.5 Of course, being an accompanist is not the preserve of a privileged few. Yes, ministers and CRCWs are, but so are local church Leaders, Elders and Secretaries as they take on so much responsibility. So are Lay Preachers, as they break open the Word for congregations Sunday by Sunday. So are children's and youth workers, as they travel with young people across the threshold into conscious Christian believing and living. So are children and young people, 'equal partners with adults in the life of the church'.<sup>11</sup> So are coffee makers as they enable the togetherness of hospitality. So are elders as they collaborate with ministers in leading, trusteeship and oversight. So are pastoral visitors. So are we all. All of us are accompanists and each needs to be accompanied.

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<sup>10</sup> Kellerman, Barbara 2008 *Followership: how followers are creating change and changing leaders* Boston: Harvard Business Press page 73.

<sup>11</sup> from *Charter for Children in the Church*.

## 10 Synods as accompanists

We are conscious that increasingly some are asking what Synods are for; others question their viability. It might be helpful to regard them as accompanists, too. Just as it is when local churches and their people support synods that these regional councils can be at their best, so it is only as and when synods are meaningfully accompanying local churches in their mission and ministry that they are fulfilling their real purpose. Where that is happening, we celebrate it; where it is not, we commit ourselves to be part of ensuring it does, in ways that are feasible, sustainable and efficient.

## 11 Ecumenism as accompaniment

11.1 Many in local churches will have appreciated how the Emmaus Road story was at the heart of this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity material from Scotland. It is a narrative about how people accompanying one another on a journey found their experience and faith nourished and deepened.

11.2 Synod Moderators have significant ecumenical opportunities to play their part in fostering the United Reformed Church's determined ecumenical focus. We are, therefore, as aware as many at the grass roots of how mixed today's ecumenical experience is, between the three nations, and even within them. In places it is dynamic – an instrument of witness and mission more credible and effective than when we stand alone. Elsewhere it is tired or bored, treated as a distraction or irrelevance. And in some places it has completely withered on the vine, too often with considerable angst and pain.

11.3 We recognise that accompanying is the essence of much local ecumenism. Regardless of the faltering progress we may be making toward organic unity, committedly walking together along the local pilgrim path, ideally in shared commitment to an outward-looking project, is what makes the real difference in people's experience. Indeed, there is considerable anecdotal evidence that ecumenism which is about working together in the community is often the essential precursor to sharing agreements and constitutions. The vision, however, remains unity. Willem Visser 't Hooft, first General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, sums it up: 'It goes without saying that there must be social engagement. And of course there may, nay there must, be co-operation between [people] of goodwill of every kind who come together on the basis of this concern for justice and peace. But that is not an alternative to the gathering of the scattered children of God. Social engagement is the necessary consequence of our becoming the church-together.'<sup>12</sup>

## 12 Accompanying the world

12.1 As Christians we are not called simply to accompany others in the church, but also crucially to accompany the world. The incarnate Christ was not about God coming to a sacred elect, but to the world. We best follow Christ, then, as we go out from the sanctuary onto the pavement; from the pulpit to the agora<sup>13</sup> – that place of public gathering, activity and discourse, where we can engage in an apologetic that persuasively sets the gospel alongside every other competing voice that seeks to shape life today.

12.2 The church is most impressive to society when it emerges from its isolation and privilege and simply serves, through Sure Start Children's Centre or Age Concern Luncheon Club; through campaigning for climate change or trade justice; through availability. Whilst we may not believe it right to take to ourselves the state's responsibility for social services, we should not underestimate our potential, as seemingly powerless accompanists, to be Third Sector agents of stability, peace and hope in society.

<sup>12</sup> Visser 't Hooft, Willem A 1974 *Has the Ecumenical Movement a Future?* Belfast: Christian Journals Limited page 97.

<sup>13</sup> Acts 17.17.

12.3 This report is being written as Churches Together in Cumbria has played a significant role in the care of whole communities devastated by flooding; they have accompanied and that has made a difference. By the time Assembly meets, a General Election will have been held. As constituents pondered the options, churches and Churches Together groups through hustings and Question Time-like events, will have helped us tease out a theological perspective, an alternative view, on some of the issues. Accompanying the world is not always about answers – it is also about living with, wrestling with the questions that must be asked if God's reign is to be embodied.

### 13 Christ the accompanist

Wherever we accompany one another in this mutual dependability we are likely more authentically to be being the church of Jesus Christ. Indeed, we sense that so many of the difficulties and the disillusionments that can drag the church down could be ameliorated if we were more aware of the calling to accompany one another, faithful accompanying being all about encouraging or putting the heart into one another.<sup>14</sup> Accompanying is, after all, one implication of the incarnation. God is in Christ accompanying creation. The with-us God is emphatically and eternally walking with us, not simply to comfort us – though that is one effect – but also to transform our experience of life from the half-living of lovelessness to the abundant living of both knowing and showing the wholehearted love that is the very nature of the accompanying Christ.

### 14 Accompaniment and transformation

14.1 The resurrection narrative centred on the Emmaus Road is a story of accompaniment leading to transformation.

- Cleopas and the companion first meet with a stranger.
- As the three walk and talk, opening up ancient stories in new ways, the stranger becomes a teacher.
- As the teacher offers one persuasive idea after another, the two weary travellers find that their companion is in fact a friend, so much that they invite him to share a meal.
- And in that most special act of accompanying – table fellowship – the transformation is made complete; the stranger, who transitioned through teacher and friend, is recognised as Saviour.

14.2 What else is the ambition of transition, but that we are transformed and that we have our trust in God transformed? Transformed from despairers into hopers, from those who live for themselves to those who live for Christ and for others, from antagonists into accompanists.

### 15 Conclusion

The condition and context of the United Reformed Church is a challenging opportunity. We believe we are called to accompany one another in the Way of the eternal one who accompanies us, still speaking that word of ultimate encouragement, 'I am with you always, to the end the age.'<sup>15</sup>

To God alone be the glory.

### 16 Study Guide

We are aware that sometimes people wish to reflect upon reports to General Assembly in more local groups. To facilitate that, we offer some questions at pages 47-48, focussing upon each of the fourteen sections. These are an opportunity rather than an expectation. If there is feedback to be made please submit it through the General Secretary: [roberta.rominger@urc.org.uk](mailto:roberta.rominger@urc.org.uk)

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14 Mayne page 58.

15 Matthew 28.20.



## 17 Personalia

Since the Synod Moderators last reported to General Assembly we have been pleased to welcome the companionship and global experience of Andrew Prasad as Moderator of Thames North Synod, following several years in local ministry with the Church of North India and in Southern Synod, and in strategic roles through Council for World Mission.

N P Uden for the Moderators' Meeting  
March 2010

# A Study Guide

- Section 1 A time of transition**  
Whilst recognising that God's wholehearted love in Christ is 'an enduring melody', the report notes that we are in the midst of change. What do you sense in your own context has had to be left behind and what are you moving towards?
- Section 2 A good time**  
Alongside initiatives in synods and local churches, how have the three General Assembly-inspired instruments of transition – *Catch the Vision of God's Tomorrow*, *Vision4Life* and *vision2020* – led your church to embrace change?
- Section 3 A difficult time**  
What do you/your congregation find difficult in this time of change?
- Section 4 Together in transition**  
'Pastorally supported risk takers': what steps can we take together to ensure that a) we know ourselves to be supported and b) are therefore prepared to embrace risk as we follow in Christ's Way?
- Section 5 Dependability**  
What steps can we take as individuals and as churches towards a mutual dependability?
- Section 6 Musical accompaniment**  
The picture throughout the report is one of musical accompaniment; what pictures suggest themselves to you to describe the life of the church and its mutually dependable relationships?
- Section 7 Missiological accompaniment**  
Six modes of accompanying are suggested to describe the Church in mission to the world. Are there others you feel need emphasising, and some over-emphasised that need to diminish?
- Section 8 Evangelism through accompaniment**  
How do you accompany others as they explore questions of faith and meaning?

continue overleaf...

...continued

**Section 9 Leadership as accompaniment**

What ways have you found for accompanying those in positions of leadership in your church?

**Section 10 Synods as accompanists**

How do you see your Synod accompanying local churches in their mission? How might they do it more effectively?

**Section 11 Ecumenism as accompaniment**

Walking together with other Christian churches is a joy and a burden. What in your experience breathes life into the journey?

**Section 12 Accompanying the world**

'Giving an account of the hope that is in us' or service to society – which best describes your relationship with the public community?

**Section 13 Christ the accompanist**

How do you see God transforming us from the half living of lovelessness to the abundant living of whole hearted love?

**Section 14 Accompaniment and transformation**

Emmaus – a journey of unfolding transformation. What transforming changes have you encountered on your journey?

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.

**Committee members:**

The officers of the General Assembly, the past Moderator, the Moderators-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.

Mission Council Representatives appointed by synods (in March 2010) were:

**Northern Synod**

Miss Elaine Colechin, Revd John Durell, Mr Justice Semuli

**North Western Synod**

Mr George Grime, Revd Rachel Poolman, Ms Marie Trubic

**Mersey Synod**

Miss Emma Pugh, Revd A Gordon Smith, Mr Arthur Swift

**Yorkshire Synod**

Revd Kay Alberg, Mr Roderick Garthwaite, Mr Chris Reed

**East Midlands Synod**

Revd Jane Campbell, Mr Duncan Smith, Mrs Jill Turner

**West Midlands Synod**

Mr Bill Robson, Mrs Val Phillips, Mrs Adella Pritchard

**Eastern Synod**

Revd Catherine Ball, Ms Linda Harrison, Mr Clifford Patten

**South Western Synod**

Revd Roz Harrison, Mrs Sarah Lane-Cawte, Revd Stephen Newell

**Wessex Synod**

Mr Peter Pay, Mrs Margaret Telfer, Revd Mary Thomas

**Thames North Synod**

Mr Simon Fairnington, Revd Maggie Hindley, Revd David Lawrence

**Southern Synod**

Revd Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor, Revd Chris Parker, Revd Zam Walker

**National Synod of Wales**

Revd Dr Peter Cruchley-Jones, Revd Shelagh Pollard, Mrs Iris Williams

**National Synod of Scotland**

Mrs Barbara Bruce, Miss Irene Hudson, Revd John Sanderson

## 1 Mission Council: A new Role

1.1 Mission Council gave serious consideration to the changes arising from a biennial Assembly and particularly the impact a biennial Assembly would have on the role of Mission Council. Resolutions 25 and 26 detail proposed amendments to the structure of the United Reformed Church and the Rules of Procedure arising from these discussions. The logic of decisions already taken is that more responsibility for the running of the United Reformed Church will need to be delegated to Mission Council. The changes seek to affirm the unique status and authority of General Assembly whilst accepting that in the new circumstances it should devolve more of that authority than before to Mission Council.

1.2 It was agreed that Mission Council will in future, on an agreed cycle, receive and decide upon reports and resolutions from all Assembly Standing Committees, synods, and (particularly in relation to legal and disciplinary matters) the Clerk. Mission Council will receive the complete list of nominations from Nominations Committee, but the election of Moderators of Assembly, Clerks of Assembly and Directors of the United Reformed Church Trust will remain with the General Assembly. Where proposals to change the Basis and Structure of the United Reformed Church or other constitutional changes currently require two votes in General Assembly, Mission Council will be able to act once on General Assembly's behalf. Proposed changes will require a two thirds majority, whichever way round first and second votes are taken. Mission Council will share responsibility for hearing appeals with General Assembly.

1.3 Simply for purposes of cross-reference, General Assembly will remain the place where Moderators and Clerks of General Assembly and Directors of the URC Trust are elected; closure of churches and admissions of new churches are marked, and representatives of new churches are received; ministerial jubilees are recognised and all ministers who have died since the previous General Assembly are remembered; newly ordained ministers and newly commissioned CRCWs are received; all Assembly Standing Committees report in writing; the General Secretary reports on the work of the Disciplinary Process; and all appeals which have to be taken to General Assembly are heard or referred to a Commission.

## 2 Actions taken on behalf of General Assembly

### 2.1 December 2008

2.1.1 Mission Council appointed the Revd Richard Mortimer as Deputy General Secretary from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009 until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015. It also agreed to the continuation of the posts of Youth Work Development Officer and Children's Work Development Officer and confirmed Mr John Brown in the former post and Ms Jo Williams in the latter, both on open contracts. It further agreed that MCAAG should appoint the Secretary for World Relations on the recommendation of the nominating group. The appointment of the Revd Jane Rowell was reported to the following Meeting.

2.1.2 Mission Council agreed that the level of the basic ministerial stipend should be set annually by agreement between the Finance Committee and the URC Trust and reported to Mission Council. In the event that the URC Trust was unable to endorse the Finance Committee's recommendation, the decision would revert to Mission Council.

2.1.3 Mission Council resolved that the following notice be included in the Scheme document of the Rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund.  
*(The Trustees resolve, and the United Reformed Church acting in General Assembly agrees, that the rules of the Fund shall be deemed to be, and they are hereby, modified with effect from 6<sup>th</sup> April 2006: in a manner which has the same effect as all of the modifications in regulations 3 to 8 of the HMRC Transitional Regulations but without limitation to the transitional period mentioned in those Regulations and subject to the 'General Finance Act 2004 amendments' already made to the fund with effect from 6<sup>th</sup> April 2006 by Resolution 3 passed at General Assembly at their meeting of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2006: and so that the HMRC Transitional Regulations no longer apply in relation to the Scheme with effect from 6<sup>th</sup> April 2006 'Transitional period' has the meaning given to it in the HMRC Transitional Regulations.)*

2.1.4 Mission Council amended the Rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund, with effect from 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2008. (Annexe 1)

2.1.5 Mission Council agreed changes to Part II of Section O (the process for dealing with cases of discipline involving ministers and church related community workers) and Part II of Section P (Incapacity Procedure) of the Manual.  
(Annexes 4a and 4b respectively)

## 2.2 May 2009

2.2.1 Mission Council appointed committees and representatives of the Church.

2.2.2 Mission Council appointed the Revd David Tatem to the post of Secretary for Ecumenical Relations from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2009 until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014, subject to review before the end of this period.

2.2.3 Mission Council agreed to the following change in the Plan for Partnership: Add the following words to 6.3.4.2 after 'a fixed car allowance should be paid': A fixed allowance may be claimed for motor bicycles if this is the only mode of transport used by the minister for church business. The amount paid shall be 25% of the fixed car allowance. [6.3.4.2 then continues: 'The rate of fixed car allowance will be advised by the MoM Sub-committee (see Appendix A).' Currently the recommended rate is £1,200 pa.]

2.2.4 Mission Council, on a matter of immediate importance, reminded members of the importance of voting in the European and County Council elections on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2009 despite the recent bad publicity about MPs' expenses and urged members of the United Reformed Church to cast their vote in order to counter the threat of the BNP. (For information in 2004 the URC declared that support for organisations, such as the BNP, to be incompatible with Christian discipleship. A 'toolkit' produced by the Baptist Union, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church is available for local churches. [www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/jptpolitics](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/jptpolitics))

2.2.5 Mission Council agreed changes to Part II of the Disciplinary Process (Section O). (Annexe 4a)

## 2.3 November 2009

2.3.1 Mission Council agreed to the transfer of Cobham United Reformed Church from the Wessex Synod to the Southern Synod on December 1<sup>st</sup> 2009.

2.3.2 Mission Council adopted the new terms of reference of the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee. (Annexe 2)

2.3.3 Mission Council appointed the Director of the Windermere Centre and the URC members of the teaching staff of Northern College Manchester to be members of the North Western Synod.

2.3.4 Mission Council approved changes to wording in Part II of the Disciplinary Process and Incapacity Procedure. (Annexe 4a and 4b respectively)

2.3.5 Mission Council received the Trustee's Report and adopted the Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2008.

2.3.6 Mission Council agreed to amend *The Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration* by:

- (i) amending paragraph 6.3.4 to read: Travel: the costs of travel on church business shall be met as follows. Although these options are available, environmental issues should be taken into account.
- (ii) Amending paragraph 6.3.4.1 by the underlined insertion: ....The MoM Sub-committee shall distribute annually the rates of reimbursement for mileage undertaken on church business, including rates for motorcycles and bicycles, which must not be exceeded...

## 2.4 March 2010

2.4.1 Mission Council appointed the Revd Roger Woodall to serve as a Director of the URC Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd until 2016. It also reappointed the Revd John Proctor as Director of New Testament Studies at Westminster College, Cambridge, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2010 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017, subject to review.

2.4.2 Local church Constitution. It was resolved to adopt the document, subject to further legal advice for different jurisdictions. (Annexe 5) It applies to churches in England and Wales and is for local churches to use or adapt as they wish. Scottish churches do not require a constitution and further advice is required for churches in the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. Churches wishing a copy of the document should contact the General Secretary.

### 3 Other Actions

#### 3.1 December 2008

3.1.1 The General Secretary reported on conversations with her counterpart in the Methodist Church. Assembly appointed staff members from the URC were meeting with their counterparts in the Methodist Church to explain their roles. Mission Council agreed to welcome a Methodist observer to future meetings and to appoint a URC observer to attend the Methodist Church Council, subject to review in 2010. It also welcomed the proposal of a joint meeting with the Methodist Church Council in the Autumn of 2010 and encouraged the General Secretary to make preparations. Officers of both the Methodist and United Reformed Churches meet three times a year as a Strategic Oversight Group.

3.1.2 Mission Council welcomed the proposal of a *God is still speaking* initiative in the United Reformed Church as a vehicle for renewal and evangelism, approved the submission of a grant application to the CWM Mission Support Programme for a *Marketing Campaign* in the United Reformed Church, and asked the Mission Committee to proceed with preparations for the *Marketing Campaign*.

3.1.3 Mission Council resolved that the Windermere Centre be recognised as a Resource Centre for Learning for the United Reformed Church, one of the coalition of learning providers seeking to equip the whole people of God, and that a new Windermere Management Committee should replace the present Windermere Advisory Group and the Windermere Local Management Committee. The new committee would be a sub-committee of Education and Learning.

3.1.4 The URC's two investment committees, (serving the URC Trust and the Ministers' Pension Trust respectively) were combined into one. A number of members were due to retire shortly and so this seemed a sensible time to create a single group with those who had continuity of knowledge forming the first committee members. Mission Council therefore thanked the serving members and resolved that from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009 a United Reformed Church Investment Committee should operate in accordance with the agreed terms of reference and composition.

3.1.5 Mission Council agreed to reappoint the Revd David Grosch–Miller as Moderator of the South Western Synod from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2009 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2013.

3.1.6 Mission Council authorised the scheme of Local Ministry and Mission Review as proposed by the Ministries Committee.

3.1.7 Mission Council resolved that henceforth the disciplinary process for Ministers and Church Related Community Workers should be known as 'The Disciplinary Process'. Where appropriate the words 'found in Section O of The Manual' might be added.

#### 3.2 May 2009

3.2.1 Mission Council adopted *Hope in God's Future*, the Joint Public Issues Team report on the theology of climate change. It asked the Mission Committee to create a more accessible version for synods and local churches, linked with practical suggestions for study and action, acknowledging the action already taken by many individuals across the churches with respect to their personal lifestyles. It affirmed congregations in seeking to reduce their carbon emissions. It noted the intention of Mission Committee to appoint a climate change consultant to help integrate the recommendations of the report into the

mission focus and priorities of the URC and instructed them to agree the conditions and outcomes of the post.

3.2.2 Mission Council agreed that the new title for the Ministerial Incapacity and Disciplinary Procedures Advisory Group should be the MIND Advisory Group.

### 3.3 November 2009

3.3.1 Mission Council agreed that the next Clerk to General Assembly be appointed for six years from Assembly 2012 (to serve the Assemblies of 2014-18 inclusive) with the possibility of re-appointment for a further four years, subject to review and to the revision of the relevant Rules of Procedure.

3.3.2 Saluting the work of those who give themselves to God and the Church in service as ministers of Word and Sacrament and as church related community workers, Mission Council requested synods to meet the challenge of supplementary support for the Ministers' Pension Fund by committing to provide the sums indicated in the report for the period 2010-12; requested every synod to consider a commitment to give a percentage of the proceeds of property sales to the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund; noting the suggestion of the Board of Directors of the URCMPF that honouring the ethical investment policy of the Church may have resulted in a reduction in the value of the Fund by £644,000 over the period 2006-8, agreed that this sum should be transferred to the URCMPF as part of the additional funding under the Recovery Plan in 2010; supported an increase in member contributions to the URCMPF to 7.5% of stipend with effect from 1 July 2010; approved the budget for 2010, noting that it included income of £0.5m from synods for pensions support.

3.3.3 Noting the following concerns: The impact of the economic recession on those least responsible for the financial crisis – the poor and vulnerable – and the shift in public discourse of this crisis from private to public finances in the UK over the past year; potential cuts to social benefits and public services being advocated by political parties in the lead up to the General Election and the negative impact this would have on vulnerable households and individuals in the UK; and the likely impact of the enormous deficit in public finances on the UK's commitments to international development and climate change adaptation and mitigation; Mission Council warmly welcomed the Prime Minister's proposal for a financial transaction levy of half a basis point (0.05%) to be imposed globally as an innovative means of raising finances to offset this deficit and to create 'a better economic and social contract between financial institutions and the public based on trust and a just distribution of risks and rewards'; called on other leaders of the G20 economies to grasp the opportunity to redress the inequity in the current financial system by supporting the proposal; and agreed to pursue with ecumenical partners appropriate ways of responding to the issues raised in this resolution to ensure that the voice of faith communities and the church was heard on this critical moral imperative.

3.3.4 Mission Council adopted the proposed Terms of Reference for MIND (Annexe 3).

### 3.4 March 2010

3.4.1 Mission Council, noting with thanksgiving the 135 years of partnership in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and its predecessor bodies by the United Reformed Church and its parent denominations, and looking forward to a continuing relationship with the newly formed 'World Communion of Reformed Churches', resolved that from June 18<sup>th</sup> 2010 all references to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches contained in any of its rules, regulations or guidelines should be understood to refer to the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

3.4.2 Mission Council agreed that the list of committee members and other appointments made through the Nominations Committee should be published annually in the same format. This format should include the URC website. The Communications team was asked to look for an appropriate way of publishing it in hard copy.

3.4.3 On the advice of the Ethical Investment Advisory Group, Mission Council agreed to recommend to Assembly that Nestlé should no longer be treated on a different investment basis from all other companies. (Resolution 3)

3.4.4 Mission Council also agreed that the statement ‘Ethical investment principles for the use of the United Reformed Church’ should be sent to Assembly for decision.

3.4.5 Mission Council resolved to appoint the Revd David Skitt to serve as a consultant for ministers and CRCWs who were the subject of the Disciplinary Process and resolved to add ‘the Convener of the Incapacity Procedure Review Commission’ to the membership of the MIND Advisory Group.

3.4.6 Mission Council commended to General Assembly that the Westminster College Development Plan be the subject of an Assembly Appeal to the whole United Reformed Church, and requested the Finance Committee to bring specific proposals to the General Assembly on funding options from central resources to contribute towards the costs of the development plan.

## 4 Safeguarding (2008 Assembly resolution)

4.1 Considerable work has been done by the Deputy General Secretary in tandem with officers from the Youth and Children’s Work Department and the Ministries Department. They are working towards a portfolio of documents on Safe Recruiting, Safeguarding of Children and Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults. The Safe Recruiting guidelines await final definitive guidance from the Government to faith groups on barring and vetting. The existing policy on the safeguarding of children is being updated. As regards vulnerable adults they intend to draw upon ecumenical work by our Anglican and Methodist partners. The Church House Management Group has also given careful thought to the continuing need for Criminal Records Bureau Disclosures.





# Annexe 1

## Amendments to the Rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund

agreed by Mission Council on behalf of General Assembly with effect from 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2008

Deletions shown in bold **(brackets)** additions/amendments shown in italic *[brackets]*

Amend Rule 17 as follows:

[17.1.1 the voluntary contributions shall be limited to a sum which, when added to all other contributions in respect of his/her membership of the Fund, would provide benefits not exceeding Inland Revenue limits and when added to the contributions (if any) of the member to this and all other retirement benefits schemes that have received or are capable of receiving approval under the 1988 Act does not exceed 15% of the member's total remuneration for that year.]

Re-number paragraphs [17.1.2 & 17.1.3] **(17.1.1 & 17.1.2.) respectively.**

Amend Rule 43 and 43.1 as follows:

**(Overriding Tax Rules and)** Maximum Benefits

[The Inland Revenue limits on benefits apply to the Fund and are set out in the Schedule hereto] **(The Schedule hereto sets out the Tax Rules and the Inland Revenue Limits on benefits that apply to the Fund)**

Add the following at the end of the Schedule: 'Inland Revenue Limits: Part 1-Tax Rules' ***Members' contributions: The annual rate of Members' contributions may, with the consent of the Pension Trustees, exceed 15% of remuneration or any other limit imposed by the provisions of Part 11 of the schedule.***

1. These amendments to the Pension Fund Rules allow members to pay Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs) to the AVC Scheme attaching to the Fund without the current contribution restriction (maximum contribution 15% of stipend.)

Deletions shown in bold **[brackets]** Additions/amendments shown in italic *(brackets)*

22.2 as follows:

22.2 'To the surviving spouse a pension for life of an annual amount equal to one half of the pension to which the member would have been entitled to if the member had attained normal pension age *(or, in the case of the death of a contributing member in service after normal pension age, one half of the pension to which the member would have been entitled had he or she retired the day before his/her death)* plus in the case of the spouse of a member of the Congregational Fund.....'

Amend Rule 23.1 as follows

22.1 'In the event of the death of a member who has retired on pension and who leaves a spouse whom he/she married before **[attainment of normal pension age]** (the later of the date on which his/her service of a contributing member of the fund ceases and the date of his/her retirement), a pension will be payable for life to the spouse'

2. On 1<sup>st</sup> December 2006 when the Pension Fund Rules were brought into line with the requirements of the Employment Equality (Age) Discrimination Regulations 2006, these required amendments were overlooked. The amendment would ensure that benefits are provided from the Fund where a member has continued in contributory service after normal pension age 65; and that spouse benefits are available in all cases where the marriage took place before the member's retirement date.

# Annexe 2

## Terms of reference for the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee

### 1 Functions

1a The Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee (PRWC) considers the cases of United Reformed Church (URC) Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Church Related Community Workers (*hereafter, those exercising either ministry are included in the term 'ministers'*) which are referred to it by the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary, synod moderators, synod pastoral committees or Mission Council, on account of perceived pastoral need. Such response maybe needed:

- i) when there is a perceived breakdown in relationship between the minister and the wider United Reformed Church;
- ii) when synod officers feel the need for wider help:
- iii) when the continuation of a minister's service within the existing pastoral charge, or the URC itself, is in question:
- iv) when financial assistance is sought from welfare funds.

1b The committee will seek to resolve problems both by consideration of the issues and by consultation with the parties involved, where appropriate. It will further seek to enable the person's service within the URC to be continued if that is seen to be appropriate. To this end it may consider financial support for courses of re-training, therapy or counselling.

1c The committee may initiate discussion about alternative forms of service for a minister, within or outside the URC, and may seek help (practical, financial, professional) – in consultation with the person involved – to make this possible.

1d The committee has overall responsibility for the administration of Welfare funds. To this end, the Senior Finance Officer will attend meetings to advise on applications and to implement administration of agreed policy.

1e The committee may authorise the Maintenance of Ministry (MoM) sub-committee to provide stipend or part-stipend, and may authorise the Chief Finance Officer to pay – for a specific period – other necessary expenses (including accommodation costs) to a minister not in pastoral charge. Such period will not exceed six months, in the first instance, but may be renewed by the PRWC. The MoM sub-committee (or such other body as shall in future carry its functions) or the Chief Finance Officer will accept this authority for payment.

1f In each case the committee will make clear to the minister concerned the period for which payments will be made and whether or not it may be extended.

### 2 Limitations

2a The committee does not have authority to delete the name of a minister from the Roll of Ministers, nor to take any other disciplinary steps against him/her. The committee does not have to be consulted about and does not have authority over the process of ending the appointment of a minister in pastoral charge, which process is a matter for minister, Church Meeting and Synod.

2b The committee may not be involved with, and must withdraw from, any ongoing discussions, counselling or any other direct pastoral involvement with any case in which the disciplinary procedures of the Church are being applied against a minister. The committee may, however, authorise financial payments allowed under its Terms of Reference (see 1e).

### **3 Confidentiality**

The work of the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee will be both confidential and pastoral. It will, though, need to keep a record of its meetings. The committee's conclusions should be recorded, given to the person concerned and shared with others directly involved who need to know the outcome. It will be inappropriate for the committee as a body, or individual members of it, to divulge any additional information about ministers or churches concerned.

### **4 Attendance**

4a If circumstances require, the committee may invite a minister whose case is being considered to meet some or all of its members. In that case the person may be accompanied by a friend if he or she so wishes.

4b The committee shall have discretion to invite other parties involved in a case to meet it.

### **5 Composition**

A former Moderator of General Assembly shall be Convener; the General Secretary; two lay people; one minister with experience of pastoral charge; one synod moderator; the Honorary Treasurer; the Deputy General Secretary who will act as Secretary.

### **6 Relationship to General Assembly**

The committee will report to each meeting of General Assembly. However, the report will deal only with general matters or changes in procedure and will not refer to, nor may the committee be questioned on, individual cases.

## **Annexe 3**

### **Terms of Reference for the Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline Advisory Group (MIND)**

To oversee the Ministerial Disciplinary Process (Section O) and the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (Section P);

To receive reports (from which all details which might serve to identify the minister or CRCW involved have been removed) following each case in order that any lessons may be learnt;

To propose any changes to Mission Council.

Membership: Convener, Secretary, the General Secretary, the Clerk, the Secretary for Ministries, the Convener and Secretary to the Assembly Commission, the Convener and Secretary of the Review Commission of the Incapacity Procedure, the Legal Adviser, the Procedures Consultant(s), the Training Coordinator.

N.B. The group is an Advisory Group to Mission Council.

Apart from scrutiny of anonymised reports, the Group does not consider any specific cases in the Disciplinary Process or Incapacity Procedure.

## Annexe 4

### Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline Advisory Group (MIND)

The MIND (Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline) Advisory Group was so renamed by Mission Council to take account of the fact that we have been asked to give oversight to the operation of the Incapacity Procedure (*Section P in the Manual*) in addition to the Disciplinary Process (*Section O*).

The documents relating to these need constant revision to take account of both experience in their use and changes to legislation and employment practice. It is, therefore, vital that any who need to use Sections O or P ensure that they have the most up-to-date version of all documents available on the Church's website. Since the last Assembly we have produced a comprehensive set of Guidelines. We have also produced a simpler general introduction to the Disciplinary Process which will, we trust, help people get a basic understanding of the Process before they address the more technical, but essential, documents. Consultations are being held about the relationship between the Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure for which guidelines and formal documents are also needed.

We liaise with Synod Moderators about their experiences in the operation of the Disciplinary process, in particular addressing problems that have arisen from the making of Recommendations by Assembly Commissions as there is no formal way of ensuring that such Recommendations are followed. Resolutions are being presented which will resolve this issue.

We have also been working on proposals to establish a formal Graduated Entry into disciplinary action to address issues significant in themselves but not necessarily sufficiently serious to merit being brought into the current Disciplinary Process. This requires detailed work which will not be complete in time for the meeting of the Assembly. However, because we are advised of the need to align our Disciplinary Process more closely with the secular employment law it will not be possible to delay this action until the meeting of General Assembly in 2012. It will therefore be necessary for the changes to the Disciplinary Process to be approved by the Mission Council, probably later in 2010.

We have held a number of well-attended Training Days for those nominated by Synods to serve on Assembly Commissions and to be members of the Joint Panel to lead Mandated Groups. Each Synod has now been asked to appoint two Joint Panel members and early indications are that the revised way of working, in that the Joint Panel members train those who will form a Mandated Group with them, are proving helpful. We already had a consultant who can help Mandated Groups with the legal aspects of their work and are happy to have been able to appoint another consultant who can give comparable support to Ministers/CRCWs.

On behalf of Assembly, Mission Council has made changes to Part II of both the Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure. Mission Council has also approved a number of changes to Part I of the Disciplinary Process and Incapacity Procedure. These are now presented to the Assembly at Resolutions 5 and 6.

It is of concern to the Advisory Group that, although these changes are important and some were identified as being necessary early in 2009, because changes to Part I are 'Constitution Changes' and so require presentation at two Assemblies as well as consultation with Synods they cannot now be implemented before July 2012 at the earliest. The decision to hold biennial assemblies has thus created a well-nigh impossible

situation. In the interests of justice and for the avoidance of inconsistencies between Parts I and II, it is essential that in future Part I changes can be made promptly, and this simply cannot be achieved under the new arrangements. The Disciplinary Process has now been up and running for 15 years or so and, whilst we are continually having to revise the Rules of Procedure, the general principles set out in Part I are well settled. Consequently, it is felt that Mission Council, with the guidance of the MIND Advisory Group, can properly have authority over these just as it does over Part II. It is of course always acting with delegated authority from General Assembly. Although the Incapacity Procedure is of more recent origin, the same concerns over the inability promptly to make necessary changes apply, and so it is proposed that Part I of this Procedure be similarly treated, noting that all changes will be under the jurisdiction of Mission Council which will be guided by the Advisory Group, as with the Disciplinary Process. To that end, we propose Resolutions 7, 8 and 9. If the Assembly passes these resolutions the Advisory Group will carry out the necessary drafting work to enable the new wording of both the Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure to be placed before the Assembly when it ratifies the original resolutions. This new wording would, in each case, integrate the current Parts I and II into a single entity.

Christine Craven and Helen Brown have retired from their positions as Secretary for Ministries and Convener of the Assembly Commission Panel respectively. Both gave so very much to this unglamorous side of our Church's life for which all should be grateful. In their place we have welcomed Craig Bowman and Kath Cross; we have also welcomed Heather Kent and Donald Swift to the Group as the Secretary and the Convener of the Incapacity Procedure Review Commission respectively.

**(Resolutions 5-10 on pages 245-257)**

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## Annexe 4a

### Changes to the Ministerial Disciplinary Process (Section O) Part II made by Mission Council since Assembly 2008

#### MISSION COUNCIL December 2008

- B.2.2** Replace **'thirteen'** with **'twenty six'** and add **'or two'** after **'of whom one'**.
- E.5.3.15** Replace the existing wording with the following:  
**'That Notice shall state that the proceedings under the Section O Process shall stand adjourned to await written notification from the recipient as to whether the recommendation contained in the Notice has been accepted or rejected. The Notice to the recipient shall include a request for him/her to respond with all due expedition, consistent with the consultation process laid down by the Incapacity Procedure.'**
- E.7.4** Delete the bracketed words at the end.
- E.7.7** Delete this paragraph.
- J.2** Replace the words: **'(but excluding any costs of representation)'** with the words: **'(but excluding any costs and expenses incurred by the parties in the preparation of their respective cases and the cost of any representation at the Hearing)'**.
- J.3** Replace the words: **'all papers...[to end of sentence]'** with the words: **'all papers relating to concluded cases, which shall include the papers which the Mandated Group and the Minister have lodged with the Secretary of the Assembly Commission and, in the event of an appeal, with the General Secretary during the course of the proceedings. The complete bundle of all these papers shall be kept in a locked cabinet at Church House.'**

#### MISSION COUNCIL May 2009

- A.3** Replace the words **'the right of appeal (Paragraph G.1)'** with **'the rights of appeal under Paragraphs E.5.3 and G.1'**.
- A.6.4** After the words **'Assembly Commission'** (both times) insert **'or Special Appeals Body'**.
- A.8** After the words **'Assembly Commission'** insert **'or the Special Appeals Body'**.
- B.6.3** After the words **'Paragraph B.3, B.4 and B.5'** add **'and this Paragraph B.6'**.
- C.1.5** Delete the words **'or the responsible officer of any relevant Organisation'**.
- C.3.1** After the words **'Appeals Commission'** (all three times) insert **'or the Special Appeals Body'**.
- E.5.3** After the words **'the Section O Process'** insert **'which has reached the Commission Stage'**.  
Remove the words **'or the Appeals Commission'**.  
After the words **'the Assembly Commission may'**, remove **'either on its own account or on a written request from the Mandated Group, stating the reasons for making the request,'**.
- E.5.3.1** Remove the words **'or the General Secretary as the case may be'**.  
Replace the word **'intention'** with **'decision'**.  
After the sentence ending with the words **'such recommendation'** insert a new sentence as follows:

**‘This Notice shall contain a statement of its reasons for reaching its decision to refer back and it may indicate what papers, if any, should be passed to the recipient of the Notice.’**

Remove the bracketed words **‘(or the General Secretary if the reference back is proposed by the Appeals Commission)’**.

After the word **‘received’** add **‘(time being of the essence for this purpose)’**.

At the end of E.5.3.1 add the following sentence: **‘The Notice shall draw the attention of the recipient to the strict time limit for serving a Notice of Appeal in response to a Notice served under this Paragraph.’**

- E.5.3.2** After the opening words **‘In the event of such appeal,’** insert the words **‘the Section O case shall stand adjourned during the course of the appeal and...’** .

Remove the words **‘or the General Secretary as the case may be’**.

- E.5.3.5** Replace the opening wording up to the words **‘in response thereto’** with **‘The Special Appeals Body shall consider the decision of the Assembly Commission to refer the case back and any representations made in connection therewith....’**

- E.5.3.6** After the words **‘request for a Hearing’** insert **‘which is accepted by the Special Appeals Body’**.

- E.5.3.7** After the words **‘Rules set out in’** insert **‘Paragraph E.10 (as to representation) and’**.

- E.5.3.9** Remove the words **‘or the General Secretary as the case may be’**.

Remove the words **‘/Appeals Commission’**.

- E.5.3.10** Remove the words **‘/General Secretary’**.

- E.5.3.11** After the words **‘the Secretary’** insert **‘of the Assembly Commission’**.

Replace the expression **‘Paragraph E.5.3.8’** with **‘Paragraph E.5.3.1 or Paragraph E.5.3.8 as the case may be’**.

- E.5.3.14** Remove the words **‘/General Secretary’**.

Replace the words **‘decision of the Special Appeals Body on the appeal’** with **‘decision of the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Special Appeals Body’**.

Remove the words **‘signed by the Convener’**.

Replace the expression **‘Paragraph E.5.3.8’** with **‘Paragraph E.5.3.1 or Paragraph E.5.3.8 as the case may be’**.

- E.5.3.16** Remove the words **‘/General Secretary’**.

- E.5.3.17** Remove the words **‘or the Appeals Commission as the case may be’**.

Add the following at the end of the paragraph:

**‘This declaration shall conclude the disciplinary case against the Minister. The suspension of the Minister will, however, remain in place and will thereafter be subject to the provisions regarding suspension in the Incapacity Procedure [as to these, see the Incapacity Procedure, Part II, Paragraph E.1]. The attention of the Mandated Group is particularly drawn to Paragraph H.4.’**

- E.5.3.18** Remove the words **‘/General Secretary’**.

- E.5.3.19** After the word **‘Secretary’** insert **‘of the Assembly Commission’**.

- E.9.3** At the end of the first sentence, continue as follows: **‘and/or to incorporate recommendations into its decision under Paragraph F.2.3 or where, of its own accord, it might have it in contemplation to adopt either or both of those courses’**.

The second sentence remains unchanged.

- F.2.3** Replace the words **‘in its written statement (see Paragraph F.3.3) append such recommendations to’** with **‘incorporate within and as part of’**.  
End the final sentence with the words **‘the Minister only’** and delete the words **‘and that they are of an advisory nature and do not form part of the decision.’**
- F.2.4** Replace the word **‘include’** with **‘incorporate within and as part of’**.  
Delete the whole of the final sentence.
- F.4** Change the paragraph reference in the text from **J.2** to **J.3**
- F.5.2** Replace the words **‘appended to’** with **‘incorporated within and forming part of’**.
- F.6.4** Replace the words **‘appended to’** with **‘incorporated within and forming part of’**.
- G.1.3** Replace the words **‘Section E’** with **‘Sections E and F’**.
- G.8.4** Replace the words **‘appended to’** with **‘incorporated within and forming part of’**.
- G.13.4** Replace the words **‘in its written statement (see Paragraph G.13.3) append such recommendations to’** with **‘incorporate within and as part of’**.  
End the final sentence with the words **‘the Minister only’** and delete the words **‘and that they are of an advisory nature and do not form part of the decision.’**
- G.13.5** Replace the word **‘include’** with **‘incorporate within and as part of’**.  
Delete the whole of the final sentence.
- G.14.4** Replace the words **‘appended to’** with **‘incorporated within and forming part of’**.
- G.14.6** Replace the words **‘appended to’** with **‘incorporated within and forming part of’**.
- G.16** Replace the existing Paragraph G.16 with the following:  
**G.16 G.16.1** The decision of the Appeals Commission shall conclude its involvement in the Section O Process, except as to the discharge of its responsibilities under Paragraph J.3. Unless the decision falls within Paragraph G.15 (reference back to another duly constituted Assembly Commission), it shall have the effect provided for in Paragraph G.16.2 or Paragraph G.16.3, whichever is applicable.
- G.16.2** In the event of the Appeals Commission deciding to delete, the minister’s suspension shall continue up to the date of the decision, on which date the deletion shall automatically take effect. The Section O case shall be regarded as concluded on such day.
- G.16.3** In the event of the Appeals Commission deciding not to delete, the minister’s suspension shall cease on the date of the decision and the Section O case shall be regarded as concluded on such day.
- J.1.5** Add a new paragraph as follows:  
**‘It shall not be necessary to include in any report to General Assembly under this Paragraph J.1 any recommendations or guidance incorporated into any decision of the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission.’**
- J.2** Add a new paragraph as follows:  
**‘If a case is concluded under the provisions of Paragraph E.5.3.17 the Report shall simply state that a case has been referred into the Incapacity Procedure and shall not name the Minister.’**  
Renumber Paragraphs **J.2** and **J.3** as **J.3** and **J.4**



## Notes on the changes made in May 2009

Most of the changes relate to the provisions for reference into the Incapacity Procedure.

As first drafted, it was possible for the Mandated Group to request the Assembly Commission to refer a case back to the person who called in the Mandated Group with a recommendation to instigate a case within the Incapacity Procedure. On reflection it was concluded that it was sensible to withdraw that right (after all, the Minister/ Church Related Community Worker was not given the equivalent right) and leave the matter entirely to the discretion of the Assembly Commission. There would, of course, be nothing to prevent either party making an informal approach to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission to consider making such a referral back.

Again, as originally drafted, the decision to refer back to the person calling in the Mandated Group with the recommendation as to the commencement of the Incapacity Procedure could be invoked either by the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, by the Appeals Commission, i.e. either during the Commission Stage whilst still under the jurisdiction of the Assembly Commission or later during the course of an appeal. Now, after considerable further thought, and for a number of reasons, the legal advisor has strongly advised and it has been agreed that the Paragraph E.5.3 procedure should only be available up to the point when the Assembly Commission reaches its substantive decision. If that Commission has been satisfied that it was handling a disciplinary case right up to that point, it is believed that it should be outside the scope of the Appeals Commission's remit to invoke the Paragraph E.5.3 procedure at the later stage.

In addition to the amendments relating to these two changes, other corrections needed to be made, most of which should be self-explanatory.

## MISSION COUNCIL November 2009

- A.4** The existing **A.4** to become **A.4.1**. Also add the following sentence at the end of the paragraph:
- ‘In this connection, the expression ‘the framework of the Section O Process’ shall be regarded as covering not only the immediate confidentiality forum existing within the Section O Process during and beyond the continuance of the case, but shall extend to include any statements and information passed on to any person or body not directly involved in the case in the course of the implementation of any part of the decision of the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission or any recommendations or guidance appended thereto, on the basis that the recipient thereof is made fully aware that he/she/ it is bound by the confidentiality existing within the Section O Process in respect of such statements/information’.**
- A.4.2** Add a new **A.4.2** as follows:
- ‘Should either (i) a formal request for information concerning any case dealt with under the Section O Process be received from the Independent Safeguarding Authority or any other public body with the requisite statutory authority to insist upon production thereof or (ii) circumstances arise which create a statutory requirement to supply such information, then in either case the supply to that body of such information shall not be deemed to be a breach of confidentiality under the Section O Process’.**
- E.4.2** At the end insert the following:
- ‘and at the same time supply this information to the Synod Moderator and, if the case arises under Paragraph B.3.2, the Deputy General Secretary’.**
- E.5.1.2** At the end remove the fullstop and insert the word **‘and’**.

- E.5.1.3** Add a new **E.5.1.3** as follows:  
**‘A discretion to allow the parties to lodge an agreed written statement(s) as to those facts which are not in dispute, on the basis that such facts shall be taken as proved without the need for personal verification by witness testimony at the Hearing.’**
- F.2.4** After the words **‘appropriate guidance’** insert **‘.... in its written statement (see Paragraph F.3.3)’**.
- G.7.4** Delete and renumber the previous **G.7.5** as **G.7.4**.
- G.10.2** At the end insert the following:  
**‘and at the same time supply this information to the Synod Moderator and, if the case arises under Paragraph B.3.2, the Deputy General Secretary’**.
- G.13.5** Change the paragraph reference in the text from **‘F.3.3’** to **‘G.13.3’**.
-

## Annexe 4b

### Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (Section P) changes to Part II made by Mission Council since Assembly 2008

#### MISSION COUNCIL December 2008

- N.1.2** Add the following words at the end of the paragraph: **‘The name of the Minister shall not be read out at General Assembly, but shall be recorded in the list of all those no longer on the Roll of Ministers.’**

Add a new Paragraph N.1.4 as follows:

- ‘N.1.4 If the Review Commission decides to retain the name of the Minister on the Roll, the report to General Assembly shall simply state that a case under the Incapacity Procedure has been concluded and the name of the Minister has been retained on the Roll, but shall not supply the Minister’s name or any further information.’**

- N.2** Replace the words: **‘(but excluding any costs of representation)’** with the words: **‘(but excluding any costs and expenses incurred by the Minister in the preparation of his/her case and the cost of any representation at the Hearing)’**.

#### MISSION COUNCIL November 2009

- A.1.1** Widen the current definition of the **Secretary of the Review Commission** as follows: between the words **‘Review Commission’** and **‘in accordance with’** insert **‘and the Standing Panel’**

- A.3** Add the following sentence at the end of the paragraph:

**‘In this connection, the expression ‘the framework of the Incapacity Procedure’ shall be regarded as covering not only the immediate confidentiality forum existing within the Incapacity Procedure during and beyond the continuance of the case, but shall extend to include any statements and information passed on to any person or body not directly involved in the case in the course of the implementation of any part of the decision of the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission or any recommendations or guidance appended thereto, on the basis that the recipient thereof is made fully aware that he/she/it is bound by the confidentiality existing within the Incapacity Procedure in respect of such statements/information’.**

- A.4.1** The existing Paragraph A.4 to become A.4.1.

- A.4.2** Add a new paragraph as follows:

**‘Should either (i) a formal request for information concerning any case dealt with under the Incapacity Procedure be received from the Independent Safeguarding Authority or any other public body with the requisite statutory authority to insist upon production thereof or (ii) circumstances arise which create a statutory requirement to supply such information, then in either case the supply to that body of such information shall not be deemed to be a breach of confidentiality under the Incapacity Procedure’.**

- A.5** After the words **‘Review Commission’** insert **‘, Appeals Review Commission or Special Appeals Body’**.

After the words **‘Appeals Review Commission’** insert **‘or a Special Appeals Body’**.

- B.3** The existing B.3 to become B.3 1. Also, after the words '**the Minister**' insert '**in writing**'.
- B.3.2** Add a new **B.3.2** as follows:  
**'The Secretary of the Review Commission shall thereupon notify the following persons in writing of the issue of the Commencement Notice, namely the General Secretary, the Synod Moderator (if s/he did not issue the Commencement Notice), the Synod Clerk, the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries, the Convener of the PRWC and the responsible officer of any relevant Outside Organisation. 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. If appropriate, the Notice may be combined with a Notice given under Paragraph E.4 regarding suspension.'**
- B.6** Replace the last sentence with the following:  
**'S/he shall also send a written Notice countersigned by the Secretary of the Review Commission to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission informing him/her of the initiation of the Incapacity Procedure so that a declaration can be issued as provided under the Disciplinary Process to the effect that that Process is thereby concluded.'**  
Then add a new final sentence as follows:  
**'In the event that the Consultation Group decides that the Incapacity Procedure should not be initiated, the Synod Moderator or the Deputy General Secretary as the case may be shall give written Notice of that decision to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission to enable the Disciplinary case to be resumed.'**
- D.1** After the words '**Appeals Review Commission**' insert '**or the Special Appeals Body**'
- D.2** After the words '**servicing of**' insert '**the Standing Panel and**'
- G.4.2** At the end of this paragraph remove the full stop and add the word '**and**'.
- G.4.3** Add a new paragraph **G.4.3** as follows:  
**'take all such actions, including the commissioning of specialist advice and guidance, as seem to it desirable and appropriate in the proper conduct of its enquiry.'**
- H.1** Remove the words '**or the Appeals Review Commission**'.
- H.2** Remove the words '**or the General Secretary as the case may be**'  
Replace the word '**intention**' with '**decision**'  
After the sentence ending with the words '**such recommendation**' insert a new sentence as follows:  
**'This notice shall contain a statement of its reasons for reaching its decision to refer back and it may indicate what papers, if any, should be passed to the recipient of the notice'**  
Remove the words '**(or the General Secretary if the reference back is proposed by the Appeals Review Commission)**'  
After the words '**received**' add '**(time being of the essence for this purpose)**'  
At the end of H.2 add the following sentence:  
**'The Notice shall draw the attention of the recipient to the strict time limit for serving a Notice of Appeal in response to a notice served under this Paragraph.'**
- H.3** Replace the words '**.....the Secretary of the Review Commission or the General Secretary as the case may be**' with '**the case within the Incapacity Procedure shall stand adjourned during the course of the appeal and the Secretary of the Review Commission.....'**

- H.6** Replace the opening words up to **‘in response thereto’** with **‘The Special Appeals Body shall consider the decision of the Review Commission to refer the case back and any representations made in connection therewith....’**
- H.9** After the words **‘request for a formal hearing’** insert **‘which is accepted by the Special Appeals Body’**
- H.12** Remove the words **‘or the General Secretary as the case may be’** and the words **‘/Appeals Review Commission’**
- H.13** Remove the words **‘/General Secretary’**
- H.14** Remove the words **‘/General Secretary’**  
Replace the expression **‘Paragraph H.11’** with **‘Paragraph H.2 or Paragraph H.11 as the case may be’**
- H.17** Remove the words **‘/General Secretary’**  
Replace the words **‘decision of the Special Appeals Body on the appeal’** with **‘decision of the Review Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Special Appeals Body’**  
Remove the words **‘signed by the Convener’**  
Replace the expression **‘Paragraph H.11’** with **‘Paragraph H.2 or Paragraph H.11 as the case may be’**
- H.18** Remove the words **‘/General Secretary’**  
Add the following sentence at the end of the paragraph: **‘The Secretary and Convener of the Review Commission may in exceptional circumstances allow a short extension of this period’**
- H.19** Remove the words **‘/General Secretary’** from the first line.
- H.20** Remove the words **‘or the Appeals Review Commission as the case may be’**.
- H.21** Remove the words **‘/General Secretary’**.
- K.8.3** After the opening words **‘If by the’** insert **‘28<sup>th</sup> day after the’**.
- L.11.2** Add a new paragraph L.11.2 as follows:  
**‘If the decision is that the name of the Minister shall remain on the Roll of Ministers, the Appeals Review Commission may in its decision record append such recommendations to its decision as it considers will be helpful to Moderators of 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’**
- L.11.3** Add a new paragraph L.11.3 as follows:  
**‘If the decision is to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll of Ministers, the Appeals Review Commission is particularly requested to include appropriate guidance concerning any restrictions which it considers ought to be placed on any activities involving the Minister after his/her deletion with the object of assisting Moderators of 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 guidance is of an advisory nature and does not form part of the decision.’**
- L.11.4** The existing L.11.2 to become L.11.4
- L.11.5** The existing L.11.3 to become L.11.5

# Annexe 5

## Model constitution for local churches

### Introduction

The United Reformed Church was formed in 1972 by the union of the Congregational Church in England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England. Since then the United Reformed Church has continued to express its deep commitment to the visible unity of the whole Church. In 1981 it entered into union with the Re-formed Churches of Christ and in the year 2000 with the Congregational Union of Scotland. The United Reformed Church is in frequent dialogue on unity with other traditions and has more than 400 local churches united with other denominations.

Though one of the smaller of Britain's 'mainstream' denominations, the United Reformed Church stands in the historic Reformed tradition, whose member denominations make up the largest single strand of Protestantism with more than 70 million members world-wide.

Along with other Reformed churches the United Reformed Church holds to the Trinitarian faith expressed in the historic Christian creeds and finds its supreme authority for faith and conduct in the Word of God in the Bible, discerned under guidance of the Holy Spirit. The United Reformed Church's structure also expresses its faith in the ministry of all God's people through the structure of Councils by which the Church is governed.

Notes about this Model Constitution Document:

There is an increasing expectation that local churches will have a written Constitution. The Charity Commission does not wish to see it as part of the registration process but has indicated it would expect to have sight of one if problems arise in the future. Also, grant funders and even banks are asking for details of how local churches are constituted to verify their collective identity and that of their signatories and better understand their governance. Not only to satisfy the outside world, but also to make the church's workings transparent to new members and to obviate later disagreement within the fellowship, it is helpful to have a clear stated understanding of how local decisions are taken and appointments made.

This document has been prepared with the benefit of legal advice and it is therefore commended to local churches. However, it has been drafted according to the law of England and Wales and churches in Scotland, Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man will need to take further legal advice on its adoption in those jurisdictions.

Local churches may already have their own written rules of operation, or established but unwritten 'custom and practice', on some or all of the matters covered in this model. Those whose rules are written are encouraged to compare them with this model; some Churches may wish to incorporate useful material from the model into their own rules, others to adopt a version of the model in place of their old rules. Those whose rules are unwritten are urged to consider adopting a version of this model (incorporating local practices when appropriate). If a written constitution exists it is important that people should be able to rely on it; so once adopted it will prevail over any inconsistent unwritten custom. Subject to the Scheme of Union, which prevails over local practice whether written or not, local churches decide for themselves how they will operate and are free to adopt this model as it stands or with variations; however there are reasons for everything contained in the model and churches are urged not to amend it without careful consideration and competent advice.

In a few cases a local church may have appointed persons other than the members of the Elders' Meeting to serve as charity trustees of the church's general funds. The Church does not now recommend this practice and would encourage those congregations which have a designated group of Trustees to adopt the pattern of governance agreed with the Charity

Commissioners and approved by the General Assembly. Nevertheless, where separate groups of trustees exist references to trustees contained in this document should be taken to refer to those bodies.

The Manual of the United Reformed Church which contains full details of the Basis of Union; the Structure of the Church; Rules of Procedure; Baptism; Ministries; the Disciplinary Procedure for ministers and Church Related Community Workers and other aspects of the Church's work can be accessed on the Church's website at [www.urc.org.uk](http://www.urc.org.uk) under the heading 'Our work'.

## Index of clauses

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**The members of Anytown United Reformed Church assembled in Church Meeting on (date) have adopted the following Constitution:**

### 1 The local and the wider church

*Anytown* United Reformed Church ('the church') is a local association for the public worship of God, Christian witness and service in accordance with the principles and usages of the United Reformed Church ('the URC'). Admission to the full responsibilities and privileges of membership confers membership simultaneously in the church and in the URC. The church supports the wider councils of the URC through giving and participation, and may share in activity with other faith communities on an ecumenical basis.

### 2 Basic constitutional documents

2.1 As a local church of the URC, the church is governed by the Scheme of Union of the URC ('the Scheme of Union') and those constitutional decisions of General Assembly binding on local churches. This constitution supplements the provisions of these as they affect the church. In the event of any conflict between those provisions and this constitution, those provisions prevail.

#### 2.2 The Scheme of Union:

	Principal provisions of the Basis of Union (B) or Structure (S)	Related clauses of this constitution
a) assigns the immediate oversight of the church to the Church Meeting and the Elders' Meeting	S1(3), 2(1), 2(2)	6

b)	provides for the membership and functions of the Church Meeting (in particular, in the Call of a Minister) and for non-voting attendance	S2(1)	5
c)	provides for the membership and functions of the Elders' Meeting	S2(1)(viii), 2(2)	5 and 6
d)	provides for councils of the wider church, for the church's direct or indirect representation upon them and for appeals from more local councils to a council having wider responsibility	S1(2)(a), 1(3), 2(1)(vi), 2(3), 2(4), 2(6) and 5	
e)	provides for consultation in decision-making	S4	--
f)	contains (in the Basis of Union) a statement concerning the Faith of the United Reformed Church	B10, 12-18	--
g)	provides for the celebration of the Gospel sacraments	B14, 15; S2(2)(ii), 2(4)(A)(xx)	--
h)	provides for the ministry of Word and Sacrament, for the ministry of other Elders, and for Ministers' and Elders' ordination and induction	B19, 20, 21, 23, 25; S2(1)(vii), 2(2), 2(4)(A)(vii)	5
i)	provides for the ministry of Church-Related Community Workers and for their commissioning and induction	B19, 22; S2(1)(vii), 2(2), 2(4)(A)(vii)	--
j)	provides for the admission of baptised persons to the full privileges and responsibilities of church membership	B14; S2(1)(ix), 2(2)(vi)	4

This constitution makes further provision for these matters in the clauses indicated.

### 3 Property trusts and administration

3.1 Property is held upon trust for purposes which include the charitable purposes of the church. This includes:

- a) land and buildings governed by trusts set out in Schedule 2 to the United Reformed Church Acts 1972 and 1981 ('the URC Acts'), which provide that the statutory power of appointing new trustees and certain powers of direction are vested in the Church Meeting<sup>1</sup>.

b)

*[Use this wording if your general funds are registered as a charity and the Church Meeting has passed the declaratory resolution agreed with the Charity Commission for that purpose]*

The general funds of the church, governed by trusts declared in a resolution of the Church Meeting on *(date)*, which provides that the qualified members of the Elders' Meeting are charity trustees<sup>2</sup> and that trustees are to act in accordance with procedures laid down by the Church Meeting.

*[Use this wording otherwise]*

The general funds of the church, comprising all assets and funds held by and on behalf of the church (other than land and buildings held under the trusts

<sup>1</sup> A small number of properties are held by local churches on special trusts which fall outside the URC Acts. If in doubt, Churches should contact their Synod Office for advice.

<sup>2</sup> Consult your Synod Trust office for advice if this is not the case



declared in Schedule 2 of the URC Acts and those held on other specifically declared trusts), which are held upon trust for the advancement of the Christian faith for the benefit of the public in accordance with the Scheme of Union and whose charity trustees are the members of the Elders' Meeting qualified to serve as such, acting in accordance with procedures laid down by the Church Meeting.

3.2 The Church Meeting, after considering the recommendations of the Elders' Meeting and any guidance issued under the authority of councils of the wider URC, will review

- a) the uses to be made of the property in 3.1.a, and
- b) procedures for proper administration of the general funds of the Church

3.3 The charity trustees of the general funds of the church are responsible for presentation of an annual set of accounts to the Church Meeting and, where charity registration has been completed, for preparation and submission of the annual Trustees report.

## 4 Membership

4.1 There shall be a roll of members on which persons admitted to the full privileges and responsibilities of membership in the church, whether on profession of faith or by transfer, are to be entered. Names are to be removed from this roll

- a) on transfer to another church of the URC;
- b) at the written request of a member wishing to relinquish membership;
- c) by resolution of the Church Meeting on advice from the Elders' Meeting
- d) on death.

4.2 Admission to membership of the Church by transfer takes place when a person

- a) is a member of another local church of the URC, or of a Church with which the URC General Assembly has declared pulpit and table fellowship and
- b) is accepted by the Church Meeting or (by delegation) by the Elders' Meeting.

A member by transfer shall be welcomed in public worship at an early opportunity but enjoys the full privileges and responsibilities of membership from the passing of the accepting resolution.

4.3 Admission to membership of the Church on profession of faith takes place when a person

- a) is not eligible for admission by transfer;
- b) is considered by the Elders' Meeting of an age to make a meaningful profession of faith;
- c) has received preparation that the Elders' Meeting considers adequate;
- d) is accepted by the Church Meeting on the advice of the Elders' Meeting;
- e) makes during public worship the profession of faith prescribed in the Basis of Union; and
- f) if not previously baptised, is baptised.

## 5 Leadership

The exercise of the total caring oversight by which Christ's people grow in faith and love is the special concern of elders and ministers, which may be complemented by the work of a Church Related Community Worker ['CRCW']. Before a call can be issued by a Church Meeting to a Minister of Word and Sacrament or a CRCW the procedures to be followed shall have been agreed by the Church Meeting after considering the recommendations of the Elders' Meeting and any guidance issued under the authority of councils of the wider United Reformed Church.

### 5.1 Ministers

A local church may, at any one time, have one or more ministers in pastoral charge; these are called to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament.

## 5.2 Church Related Community Workers

A local church may at any one time have one or more Church Related Community Workers. They are called to a ministry of caring, challenging and praying for the community.

## 5.3 Elders

5.3.1 *Alt 1* The church meeting shall adopt such methods of electing Elders as it shall from time to time see fit and determine how long elected Elders shall serve and whether or not there must be an interval between the completion of a period of service and election for a subsequent period.

*Alt 2* churches may, if they wish, as an alternative to the above set out here the detail of their procedure for electing elders, length of service etc.

5.3.2. *Alt 1* [The Church Meeting/the Elders] shall make such rules and regulations relating to the calling and conduct of Elders Meetings as they shall from time to time think fit.

*Alt 2* Churches may, if they wish, as an alternative to the above set out here in detail how Elders Meetings are to be called and conducted.

## 6 Honorary officers, representatives and committees

6.1 The Church Meeting shall:

- a) consider the candidates nominated by the Elders' Meeting for the office of Church Secretary, and by the charity trustees of the Church's general funds for the office of Treasurer. If the candidate for Church Secretary is not acceptable to the Church Meeting then a fresh nomination is to be sought from the Elders' Meeting.
- b) elect a Church Treasurer
- c) elect a person or persons to represent the Church on the Synod. These shall normally be members of the Elders' Meeting
- d) elect such other honorary officers and representatives to external bodies as it sees fit;

6.2 The Church Meeting and Elders' Meeting may each establish such committees or ministry groups as they see fit, prescribing their method of appointment, terms of reference and frequency of reporting to the parent body. The Church Meeting may determine to which council of the church (itself or the Elders' Meeting) any committee or group established by it is to report.

6.3 Control of a delegated budget, with or without the competence to sign cheques drawn on church funds, may be delegated by the charity trustees of the funds concerned to committees, ministry groups or individual officers.

## 7 Employees and paid contractors

7.1 To avoid doubt, this clause does not apply to the appointment of stipendiary ministers or church-related community workers.

7.2 Appointment to any employed position in the service of the Church will be made by the charity trustees of the church funds from which the employee is to be paid. The charity trustees of the relevant funds will also be party to any contract with an independent contractor for services to the Church. Unless the services to be rendered are solely to assist the trustees in their function as such, the following rules will apply:

- a) The creation of a new permanent employed position or its permanent abolition requires a resolution of the Church Meeting acting on advice from the Elders' Meeting.
- b) The selection of an employee, the decision to vary contractual terms or terminate an employment (except for disciplinary reasons) or the decision to contract or terminate a contract with an independent contractor are matters for the Elders' Meeting, on whose directions the charity trustees are to act.
- c) Another church committee may act in lieu of the Elders' Meeting under the foregoing paragraph but only by express delegation from the Elders' Meeting.

- d) The charity trustees are to scrutinise the terms of any contract of employment or for services before it is concluded, and may defer acting on a direction in order to allow the relevant Meeting or committee time to consider any concerns the charity trustees have.
- e) The charity trustees are at liberty to take, without receiving explicit directions, such other measures in relation to employees as good employment practice may indicate.

7.3 Charity trustees who employ or may employ staff on behalf of the church will adopt and from time to time review, subject to the approval of the Church Meeting, written procedures for disciplinary cases and for the settlement of employee grievances. Disciplinary procedures are to provide for warnings when appropriate, emergency suspension when appropriate, a hearing if an employee so requests and for an appeal procedure.

7.4 Charity trustees may decline to act upon a direction to employ one of their own number or to contract with a charity trustee for the supply of goods or services, They may only act upon such a direction if all requirements of charity law in relation to the remuneration of trustees are satisfied.

7.5 A charity trustee must be absent from the part of any meeting at which his or her employment or remuneration, or any matter concerning a contract to which he or she is party other than as a trustee (including his or her performance in that employment or the performance of the contract) are discussed. He or she must not vote on any matter relating to his or her employment or the contract and must not be counted when calculating whether a quorum of charity trustees is present for that item of business.

## **8 Amendment**

Alterations of, or additions to, this constitution may be made by the Church Meeting, normally on the recommendation of the Elders' Meeting. They must be consistent with charity law and relevant trust instruments where applicable and with the provisions mentioned in clause 2.1 that affect the Church, and must receive the support of at least 75% of the members present and voting at the session of the Church Meeting.

## **9 Closure and dissolution**

9.1 Any resolution to close the Church must be passed by the Church Meeting and approved by the appropriate wider council of the URC. When approved the resolution will have the effect of dissolving the Church as an association, at the date agreed between the local church and the Synod.

9.2 A direction may be given by the Church Meeting for unrestricted monies held as part of the general funds of the Church to be applied after the satisfaction of debts and liabilities, in a specific manner determined by the Church Meeting (within the charitable objects set out in the relevant trust instrument).

9.3 If no such direction is given the Church Meeting shall be deemed to have directed the trustees to apply the unrestricted monies held as part of the general funds of the Church, after the satisfaction of debts and liabilities, as determined (within the charitable objects set out in the relevant trust instrument) by the Synod.

## **10 Interpretation and miscellaneous**

In this constitution:

'Elder' refers to a serving Elder but 'ordained Elder' refers to any person ordained to the Eldership and includes ministers of Word and Sacrament who are on the Roll of Members but currently hold no active office in the URC. 'Minister' refers also, where the context allows, to the Interim Moderator during any vacancy. 'Synod' refers to the Synod of the URC on which the Church is, or was last, represented.

# Annexe 6

## Human Sexuality Task Group (2008)

### 1 Introduction

1.1 The Assembly returns to the subject of human sexuality from the base point of the Commitment it adopted and commended to synods and churches in 2007. For any who may have forgotten that Commitment, it is printed as Annexe 6a following this report. It is also worth recalling the advice given to that Assembly to the effect that the process of further discussion needed to take place without the pressure of deadlines. 'It is imperative that the whole church is given space to be and to reflect'.

1.2 In addition the Assembly of 2007 asked Mission Council to set up a task group to take forward the process of continuing discussion, as well as addressing certain specific concerns which had been identified. A group was established towards the end of 2008 with the following membership: John Bradbury, Cecily Boulding (ecumenical observer), Lucy Brierley (secretary), Richard Church, Doreen Daley, Claire Gouldthorp, Val Morrison and John Waller (convener). The task group has reported regularly to Mission Council and this report is the result of its work so far.

### 2 Matters referred from the 2007 Assembly

A part of the report which was presented to the 2007 Assembly identified eleven issues that needed further exploration. The issues are repeated below with, in each case, the response that has been made to Mission Council.

2.1 **Theology.** *Among several theological issues to be addressed, a coherent and comprehensive theology of same-sex partnerships is urgently needed as a basis for any further decisions. Ideally, as with earlier work, this should be set within the context of human sexuality, marriage and relationships in general as well as our understanding of gender.* The task group understands that the request is for a theology of same-sex partnerships and not a specifically United Reformed Church one, and that the need therefore is to identify existing theological statements which will satisfy the request and be reasonably easily accessible. At some point it may be necessary to relate such a theology to the ecclesiology of the United Reformed Church. The group has asked the Faith and Order Group for advice. The second sentence of the request should fall within the plans detailed in section 4 of this report.

2.2 **Advocacy.** *Related to this is the need for clarity about the church's teaching on matters of sexual relationships. What do we actually affirm and teach about marriage, singleness, celibacy and same-sex relationships, for instance? Within this, how does the church cope with two incompatible sets of teaching, one of which says that same-sex practice is wrong and the other of which says that it can be life-affirming? Do we say that our church teaches both?* The United Reformed Church understanding of marriage is reflected in the marriage service in the Service Book. Beyond that, no specific statements have been agreed on sexual relationships: it is the intention of the task group to create opportunities for further discussion of this whole area in the next two years. In so doing, the group believes that the discussion is most likely to be fruitful in groupings where people are used to speaking together and it believes that sexuality needs to be seen as a gift rather than as a problem. On the question of how the church copes with two incompatible sets of teaching, more will be said under the heading of unity through diversity. For the time being, those who wish to know the church's position must be pointed to the Commitment.

2.3 **Standards in ministry.** *What are acceptable patterns of life within ordained ministry? What standards are expected of ministers and members in relation to different expressions of sexuality? How are we to understand a minister's promise to lead a holy life?* The Ministries Committee was already working in this general area and the task group asked it to consider whether issues of sexuality could be included within its work. The Committee agreed to this request and those who want to pursue this matter should refer to the papers on Standards of Conduct for ministers, Church Related Community Workers and elders.

**2.4 Discipline.** *Recognising that there are ordained ministers within the church in openly same-sex relationships, are they under similar disciplinary constraints as heterosexual and single ministers? If so, what do we understand those constraints to be?* This has been referred to the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure and Disciplinary Process Advisory Group (MIND) as the body which oversees matters of ministerial discipline. It has responded that in its opinion ministers in openly same-sex relationships are under similar constraints as heterosexual and single ministers. It further defined those constraints in the following way: 'It is important to remember that the standards by which ministers are measured under the Church's Disciplinary Process (Section O) are those defined by the vows made at ordination and promises made on induction (or commissioning in the case of Church Related Community Workers). When disciplinary cases are considered it will therefore be breaches of the promises to live a holy life and to seek the well-being, purity and peace of the church which will be considered. Any action or omission of a minister will be considered in this light. When individual cases are considered it may well be that Assembly Commissions will find it helpful also to be mindful of the 'Standards of Conduct for Ministers' which includes a constraint on sexual conduct.' Mission Council has accepted the advice of the task group that there is a need to look at the connections between the various groups who hold responsibilities in the areas of standards and discipline.

**2.5 Legal implications.** *Some recent legislation carries implications for the church. These need to be reviewed both in terms of what is required of the church and the church's own response. It would be good to do this work ecumenically, and particularly in the light of recent work in the Methodist Church.* The group was not aware of any specific issues that require legal advice at the time of its last meeting, and it does not recommend seeking such advice unless such issues do arise. However, noting that the Methodist Church has done work in this area, the group has asked if it can share any relevant outcomes. In the meantime a question has arisen in relation to the Equality Bill and advice may be given to Assembly if the situation is clearer by then.

**2.6 Blessing of partnerships.** *What attitude should the United Reformed Church take regarding the blessing of civil partnerships? Do the present guidelines need to be reviewed, and should they be subject to debate and decision in General Assembly?* The group looked at the advice produced by Mission Council in 2006 and made available to local churches since then. It did not believe that this was the right time to consider other than minor changes which resulted from the adoption of the Commitment by the Assembly. These changes have been accepted by Mission Council, which was not minded to subject them to debate in the General Assembly.

**2.7 Unity.** *Believing that the unity of the Church is a gospel priority, how much internal diversity is tolerable before that unity is contradicted? Clearly there is much diversity within the present church over many issues, but would it ever be acceptable in the name of unity to have such a diversity of beliefs and practices that members and ministers denied the actions and beliefs of others and where some ministers were totally unacceptable in some parts of the church?* Very early in its discussion the group recognised that this is a key issue, not only in regard to human sexuality but also in very many aspects of the church's life. Later in this report it sets out some thoughts on the subject which are intended to encourage discussion rather than point to any particular conclusions. Any group which has such a discussion is welcome to send any conclusions to the Secretary of the task group, Lucy Brierley.

**2.8 Practical implications of diversity.** *We need to look carefully at the implications of the kind of diversity envisaged in the previous point. Might the acceptance of mutually exclusive interpretations living side by side lead all too painfully to the 'clustering' of churches and ministers of similar views? What does it mean for a minister to be called locally but recognised nationally, particularly if different criteria seem to be used in different parts of the church? Might some candidates for ministry and some existing ministers seeking pastorates need to look for areas of the country where they might be more readily accepted than in others? If such pressures arise, how do we maintain the integrity of the Church?* The task group recognises that this issue is closely linked to the previous one on a theological level. In practical terms it has considered this issue under the heading of Pastoral issues (see below).

**2.9 Conscience.** *What are the implications of personal conscience in this area? For example, what freedom do individuals and congregations have to reject the ministries of*

*those whose attitudes or lifestyles are not acceptable to them?* The task group does not see this as an issue that needs further work at the moment. The rights of personal conviction are already accepted in the Basis of Union and, although this will be difficult to apply in some circumstances, further study is unlikely to make it any easier. That having been said, the group does not rule out returning to the issue in future if changed circumstances arise.

**2.10 Stereotyping.** *How do we overcome the dangers of stereotyping, which need to be challenged wherever they come from?* The group is aware that this is a danger in all human relationships, and not only in regard to sexuality. The clothes a person wears, the way they speak, or the colour of their skin can as easily lead to stereotyping as can their perceived theological position. The group believes that this is not an issue which needs further study or debate. It requires each of us constantly to look at ourselves, our attitudes and our behaviour, and to ask whether we are seeing in the other a person made in the image of God. In the church we should not assume that difference makes another person any less a follower of Jesus.

**2.11 Pastoral issues.** *How should the church respond to those whose orientation is other than heterosexual and those in same-sex relationships and civil partnerships? How should the Church respond to those who find such relationships and partnerships unacceptable and offensive in a Christian context? There is also potential for a wide range of issues of principle to arise from pastoral situations. Such things as a person's reorientation of gender could affect a minister. Situations like this need to be looked at now so that when they do arise they can be addressed with understanding and care.* The task group realised at an early stage that the Commitment was bound to result in practical and pastoral questions, some of which could be very serious indeed and have a deep impact on individuals and churches. With that in mind it has asked the Synod Moderators to indicate their experience without actually quoting any particular cases. This showed that the number of issues that have arisen so far is fairly small, that some are complex and stressful, and that sometimes what was a problem in one instance proved quite straightforward in another. Overall it does not seem that there is need for further action at the present time. However, the group wants to observe that any ethical position taken by the church will inevitably produce practical consequences for which provision had not (and maybe could not have) been made, or which require pastoral judgements to be made in the light of the particular circumstances. No amount of definition is going to be able to alter this fact. It is therefore of primary importance that the Church in all its councils has those to whom such situations can be referred, and that such persons and groups are accorded the trust of the whole body. This seems to the group to be part of the essential nature of a Christian community, and therefore it does not propose to take this particular issue any further unless it becomes clear that there are aspects which are causing serious damage or difficulty.

### **3 Unity through diversity**

**3.1** The Commitment which the Assembly has adopted recognises that there is a considerable diversity of view on matters of human sexuality held within the United Reformed Church. It ends with the commitment 'to stay together, to work and pray together, to treat one another with respect, and to seek God's gifts of unity, harmony, wisdom and deeper understanding'. However, serious questions remain. How much diversity is possible before unity loses its meaning? Does the desire for unity mean that truth and conviction have to be subjected to it? What is the basis on which the Church is united?

**3.2** Although human sexuality is the issue which has given rise to these questions, they actually apply across the whole range of Christian faith and life. Therefore, in encouraging groups to think about this subject, the task group advises that it should be done in general terms and not related to one particular issue. It may help sometimes to consider particular examples in order to give focus to the discussion, but any conclusions could be tested by relating them to other aspects of faith and life. There is a need for consistency in whatever conclusions we may reach.

**3.3** In the following paragraphs issues of unity and diversity are considered in a variety of contexts and in each case some questions are posed. No attempt has been made to explore the issues in depth: it is left for individuals and groups to do that for themselves in whatever ways they find helpful.

**3.3.1 Unity in the New Testament.** Unity is the essence of the Christian community. ‘There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all’ (Ephesians 4:4-6) ‘Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all participate of the one bread’ (I Corinthians 10:17). Unity is the subject of the prayer of Jesus that they all may be one (John 17:20-23). It is based on the word of Jesus that disciples are chosen by him; they do not make the choice (John 15:16). It is based on the entreaty of Jesus that disciples should love one another as he loves them (John 15:12). Paul expresses the whole mission of Jesus in terms of the bringing together of all things (Colossians 1:15-20). Can you think of other texts that support this understanding of unity? How is it experienced in your local church or pastorate?

**3.3.2 Diversity in the New Testament.** Diversity is also the essence of the Christian community. Jesus deliberately called a remarkably diverse group of people to be his first disciples (and that created problems, as in Matthew 20:20-28 and Mark 10:35-45). The Pauline image of the church as the Body of Christ maintains that diversity is a necessity: the church cannot function effectively without different gifts and understandings (Romans 12:3-8, I Corinthians 12). It is in their diversity that disciples constitute a complete whole. What sorts of diversity are needed in a local church for it to function effectively? Can you think of instances where diversity has been (a) helpful and (b) unhelpful in local church life?

**3.3.3 Diversity, disunity and division.** These three words describe situations which may follow on from one another but which in practice often overlap one another. From the beginning of the church’s life, diversity has caused disunity and sometimes led to division. The obvious example is in the distinction between Jews and Gentiles (Acts 15:1-35, but see also Galatians 1 and 2). A difference on mission strategy led to sharp disagreement and division (as described in Acts 15:36-41). The Corinthian Church was noted for its disunity: over personalities (I Corinthians 1:10-17), over sexual immorality (I Corinthians 5), over food sacrificed to idols (I Corinthians 8), over the Lord’s Supper (I Corinthians 11:17-22) and so on. How do you judge when diversity is leading to disunity and division in the Church’s life? Is it possible or desirable to set boundaries to diversity?

**3.3.4 Another reaction to diversity.** There is another strand within the New Testament which suggests that where there is disagreement in the church, those causing the problem should be cut off in order to preserve the purity and unity of the body. Some texts which seem to support this attitude are Matthew 5:29-30, 18:8-9, Mark 9:42-48, II Corinthians 6: 14, II Thessalonians 3:14, Titus 3:9-11. Is this an alternative view, or is it suggesting what should only be done in extremis? Can you suggest in what circumstances it might be right for a Church Meeting to decide to end a person’s membership?

**3.3.5 Unity based on a creed.** The United Reformed Church and its uniting traditions have been reluctant to ask people to subscribe to a single creed as an expression of their unity. A reason behind this can be seen by looking at the simple Trinitarian formula: I believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Some will feel that this is what unites them to Christians of all traditions and all ages and at the same time places the United Reformed Church within the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church: others will see it as an excessively male-dominated statement to which they cannot subscribe. What does it say to us when the same words both unite and divide us? Are there simple statements of faith to which we all ought to be able to subscribe?

**3.3.6 Unity and the Basis of Union.** The set of words that describe the unity of the United Reformed Church, and its place within the one holy, catholic and apostolic church, are those of the Basis of Union. Yet it is phrased in such a way as to be capable of a variety of interpretations and it specifically allows individual members the right of personal conviction, unless that is exercised to the injury of the peace and unity of the Church. Is the Church any less a united fellowship if there are different interpretations and sometimes-different convictions? How important is it for the Church to describe its identity and for its members to accept it?

**3.3.7 Unity and the Reformed tradition.** The history of the Reformed tradition is very much one of division and conflict: over papal power, over the status of priests, over state control of the Church, over the place of the Bible, over the place of the laity, and so on. Those familiar with the history of Presbyterianism in Scotland will know that very often Reformed Churches themselves have split into fragments over doctrinal disputes. In England and Wales one of the proud titles of our predecessors was that of Dissenters. As inheritors of that tradition, are there issues on which we have to take a stand and on what basis do we make such a decision?

**3.3.8 Unity and the ecumenical movement.** 2010 marks the centenary of the beginning of the ecumenical movement, in which Reformed Churches have played a major part. In seeking the unity of churches and people the movement has sought to cut through some of these divisions caused by old disputes and past history. The United Reformed Church has seen itself as in the vanguard of the movement in this country. In your experience, how successful has the ecumenical movement been in achieving the unity of Christians and churches? Are there lessons to be learned from the experience? Is there a danger that we may create new divisions to replace the old ones, with the same sorry result?

**3.3.9 Unity and the missionary situation.** There is little doubt that mission is a priority for the Church and that the situation is one in which a significant part of our society is ignorant of the Gospel and either apathetic or resistant to it. In such a situation, is it foolish for the Church to spend time debating different understandings of truth when the need is to show the essential core of the Gospel, or is it important to be able to present the Gospel with clarity and unanimity? What is the right relationship of unity and mission in 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain?

**3.3.10 Unity and culture.** There is an extent to which the way we express our faith, and the principles by which we live as Christians, arise from the nature of our religious experience, the church which nurtured us, the people who have influenced us and the culture in which we feel at home. Some of our diversity arises from this fact. Have you explored this angle with others who you find it difficult to understand? Is it a good or a bad thing that local churches attract people of similar theology, social class or ethnic background?

**3.3.11 Unity and Communion.** It is at the Lord's Table that many people have their greatest sense of the unity of the fellowship. We get caught up in the wonderful grace of God offered to all who come in faith, and whatever differences we may have with others in the church on other matters do not concern us. How do you connect that experience to the times in meetings when you find yourself in a position of diversity or division?

**3.3.12 Unity and .....** Unity can be looked at from any number of angles. Are there others that are as significant, or more significant, to you? Can you draw your thinking about unity and diversity into a coherent statement?

#### **4 Human sexuality: the next stage**

4.1 The task group sees the next stage as the two years leading up to the Assembly of 2012. The focus of that time will be human sexuality, but not limited to same-sex relationships, and being careful to see sexuality primarily as God's gift rather than as an ecclesiastical problem. This will be a theological exploration and so attention will need to be given to the way we do our theology and the use we make of the Bible.

4.2 The first step will be to have a theological consultation for people with some expertise in the various aspects of the subject. Arising from that, the intention is to produce a DVD and discussion material in a form which can be used by groups in local churches or in any other forum where people are used to discussing and listening to each other.

4.3 Whilst it is too early to say what direction the 2012 Assembly might take, at the moment the thought is that it could review the Commitment and decide, in the light of the general discussion described above, whether or not it wants to move from the Commitment in any way or whether it believes other steps should be taken.



# Annexe 6a

## The Commitment on Human Sexuality (General Assembly 2007)

As the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church,  
we recognise that –

- many of the issues and views surrounding human sexuality can seem to be intractable and irreconcilable;
- despite lengthy debates, much study and many reports, opinions have not changed sufficiently for us to be of one mind;
- this is a deeply emotive and potentially divisive issue;
- human sexuality and the language we use about it raises many complex questions, not least in the area of biblical interpretation.

While it is not possible to do full justice to the variety of views represented within the church, we recognise that the range includes –

Some people who feel that the debate on human sexuality has become a wrong focus and has received too much attention, believing that:

- faithful living and worship should take priority over controversy about human sexuality;
- participation in God's mission and Christ's ministry in the world demands all the energy of God's people;
- this is not a matter over which policy decisions imposing a universal rule are necessary or appropriate;
- the Church's existing assessment procedures are appropriate for discerning the call of God;
- responses to pastoral situations involving people in same-sex relationships are best determined within the local church;
- working and sharing fellowship with people of very different views can create painful tensions, though it may also offer opportunity for growth and development.

Some other people who feel that this debate is a necessary focus because it concerns the Word of God, and for them is a passionately held matter of holiness, purity and obedience to God's commands in scripture, believing that:

- God's creation plan is for the complementarity of man and woman, and that sexual relations apart from that are therefore disordered;
- scripture and the traditions of the church teach that the only legitimate pattern for sexual relations is between a man and woman within the commitment of marriage;
- all scriptural references to same-sex activity are explicit in their condemnation;
- same-sex activity is an affront to Christian morality and offensive to many people of other faiths and of none;
- people in sexually active same-sex relationships should not be accepted for ministry;
- the acceptance of same-sex (civil) partnerships on the part of society and the state is a matter to be resisted;
- the character and teaching of Jesus requires that both grace and truth must be embodied in dealing with this issue and with the people concerned;
- working and sharing fellowship with people of very different views and practice creates painful tensions.

Some others again who feel that this debate is a necessary focus because it is a passionately held matter of God's unbounded grace, justice, the work of the Spirit and faithfulness to God's revelation in Christ and in scripture, believing that:

- God's will is for newness of life for all people in Christ, regardless of any human distinctions, including sexual orientation;
- it is God's creative intent that there are people whose innate sexual orientation and its fulfilment are directed towards others of the same sex;
- some people are called by God into committed, loving, same-sex relationships, including their sexual consummation, and that such relationships can be judged by the fruits of the Spirit that result;
- whilst most scriptural references to same-sex activity seem negative, they are not relevant to the contemporary understanding of same-sex relationships; emphasis needs to be given to the scriptural themes of grace, love and faithfulness;
- where vocations to ministry of those in committed same-sex relationships are discerned through the processes of the church to be the work of the Holy Spirit, such vocations should be upheld;
- this is an issue of justice, and the church should celebrate changes made to address unjust structures in society as, in part, the work of the Spirit;
- the Church should welcome the creation of civil partnerships and support such unions pastorally;
- working and sharing fellowship with people of very different views and practice creates painful tensions.

Recognising this very wide range of views, we –

- acknowledge this diversity;
- accept that these views are all held with integrity and often with passion;
- acknowledge that those who are sisters and brothers in Christ are so through God's calling rather than personal choosing;
- believe that Christ calls us to strive to live together;
- realise that this can only be done by reliance on the grace of God to enable mutual respect, love and continuing exploration together;
- agree to continue to explore these differences in the light of our understanding of Scripture and under the Holy Spirit's guidance for our individual and shared life in today's world.

In love and submission to Christ who holds us together, we therefore commit ourselves to stay together, to work and pray together, to treat one another with respect, and to seek God's gifts of unity, harmony, wisdom and deeper understanding.

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# Annexe 7

## Final report of the Working Party on housing provision for Ministers and Church Related Community Workers

### Introduction

1 On 26<sup>th</sup> January 2008 Mission Council received and considered a report from a working party established by the Ministries Committee<sup>1</sup> arguing for a change to the present manse system. Their conclusion was ‘that there are grounds for a detailed plan to be prepared for a new system in which it would not be the norm for ministers to be housed in manses’. Mission Council decided to establish this working party to examine the financial, practical and pastoral implications of such a change together with a full implementation programme. The membership of the committee is listed at the end of this report.

2 We held eight meetings over a period of over a year. We made use of resources supplied to us by Rachel Wakeman (formerly Greening) and PLATO<sup>2</sup> and sabbatical research by the Revd Michael Spencer into the views of serving ministers about their housing. We decided to undertake a further survey to assess the current position, and in particular whether some of the assumptions upon which the different arguments are based are correct. We are very grateful to the Revd Nigel Appleton and his team for devising the questionnaire and collating the results, details of which are set out below<sup>3</sup>.

3 With many propositions ‘the devil is in the detail’ and the proposal to change the manse system is no exception. As we began to examine the proposal, we were not persuaded that the previous report had fairly considered the advantages of the manse system. We therefore invited the chairman of that working party, the Revd Geoffrey Roper, (who has, through various working parties of the URC, been arguing for this change since 1979) to explain further the thinking behind the recommendations, and to answer questions, which he graciously agreed to do.

4 We confess that despite our best endeavours, we have been unable to carry out our brief. We have looked at the main advantages and disadvantages of changing the manse system and set out the issues and our conclusions below<sup>4</sup>. We have examined a number of options for change and concluded that the only practicable option is to retain the present manse system, but improve the practice in order to ensure that manses can be provided where they are needed and are properly maintained.

### The options

5 The options for change (some of which are variations on the same theme) that we have identified are:

- (i) keep the present manse system, but improve the practice in order to ensure that manses can be provided where they are needed and are properly maintained;
- (ii) consolidate the stock of manses and manage them through a housing association that would act as managing agent;
- (iii) create an incentive scheme that would encourage ministers and their families to build up an equity holding in a consolidated stock of manses;

1 Autumn 2007. The members of the working party were Geoffrey Roper, Ruth Whitehead, Helen Matthews, Guy Morfett and John Ellis. Staff: Christine Craven.

2 Property Legal Administrative and Trust Officers

3 The full report *Report on a survey of ministers receiving a stipend and of CRCWs* can be found on the URC’s website.

4 For simplicity we use the words ‘minister’ and ‘ministers’ to mean Stipendiary Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Church Related Community Workers. The masculine includes the feminine.

- (iv) over time, withdraw from the provision of tied housing entirely, and instead invest the proceeds of sale in managed property funds, from which housing allowances would be paid to ministers;
- (v) quantify the benefit represented by the manse, grossed up to allow for tax and National Insurance liability, which would be paid as a housing allowance, leaving the minister free to choose whatever accommodation he can afford;
- (vi) liquidate part of the stock of manses, to create a fund from which mortgages at preferential rates would be granted to those ministers who either already owned or who wished to acquire an interest in a property;
- (vii) establish some form of shared equity scheme between the denomination and those ministers who wish to participate.

### The present legal framework

6 Section 8 (1) of the United Reformed Church Act 1972 provides that:

**‘all land which immediately before the date of formation is held on trust for or for the purposes of or in connection with a uniting church (whether alone or jointly with one or more other uniting churches or uniting congregations) or a uniting congregation (whether alone or jointly with one or more other uniting congregations) shall on or from that date, and in accordance with the following provisions of this section, be held in trust for or (as the case may be) for equivalent purposes of or in connection with the uniting church or uniting congregation in question.’**

7 It is unfortunate that this section is no longer reproduced in the Manual, because it makes clear that, so long as the local congregation continues, the property is held for its benefit, and not for the general benefit of the denomination. Neither the trustees nor synods are entitled to deal with the manse except in accordance with the wishes of the local congregation (although the church meeting in reaching its decision must have regard to any recommendations of other councils of the church). This is the case regardless of the superior wisdom of those who can always find a better use for someone else’s money, or the advantages that might accrue to the denomination if the local church chose a different course.

### The case for change

8 The concerns identified as the background to the setting up of the previous working party were:

- (i) the financial costs of providing retired ministers’ housing to those who would not otherwise be adequately housed in retirement;
- (ii) ‘trapped ministers’ that is those who have lost their sense of vocation and would choose to leave the ministry if it were not for the fact that it would make their family homeless.

9 The Retired Ministers’ Housing Society faces a typical shortfall of one or two houses per year, with a larger prospective gap in several of the years over the next decade because over half of the ministers currently in service are due to retire in the next ten years. Thereafter the problem will probably resolve, as numbers become more manageable. None of the possible changes to the manse system which might be introduced is likely to deliver the sort of funds necessary to meet the shortfall within ten years. Most synods have responded generously to the RMHS’s appeals for financial support, and have so far given or pledged over £1m. We consider that they should be encouraged to maintain this support in the future.

10 The problem of ‘trapped ministers’ is a serious problem for a relatively small number of ministers. Estimates suggest that as many as 10% of ministers have experienced such a crisis of vocation. We are not persuaded that the scale of the problem is itself a reason for changing the whole system, and believe that some other method could be devised for dealing with this problem. Ministers owning their own homes, whether in whole or in part, are just as likely to feel trapped by a whole complex of ties to a local area, including negative equity, a partner’s job or the children’s

schooling. We did devise a possible way forward to mitigate the financial hardship, but have concluded that the problem is primarily a pastoral one and needs consideration by a more widely based group.

11 It soon became apparent that those who advocate change actually want to achieve different objectives. These are:

- (i) to ensure that the provision of housing is in harmony with and not running counter to the denomination's mission and deployment objectives. Many small congregations retain manses dating from the 'one church one minister' era, which no longer meet the needs of joint pastorates, and they are considered to be using this capital without regard for the wider needs of the denomination;
- (ii) to ensure that we remove the embarrassing and pastorally unacceptable fact of a minority of manses not being at the approved manse standard and the degree of control some local churches retain on the quality and frequency of work done in manses;
- (iii) to meet the aspirations of those ministers who wish to own their own home, reflecting what is now the norm in our society. This would give them capital to fund or help to fund their retirement housing. It is argued that most other organisations that used to provide tied housing no longer do so, and the denomination should do the same. The manse system creates a culture of dependency.

There is no single solution that can meet all these objectives. As will be seen, solutions which promote objective (iii) are generally inconsistent with objective (i).

12 To achieve any of these objectives would require radical change, including the amendment of section 8(1) of the United Reformed Church Act 1972, so that the control of manses (and arguably church buildings as well) would pass from the local church to the denomination for it to use to meet whatever priorities it chooses for mission and ministry.

13 In considering possible reform we have borne in mind that funding for housing comes either from the existing property held by local churches and synods, the income generated from that property, or the direct giving of a declining number of church members, many of whom are themselves on limited incomes. Money diverted from these sources into retired ministers' housing reduces the funds available for the remuneration of serving ministers and for other projects. There is no hidden pot of cash.

### The case for keeping the manse system

14 The Church has an inherited housing stock of over 800 manses<sup>5</sup> which would be impossible to replace if sold off. The distribution is as follows:

Synod	No. of manses (approximate)	No. of churches (as at 13/11/2008)	No. of ministers and CRCWs	
1	Northern	52	82	35
2	North Western	69	143	61
3	Mersey	41	90	31
4	Yorkshire	50	108	42
5	East Midlands	59	144	47
6	West Midlands	71	137	57
7	Eastern	84	144	51
8	South Western	80	124	44

<sup>5</sup> It is not always obvious when a manse is properly classified as such. This has led to variations between synods asked for this information.

9	Wessex	70	141	50
10	Thames North	91	141	64
11	Southern	87	165	79
12	Wales	33	115	28
13	Scotland	26	53	38
	Total	813	1587	627

In most synods there is roughly one manse for every two churches. On average there are roughly four manses for every three ministers<sup>6</sup>. There needs to be a surplus in order to facilitate the transfer of ministers from one pastorate to another, but arguably not on this scale. In every synod except Scotland, there are more manses than there are ministers. We deal with the explanation for Scotland's position in paragraph 27 below.

15 Within the statutory framework some synods have now developed successful strategic manse policies with the consent of local churches. These encourage the local churches to hand over to the *Synod Manse Fund* the proceeds of sale of a manse that is no longer needed to house a minister and the rent from a vacant manse, on the understanding that if and when they call a minister, they will be provided with a suitable manse. The synod (often through its trust company) provides financial and other assistance with the cost of repairs and maintenance which remain the responsibility of the local church. Not all synods have chosen to develop a strategic manse policy along these lines.

16 Those synods that currently operate a strategic manse policy have found that they normally need to sell two manses that do not meet the required standard in order to purchase one that does. Any surplus is reinvested. The value of manses held by churches is not confined to their disposal value. Voluntary labour in local churches for their own identified church property (even for manses held by synods) has significant value across the denomination which would be lost, and would be a substantial additional cost if the beneficial interest in those manses were compulsorily transferred to the denomination.

17 The assembly manse standard guidelines specify a three/four bedroomed house with a lounge and dining room (preferably separate) and a study (downstairs is recommended). The present housing stock means that there are suitable manses, even in expensive areas of the country. Whatever the other merits of changing the manse system we do not think such change will increase mobility or ensure that the church has the ministers it needs where and when it needs them. If the denomination comes out of the provision of tied housing in favour of paying an increased stipend, there will be some parts of the country (south of the Severn – Thames line) where it is unlikely that any minister would be able to afford to rent or buy a property of that standard. The church would have no real say in whether or not the chosen property was suitable. It might be all that was affordable. The mobility of ministers would be seriously curtailed if assets had to be realized by selling a house every time a minister sought to move pastorate. There would also be a significant financial cost for the minister involved in moving home, which might deter some from changing pastorate.

18 A minister is required to live in a manse 'for the better performance of his duties'. This emphasises that the manse is a resource for the job and not simply a home for the minister. It is also key to the tax treatment of manses.

<sup>6</sup> This calculation does not include ministers already living in their own property.

19 The present system of housing ministers in manses is tax efficient, as that requirement means that it is not regarded as a taxable benefit. A housing allowance would be. We have calculated that every £1,000 net paid to a minister in housing allowance would gross up to £1,450 at basic rate of tax, and including additional National Insurance. Furthermore as employer there would be an extra £186 of National Insurance contribution. That means an extra £636 would go directly to the Inland Revenue for every £1,000 put into ministers' hands in housing allowance. If the intention is to pay some form of 'rent' to help with mortgage payments and the running costs of the property an average of £12,000 does not seem unreasonable. At that level the extra tax cost per minister is £7,632 per annum. If all ministers wanted to do that it comes to £5m per annum!

20 The Church would have to pay ministers a sufficiently high level of stipend for them to be able to buy or rent a property in the area in which they are to minister. Since property costs are the most variable element in any household budget, it is unlikely that the current policy of paying the same stipend throughout the country would be sustainable. Some method would have to be devised to pay a weighted figure depending on the property costs in the area.

### **The research evidence**

21 The Revd Mike Spencer carried out a sabbatical survey in 2005 into the views of serving ministers about their housing. The response rate was over 79%. His results showed that most manses were an acceptable size but that over one third were not considered to be in good condition when the minister arrived. A substantial majority was in favour of centralised management of manses, regardless of whether they themselves had experienced difficulties in relation to the repair and maintenance of the manse. About 75% of respondents were interested in some form of housing association to enable ministers to build up their share of property ownership throughout their ministry. One third already owned a property.

22 We decided to undertake a further survey to assess the current position, and in particular whether some of the assumptions upon which the different arguments are based are correct. We are very grateful to the Revd Nigel Appleton and his team for devising the questionnaire and collating the results. The response rate was high at 71% of the total number of serving ministers, spread across all the Synods. The full report, which includes an executive summary, can be found on the URC website.

23 Nearly 13% of respondents live alone. The overwhelming majority (78%) are living with a partner or with a partner and children who are still in education. A striking finding is that almost 46% either owned property outright or were buying one with a mortgage before they entered the ministry. Half do not currently own a property, but the rest either own some form of property or left this section blank. When asked what they would like if the manse system were to be modified 20% would like to provide their own property with financial help from the denomination and a further 19% would like to do so but do not think it will be possible. This is strongest among those entering the ministry in their 20s and 30s. The majority continue to expect to be provided with a manse and with housing in their retirement.

24 It is also right to mention that awareness that our working party was looking at possible change to the manse system has also caused anxiety to some who are dependent on the present arrangements continuing.

### **Experience of other denominations and in Scotland**

25 We have made some enquiries of our ecumenical partners as to their present practice. Methodists provide a manse as the norm although some do have a housing allowance. Baptist churches are independent and therefore housing provision will vary. Their standardised housing allowance is £5,600.

26 The Church of England Pensions Board undertook a major review of retirement housing with a consequent exploration of the housing issues for serving clergy. The final report was published in 2009. The board now offers two distinct services to ministers seeking housing in retirement. Although various other possibilities for assisting serving ministers to enter the property market were raised by the report, some of these have been ruled out as unfeasible, whilst others are not seen to be viable financially at the present time. The one proposal that has been developed is encouraging ordinands and those in the early years of ministry to become more financially educated in order that those ministers can make better informed decisions regarding their future housing needs. While the United Reformed Church may not wish to do this formally, it is important that any advice given to ordinands is soundly based.

27 The legal and fiscal treatment of manses in Scotland is different. Council tax for ministers housed in their own properties is paid directly by the church, and is not treated as a taxable benefit. Manses are mostly owned by local churches. There is a shortage of manses. Over the years before union with the URC manses were sold by local churches to provide resources to keep the church going. Thus they have churches that have ministers with their own houses who would be unable to call a minister who would require a manse, and churches that are vacant or soon will be that have no manse. In 2004 the Synod had sufficient resources to buy two manses, only one if the vacancy was in Edinburgh, but that would have left the Synod with no cash at all so that was not an option. Since then the Synod has been creating a manse fund to replenish stock. The Synod adheres to the procedure as set out in the United Reformed Church Act 2000 in relation to acquisition and disposal etc of manses. Where the church is continuing then it is a matter of the resources from disposal funding a replacement but otherwise they aim to build up a Synod Manse Fund.

28 The Revd Craig Bowman has made enquiries of ecumenical partners in the USA and Canada. The United Methodist Church there still provides manses but the Presbyterian Church USA and the United Church of Christ do not have a consistent policy of doing so, not least because congregations have sold off a lot of their properties and cannot afford to replace them. In the United Church of Canada, each pastoral charge deals with the matter differently. Where a housing allowance is paid it must be at least 20% of salary. It is not easy to translate their practice to the UK situation.

### **Possible ways forward**

29 We have identified these in paragraph 5 above, and shall now consider them in more detail. Before doing so, we should acknowledge the disappointment felt by those on our working party who had hoped that we might adopt a more radical solution to the problems that have been identified. That we have not felt able to do so is in part a reflection of the different areas of expertise we have brought to the working group, but it is also a testimony to the difficulty we have had in considering these issues. The debate on the manse system is only part of much wider issues about the nature of ministry; whether the URC can continue with its present pattern of small congregations stretching ministerial resources and controlling substantial financial resources; and the future of the URC over the next ten years. We have to decide whether we should hold to the traditional theological basis of remunerating ministers or move to a system which recognizes their aspirations to own property as one which the denomination for pastoral reasons should try to meet.

30 Fundamentally the issue is whether local churches have the collective will to make a change to the remuneration system and, if so, how radical they are prepared to be. In our view, it matters very little whether a group like ours or Mission Council or even General Assembly decides that a particular change is desirable or not. Our ecclesiology does not allow the imposition of this sort of policy change from the centre. There would have to be a 'hearts and minds' exercise, which is likely to take a long time.



**31 Option (i): keep the present manse system, but improve the practice in order to ensure that manses can be provided where they are needed and are properly maintained.**

The majority of the group favour this option for the following reasons:

- a) the benefits of the manse system outlined in paragraphs 14 to 20 above;
- b) The experience of those denominations that have sold off their manses has not led to better provision of ministerial housing;
- c) there is little evidence that local churches would support any of the proposals for a more radical change, and without that support it would be virtually impossible to get the statutory amendments required. The time and energy involved would arguably be better used elsewhere;
- d) moving away from the manse system would be wasteful of resources, both of money and peoples' time. The denomination has other major financial problems facing it, for example the deficit in the ministers' pension fund and the problems facing the RMHS. It should not be dissipating resources on this contentious and divisive issue;
- e) the main beneficiary of a wholesale move away from the manse system is likely to be the Inland Revenue.

**32** It is usually part of the terms of settlement that suitable ministerial housing can or will be made available. Some synods go further and do not allow a vacancy to be declared unless that is the case. At the very least, no minister should have to move into substandard accommodation, and the terms of settlement and the synod scrutiny of them should ensure this.

**33 How do we improve the maintenance of manses?**

Most synods are now working towards strategic manse policies which will give financial help with repairs to churches whose manses are within the policy, and ensure that the local church has a manse available when it wishes to call a minister. It has been a slow process for the synods with well-regarded manse policies to get to that position. Other synods have encountered considerable resistance to the policy and have some reservations about its operation in practice. Making the policy work successfully is very time consuming and labour intensive. Generally, however, synods rely upon local churches to ensure that the repairs are carried out.

**34** Our enquiries suggest that whether or not the manse is within a synod policy or remains under the control of the local church, the problems in carrying out repairs lie in the following areas:

- a) sometimes it is simply that the local church does not do the repairs it should, either because it does not inspect the property and see what needs to be done, or because it lacks the funds to carry them out. The church may expect the minister will tell them what needs to be done. This does not happen, often because the minister knows that the church has genuine financial difficulties;
- b) the second situation is where the church is willing to carry out the repairs, but the minister objects to the works being carried out. Other problems arise when the minister makes excessive demands about what needs to be done;
- c) there are also those situations where there is a disagreement about whose responsibility it is to carry out certain repairs.

**35** We believe that some of these difficulties could be dealt with by this issue being addressed clearly in the terms of settlement. Manses should be inspected and put into a proper state before a vacancy is declared, or there should be a clear plan for ensuring that it is in a fit state before a minister moves in. Synods now have responsibility for these matters and should share good practice in relation to this. They should also be responsible for mediating any disputes between the minister and the local church.

**36 Option (ii): consolidate the stock of manses and manage them through a housing association that would act as managing agent.**

We have considered both the option of using an existing association and the establishment of a new association. The perceived advantage of this system is that it would provide professional management of the stock, so that there would be less variation in the carrying out of repairs. It would also provide ministers and their families with the legal protection afforded to tenants. From the point of view of flexible deployment of ministers that may not be an advantage. From the ministers' point of view it would provide continuity of tenancy for those wishing to move out of ministry or into retirement, and they might acquire reciprocal rights to other property managed by the association. Since most housing associations operate shared ownership schemes, this would also allow ministers who wish to do so to own property.

37 We have rejected this option for the following reasons:

- a) it shares many of the disadvantages of other alternatives to the manse system;
- b) it is expensive compared with the present way of managing manses because much of what is now done by voluntary labour would have to be paid for;
- c) the regulation and registration of housing associations is different in each of the three nations served by the URC.

**38 The remaining options**

Options (iii)-(vi) are all variants on the same theme. They are different ways of allowing ministers to provide their own housing. This has been the most divisive issue for our working party. We are not agreed that this is an aspiration that the denomination should seek to meet. It raises issues about the nature of the call to ministry, as well as practical problems for pastorates, if the retiring minister remains living in the immediate area. It does not ensure that ministers are where the denomination needs them, but rather in areas where they wish to live.

**39 Option (iii): create an incentive scheme that would encourage ministers and their families to build up an equity holding in a consolidated stock of manses.**

This and some of the other options involve over time transferring some assets of local churches and the denomination to ministers and their families. Those who argue in favour of it do not see this as a problem, because they do not think the denomination is making the best use of its assets at the moment and believe the overall remuneration package for ministers is less than generous. If we are also living in the 'end times' for the denomination, we will die rich, without having made any effort to do better for our ministers.

40 We have rejected this particular solution because we think that there are already existing property funds in which ministers who wish to do so may invest.

**41 Option (iv): over time, withdraw from the provision of tied housing entirely, and instead invest the proceeds of sale in managed property funds, from which housing allowances would be paid to ministers.**

We reject this option as a waste of resources. We have set out in paragraph 19 above some of the financial implications of making this change. The money to fund this could only come from increasing the churches' Ministry and Mission contributions or the sale of property. On one calculation, if all the existing manses were sold and the money used to fund housing allowances at the level set out in paragraph 19, the money would last for about 30 years. The biggest beneficiary would be the Inland Revenue.

**42 Option (v): quantify the benefit represented by the manse, grossed up to allow for tax and National Insurance liability which would be paid as a housing allowance, leaving the minister free to choose whatever accommodation he can afford.**

We reject this option. The church cannot afford it if it is to have a long-term future with a similar number of ministers to that at present. We think it is unlikely that the denomination would be able to pay the sort of sums that would be necessary to fund the purchase or rental of suitable property. If the decision is to pay an increased housing allowance to allow those who wish to purchase a property, we do not think it should be grossed up.

**43 Option (vi): liquidate part of the stock of manses, to create a fund from which mortgages at preferential rates would be granted to those ministers who either already owned or who wished to acquire an interest in a property.**

This option is not necessarily an alternative to the manse system, since it could be used by those who are living in a manse as well as those who are not. We reject it for the reasons already given.

**44 Option (vii): establish some form of shared equity scheme between the denomination and those ministers who wish to participate.**

The Revd Nigel Appleton prepared for us an outline of a model shared ownership scheme, and we are indebted to him for this. It would be open to those ministers who had capital resources (either owned or borrowed) to put towards the purchase of a property. The minister would identify a suitable property, in consultation with synod. This would not necessarily have to meet the standard for manses but living in that property would be a condition of concurrence in a call. The balance of the purchase price would be funded by synod and the equity in the property would be held in proportion to the respective contributions of the minister and synod. The minister would pay rent to the synod on the balance. The minister could purchase an increased share in the equity at a later stage, with a corresponding adjustment to the rent. This basic scheme is capable of being refined in a number of ways. The outline proposal is attached as Annexe 8a for those who wish to consider it in more detail.

45 This scheme has the advantage over the other options that it could be done without the necessity for statutory change if synods were to utilise funds from redundant manses. It would meet the aspirations of serving ministers to own, in part at least, their own property, and give them resources to provide their own accommodation in retirement, thus relieving pressure on the Retired Ministers' Housing Society.

46 This proposal has the support of a minority of the committee, who believe that the denomination should do something to meet those aspirations, and that this is the least contentious way of achieving a step in the right direction. The majority, however, consider that there are a number of major difficulties in implementing such a scheme. If it were synod based, it would depend on synods providing resources both financial and administrative to make the scheme work. The ability of synods to do this would vary, and some might not be able to do it at all. Such a scheme would therefore create inequalities between ministers depending where their ministry was exercised. It would cut across the principle of a uniform scheme of ministerial remuneration throughout the denomination. The alternative would be to establish a tri-national scheme, or enter into an agreement with an existing housing association to do so, but the legal and other complexities (some of which we have referred to above) of doing so would be considerable.

47 Such schemes can be very difficult and disproportionately time-consuming to administer and there are many possible pitfalls, about which the minister would have to take independent advice. Property values can go down as well as up, and this can cause difficulties if a minister needs to move at a time when property values are low and the capital sum realised is less than expected. Repairs are another area of potential difficulty. Many of the problems highlighted in paragraph 17 would apply to this scheme as well.

48 If Mission Council wishes to do something to meet the aspirations of those ministers who would like to own their own homes at least in part, this would be a way of doing it, provided that the difficulties we have identified can be addressed.

## Mission Council

Elizabeth Lawson Q.C. (Convener)	Church Secretary at St Paul's Bayswater URC
Revd Ray Adams (until December 2008)	Deputy General Secretary
Revd Nigel Appleton	Principal of Contact Consulting and associate minister Cumnor URC Oxford.
Revd Craig Bowman	Secretary for Ministries
Margaret Carrick Smith	Wessex Synod Trust and Finance Committee
Revd David Coote	Hull area team ministry; member of Yorkshire Synod Finance Committee
John Ellis	Treasurer of the URC
Rachel Wakeman (formerly Greening)	Trust and Property Officer, West Midlands Synod, Convener of PLATO.
Brian Hosier	Member of Assembly Finance Committee; Treasurer Thames North Synod
Revd Richard Mortimer (from December 2008)	Deputy General Secretary
Revd Michael Spencer	Retired Ministers Housing Society
Graham Stacy	Former URC Treasurer

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# Annexe 7a

## A system of shared equity for serving ministers and CRCWs in the URC

### Understanding the model

Shared Equity schemes are not new. Housing Associations have been offering them, with varying degrees of encouragement from both Conservative and Labour governments, for more than twenty years. Their purpose has been to offer access to homeownership for people whose low level of income would otherwise prevent them from choosing that tenure.

The basic model is that the sale value of the property is fixed. The purchaser opts to buy a share in the equity of the property in return for a payment equal to the corresponding proportion of the sale value. This purchase will generally be funded by a mortgage. The purchaser will pay rental to the Housing Association on the unpurchased share of the property. There is an expectation that the purchaser may 'staircase up', buying a further share of the equity as their circumstances improve. In some variants of the model the government funds the unpurchased share on behalf of the Housing Association so that no rental is paid by the occupant who will have only the mortgage to find (in addition to the normal household expenses and charges of course).

Typically a purchaser will buy a 50% or 75% share, although other proportions are possible. The aspiration is that, over time, they will acquire 100% ownership but some may never achieve this. The model is particularly attractive to first time buyers who have an expectation that their circumstances will improve: children will start school releasing a partner to full-time work, or career progression will bring enhanced income, and so on.

### Worked example

The property is valued at £200,000.

The 'social rent' would be approximately £120 per week or £520 per calendar month.

The purchaser takes a 75% share.

To fund this they provide a 5% deposit of £10,000.

They take a mortgage of £140,000 over 25 years at 5% (slightly above current rate offers).

Their monthly mortgage payment is £818-43.

Their monthly rental payment for the remaining 25% share is £130.

Total outgoings on mortgage and rent £948.43.

Monthly mortgage on £190,000 (valuation less deposit) would be £1,110-72.

Appreciation in total value of property over ten years at 3% annual rate of uplift would be £268,783.

(Historically levels of appreciation have been significantly higher over most periods of ten years in the last forty years.)

Share of capital appreciation at 75% share would be £20,158, added to the proportion of equity purchased through the mortgage after ten years of approximately £30,000.

Those taking an equity share have generally moved to full ownership at the point of moving to another property when the equity they have built up through their mortgage provides a lump sum to invest in the new property.

Another variation has been applied to older people wishing to release tranches of equity to fund care or lifestyle choices in old age by 'staircasing down' as they surrender a share of equity for cash. Although this has never attracted much support the current plans set out by Government in its Green Paper on the future of care services may give it greater acceptance.

### **Applying this to the situation of serving ministers**

The survey shows us that a significant number of serving ministers have resources that would allow them to contribute to the provision of their own housing whilst serving. Even more came into ministry with some equity and might have been minded to invest in their housing whilst serving, if that had been practicable.

The inhibitions felt by the majority of those in the Working Group about the transfer of capital assets from the Church to individual ministers involved in a scheme that replaced the provision of manses with a system of cash allowances might be moderated by a shared equity scheme.

The variation between synods in the current pattern for holding and managing manses means that such a scheme could probably only be promoted at a synod level. This would offer the advantage that it could be piloted in one synod before being offered more widely.

In outline the scheme might offer a minister moving to a new pastorate the opportunity to provide their own accommodation on a shared equity basis.

The minister would identify a property, in consultation with the synod, but perhaps with a less rigorous or more flexible approach to what might constitute a suitable property than most current manse policies. The 'condition of residence' implicit in the current terms and conditions of ministers would be varied so that the requirement would be to live in the property provided (a manse), or in a property acceptable to the synod as a condition of its concurrence in the call.

The minister would calculate the proportion of the purchase price they could fund (whether by application of the proceeds of sale from other property, family resources or a mortgage) leading to the identification of a share of the purchase price (including fees and related charges). For administrative convenience this might be in 5% increments of the value. It would be sensible to agree a minimum share that would qualify for this arrangement and that might be 25%.

The synod would make an investment in the property equivalent to the balancing share in the purchase costs of the property and fund this from within a fund for the provision of manses. Clearly the circumstances in synods varies greatly and where there is no common holding of manses this might be difficult, unless the proceeds of some manse sales were allocated to this purpose.

Over the period of the ministry both parties would benefit from any appreciation in the value of the property proportionate to the share they hold.

Should the minister resign or retire from ministry they would have the option of purchasing the synod's share of the property. Should they decide not to exercise that right the synod would decide whether to retain the property (and buy out the minister's share on the basis of an agreed valuation) or to sell the property and divide the proceeds according to the shares held.

To support the minister in the servicing of any borrowing to fund their share the synod may pay a form of reverse rental as an addition to current housing allowances. This would be calculated as equivalent to the income on a capital sum equal to the proportion of the cost of purchase met by the minister.

This can best be understood by looking at a worked example.

Purchase price of property £200,000

The minister takes a 50% share funded by a mixture of proceeds from the sale of a holiday property (or other family resources) and a small mortgage.

The synod, which would otherwise have invested the whole £200,000 in the purchase of the property invests £100,000 in the property and the balance in a fund paying, say, 4% annually which it pays as an allowance to the minister, less a handling charge of 2% of the allowance.

The minister receives an annual housing allowance toward the capital costs of the property of £3,920. This would of course be taxable so the net benefit to the minister would be around £3,100; sufficient of itself to service a twenty-five year repayment mortgage of around £45,000, in addition to any mortgage funded from stipend or income from a partner for example.

By this arrangement the minister is able to build a proportion of equity, the synod retains its capital (and if invested in funds that offer income plus capital growth, may even enhance it).

Whilst it would be challenging to operate the scheme in areas of highest property value it offers an option not currently available to meet the aspirations of some ministers. It presumes that synods are able to access and manage the capital resources represented by the current stock of manses and this may be a large presumption.

The figures offered in illustration are, of course, averages and represent current circumstances qualified by a longer term view concerning the direction of interest rates, returns on investment and property prices.

It is offered to the Working Group as the basis for discussion.

# Annexe 8

## Ethical Investment Policy Statement

Mission Council meeting in London Colney in March 2010 received a report on ethical investment principles for the use by the United Reformed Church. These principles are based on theological reflection on how to express mission responsibility through investment and developments in ethical investment policy and practice to reflect both positive and negative screening criteria based on social, environmental, governance and ethical concerns. Assembly is asked to adopt these principles.

### Ethical investment principles for use by the United Reformed Church

1 The General Assembly of the United Reformed Church considers investment decisions to be an integral part of the Church's mission and witness and is committed, as far as it is legal and practical, to expressing Christian responsibility through investment decisions. Towards this end, Assembly requests that those responsible for investment decisions on behalf of the URC and its Trust bodies are guided by the principles set out below.

2 Assembly wishes the basic, aspirational ethical principles outlined below to inform all investment decisions:

- **mission integrity** – the URC will, in all investment related activities, aim to avoid undermining the credibility, effectiveness and unity of its mission and witness;
- **stewardship** – those entrusted with responsibility for investment decisions on behalf of the URC, its Trust bodies and their agents will exercise due diligence and care in the exercise of their duty to ensure that mission and fiduciary responsibilities are creatively and effectively balanced;
- **legality** – all investment decisions will comply with the legal requirements for trustees as outlined in the Charity Acts and other legislation;
- **sustainability** – investment decisions will be guided by the principle of financial and environmental sustainability with a view to the long term maintenance of well-being for the economic, social and natural environments;
- **solidarity** – investment decisions will be guided by the biblical principle of solidarity with those who are poor and marginalised and seek social justice as expressed in Statement 9 of the URC's Mission framework;<sup>1</sup>
- **accountability** – URC trustees, working in liaison with fund managers, will aspire to the highest level of compliance with this policy which can be achieved;
- **transparency** – reputational risk will be minimised by ensuring openness and transparency in reporting on URC investment portfolios and compliance with this policy;
- **partnership** – the URC recognises the value of collaborative action in terms of effecting change in companies' policies and practices and commits to working with the other members of the Church Investors Group (CIG), the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR) and other ecumenical agencies to engage with companies and, where relevant, to act in support of their initiatives.

3 Expression will be given to these principles through both negative and positive screening of companies as well as through selective direct engagement with companies. Each of these investment strategies is outlined below and should be considered as part of an integral approach to ethical investment by the URC.

4 The existing URC Ethical Investment policy will be developed to guide our investments in terms of negative screening. This policy states:

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1 See p.28 Book of Reports 2010 or p.22 of the *vision2020 – planning for growth in the URC* booklet for details – [http://www.urc.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/mission/images/vision2020\\_booklet\\_colour.pdf](http://www.urc.org.uk/what_we_do/mission/images/vision2020_booklet_colour.pdf)



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

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

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

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

However, in addition to the criteria listed above, the URC's investment bodies are encouraged to avoid investment in companies whose management practices are deemed to be unacceptable or whose operations are deemed to:

- contribute to the oppressive nature of regimes which are guilty of gross human rights violations;
- contribute to a harmful impact on the social or natural environment;
- harm the society in which they operate more than they benefit it;
- promote injustice.

**5 Positive screening and 'best in class/sector' strategy** – URC trustees are encouraged to support companies that seek to develop their businesses successfully and sustainably in the long term interests of shareholders and other stakeholders. The URC will seek to invest in companies which have an active commitment to the following:

- responsible employment practices;
- equal opportunities policy and practice;
- good practice in terms of corporate governance;
- environmental sustainability expressed by comprehensive environmental and climate change policies and audits;
- positive attitudes to customers and active monitoring of employment practices across the supply chain;
- openness in reporting to stakeholders;
- sensitivity towards communities in which they operate;
- integrity in all their dealings; and
- the promotion of human rights, especially in countries with oppressive regimes.

**6 Engagement and dialogue with companies** – the URC endorses the strategy of direct engagement with companies through correspondence, face-to-face meetings and shareholders' attendance at AGMs as a means of influencing the practices of these companies. This is based on an understanding of the theological and moral duty to monitor the policies and practices of companies in which a URC body is a direct shareholder and to raise concerns with a company if we are not fully satisfied with its business.

7 **Project or socially-directed investment** – in addition to the positive screening, the URC will continue to set aside a proportion of its capital for investment where the return is principally social rather than financial. This echoes the Church’s mission strategy.<sup>2</sup> The following social investments have considerable overlap with ethical investment portfolios and may sometimes offer market rate investments:

- community land and reinvestment trusts;
- ecological building projects;
- organic food and fair trade initiatives; and
- micro-credit based social development programmes.

In supporting any such initiative, URC Trust bodies should be satisfied that effective governance monitoring is in place.<sup>3</sup>

8 **Disinvestment** – as a last resort, the URC will consider selling its shares in a company on ethical grounds in cases where a company fails to amend its operating policies and practices after engagement and dialogue over an extended period of time. Such action will generally be taken in conjunction with ecumenical partners through the CIG (or similar body) based on advice from the EIAG. However, such decisions will be subject to periodic review in the light of these principles to maintain the integrity and credibility of the policy.

9 **Monitoring of policy** – The monitoring of these principles on behalf of the URC is principally the task of Mission Council’s Ethical Investment Advisory Group. EIAG is required to report on issues of concern and develop policy statements on various issues related to ethical investment as necessary. However, every investment body and officer within the URC family (whether at assembly, synod or local church level) needs to share in this responsibility to ensure the Church retains its mission integrity.

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2 See *vision2020 – planning for growth in the URC* at [http://www.urb.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/mission/images/vision2020\\_booklet\\_colour.pdf](http://www.urb.org.uk/what_we_do/mission/images/vision2020_booklet_colour.pdf)

3 Cited in EIRIS/UKSIF Charity Project, *Responsible Investment Approaches to Non-Equity Investments: An Introduction for Charity Trustees*, 2006, [www.charityysri.org](http://www.charityysri.org)

# Annexe 9

## Policy on investment in Nestlé Review Report

### 1 Background

**N.B. This report makes reference to MC appendices 1-9. Due to the length of these appendices they have not been included in the Book of Reports but may be accessed on the URC website at this link:**

**[http://www.urc.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/mission\\_council/mission\\_council](http://www.urc.org.uk/what_we_do/mission_council/mission_council)  
(<http://bit.ly/missioncouncil>) (Mission Council papers March 2010)**

1.1 The United Reformed Church (URC) adopted a motion to boycott Nestlé products at General Assembly in 1992 based on concerns highlighted by Baby Milk Action (BMA) related to the company's policy of marketing and distributing of breast milk substitutes to mothers in Third World countries. This motion called for '*Church and Society to set up a working party to monitor the situation to enable the motion to be reviewed at the General Assembly 1993*' – see **MC Appendix 1** for copy of motion.

1.2 The Church and Society (C&S) Committee expressed its continued support for BMA's campaign to continue boycotting Nestlé products in its report to Assembly in 2001. This was based on the case that Nestlé '*contributes to the unnecessary death and suffering of infants by aggressively marketing breast milk substitutes in ways that violate the International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes and subsequent relevant resolutions adopted by the World Health Assembly.*' The report ended by calling for '*the Church to continue to express practically its feelings about Nestlé's practice of prioritising its own interests before the health and lives of babies in the developing world*' – see attached **MC Appendix 2**.

1.3 The Methodist Church released a statement on 25 November 2005 saying that its Joint Advisory Committee on Ethical Investment (JACEI) had cleared the way for its Central Finance Board to invest in Nestlé, if it so wished. The committee said that '*whilst there were still areas of ethical concern relating to the marketing and promotion of breast milk substitutes, there was no suggestion that the nature of Nestlé's business was inherently unethical, and there were insufficient reasons to avoid investment on ethical grounds*' – see **MC Appendix 3** for a copy of this statement.

1.4 In response to this statement, the C&S Committee (in conjunction with the *Commitment for Life* sub-committee) released a statement in December 2005 saying that whilst '*some in the URC may feel, as the Methodist Church does, that the option of making a financial investment would enable the Church to press Nestlé further than it could by other means; others would no doubt believe that the best way of working for change is for the boycott to remain – or that a token investment would not necessarily be incompatible with a continuing boycott.*' The statement also made reference to the fact that '*the URC Assembly resolution has remained in force since 1992; any proposed change would have to be considered by the Church's committees and, ultimately, by General Assembly.*'

1.5 In the C&S Report to General Assembly in 2006 the Committee expressed the view that in light of the decision by the Methodist Church to allow its investment agency to invest in Nestlé, the URC '*should continue to recommend a boycott of Nestlé products; however the committee endorses the possibility of a selective purchase of shares in companies to enable campaigning from within.*' This decision was also endorsed by the *Commitment for Life* Sub-committee who whilst endorsing the 1992 General Assembly decision to boycott Nestlé products, also stated that they '*would not be against a selective purchase of shares in Nestlé, as long as this was used to enable campaigning from within.*'

1.6 A detailed briefing paper on Nestlé was prepared by the Secretary for Church and Society ahead of the C&S Committee meeting in January 2007 – see **MC Appendix 4**. Unfortunately, time did not permit discussion to be held on this paper and it was referred to the *Commitment for Life* sub-committee for discussion at their next meeting. Following this meeting a Nestlé working group was established to consider whether Nestlé had done enough in factual terms to warrant lifting the boycott of its products and whether engaging with the company was an option.

1.7 The first meeting of the Nestlé working group took place on the 10 October 2007 at which Steve Hucklesby explained the rationale for the Methodist Church's decision to engage with the company. Discussion followed on the merits of the URC continuing with its boycott of Nestlé products and the case of investment and engagement in light of the changes made by the company and a follow-up meeting was scheduled for January 2008. Unfortunately, this meeting did not take place due to the non-availability of some of the members of the working group. However, at the January 2008 meeting of the C&S Committee, it was proposed that the review of the Nestlé boycott be left in abeyance until the proposals for broadening the URC's guidelines for ethical investment were completed to allow balanced debate on this issue based on objective criteria. This decision was endorsed by the Ethical Investment Advisory Group (EIAG) at their meeting in April 2008.

## 2 Revised Ethical Investment Principles

2.1 Guiding principles for a revised Ethical Investment Policy for the URC were discussed and adopted together with this briefing document at the last meeting of Mission Council on the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2010 – see **MC Appendix 5**. These guiding principles were informed by the report of a theology working group established by the Mission Committee to consider the issue of expressing mission responsibility through investment as well as the ethical policies of our ecumenical partners.

2.2 Key issues highlighted in these guiding principles include the desire to achieve a better fit between the mission and fiduciary responsibilities of the URC, the inclusion of positive screening criteria and the criteria for engagement with companies (and disinvestment when deemed necessary). The URC's response to Nestlé will be considered in terms of these criteria and will provide an interesting test case for the revised ethical policy when this is debated at General Assembly in July 2010.

## 3 Meeting with Nestlé Management

3.1 A meeting between the Church Investors Group and senior Nestlé management was hosted by CCLA on 4 December 2009 to engage on issues of ethical concern related to their marketing of baby milk substitutes and compliance with the *International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes (International Code)* – see **MC Appendix 6** for a copy of the notes of this meeting. Five representatives from the URC were invited to attend this meeting – Richard Nunn (Chair of the URC Investment Committee), John Ellis (Treasurer), Simon Loveitt (URC spokesperson on public issues), Val Morrison (Co-Moderator Elect), and Linda Mead (*Commitment for Life* Coordinator). A briefing meeting was held at URC House ahead of this meeting where issues of concern identified and discussed. The following 3 questions emerged from this meeting:

3.1.1 what specific changes have been made by Nestlé in terms of its marketing of breast milk substitutes and compliance with the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes to warrant recommending that the boycott of their products by the URC be ended?

3.1.2 is Nestlé planning to apply for listing with the *FTSE4Good* Index?

3.1.3 what actions was Nestlé taking to regulate their supply chain and to ensure that the human rights of employees were upheld?

- 3.2 In response, at the meeting, Nestlé affirmed that:
- the WHO code on BMS drives their operations in the BMS business. Allegations of non compliance are investigated thoroughly. Where necessary, corrective action is taken immediately;
  - they have been enthusiastic supporters of *FTSE4Good* and now that it is more focussed upon the developing world market rather than the whole world they would embrace whatever was required to comply;
  - they promote shared values with their customers, suppliers as well as shareholders as they see their role as being long term providers of nutrition solutions rather than seeking shareholder value as fast as possible;
  - they now actively support independent assessments of their activities and its impact upon local communities. These have been highly favourable.

3.3 There was general agreement from the URC representatives who attended this meeting that in light of this engagement, a proposal be made to the EIAG for consideration at their February 2010 meeting that the boycott of Nestlé products by the URC be ended and that a formal proposal outlining the rationale for this decision be forwarded to Mission Council in March together with the revised Ethical Investment Policy for joint consideration. Mission Committee also considered this proposal at their January meeting but decided that they first needed to review the revised Ethical Investment Policy of the URC before being in a position to review the decision to boycott Nestlé products. See **MC Appendix 7** for a list of the responses of the URC representatives who attended the meeting with Nestlé management.

#### **4 Assessment of Nestlé marketing of breast-milk substitutes and compliance with the *International Code* and subsequent, relevant World Health Assembly resolutions**

4.1 In seeking to take this proposal forward, it is important that an independent assessment be made of Nestlé's current practices related to the marketing of breast milk substitutes and compliance with the relevant international health codes and resolutions. It is not, however the intention of this briefing paper to present a detailed analysis of the alleged violations of the *International Code* and child rights posited by the Baby Milk Action campaign and the response by Nestlé management . The Methodist Church has already engaged in this type of analysis based on in-depth engagement with the key stakeholders culminating in the release of their statement on Nestlé on the 25<sup>th</sup> November 2005 alluded to in point 3 above. The briefing note from the Central Finance Board and reports on this process are well documented on the Methodist Church website by following this link <http://www.methodist.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=opentoworld.content&cmid=1826>

4.2 Rather, this briefing paper seeks to assess Nestlé's current marketing practices and compliance to international codes based on the criteria outlined in the revised Ethical Investment Policy of the URC – see **MC Appendix 5**, the draft *FTSE4Good* inclusion criteria for marketing of breast-milk substitutes – see **MC Appendix 8**, and the information provided by the highly respected Ethical Investment Research and Information Service (EIRIS) in their latest company profile on Nestlé on their marketing of breast-milk substitutes – see **MC Appendix 9**.

#### **5 Issues considered by Mission Council**

5.1 The following findings and recommendations were considered by Mission Council based on this assessment:

5.1.1 In terms of the proposed principles for ethical investment for the URC, Nestlé remains in breach of the principle of *solidarity*<sup>1</sup> based on EIRIS' recording of a number

<sup>1</sup> Investment decisions on behalf of the URC are to be guided by the biblical principle of solidarity with those who are poor and marginalised and social justice as expressed in Statement 9 of the URC's *vision2020* Mission framework.

of instances where Nestlé has been found to be in partial compliance with, or total or substantial violation of the International Code of Marketing Breast-Milk Substitutes in developing countries – particularly those countries which have a UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) of less than 0.5. The countries concerned are as follows: HDI of less than 0.5 (but more than 0.25) – Angola, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal.

5.1.2 However, EIRIS notes that Nestlé demonstrates systems for investigating and responding in a timely manner to alleged non-compliance reported by governmental bodies, professional groups, institutions, NGOs or other individuals from outside the company – in response to IBFAN's 2007 Breaking the Rules report, Nestlé has produced a report: Nestlé Investigation of Reported Non-Compliance with the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes. This lists the allegations and Nestlé's response to them. In addition, the company has indicated that queries and allegations from NGOs and other external sources are routinely investigated and responded to, both at country level and at headquarters level.

5.1.3 Nestlé is rated as having a high exposure to the issue of marketing of breast-milk substitutes by EIRIS based on estimates that the company derives £750m of turnover from breast-milk substitutes i.e. 2.9 % of total turnover. It is assessed as **inter-mediate** by EIRIS based on the fact that *'the Company has the policy and management systems elements in place required for an assessment of 'good' but as the Nestlé Instructions re-interpret certain articles of the WHO Code, the Company is not able to achieve an assessment above intermediate.'* The aspects of the WHO Code which Nestlé re-interprets is summarised in **MC Appendix 9** (see pages 2-3).

5.1.4 Nestlé has responded to EIRIS on these points and has provided an explanation of the differences between the Nestlé Instructions and the equivalent articles of the WHO Code and why it believes its policy is aligned with the WHO Code.

5.2 Based on this assessment and the reporting and management systems which Nestlé has put in place to monitor and track alleged violations of the International Code, Mission Council now concurs with the November 2005 statement of JACEI which states that *'whilst there were still areas of ethical concern relating to the marketing and promotion of breast milk substitutes, there was no suggestion that the nature of Nestlé's business was inherently unethical, and there were insufficient reasons to avoid investment on ethical grounds'*.

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# Annexe 10

## Westminster College Development Plan

### 1 Introduction

1.1 In July 2008 the Westminster Governors affirmed a document setting out strategic objectives for Westminster for the following four years. That document began with these words:

1.2 ‘Westminster College is committed to serving the United Reformed Church and to responding to the challenge our denomination has given us to be a resource centre for the learning of the whole people of God. We will need to do this in new ways and we have been given freedom and encouragement to be imaginative. We have many resources already. We are part of an ecumenical partnership in the Cambridge Theological Federation through which we also have a partnership with two universities in Cambridge. We have excellent teaching and support staff. We have a wide and now more dispersed and diverse community of those who learn through Westminster. We belong to several significant networks: denominational, confessional, ecumenical and international. We have a physical site and building with chapel, library, meeting space, accommodation, catering and hospitality, and grounds.

1.3 ‘We need to resist being bound by the building we have inherited and we need to develop Westminster as an intentionally diverse and dispersed community which has a meaning beyond these walls. We need to test the practicability of making this building work for a renewed purpose. We must be realistic and business-like about this, and be prepared to be visionary about new possibilities for our late-Victorian building’.

1.4 The Management Committee was given the task of thinking about how the site and buildings of Westminster might be renewed and redeveloped to serve a new purpose. In November 2008 the committee presented an interim strategic plan for the future of the Westminster buildings. There was wide consultation among governors, staff and students and a design brief, based on this consultation, was given to our architect. Our plans have also been shared in outline with our partners in the Cambridge Theological Federation, who have given us their support and encouragement.

1.5 In June 2009 the architect presented his proposals for the development of Westminster (based on the design brief) to the governors and it received their general approval. The plans were then refined in the light of further suggestions by governors and others. In November a full development plan was submitted to the governors, including drawn plans, a quantity surveyors’ report giving an estimated order of cost, and reports by structural and building services engineers.

1.6 The governors approved the development plan and decided that, provided funding could be obtained, it should be implemented as a single project (subject to appropriate phasing).

1.7 After careful consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of doing so, the governors also decided to instruct the architect to complete and submit the requisite planning application without further delay. Amongst the reasons for reaching this decision was the view that planning approval would establish the project’s feasibility; we were also advised that an early planning application would reduce exposure to changing planning regulations and consequential cost increases.

1.8 This report:

- summarises the strategic aims of the Development Plan;
- sets out the plan’s key design features and the estimated order of costs; and
- considers the steps that should be taken to seek the necessary capital funding.

### **2 Strategic aims**

2.1 For the future, and in order to fulfil our purpose as a Resource Centre for Learning within the United Reformed Church, we have the following strategic aims.

2.2 We want to make Westminster a centre for learning, prayer, meeting and hospitality for a wide range of people within the United Reformed Church. This needs to be done both by Westminster staff going out into the churches and communities where people invite us, but also by providing a welcoming, well-resourced place here in Cambridge for people to come to pray, to meet, and to learn.

2.3 We want Westminster to continue to play a full part in the life of the Cambridge Theological Federation, contributing teachers, teaching space and facilities, as we in turn receive these things for our own students from other partners.

2.4 We therefore need to make the building a place which fits the purpose we believe it has within our Church and within the Federation. It needs to offer appropriate meeting and teaching spaces: beautiful, uncluttered, appropriately equipped. It needs to offer spaces for worship and prayer that express the best of our Reformed tradition in terms of beauty, simplicity and welcome. It needs to offer appropriate resources for all kinds of learning: days for church groups, space and books for those doing TLS or short courses, library collections for research in our specialisms, a working library for theological education for ministry, as well as spaces and equipment for those who learn by 'doing' or by talking with others, all supported by excellent and contemporary IT and AV facilities. It needs to offer good hospitality in terms of bed and board, of such quality and welcome that people will want to come again. It needs to be a gateway to the opportunities of Cambridge and to make the best use of our location and grounds.

2.5 We also need to house and provide teaching, research and work space for (at least) five full time theological educators who are actively involved in a wide range of education and learning activities both in Cambridge and out in the three nations of the denomination. They need to work effectively as a team and to have the equipment they need to do their work. We need to provide them with well equipped teaching rooms and offices.

2.6 We need to open up and make truly accessible the treasures of our traditions that are housed at Westminster so that they can be properly appreciated, researched and made available for any who want to know more of our story. This means providing proper care, security and, where appropriate, display for valued documents and books and a good service to help people research and study, whether classic Reformed texts or local church history.

2.7 The original building dates from 1899, with the chapel added in 1921. The roof was completely replaced in 1970-72. The building is, for its age, in excellent condition, but it now urgently needs this major redevelopment for new times. The residential accommodation needs to be brought up to today's high standards. The kitchens need to be able to provide good food to a growing and more varied community. The configuration of rooms and uses needs to have a clear rationale, so that the building has more clearly defined areas for accommodation, teaching, worship and hospitality. The whole building needs to be 'lifted' in appearance and comfort, so that it can provide the welcome and facilities that people rightly expect today.

2.8 There are also some structural repairs to do, so that the life of the building is secured for future generations.



### 3 Key design features

Reference to the architect's report dated October 2009, and the accompanying report of the quantity surveyors may be found helpful at this stage:

#### a) Overview

The proposed works will provide attractive, modern accommodation and facilities, well able to meet the needs of the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They will also equip Westminster to generate increased income from conferencing and catering services. The proposals provide for:

- 38 rooms in the residential wing, up-graded to modern standards, including en suite facilities in every unit, and two self-contained suites in the grounds, making a total of 40 rooms available for students, conference delegates and guests;
- two refurbished students' flats;
- increased teaching space with up-to-date audio-visual equipment;
- improved teachers' studies;
- extended and improved library and archive facilities;
- new space for informal discussions and social activities;
- a modern kitchen;
- a light, airy reception area;
- a new prayer chapel and an art studio;
- essential structural repairs to below-ground ducts;
- replacement of the ageing heating and electrical systems;
- re-location of the Henry Martyn Centre.

#### b) The Principal's Lodge

An important feature of the proposals is the provision of accommodation for the Principal outside the main building; this will allow the Lodge area to be redeployed for the needs of the whole Westminster community. All academic staff will be based here, with space for individual conversations and small group meetings, and two new plenary teaching rooms. There is also an archivist's room and space for archive storage. The ground floor provides meeting and teaching space, and a function room for private dining, serviced from the main kitchen. Two self-contained flats on the second floor, suitable for long-term students and accessible from within the building, will be refurbished. A lift will serve ground and first floors, and the unsightly external stairway will be removed.

Westminster has had, for some years now, a developing relationship with the Henry Martyn Centre, a partner within the Federation, with specialisms in Mission and World Christianity. The Centre has office and library space within our building and the new development gives us an opportunity to create more appropriate accommodation for their present and future needs. Library, archive and office accommodation for the Henry Martyn Centre is provided on the ground floor and basement; at their request, the space is significantly greater than at present. The related capital investment is fully reflected by a rent calculated on fair, commercial terms. Negotiations on the rent and other conditions are proceeding.

#### c) The Central Area

The kitchen is long overdue for modernisation; the proposals will enable staff to cater flexibly and economically, either for small numbers of our own core students or for up to 200 covers when a large group, or several different groups, are using the college at the same time. Specialist consultants have advised on the equipment required. Transfer of the servery to a separate area will enlarge dining room accommodation, and an external terrace will provide an informal 'break-out' area. Offices for administration staff will be moved from the residential wing to the first floor above the kitchen.

The Healey-Elias Room will remain the College's largest teaching room, but will be enhanced by the removal of the partition and surrounding book-cases. Books (and, where acceptable in conservation terms, bookcases) will also be removed from the Cheshunt Room and Reformed Studies Centre; the former will become a social area (served, when needed, by a mobile bar) and the latter an access library and informal discussion room. The Common Room/Lounge will be refurbished, whilst the small rooms adjacent to the main entrance will be opened up as an attractive and welcoming reception area. New building on the ground floor will provide a Prayer Chapel, a temperature- and humidity-controlled archive store and toilet accommodation.

Displaced books will be transferred to the east end of the Library, vacated by the Henry Martyn Centre, to which there is disabled access from the lift in the adjacent residential wing; however, the door at the west end of the Library will remain the principal entrance. The Senatus Room will be re-furnished and sensitively equipped as a teaching room.

We have known for several years that the structure of the service ducts below the ground floor was seriously defective and that it has compromised the integrity of the terrazzo flooring in the main corridor and elsewhere. The proposals provide for the structure to be repaired.

### **d) The Residential Wing**

There will be 38 accommodation units of four types, all with en-suite facilities:

- 2 twin disabled study suites
- 4 double study suites
- 11 single study suites
- 21 single bed-sitting rooms

Study suites will also be provided with sufficient kitchen facilities for self-catering, whilst single bed-sitting rooms will have tea- and coffee-making facilities. For students occupying the latter, a shared kitchen on the first floor will offer cooking facilities and a space to eat. The lift will serve ground, first and second floors.

The loft already contains the Buick Knox archive room, and there will also be provision for a computer server room. There will be room in the south end of the loft for further storage space, although it is unlikely that this will be needed for the time being. The loft is already linked to the second floor by an existing spiral staircase.

### **e) Peripheral buildings**

Since the Principal's present accommodation in the Lodge will be given over to the Henry Martyn Centre and to new teaching facilities, it will be replaced by no.3 The Bounds, a detached house in the College grounds, which is to be re-furbished for the purpose.

The annexe on the northern boundary has for many years provided two low-quality flats, generally occupied by sabbatical visitors. The annexes are to be insulated and refurbished to a higher standard and retained for the same purpose.

A new, timber-clad art studio will be built on a suitable site nearby.

### **f) Estimated order of costs**

The quantity surveyors' report gives a comprehensive cost estimate of the works described above. The total of £5.3 million includes:

- building and engineering costs;
- furniture, fittings and equipment;
- professional fees;
- an inflation allowance to the end of 2011.

In addition, allowances must be made for loss of income during the construction period, and for VAT.

**i. Loss of income**

The construction work will be phased over a period of up to two years in such a way as to allow the college to function; nevertheless, room rents and conference income will be significantly reduced during that period. We estimate the reduction in net income at £204,000.

The following is a table of costs excluding VAT:

Construction costs	4,040,000
Furniture, fittings and equipment	481,000
Professional fees	687,000
Provision for inflation	122,000
Total	5,330,000
Plus loss of income during construction	204,000
Grand Total	<u>£5,534,000</u>

**ii. VAT**

VAT at 17.5% on expenditure of £5.33m would amount to £933,000. Not all the expenditure will attract VAT: listed buildings and certain work on student accommodation are zero-rated, but the rules are complex and we are taking advice from PricewaterhouseCoopers in order to quantify the cost. We expect to receive their report within two months. In the meantime, and as a working hypothesis, we have taken the VAT exposure at two-thirds (£622,000) suggesting an overall cost for the project of some £6,200,000.

## 4 Implementation of the plan

4.1 The governors view the plan as a single entity, believing that there is little permanent benefit to be gained by implementing only certain parts of it; moreover, the overall cost would be considerably greater if it were tackled piecemeal. Accordingly, they have accepted the architect's recommendation that a decision to proceed with the plan should embrace it in its entirety.

4.2 In accordance with the governors' decision to apply for planning permission, the application will be submitted in early February; since the buildings are listed Grade II, there will also be an application for listed building consent. We are advised that decisions on both may be expected in the first half of April.

## 5 Capital funding

The college has spendable reserves of some £550,000. It also has some realisable assets, which the governors have in principle agreed to sell. The first sale has recently been agreed and will produce £363,000; other sales might bring the total up to £2,000,000. The timing of these sales is uncertain, but we hope it might be possible to complete them within two years. The remainder of the project cost will need to be raised by a fund-raising appeal. The following table shows the pattern of funding required.

	£
Overall project cost	6,200,000
Less funds immediately available	<u>567,000</u>
	5,633,000
Less realisable assets (approx)	<u>2,000,000</u>
To be raised by appeal	<u>£3,633,000</u>

If the plan is to go ahead the college must inevitably look first to the Church, although we intend also to appeal to grant-making trusts beyond the Church and to individuals. The governors will be asked at their meeting in late February to establish a fundraising committee.

## 6 Conclusion

6.1 The way in which Westminster of the future will operate, and the attendant financial consequences are set out in the accompanying Business Plan [available from the General Secretary on request].

6.2 The governors have taken great care in defining Westminster's strategy and in matching the development plan to that strategy. We believe that, if it can be carried through, Westminster life in all its aspects will be revitalised and its future as a major resource for the Church will be secured. On the other hand, if it should prove impossible to carry out the re-development in the way proposed, we fear that Westminster will be increasingly hampered in meeting the Church's needs by the limitations of its fabric and by financial constraints. We therefore commend the plan to the Trust with confidence, and with the hope that you will share our vision of what might be achieved.

6.3 We believe that we have inherited a great gift, and we give thanks to God for the generosity and vision of our founders and forebears, and in particular to the 'Sisters of Sinai' who gave so much to make Westminster possible. The call and challenge now is to fit Westminster for new times and a faithful Church. It would be vanity to want to preserve historic buildings for our own glory or to 'keep' the past, but that is not what we want to do. We believe that God is calling us to respond to the challenge of stewarding this gift for the church, for today and for the future. We are open to God's will and leading and ask you to help us both to seek and to fulfil this vocation.

The Revd Dr Susan Durber, Principal  
Professor Sir Anthony Bottoms, Convener of Governors  
Canon Brian Long MBE, Convener of the Management Committee

**Convener:** David Robinson

**Secretary:** Ann Barton

**Committee members:** Moderator, Moderators-elect, General Secretary, Clerk to Assembly, Convener of Local Arrangements Committee

## 1 The change to biennial assemblies

The 2010 meeting of General Assembly at the University of Loughborough is the first biennial meeting of General Assembly. We have therefore reviewed how best to organise business on that basis. We hope you will find many familiar features at this year's meeting, but of necessity we have not attempted to cram two years of business into the customary four day meeting. We have sought to reduce the number of formal resolutions brought to Assembly so that we can concentrate on four main themes: *Vision4Life* and the *Marketing Campaign*; mission and strategy; equipping people for service; and general business. The Book of Reports looks very much as it always has done with separate reports from each committee, resource centre for learning and URC-related school plus the synod moderators' report and such synod resolutions as have been received. There will be no written synod reports this year. Instead synods have been invited to share stories alongside the presentations of the major pieces of work brought by the Assembly committees within the four main themes outlined above. There will also be an opportunity within the Assembly timetable for questions and comments on each section of the Book of Reports.

## 2 Thanks

Assembly Arrangements really is a team effort. Warm thanks are due to many, and in particular to the moderators-elect and the general secretary for reshaping the Assembly agenda, to Richard Mortimer for helping to define the remits of General Assembly and Mission Council, to Ann Barton for her huge contribution to making sure that all the pieces are in place so that Assembly works on the day, to the local Assembly Team who will contribute enormously to our enjoyment of and involvement in this year's meeting, to Michael Davies for all that he does in helping to make the arrangements for Assembly, and for this year in particular for his efforts to make our forward financial budgeting for Assembly more of a reality, to Martin Hazell for all his contributions, and in particular for all he does to ensure we benefit from the whole range of multi-media opportunities throughout Assembly, and to both Martin Hazell and Michael Hopkins for advising on possible future venues for Assembly meetings and for ensuring effective stage management when Assembly meets.

## 3 General Assembly 2012

At the time of writing this report the Assembly Arrangements Committee is still reviewing options in terms of the timing and venue for the meeting of Assembly in 2012. We hope to bring forward our recommendations for consideration at the 2010 Assembly. As ever, it will be our intention to make Assembly a worthy vehicle for the United Reformed Church and if you have suggestions that might assist that process please contact David Robinson or Ann Barton.



# The URC Bookshop

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## **Students**

Have you joined our student mailing group yet? It offers special discounts, promotions and events.



**Convener:** Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe  
**Director of Communications:** Revd Martin Hazell

**Committee members for the period 2008-10**

Ms Lucy Berry, Mr Justin Brierley, Mrs Valerie Jenkins (until 2009), Mr Stanley Hazell, Mrs Helen Jones, Mr Richard Lathaen (until 2009), Ms Catherine Lewis-Smith (until 2009), Mr Andrew Littlejohns, Revd Peter Lyth (from 2009), Mr Peter Ranscombe (from 2009), Mrs Esther Searle, Mr Orin Stephens (from 2009) and Mr Ron Sweeney (until 2009).

**Staff team as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010**

Martin Hazell – Director of Communications  
Genevieve Gbesorgbor – PA to the Director  
Kay Parris – Editor of Reform  
Charissa King – Production and Marketing Coordinator, Reform  
Chris Andrews – Graphic Designer, Reform  
Sara Foyle – Senior Graphic Designer  
Tina Yardley – Assistant to Senior Graphic Designer  
Michael Bluett – Web and Database Coordinator  
Gill Nichol – Press and Media Officer  
Caroline (Caz) Binstead – Bookshop Manager  
Robert Wadey – Distribution and Packing  
Pat Duncan – Bookshop Assistant

1 Good communication is at the core of every successful organisation. It must and should be at the centre of all the Church does, from how we give information to one another within a congregation to how we converse with the wider world, and is necessary for every aspect of church life and activity in between. At its best, communication can transform the Church into the living reality Christ calls us all to be.

2 This report covers the past two years during which great changes have been made to build a vibrant and professional communications team. The committee is delighted to see such an energetic and enthused group of people working together to produce work of a high standard for the benefit of the whole Church.

### 3 Developing a vision

The department is currently formulating its vision; the statement below is work in progress.

‘The Communications department aims to ensure there is effective communication in all the Church does, at every level, which is automatically built into the planning process.

To encourage everyone to think how best information can be communicated in ways that inspire, challenge and build up the Church.

To provide material that *opens* up discussions of important life matters.

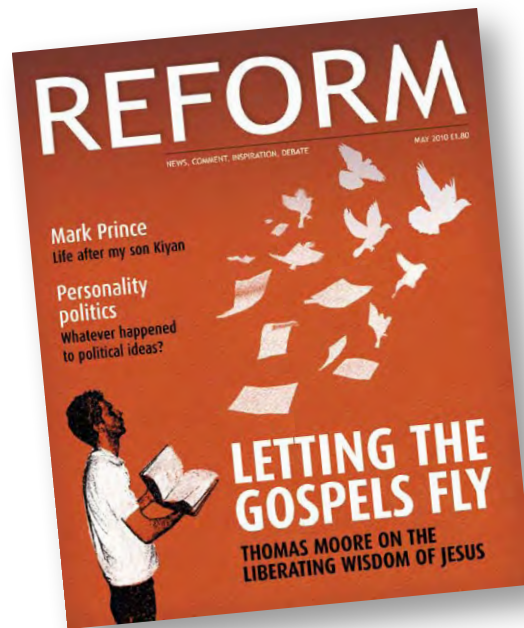
To widen people’s horizons, challenge perceptions and prepare members to serve responsibly, in the best traditions of Christian discipleship.

To help build a church of healthy relationships’.

### 4 Delivering the mission

#### 4.1 Reform

4.1.1 The new look Reform has been running for almost two years, and every week the team, Kay Parris (editor), Charissa King (production and marketing coordinator) and Chris Andrews (graphic designer), receive compliments about its contents and presentation, both from within our own membership and across the denominations. A very few of the many comments are: 'Thank you for Reform – it is so good to read.' 'Thank you for what has become an excellent channel of Christian life and thinking and inspiration.' 'essential, vibrant reading' and spotted in one local church newsletter: 'Reform has developed into a truly exciting publication, full of articles, which inspire, which inform and which sometimes infuriate!'



4.1.2 John Humphrys, Jeremy Vine, Christine Ohurugo, Ann Widdecombe and Stephen Timms have all been interviewed in Reform's pages; alongside articles on *Fresh Expressions*, science and faith, and social concerns; there has also been biblical analysis by Walter Brueggemann and theological exploration by Keith Ward. It's a lively, informative read, and is being widely recognised as such. Reform exists to promote discussion and raise issues, so when articles challenge and cause debate that is good news. Sometimes controversial topics provoke letters which can be aggressive, rude or defamatory; this has necessitated the introduction of an editorial policy which helps to ensure potentially offensive letters are not published.

4.1.3 Readers may have noticed a change in emphasis: Reform is now less an internal noticeboard for URC events and more a forum for contemporary ideas and discussions. The greater aim is to see Reform as a mission-led magazine, reaching out to communities and exploring issues from a Reformed perspective. The department intends publishing a regular local news update for inclusion in church newsletters, to help keep churches better informed of URC news.

4.1.4 Subscriptions to Reform, particularly by individuals, have increased month on month since the re-launch. There was a drop in subscriptions from church groups during the annual renewals period in November/December 2009, but since then they have continued to grow each month. At the start of 2010, the Reform team became aware of major problems with distribution and have now changed to a different company. The United Reformed Church can be truly proud of Reform.

#### 4.2 Bookshop

4.2.1 The Church House bookshop survives within a much changed environment for religious book selling, where several household names have recently vanished. Following a review conducted by an experienced independent bookseller, a restructuring took place and two longstanding staff members were made redundant. We thank Jane Hogge and Pat Duncan for their many years of service and care of the bookshop.

4.2.2 At the beginning of 2010, a new manager (Caz Binstead) started work and is gradually re-shaping the look and practices of the bookshop. The department is planning to re-launch it under a new name in the autumn. Stock, some of which had become stale, has been rejuvenated and new sections have been introduced. The Bookshop online offers



a very good service and the department is investing in a new website to improve the experience of shopping online. This is a great resource for both church members and the wider Christian community. It is important that the bookshop avoids the financial deficits of past years and the changes we are making should go some way to achieve this.

### 4.3 Press Office

4.3.1 Building the positive profile and name of the United Reformed Church, both locally and nationally, is an enormous task. The press office's ambitious aim is to raise the national media profile of the URC.

4.3.2 Our press office provides confidential, behind-the-scenes help when negative stories could break and threaten the reputation of a local congregation. It also gives encouragement and assistance to those who want to publicise the good things that are happening in their church. We have now appointed Gill Nichol as full time press officer to build on the work done by Stuart Dew until his retirement in 2009. Initially, Gill and Alex Klaushofer both worked part-time, until Alex left us earlier this year. The office has successfully placed stories and obituaries in leading newspapers, kept a regular supply of stories for the website and encouraged local press officers with updates and training.

### 4.4 Website

The committee is delighted with the new website although it recognises the need for it to continue to develop and change as the needs of the Church change and available technology improves. We are delighted to have achieved our original aim of providing a contemporary, attractive window to the world which also offers resources for the whole Church and increased opportunities for interaction. The regular updating of news stories keeps the front pages interesting. A recent correspondent has said: 'It is so refreshing to visit a website where the news on the front page is updated every few days. Many organisations seem to set up websites and then forget all about them. Well done the United Reformed Church!' The committee wants to encourage more use of discussion forums. Michael Bluett oversees the website. Some of the pages still leave scope for development but we are delighted that the people responsible for specific areas of the Church's work can now present their material in their own way. As this engagement expands, new ways of using the website are opening up.

### 4.5 Graphics

4.5.1 Our graphics office continues to produce a wide range of attractive and accessible documents and publications in-house, promoting a positive impression and helping to keep within budget. Recent titles include the popular Prayer Handbook and our denominational Year Book. For the first time this year, the Year Book has been accompanied by a supplement of ministerial obituaries in a new format, which has been much appreciated as a way of recording the stories of some faithful servants of the gospel.

4.5.2 Graphics also designs and publishes materials other people originate and develops initiatives from other departments. The list includes TLS material (designed and printed in-house); publicity material for Pilots' Warwick Castle day, Vocations Sunday campaign; material for General Assembly, Children's Assembly and FURY Assembly; Mission Council material; Year Books and the 2010 Obituaries book; certificates for Ministries (accreditation, ordination) and jubilee ministers; certificates for training weekends, summer school (Education and Learning); finance: pensions newsletter, M&M leaflet and training booklets.

4.5.3 The design team also worked on some of the vital denominational initiatives, including Vision4Life, providing design and distribution of materials for the Bible, Prayer and Evangelism years. The department worked with the Mission Committee on establishing artwork and presentational materials for the *vision2020* booklet. Martin Hazell plays a key role overseeing the marketing of the URC to the wider world in terms planning and strategising.

### 4.6 Prices and costs

4.6.1 We are often challenged about the price of the annual Prayer Handbook. The department attempts to keep prices as low as possible: the Handbook is currently priced below five pounds. Both 2009 and 2010 books cost about £26K to produce; this year's has been particularly popular and a small profit of about £4K has been made. About 6500 copies were sold this year (as at the end of March) which is the highest number for many years. The committee thanks the editors Geoffrey Duncan (2009) and Susan Durber (2010) for all the work they put into compiling the books. The Prayer Handbook goes from strength to strength.

4.6.2 Each year, Communications struggles to produce an accurate Year Book; we would like to explain some of the issues involved. It is a massive undertaking and 2010 was a particularly difficult year. Following the demise of districts some synods prefer to group churches together under area name while others prefer listing churches alphabetically; this is increasingly confusing to users of the lists. The logistics of ensuring correct entries is always a time-consuming and detailed piece of work and the team who worked on this last year was not only new to the process but was doing so while having other responsibilities. Once the deadline was missed it proved impossible to publish by the advertised date. To reach a standard that members want would mean employing a professional proof-reader. At the moment we use in-house and busy staff to keep the costs down; even so, each book costs about £26 to produce and we sell it at £13. If we were to outsource the work to a professional editor the Year Book would have to be sold at a price more like £80 a copy which is simply not viable.

### 4.7 Database

General Assembly 2005 agreed that the URC should use a database to contact individual members directly. For this to happen, Communications has overseen the development of a totally new database which will offer a more sophisticated facility. However, the migration of information, liaising with other departments, has put pressure on a number of people in Church House who have busy workplans of their own. Easter 2010 was the great switchover and everyone in Church House is now using the new database. Despite early fears about its implications for working individuals, staff members have pulled together and shown how different parts of the Church can come together and enable true 'joined-up thinking'. Communications thanks Gillian Jones, from Ministries, and Penny Hannon from Education and Learning, together with Michael Bluett from our department for their hard work and many hours put into making this enormous project successful. It is not a glamorous part of the work but an essential ingredient of successful internal communications for the Church.

### 4.8 Church Returns

For a number of years the annual church returns have been dealt with by Communications. Traditionally, as part of the information gathering, the back page of the form has been given over to various other requests for information: e.g. Equal Opportunities, Multicultural Ministries, and the Musicians Guild. There has never been much of a pattern as to what is asked for each year. Communications is developing a standard questionnaire that will go out to churches every year which will contain all such additional requests for information. The department hopes to offer this electronically to those who would like to receive the forms in this way. It is regretted that the questionnaire for Equal Opportunities due last winter was omitted; this was due to a mix up in Communications for which we apologise to General Assembly.

## 5 Engaging with outside organisations

We value our involvement with other Christian communicators both through the work of the Joint Public Issues team, the Methodists and Baptists communications departments, as well as through the re-named Church and Media Network, whose activities help us to keep informed of developments in this field. It is also appropriate

to commend the Roots for Churches magazines and website, as our Director of Communications, Martin Hazell, stands down from his role as a trustee on the board of this joint Christian education venture.

## 6 The Communications staff team in Church House

6.1 Since Communications last reported, we have been glad to welcome new staff: Michael Bluett, Charissa King, Caroline (Caz) Binstead, Alex Klaushofer, Gill Nichols, Genevieve Gbesorgbor and Jennifer Varela to our staff team. We record our thanks to those who have left us in the period since the last Assembly: Stuart Dew, Pat Duncan, Stephanie Honey, Genevieve Gbesorgbor, Jane Hogge, Alex Klaushofer, James Roberts and Jennifer Varela. We remember the 20 years service of Brenda Guest who died after a short illness in November 2008.

6.2 The committee has also benefitted from the membership and contributions of Valerie Jenkins, Richard Lathaen, Catherine Lewis-Smith and Ron Sweeney. We are glad to have a committed membership, who together bring a range of specialist skills and interests to our varied and stimulating field of work.

## 7 Olympics 2012

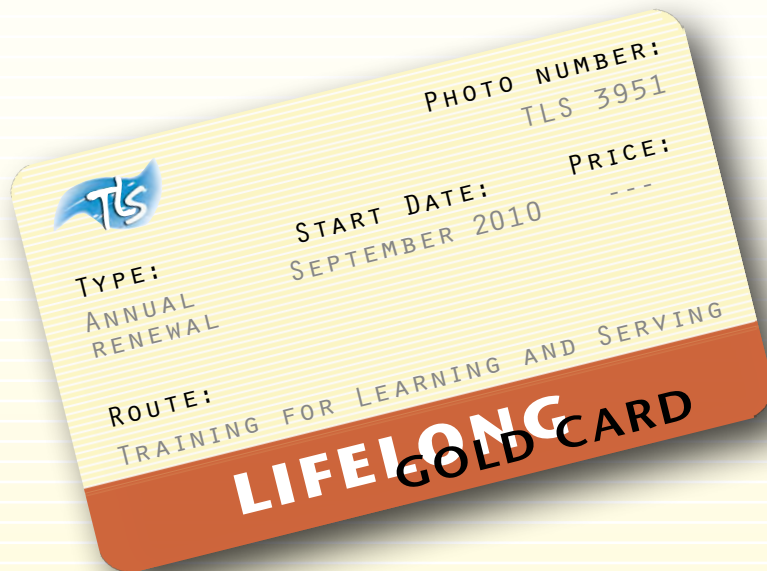
2012 will be an extraordinary year for people living in the UK. It will see the Diamond Jubilee of the Queen, the Olympics and Paralympics. It will be a year to treasure and remember, not least since it also marks the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of some of our churches. Communications and Mission teams have been working together to plan the URC's response to all these once-in-a-lifetime events. The year will include the torch relay that will be seen by millions; the ceremonial and religious celebrations of the Queen's anniversary with a long Bank Holiday weekend at the beginning of June; leading into the weeks of sporting activity, with training camps and/or competitive events taking place in each of our thirteen synods. Members of the URC will be encouraged to hold events through the year in their community spaces, building on the enthusiasm of people to gather to watch. Working with *More Than Gold* (a Christian organisation planning events around the Games) the URC will encourage church members to open their doors to the friends and families of athletes who will need local hospitality. The URC, in common with other denominations and faiths, will be giving a welcome to the world. It will be a marvellous opportunity for mission and service.

## Communications and Editorial Committee: 2012 Olympics and Queen's Jubilee

### Resolution 32

General Assembly welcomes the work being done by the Mission and Communications and Editorial Committees in preparation for the Church's involvement in the Queen's Jubilee celebrations and in events surrounding the Olympic Games in 2012. It encourages churches to engage in the celebrations and events that will take place throughout the year as an opportunity for witness and service, doing so wherever this is possible with partners from their community, including members of other churches and faiths.

Not so much a programme  
more an experience



[www.urc.org.uk/tls](http://www.urc.org.uk/tls)

Training for Learning and Serving

The key goal of the Education and Learning Committee, as endorsed at General Assembly 2005, is to equip the whole people of God for mission. There are necessarily two clarifications which are attached to this statement, because when we speak of the whole people of God we tend to focus our efforts on those of God's people who are part of, or associated with, the United Reformed Church. Furthermore we remind ourselves that this is God's mission to the world that we are getting involved with, rather than the United Reformed Church's mission to which God is being recruited. This report will give a reminder of what has brought us to where we are, so that the story so far is told, and will also give a glimpse of the chapters which may lie before us. That is the story yet to be spoken, shaped, and lived.

**Convener:** Malcolm Johnson

**Secretary:** Fiona Thomas

**Committee members:** Susan Durber, James Coleman, Robert Pope, Fiona Weighton-Smith, John Smith, Jenny Snashall, David Whiting

**Ex officio:** Moderators of Assembly, General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary

**Coopted:** (Student Representative: currently vacant); (Methodist Church – currently vacant) Ruth White (Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Officer Representative)

**Staff in attendance:** Craig Bowman (Secretary for Ministries), Philippa Linton (Minutes Secretary)

**By invitation:** John Campbell, (Principal of Northern College); Jack Dyce (Principal of the Scottish College); Lawrence Moore (Director of the Windermere Centre); Howard Sharp, (Convener, Windermere Management committee); Mike Downing (Convener, E&L Finance sub-committee); Andrew Grimwade (Chief Accountant); David Jenkins (Convener, Training for Learning and Serving Management Group); Ian Morrison (Convener of the Education for Ministry 2/3 committee)

*The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher,  
that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word.  
Morning by morning he awakens –  
awakens my ear to listen as those who are taught.*

(Isaiah 50:4 NRSV)

## 1 Where we were

1.1 In the days of the Training Committee, there was a major review completed of the training that the United Reformed Church had been supporting and undertaking. The findings resulted in some hard decisions being taken by General Assembly in 2006. Our human and financial resources were being spread thin and wide, and there was not enough emphasis on opportunities for people beyond those in formal programmes of formation for public ministry. The recommendations of the training review, along with earlier work from *Catch the Vision* and *Equipping the Saints*, resulted in the Assembly focusing its resources on a small number of resource centres for learning and committing itself to nurturing people for discipleship within a learning Church. One of the signals of this new emphasis was a change in name – from 2007 the Assembly has had an Education and Learning Committee, serviced by a Secretary for Education and Learning.

1.2 Since 2007 there have been accumulated changes of personnel. Revd Roy Lowes moved on from being Secretary for Education and Learning in 2008, and was replaced by Revd Fiona Thomas. Major restructurings of the departments at Church House, and the cyclical renewal of office holders have developed new relationships between the staff working in Education and Learning, Ministries, and Mission. This is having a positive effect on the degree to which the programmes of the Assembly are owned across the committees and task groups.

### 2 Where we are

#### 2.1 Resource Centres for Learning

2.1.1 The 2006 Training Review designated three colleges (The Scottish College, Northern College, Westminster College) as Resource Centres for Learning (RCLs). Restructuring brought the Windermere Centre under the wing of the Education and Learning Committee, and a five yearly review of the centre resulted in the Windermere Centre becoming recognised by Mission Council as the fourth resource centre for learning in November 2008. It is the role of the Education and Learning Committee to ensure that the work programmes of the four RCLs are both shaped by, and inform, the education and learning priorities of the United Reformed Church.

2.1.2 During 2009, the Committee engaged in extensive conversations with the RCLs, key people related to training within synods, and other assembly committees. This resulted in the committee endorsing a paper in September 2009 which sets out a way of relating to the resource centres for learning founded on the three essential tenets of parity of esteem, comparability of finance, and equivalence of representation. In concrete terms this means that the real and obvious differences between the RCLs in size, ownership or non-ownership of buildings, staffing levels, governance structures and styles of working can be used constructively within the education and learning programmes of the URC. Specific developments which have resulted from working by these three tenets include more regular communication between the Secretary for Education and Learning and the Principals/Director of the RCLs, increasing involvement by RCLs with each other's educational programmes, sharing of best practice in common work, the participation of all four Principals/Director at the meetings of the Education and Learning Committee, and the formulation of a new funding model which properly recognizes the investment of time and teaching that the staff of the three Colleges have always undertaken for the whole Church alongside their core work in Education for Ministry Phase 1. The September 2009 paper suggested what is expected of every RCL by the Education and Learning Committee on behalf of the United Reformed Church, and what the RCLs can expect from the Education and Learning Committee while acknowledging that lively relationships tend to work best when expectations are revisited and revised from time to time.

#### 2.2 Training for Learning and Serving

2.2.1 TLS has sustained its strengthened position achieved over recent years with continuing healthy enrolment figures, while developments in courses and in partnerships in the past two years will equip it for further, future growth.

2.2.2 **TLS Classic:** In the current academic year 122 students enrolled on all TLS classic courses (84 on the Foundation Course, 38 on one-year courses) compared to 2008-9 when there were 126 enrolments (84 – Foundation, 42 – one-year courses). This slight fall does not take into consideration those who applied for courses for which there were not viable numbers of applicants and the figures maintain the growth since a low point of 2004-5 when there were 100 people on all courses.

2.2.3 In 2008-9, TLS piloted two new courses, Gateways into Evangelism and Developing Community Experiences which were well received by participants. Time has been taken during this subsequent year to further revise and develop materials to present them as fresh opportunities for September 2010. Developing Community Experiences was designed and is offered in partnership with the CRCW team. This is the first time TLS has engaged in such a collaborative venture.

2.2.4 In 2008, TLS reported the ending of its partnership with Bangor University. The termination has been amicably concluded and transition to a new validation partner has been arranged. In September 2009, TLS launched its new Foundation Degree in Contextual Theology, offered in partnership with the University of Chester, with 27 students embarking upon this programme. At the same time, TLS re-affirmed its commitment to an open access policy and to seeking appropriate levels of study for course members by re-defining study opportunities in the shape of three Pathways ranging from engagement at a basic level to the Higher Education possibilities.

**2.2.5 TLS Local Introductory Training Experiences (LITE):** Having decided previously to release central control of this resource, with the exception of the content of materials, the primary indicator of LITE strength is through bookshop sales. These show consistent interest and usage with equivalent numbers of units sold in 2008 and 2009 – 500 of all modules. The general healthiness of the programme is further confirmed by increasing numbers of people who follow-up engagement in LITE groups by enrolling on TLS Classic courses. Work is continuing on the revision of LITE module materials under the leadership of Sue Liddell who was appointed as LITE Course Manager in 2008.

2.2.6 The benefits of TLS to the Church sometimes go unnoticed because many course members simply return to their local congregations to engage in ministry and mission, hopefully more effectively through their learning and training. Just occasionally however something happens to herald the impact that the experience makes and TLS celebrates the fact that this year four of its current students have been accepted for ordination training.

### 2.3 Relationships beyond the RCLs

2.3.1 The 2006 General Assembly made difficult decisions about no longer pursuing EM1 through Mansfield College, Queens College and various regional ecumenical courses. The final ministerial student completed training at Mansfield College in June 2009, and the leavers' service was an opportunity for a full day's programme which properly marked the considerable mutual contribution which the URC and Mansfield College have made to each other over the years. The final URC student at Queens College is expected to have completed training by the time of this General Assembly, and the last students from SEITE, NEOC, and STETS have all been called and ordained or are in their period of final placement supervised by their synods.

2.3.2 The 2006 General Assembly charged the Education and Learning Committee with continuing to explore relationships with Mansfield College and Queens College which are not focused on initial ministerial education. In the case of Mansfield this has taken the form of an ongoing conversation about ways of drawing on the theological resources of the college. This conversation includes the college's chaplain-fellow and a representative of the Congregational Federation. Future joint work with Queens College is likely to be shaped by the need identified by the URC to help those ministers who come from Churches outside the UK to understand the cultures in which they are expecting to minister. This is work which is best carried out ecumenically, and Queen's College is well-placed to assist in this.

2.3.4 The deliberations which the URC made in 2006 in the Training Review did not take place in a static external setting, and this fluidity has continued. The shape of Regional Training Partnerships has continued to change, with apparently well-established ecumenical courses coming to an end and new ones being formed. Shifts in higher education funding, changing denominational and ecumenical priorities, and society's view of the place of theology and religious faith are all part of the environment in which the URC's education and learning policy is formed.

### 2.4 The wider coalition of education providers within the United Reformed Church

2.4.1 One of the advantages to the URC of being a large 'small organisation' is that we can easily identify and be in contact with those people who have a designated training function throughout the organisation, whether they are employed by the Assembly or a synod. This offers potential for active networking and sharing of ideas and resources across the boundaries of departments and disciplines. December 2009 saw the first of what is likely to become an annual event when an Education and Learning conference was held at Luther King House in Manchester. This brought together 50 people – relevant assembly officers, RCL teaching staff, Education and Learning Committee members, children and youth development officers, synod training and development officers, and synod mission enablers. Working relationships were renewed and we learned together about using 'appreciative inquiry' in our various contexts.

2.4.2 Physical meetings are important, but virtual gatherings for sharing are becoming increasingly common in the world outside the Church, and the URC has begun to make steps towards this too. Face to face conversations are likely always to be important, but

we have started to explore the possibility of establishing a Virtual Office and Learning Environment (VOLE) for the United Reformed Church. With assistance from the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education we offered training in online learning for 30 people from the wider education and learning network during Autumn 2009, with the intention that some of them would become involved in creating the VOLE in due course. There is much work to be done on this, and it will require collaboration with the communications and IT teams at Church House as well as continued involvement with synod colleagues if we are to develop a robust and accessible system that aids learning at many levels.

2.4.3 Collaboration between Church House departments has also been evident in the involvement of the United Reformed Church in *Fresh Expressions*. This has necessarily included a focus on training, given that the *Fresh Expressions* organisation has developed courses of varying lengths which are offered ecumenically in Scotland, Wales and England. The Mission Team and the Education and Learning Office co-hosted a day conference in February 2010 on *Fresh Expressions*, which brought together trainers and practitioners from across the United Reformed Church with members of the external *Fresh Expressions* team.

### 2.5 Supporting people in public ministry

2.5.1 Education for Ministry (EM) enables people to engage in the ministry of Word and Sacrament and Church Related Community Work in the United Reformed Church. The whole of Education for Ministry is divided into three phases: phase 1 (EM1) is the initial phase of training; phase 2 (EM2) is the post ordination or commissioning period lasting normally three years and formerly called the POET (Post Ordination Education and Training) period; phase 3 (EM3) covers the remaining time of a person's active ministry, including active service in retirement. EM3 was previously called CME, Continuing Ministerial Education. That the names of these learning periods have changed reflects a growing understanding that ministerial development is an ongoing process, with different phases requiring different learning, but not neatly separated from what has gone before.

2.5.1.1 EM1 – Equipping the whole people of God for mission includes paying attention to the formation of people involved in public ministry for the United Reformed Church, and this is tackled by all four Resource Centres for Learning, although the three colleges have responsibility for the majority of the initial ministerial education offered. The table on page 213 gives further statistics for EM1. One specific role that the Windermere Centre has in EM1 is to host an annual Summer School for EM1 participants and their families, and *Fresh Expressions* will be the theme of this year's event.

2.5.1.2 EM2 – The EM2 phase normally begins at ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament or commissioning to Church Related Community Work and ends with a certificate of completion of EM2. Learning is always the responsibility of the individual, but the transition to EM2 includes a move from the educational structures which are designed to provide support and stimulation during EM1. Early public ministry can be a time of isolation, with little line management, few colleagues and few, mostly volunteer staff and, for many, a significant change from a prior employment experience. The EM2 period is a time to learn how to work in new circumstances and to share that learning with others. The EM2 period sits alongside similar periods in other denominations, yet is quite distinct. EM2 ministers are people in recognised posts of responsibility, with no further required recognitions. In growing ecumenical training relationships, however, it may be that some training in this period is shared, yet the expectations of EM2 remain unique.

2.5.1.3 EM2 is a partnership framework in which the EM2er is supported by a range of people and funding. There are residential learning events arranged by the Assembly EM2/3 officer with two fixed events required in year one, and at least one training event in each of years two and three of EM2. These events are a combination of learning input, practice and reflection, designed to help the EM2er go forward in their ministry more equipped to approach areas of work or personal development. EM2 study sessions are organised in each synod, and EM2ers are encouraged to attend Synod Spring/Summer Schools. Some EM2ers participate in EM2 alongside undertaking further degrees. With additional budget to take up other kinds of learning related to their context of ministry,



and increased flexibility in developing individual programmes, EM2ers are better able than in the past to shape their own learning, within the context of assembly and synod expectations. Each EM2er is supported by an EM2 pastoral adviser appointed at the beginning of EM2 and who variously assists in theological reflection, offers pastoral support and acts as a critical friend and sounding board.

2.5.1.3 The EM2 cohort has reduced in recent years, from 87 in 2007/08 to 82 in 2008/08 and 73 in 2009/2010. EM2 weekends used to have a regular participant number of between 15 and 20, but the numbers, allied to the numbers going forward for ordination or commissioning, are reducing to a usual attendance of between 7 and 15.

2.5.1.4 EM3 – The purpose of EM3 is to deepen knowledge and develop professional practice, and it continues throughout the whole of a person's active ministry. The emphasis in EM3 on continuing development may include taking up new learning opportunities with each change of ministry and context. EM3ers may work with mentors, spiritual directors and other key accompaniers as they choose, with roles akin in some ways to the pastoral advisers of EM2. Synod training officers provide advice and guidance, and EM3ers are expected to be in active dialogue with them about both their learning needs and the skills and insights which the EM3er may offer to the wider Church. The Ministerial Accompanied Self Appraisal process begins in EM3 and may well indicate learning needs to be met within EM3, whether funded by the URC or from other sources.

2.5.1.5 There is an annual grants scheme to support planned learning and there are grants available for sabbatical learning programmes (ten yearly intervals) and for *Belonging to the World Church* visits (five yearly). Some EM3ers undertake further degrees. Each synod has its own programme of learning events, with usually a synod conference or school for all ministers in active service as a core element. There are assembly-wide and assembly-funded refresher courses for ministers attaining years of service of multiples of seven, with three of these being held each year. These are designed as a 'thank you!' from the URC as well as a time of collegiality, friendship, and learning for ministers who attend. Two RCLs, Westminster College and the Windermere Centre, are permanent venues and one course each year is currently held in either Scotland or Wales. In 2007-09, 84% to 92% of those invited respond positively, with yearly attendances over the three courses of between 124 and 135 people. Feedback from the courses is very positive, although one issue that has been identified is the participation of ministers in non-stipendiary service who find the time requirement during the week to be difficult. 2010 will have a course which includes a weekend to assess if this makes a positive impact on their attendance.

2.5.1.6 As in EM2, the assembly EM2/3 officer is accountable to the EM2/3 committee, a sub-committee of the Education and Learning Committee. The work relies on networking and building relationships, with the officer liaising more with synod training officers than directly with EM3 ministers and CRCWs. This is a role which has been developing since 2008, and currently includes consideration of those areas of training which General Assembly, Mission Council or synods have asked to be made assembly-wide in EM3 (e.g. sexual ethics training, child protection, Local Mission and Ministry Reviews) and participating in working groups to develop such training. Increasingly, the Education and Learning office is actively working across the URC in order to integrate different elements of training and development, auditing what is in place, understanding what more may be required and participating in design of new training content and processes.

## 2.6 Lay Preachers

2.6.1 The General Assembly of 2008 was informed of a new scheme which would offer assembly-accredited lay preachers consistent funding support for their development, and this was introduced in the Autumn of 2008. It offers an educational allowance of £200 which can be put towards courses offered by the Resource Centres for Learning or TLS. Up to half of the allowance may be used on books purchased through the United Reformed Church bookshop. Uptake of this allowance is gradually increasing, and the secretary for education and learning has been working with the RCLs and synods to encourage lay preachers to use it to its full potential.

### 3 Statistics

Whilst some areas of the work of the Education and Learning Committee have access to continuous and consistent data, particularly TLS, it has been difficult to generate statistics concerning uptake and effectiveness of some of the various training programmes of the URC, particularly in EM3. A review of EM3 in 2006 indicated that each synod keeps records in different systems with varying fields of information, and that the Education and Learning Committee records at Church House were likewise varied and sometimes lacked internal coherence. A significant amount of work has been completed since the 2006 report to assess what is needed, by whom, how to access any accumulated evidence, and the roles that various types of technologies should fulfill. A new Church House database is now beginning to be used and future reports from the Education and Learning Committee should be able to give better statistical evidence to inform and illustrate the narrative.

### 4 Where we're going

This is the story so far, and there is space here to give just a few glimpses of the chapters that are yet to be written.

4.1 The Education and Learning Committee will continue to take seriously the way in which *vision2020* offers a general framework through which the RCLs, TLS, and specific programmes that are linked through the committee can assist the whole United Reformed Church in effective discipleship and mission.

4.2 We look forward to involvement in the training aspects of any marketing campaign, so that congregations are confidently prepared to extend radical welcome and gospel hospitality.

4.3 There is scope, in creative collaboration between the Education and Learning and Ministries committees, for the long-running conversations about new kinds of assembly-accredited lay ministries which have surfaced most recently in *Equipping the Saints* and *Challenge to the Church* to combine with the potential of TLS pathways.

4.4 An emphasis on blended learning for flexibility and accessibility will see the VOLE up and running in its preliminary form by the next General Assembly in 2012. An obvious and early use for this would be in the provision of refreshed and renewed resources for leadership in the local church, drawing on existing work being done by the *Church Leadership Programme* at the Windermere Centre, an updated 'Course for Elders' and members' material which draws on the styles of presentation and accessibility which were employed to such positive effect by Vision4Life.

4.5 A theological research network which has long been an aspiration will be experienced in concrete ways, combined with a better understanding of how local theology and theology in the academy can nourish one another.

4.6 The extent to which this comes into being in a successful way will depend in great part on the depth of relationships which continue to develop in the wider network of trainers, developers and educationalists whose vocation it is to serve God through the United Reformed Church.

*'Before you become too entranced with gorgeous gadgets and mesmerising video displays, let me remind you that information is not knowledge, knowledge is not wisdom, and wisdom is not foresight. Each grows out of the other, and we need them all.'*

Arthur C Clarke, *Greetings, Carbon-based Bipeds! Voyager*, 1999.

# The Resource Centres for Learning

## Northern College (United Reformed and Congregational), Luther King House, Manchester

### 1 Where we were

1.1 Northern College is the lineal descendant of a number of independent congregational colleges rooted in various parts of the north and south-west of England. Since 1985 we have operated as an integrated part of Luther King House, a shared ecumenical resource centre for learning in south Manchester. Here we have been living and working alongside Baptists, Methodists, Unitarians and Anglicans and an 'Open College' cohort of students from a variety of other church backgrounds that in recent years has included a significant number of locally-resident African students. Since the mid 1990s we have shared in running an in-house ecumenical course known as *Faith in Living* that was validated by the University of Manchester.

1.2 In 1997 the initial education programme for our denomination's church related community workers moved from Salford Urban Mission and became at once a vital and vibrant part of Northern College and a creative extension of the shared *Faith in Living* programme.

1.3 In 2007 we began introducing a new ecumenical course, developed in partnership with the three Anglican dioceses of Liverpool, Manchester and Chester. This is taught at Luther King House for full-time students and in six centres all across the region for part-time students, one of these centres being Luther King House. This new course, called *Learning for Mission and Ministry* (LMM), leads to a Foundation Degree validated by the University of Chester and Liverpool Hope University. Developing this course was the central part of our response to decisions by Methodist Conference and the United Reformed Church General Assembly that wherever possible (in England) church learning opportunities should be developed within the Anglican-inspired ecumenical 'Regional Training Partnerships'. The LMM Course is the first fruit of the new Southern North West Training Partnership, in which we now share. Meanwhile the Luther King House Masters Degree in Contextual Theology and Research Degree programme continue to be validated by the University of Manchester.

1.4 The premises of Luther King House are owned by an educational trust, of which both Northern College and the United Reformed Church are foundation members. Over the years, this trust has developed a business model that means we run Luther King House as a residential conference centre with *en suite* bedrooms and hotel-standard facilities and catering, selling conference space and bed and breakfast whenever we have an available room that is not needed for teaching or for student accommodation. Thus far the hotel and conference business has helped to make a significant contribution to the costs of maintaining the facilities we use. In 2007 we carried out major renovations to re-design the shared library and reading room facilities, remodel access to the chapel and create a new lounge area at the heart of Luther King House. All the constituent colleges helped enable these improvements as they were able. We now have a rolling programme of renewals and improvements to keep the premises attractive and fit for purpose, funded from revenue.

### 2 Where we are

2.1 2009-10 is the third year of teaching the new LMM programme that is becoming the initial learning provision for most Northern College students preparing for ordination and all church related community work students preparing for ministry in the United Reformed Church. The new course is rich in online learning resources and

is delivered in three different formats – for full-time Luther King House students; for part-time students across the Southern North West region; and for United Reformed Church distance learning students from a much wider catchment area (as far afield as the south coast of England). Making it happen, identifying glitches and devising short-term and longer term improvements to this complex of educational opportunities has been challenging as well as exciting for all the staff involved. Sometimes we have had to rely on the forbearance of pioneer students to an extent that we would not have wished, for we ourselves have been engaged in a learning experience that feels as challenging and unpredictable as white water rafting – and equally exhilarating, some of the time.

2.2 Alongside the development of the three versions of the new LMM course, and preparing a new University of Chester honours level BA programme to connect with it, which we will start teaching during 2010-11, we have continued to offer a Masters programme that is used both by some ministry students and as a part-time programme for continuing education by ministers. From September of this year we hope to be offering two new modules as part of the MA programme which will consider the application of adult education principles in church contexts. This should be of interest to all who teach or tutor or enable learning in church, course or college contexts. We also have a growing number of research students, including serving ministers, working on professional doctorates and other theses related to church life and mission.

2.3 Being willing participants in the evolving Education and Learning Committee commitment to ‘whole-church learning’ and to our emerging role as one of four Resource Centres for Learning for the United Reformed Church, our staff have continued to engage in the development of a range of learning materials and learning events. Some of these are in response to synod invitations, whilst others contribute to whole-church initiatives such as *Vision4Life*. This has included the exploratory development of new materials and events in cooperation with synod training and development officers as well as responding to invitations to share in a variety of learning events. Our staff members have also enjoyed sharing in the preparation of TLS materials, working with groups of students at TLS weekends and contributing to short courses at the Windermere Centre.

2.4 The low level of new vocations to ministry has been a concern (there were no new church related community work students in 2009-10 and none due to start in 2010-11), but we continue to enjoy the privilege of working with those preparing for ministry. In our learning format, students spend significant amounts of time on practical placements in churches and in wider community contexts all through their learning programme. Our staff members take particular pleasure in watching students engage in learning in placement settings and within the modules which we teach and in helping them to make connections between the two.

2.5 As an expression of our wider remit, it has been good to have a new student join us in 2009-10 who is preparing for the ministry of the Moravian Church and a non-ministerial student who is a member of a Congregational Federation church.

### **3 Where we are going**

3.1 Currently, we are engaged in negotiations with our ecumenical partners to alter the format of our part-time courses to enable a richer and more supportive programme for United Reformed students from all across England and Wales. We are hoping to develop a blending of computer-supported home learning (e-learning) with six full weekends of face-to-face learning on site in Manchester. At the same time we will be building on our experience of developing e-learning materials so that they can be used creatively both in support of university level courses and to enable learning opportunities in individual churches or local clusters anywhere.

3.2 Alongside the staff of the other resource centres for learning, the learning-enabling staff of synods and the ministers and others who enable learning in local church situations, we are excited by the potential of the developing Education and Learning agenda within the United Reformed Church. As we are all on a shared journey

of discovery it is not easy to say definitively where we are all going, but the staff and governors of Northern College are eager to contribute as best we can to the creative development of an array of local churches excited and enabled by their ongoing engagement with learning. Our ministry is to help enable your ministry.

## 4 People

4.1 As we approach the new academic year (2010-11) we will be welcoming two new staff members and saying farewell and thanks to Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee, who has been the lynchpin of the community work programme. Lesley retires this summer. The two new staff members are Revd Dr Kathy White who joins us as a tutor in Old Testament/Hebrew Bible and Revd Dr Christine Jones who will succeed Lesley in leading the Community Development Work teaching programme. Kathy is an indirect successor, with a different speciality, for the Revd Dr Jan Berry who left the staff of Northern College in the summer of 2009. We still see a lot of Jan because she now works half-time for Luther King House, co-ordinating the Masters programme, as well as pioneering a new half-time role as theologian at Holy Rood House in Thirsk.

4.2 We would also wish to record our hopes, prayers and good wishes for those students who have completed EM1 with us and moved on into ministry since the last meeting of the General Assembly.

# Scottish United Reformed and Congregational College

## 1 Where we were

*Birds learn to swim, Fish learn to fly*

*Edicio de la Torre*

1.1 Founded 200 years ago (next year), the historical perspective is one that is returning to our collective minds. Our roots lie in a widespread recognition amongst early Scottish Congregationalists that learning, not least learning for recognised ministry, was a priority of the churches – so much so that they founded the ‘theological hall’ several years before they created the ‘Congregational Union of Scotland’. Keeping the learning dimension at the vital heart of the church in Scotland has been a major role for the college throughout its life.

1.2 The two centuries since then have been an ecumenical journey. In various periods, we have undertaken our theological education in partnership with the United Free Church of Scotland and the Scottish Episcopal Church. We trained people for overseas missionary service – most notably perhaps Eric Liddell. We were active partners in the Scottish Churches’ Open College and were deeply saddened at its demise. Now, the focus for us is on the collaboration between the Scottish Episcopal, Methodist and United Reformed churches (EMU) where education is recognised as being in the forefront of ecumenical co-operation and development.

1.3 Another important partnership has been with the universities in Scotland and in particular their faculties of Divinity. We continue to work together with them in Education for Ministry 1 and also in EM3 continuing education. We remain in conversation with them, directly and ecumenically, around the role, ethos and practice of the academy in theological education. Historically, of course, the Scottish universities have developed in theological education distinctively from their English counterparts. Nonetheless, there is some degree of parallel in the degree to which theology and indeed religious studies have developed as disciplines. Our college has served in a

complementary role to the university provision but perhaps we are now more conscious of (alongside the 'complementary') having a responsibility to be 'other' – to be concerned for 'ordinary theology' and other grassroots developments in thinking, to integrate theological perspectives with those of other disciplines and approaches, to question and challenge 'academic' perspectives and their limitations.

1.4 Alongside our founding for the promotion of learning for ministry, early Scottish Congregationalists were concerned for the learning of ordinary folk – for example, through preaching, through political education and through the adult Sunday School movement. In the last two decades in particular, there has been a major focus on adult learning within the life of the college. Most of our provision is undertaken on an integrated adult learning model with an interaction of participants and perspectives across the life of the Church.

1.5 Our major partnership of course has been with the then Congregational Union of Scotland and subsequent to the unification of the CUS and the URCUK with the synod of Scotland of the United Reformed Church. In constitution and governance distinct, there has been the strongest collaboration. The Principal acts as synod training officer and synod learning-related staff serve now as associate academic staff of the college. A high level of shared life means that the college is able to respond quickly and sensitively to learning needs that arise in the synod and its churches. The two bodies continue to keep under active review the operation of the reciprocal agreement which underpins the resourcing and functioning of the relationship. We are challenged by our reciprocal agreement to play a prophetic as well as a service role. Alongside this, as a resource centre for learning recognised by the General Assembly of the URC, we are moving forward in developing our activities on a wider front – with the neighbouring synod (Northern), with the work of the Education and Learning committee and with our colleagues in other RCLs.

## 2 Where we are

2.1 A major aspect of our life and work recently has been an inspection carried out on behalf of the Education and Learning committee. Following the initial visit, we were encouraged and felt significantly affirmed by the inspectors' report and many of the recommendations were in line with policy commitments and planned action of the college. We welcomed the inspectors back very recently and we note with satisfaction their comment now that: 'It is with great pleasure that the inspectors record the excellent response to the Inspectors' recommendations in 2009. The college has taken seriously the issues which were raised and have endeavoured to change their practice.' Nonetheless, this satisfaction does not carry the sense of feeling that we have finished the work and we will continue actively to pursue developments in the fields that were identified in the inspectors' review of our life and work.

2.2 For the wider URC, there are recommendations by the inspectors that are rooted in the continuing exploration of what was meant when in 2000 the denominational partners created a 'church in three nations', not merely as an observation of politico-geographical fact but as a challenge to live our common life in ways that respected and drew strength from national (and other) diversity.

2.3 The URC Synod of Scotland together with the Methodist Church in Scotland and the Scottish Episcopal Church has committed to developing shared life in mission and ministry. This was paralleled by conversations already underway between education staff in the three denominations around improving educational collaboration (the College acting on its own behalf and for the URC synod of Scotland). We believe that there would be very significant benefits of such partnership, including:

- a) sharing of educational programmes to provide a broader range of learning opportunities across the denominations together with lessening inappropriate duplication and potentially creating more often viable learning cohorts;
- b) drawing on the distinctive strengths and experience of the provider institutions;
- c) utilising more effectively the knowledge and experience of staff members and facilitating improved staff development;

- d) better marketing; and
- e) improved capacity to meet challenges creatively and effectively.

### **3 Where we are going**

3.1 Sections 1 and 2 have already suggested some of the areas for development in the life of the college and more widely. Here are some further thoughts –

#### *3.2 Staffing*

3.2.1 We have extended our part-time and honorary staff through:

- a) the appointment of a special category minister together with Morningside United Church focused on ministry with older people;
- b) the filling of a vacancy for a part-time academic tutor;
- c) the appointment of a college chaplain with responsibility for college worship and pastoral support;
- d) the inclusion of the synod children and youth development officer and the field officer for local mission and development as associate staff.

3.2.2 We recognise further challenges in:

- bringing together this staff group more effectively;
- utilising the range of skills and experience they bring, including those which are personal rather than linked strictly to their posts;
- maintaining the underpinning resources;
- staff development;
- linking to staff in our ecumenical educational partners and in other resource centres for learning.

#### *3.3 Ecumenical*

3.3.1 We are at an early stage in our more focused conversations with colleagues in the Methodist and Scottish Episcopal Churches. One URC ordinand in Scotland in the coming academic year will be studying alongside Episcopal and potentially Methodist ordinands.

3.3.2 We recognise further challenges in:

- the organisational and change management issues in forming a structured framework for collaboration;
- ensuring that informal community based adult learning activities and perspectives are at the heart of the partnership alongside more formal accredited course provision.

#### *3.4 Online and mixed learning modes*

3.4.1 Relating particularly to a synod that is around 400 miles in length, we have always been conscious of the challenges of distance learning, but we are aware too that there are other dimensions to the possibilities that online learning brings to the educational mix in our learning provision. We were grateful to the Education and Learning committee for its work to support RCLs and other education providers in exploring online learning.

3.4.2 We recognise further challenges in:

- creating an online learning environment that is appropriate to our learners and flexible enough to respond to a variety of needs and situations;
- ensuring that our IT development is consistent with those of ecumenical and other educational partners;
- facilitating and accessing staff learning and development to support the changes;
- exploring the curricular design implications of technological changes.

## Education and Learning

### 3.5 *Patterns of ministry and leadership*

3.5.1 We are very conscious of the need within the Church to continue to explore and develop its patterns of leadership and service and of the implications these have for education and learning. Indeed, we are sure that learning activities themselves support the imagination and thinking to develop new forms.

3.5.2 We are aware too that the Synod of Scotland has not been as successful as it would wish to be in fostering lay preaching and leadership, in the development of CRCW projects, in the recruitment and deployment of ministers other than in stipendiary service and in the more creative and effective use of team ministry of different kinds.

3.5.3 We recognise further challenges in:

- the nurturing of gifts more deeply in the congregations and supporting those who can be growers of people's gifts;
- the marketing of TLS in Scotland and/or the sharing of an ecumenical lay learning programme;
- the promotion of vocations;
- the development of changing patterns of ministry and leadership.

### 3.6 Celebration

With a 200<sup>th</sup> birthday coming up, we will be looking not only to celebrate our past and present but planning for a future of continuing educational innovation and development, envisaging fresh patterns of theological learning for all, sharing our strengths, insights and gifts, committing ourselves to partnership and collaboration, and gaining more security in resources.

Westminster Confession  
'a Methodist scholar looks at the Westminster Confession'







Ministerial students learn banner making

## **Westminster – a resource centre for learning**

*Serving the United Reformed Church*

### **1 Where we were**

1.1 Westminster has given much time, energy and thought over the past two years to the implications of what it means for us to be a resource centre for learning for all the people of the United Reformed Church, while also working ever more closely with other URC resource centres and with our ecumenical partners.

1.2 We have a good inheritance: of skilled and experienced theological educators, of a magnificent location at the heart of Cambridge, of a longstanding partnership within the Cambridge Theological Federation, of library and archive, of access to the resources of two universities, of a place of prayer, hospitality and welcome. The question before us has been how best to make these resources more accessible and available to all the people of the United Reformed Church, both at our centre in Cambridge and more widely throughout the Church and nations.

### **2 Where we are**

2.1 Westminster has long had a particular role as a place where men and women are prepared for ministry of Word and Sacrament. That work continues, but now much more intentionally within the context of a broader landscape of learning, and even more deliberately in partnership with others.

2.2 At Westminster, we are gradually moving towards a pattern of whole church learning. We already hold regular conferences for lay preachers. We host and welcome a variety of events for people in the Church and this aspect of our life is developing fast.

The Westminster teaching staff spend much of their time in the wider Church, often outside Cambridge, leading events, days and weekends. We contribute as writers, teachers and planners to the TLS course. We have also been contributors to Vision4Life material and are supporting churches, ministers and groups in engaging with it positively. We are also glad to support ministers on sabbatical and on EM3 (whether for a short stay for study leave or through studying for a degree or particular project), both by welcoming people to Cambridge, by staffing events and by one-to-one conversation.

2.3 We are often to be seen at other resource centres too, including Windermere, contributing to the learning of the Church. Increasingly we exchange ideas, time, policies and vision with other RCL staff, and, encouraged and supported by the secretary for education and learning, we are developing collaboration amongst those in theological education and training across the URC. We are contributing towards the joining up of the URC's centres, the work of the synods and Assembly initiatives and were glad to be part of the first annual Education and Learning conference.

2.4 Education for Ministry 1 (the first stage of ministerial education) is a large and important part of our work and we do it within the ecumenical context of the Cambridge Theological Federation. We give a high priority to finding the right course for each student and the right style and method of delivery. With two universities to work with, and with a richly diverse Federation, we can offer a huge range of resources, all to high quality. We always seek to set good reflection on practice within the context of theological learning. All our students have Church connections and placements while they are learning and preparing for ministry. And we are finding, and increasingly developing, ways in which learning can be delivered to a varied and dispersed community, while also continuing to offer the particular opportunities of close community life (for worship, living and studying). We are all learning fast about the latest educational technologies, which we always seek to combine with in-depth face-to-face contact. We are increasingly aware that today's future ministers need to be prepared for a fast changing, and very challenging, scene. They need to be equipped to interpret the world and Church they inhabit, to give an account of the Gospel that will answer today's questions and challenges, and be spiritually resilient and rooted so that they can serve the Church of today and tomorrow. Preparation for ministry today is about deepening faith, learning interpretive skills and acquiring the deepest kind of wisdom.

### 3 Where we're going

3.1 We're planning to hold more church events and conferences, and to continue to serve the Church in the places where people are. We're hosting a conference on Reformed Theology in 2010. And we're planning a large celebration of preaching in 2011, with internationally renowned speakers. We're also planning our teaching work in the wider Church carefully, collaboratively and intentionally.

3.2 We're working more closely with other resource centres within the URC, as we exchange good practice and good ideas with each other, sharing excellence and modelling consistency.



Baby and adult hand: 'joining hands  
- a sketch by Neil Thorogood'

3.3 We're contributing to a strategic renewal of the Cambridge Theological Federation with ecumenical partners who are also seeking to be more focused on the mission of the Church, on the life-long learning of the Church and on the international context in which we all live and learn.

3.4 We're planning to make our building ready for the new purpose of being a resource centre. The building is only one of the places in which we all work and serve the Church. But it is an important one. We want to take the best opportunities the building offers and make it work for the Church in new ways. More about our plans will be evident at Assembly, but the key idea is to equip the building to serve its present purpose: to improve the accommodation for guests, to develop places for worship and prayer, to modernise and equip the meeting and teaching rooms, to provide good space for celebrating faith through music and art, to provide facilities to keep and to open up our precious historical resources and archives, to make the most of our grounds, and to let in some fresh air to what could be consistently a beautiful place. We are working with a wonderful architect and a highly motivated and supportive board of governors to transform Westminster. We are exploring ways of funding this development, including the sale of those of Westminster's historic assets with which we can reasonably part.

## 4 People

4.1 Within the last two years we have prayed for God's blessing on our leaving ministerial students and on those who have completed an award as part of EM3. It is our privilege to be a community in which ministers are prepared, resourced and refreshed.

4.2 We have thanked God for Margaret Thompson and for her work here as researcher, archivist and Principal's PA. We hope soon to appoint a new archivist to succeed her and to develop work with our historical resources for local churches and for specialist scholars.

4.3 We have also appointed new support staff, Peter Dawes, Sophie O'Reilly and Emma Daniels, so that Westminster can be efficiently run and imaginatively developed for the future.

4.4 We have welcomed Tony Bottoms as our new convener of governors and have rejoiced in his magnificent contribution to college life.

4.5 This summer, the conveners of our two main working committees both reach the end of their terms of office. We are deeply grateful to Fleur Houston (Board of Studies) and Brian Long (Management Committee) who have each served Westminster wonderfully well.

4.6 Westminster is a community of people, who, in good company, are serving the United Reformed Church.



## Windermere Centre

### 1 Where we were

#### 1.1 From Life and Witness to Education and Learning

1.1.1 The Windermere Centre has historically been accountable to General Assembly through the Life and Witness Committee, although, as a residential training centre, has always fallen between the two stools of mission and education/training – a creative tension that has been reflected in its programme. Since the appointment of Lawrence Moore as the present Director in 2002, the programme has been designed specifically to equip the Church for all aspects of life-in-mission.

1.1.2 With the new committee structure, the Centre has moved to Education and Learning and become one of the Church's four Resource Centres for Learning. In practical terms, this has meant more of a change in which the Centre is viewed within the Church and funded and managed than in the way the Centre views itself and its priorities.

1.1.3 The Windermere Centre Review (2008) recommended a rationalization of the Centre's management structure. The functions of the former Windermere Advisory Group (strategic) and Windermere Local Management Committee (practical management) were amalgamated in the new Windermere Management Committee under the convenership of the Revd Howard Sharp. Its first priority from the Review has been to appoint a Centre Manager; to this end, a major review of the staffing structure of the Centre is underway.

#### 1.2 Recent developments

##### 1.2.1 Card Payment facilities

The Windermere Centre is now able to take payments by debit and credit cards. Payment can be made over the phone or in person. Guests are asked to ensure that they submit a £30 deposit with personal booking forms for courses and ideally to pay the balance on arrival.

##### 1.2.2 The Hannah Wing

In 2008 the four ground floor rooms for wheelchair users and the communal bathroom were re-ordered to provide two en-suite rooms for wheelchair users and one standard room for a course leader or carer. This means that wheelchair users and guests with disabilities and mobility issues now have up-to-the-minute accommodation facilities. It means too that all Centre accommodation is en-suite. The improvements were made possible by a generous grant from the Hannah Fund.

##### 1.2.3 WiFi Connection

The Centre is served by two secure wireless internet connections that ensure guests have fast, secure broadband internet access throughout the building.

### 2 Where we are

#### 2.1 A resource centre for learning

2.1.1 Established originally as a lay training centre, the Centre has, for some years, run a core programme aimed at both lay and ordained members of the Church, as well as hosting church weekends, residential committee meetings and network gatherings.

2.1.2 The core programme has been designed to incorporate the following elements:

- Bible and theology
- Worship and preaching
- Missiology and contemporary culture
- Personal faith and spirituality

- Ecumenical
- Administration and other skills

2.1.3 Since 2008, the Centre's programme has been focussed around *Vision4Life*, supplementing and expanding the range of materials offered through the V4L website. The courses have been aimed particularly at equipping ministers and leaders in the local churches to help members engage creatively with Bible study, prayer and evangelism.

2.1.4 The Windermere Centre has its own distinctive character among the Church's Resource Centres for Learning, operating as it does within an educational free market, and dependent on effective marketing and publicity to attract participants. Alongside this, there are a number of programmes, residential committee meetings and networks to which the Centre plays regular host: TLS, Ministers' Pre-Retirement courses, Refresher Courses, Women in Ministries Network, Moderators' Meeting, Assessment Conference training, Synod Ministers' schools, Education and Learning Committee.

2.2 The Director plays a role within the wider Church as part of the URC coalition of education providers. As well as speaking at synods, ministers' schools and other events, the Director sits on the *Vision4Life* Steering Group and co-chairs the *Marketing Campaign* Steering Group with the General Secretary.

### 2.3 Supporting people in public ministry

- The Director runs a weekly blog (*disclosing new worlds*) with comments on the weekly Revised Common Lectionary texts and sermons from United Reformed Church preachers. This is accessed by a large number of ministers and lay preachers as a regular resource for sermon and Bible study preparation.
- All Centre courses are designed to be eligible for EM3 grants, so that ministers can attend Centre courses as part of their EM3 programme.
- The Centre runs the *Church Leadership Programme* in conjunction with a delivery team from the East Midlands Synod. This is a programme that links Benedictine spirituality with effective insights from the world of business and organisation in order to enable ministers of some experience to develop further their own patterns of spirituality, effective ministry and leadership. Participants are nominated within and sponsored by the synods.
- Courses are designed each year particularly with a view to equipping lay preachers and helping them to develop their ministries. This is the 'Weekend' series: *Luke in a Weekend*, *Gospels in a Weekend*, *The Old Testament in a Weekend*, *The Creed in a Weekend* for example.
- The Centre has a rolling programme of courses for local church officeholders: secretaries, treasurers, elders and local leaders.

### 2.4 IT developments

The Windermere Centre is actively exploring ways of maximizing the opportunities afforded by IT developments to support efficient and effective communication within and beyond the Church. The Director is committed to ensuring as broad and effective a web presence by local churches as possible, and to roll out non-residential IT training via webinars (online seminars).

#### 2.4.1 *iChurch* Websites

The Director has developed a URC local Church 'website in a box'. It is aimed at local churches who are not web-technology literate but who would run a website if it were simple to operate and could easily and effectively be kept up to date. Based on Wordpress (an Open Source blogging software that is ideal for running personal and small business websites), *iChurch* costs £100 and includes a domain set up on the URC server with a yourname.urchurch.org.uk address, Wordpress software, your site theme, access to video tutorials, initial customization, unlimited bandwidth and free hosting for the life of your site. In addition, there are regular *iChurch* webinars for continuing training. For further details, go to <http://ichurch.urchurch.org.uk>

### 2.4.2 Webinar Training

The Centre is in the process of developing an *IT for churches* course that will be delivered to participants in their homes via webinars. As well as sharing the instructor's desktop, the instructor is able to allow participants to share their desktops in order to troubleshoot effectively. The course will teach participants to use and develop the standard Microsoft Office suite (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Publisher and email) for communications, the production of materials and resources, and online communication.

## 3 Where we're going

### 3.1 Building development

3.1.1 The work of a number of years is coming to fruition in the construction of a link building between Carver church and the church halls in order to provide an integrated conference suite of buildings for use by the Centre. This represents an imaginative and exceptional partnership between the United Reformed Church and a local URC. In practice, it completes and extends the partnership begun with the establishment of the Centre in the former Carver Church manse. The project has been made possible through the hard work of the Finance Committee and the personal offices of the Treasurer, John Ellis. The negotiations – financial, legal and pastoral – have happened through the committed interest of the URC Trust, the North Western Synod, Carver Church, the Windermere Centre and the Finance Committee. The work is due to be completed in September 2010.

3.1.2 In addition, a staffroom extension is currently awaiting final planning permission. The staff room will provide seating and meal accommodation for staff, who presently huddle into whatever small spaces are available in the kitchen. Construction is expected to commence in early July 2010 and to be completed at the same time as the link building.

### 3.2 Other developments

#### 3.2.1 *vision2020*

*vision2020* is the general framework within which, if adopted by General Assembly, the whole United Reformed Church will operate to integrate mission, church life, education and learning. The Centre has pioneered a weekend format for local churches and wider groups to engage with the *vision2020* process. It is planned to roll this out more widely.

#### 3.2.2 Marketing and identity campaign

The Centre will act as a focal point for training and equipping churches to take part in the campaign. It will be the venue for residential committee meetings and for the Research and Development churches to meet, plan and develop resources.

#### 3.2.3 Learning Networks via IT

The Centre is planning to create active, ongoing networks of learners via IT, delivering training and development in these skills via regular Windermere webinars. This will provide an important component within the URC's virtual office and learning environment.

#### 3.2.4 'On the Edge'

Windermere has always been 'on the edge' – geographically, and in terms of pushing at boundaries. It has ever been the intention to ensure that visitors to the Centre are excited by their learning experiences, encouraged in their faith and empowered to minister more effectively and to pass on what they have gained in order to be resources to the wider Church. This is an aim to be pursued and developed.

## Committee members:

Tom Arthur, Tina Ashitey, David Coleman (resigned as Secretary March 2009), John Danso (co-opted until July 2009), Barbara Exley, Kate Gartside (completed term July 2009), James Hurst (until July 2010), Andrew Jack (Secretary), Mary Jeremiah, Morag McLintock (Convener, until July 2010), Michelle Marcano, (Church House staff), Elizabeth Nash (Convener Elect), Gwynneth Tilley and Pamela Ward (resigned January 2009)

## 1 Encouraging Others

1.1 Be you a committee, church or synod, we hope you've all had fun since July 2008 embracing the General Assembly updated Equal Opportunities Policy and implementing it as per resolution 19 from GA 2008. The *Marketing Campaign* requires us to be a welcoming inclusive church and so a practical and meaningful personal adoption of the Equal Opportunities Policy is essential. We were delighted to be involved in assisting Mersey Synod's Church and Society committee explore what Equal Opportunities meant to them and how they could advance the policy and guidelines within their synod. Please let us know how you've done this, what assistance you'd find useful and share your experience with others to assist them.

1.2 As well as trying to raise awareness, encourage discussion and implementation, our recent work has focussed on developing resources and trying to establish how best to communicate, encourage and support churches. We've also been working with training officers to tap into Interim Moderators resources. It's fair to say its all Work in Progress! Watch this space!

1.3 We continue to act as observers on some other General Assembly Committees to provide an EO view and highlight that we aren't a wee administration concept in isolation! We thank them for their welcome and willingness to remember, listen to and work with us!

## 2 Exploring Ourselves

2.1 We've spent lots of time, thinking and dreaming (all throughout many changes in committee membership) on what our role is and how we should progress in a relevant and effective way.

2.2 We're delighted that Michael Jagesser and Sandra Ackroyd led us in exploration of multiculturalism during a recent training session which developed us greatly and gave us plenty of food for thought.

## 3 Examining Observing

3.1 Due to a communication mix up beyond our control, this year's Church Return did not contain the questions that populate the back page every 4 years to enable the committee to carry out its main monitoring exercise. The questions should be coming to a church return near you in the future...please complete!

3.2 We are grateful for the work of the Nominations Committee, with whom we have carried out some monitoring and learning exercises, for their ongoing active role in ensuring, where possible, diversity within their nominations and work done to try and redress balances! Long may that continue throughout!

## 4 Expectations Objectives

As to our future ....we look forward to raising further awareness, continuing to provide support, resources and assistance, working closely with all, advancing our work with the Methodist Church, further establishing our role and involvement with URC programmes and committees, continuing with our monitoring role, learning from and addressing the results and receiving from law...to love.

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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)

David Aplin, Richard Dewar, Brian Hosier, Jane Humphreys, Angus Massie, Harry Potter, Kathryn Taylor, David Walton, Alan Small (Chairman of the URC Trustees)

**Chief Finance Officer:** Andrew Grimwade

## 1 Telling the Financial Story

1.1 At the time of the last Assembly, almost everyone thought the economy was strong, our money was safe in our High Street banks, our investments would always earn plenty of interest – and some even believed that governments had abolished boom and bust. So much for putting one's faith in Mammon.

1.2 The financial challenges of the last two years have been legion. The central resources and programmes of the United Reformed Church have been less damaged than those of many other charities because we rely much more for our income on the giving of our members through the Ministry and Mission Fund than on investment income. Giving has remained remarkably stable despite the recession. We were also helped by some prudent investment decisions shortly before the stock market crash. Nonetheless we have not been immune from the unexpected.

## 2 The Pensions Story

2.1 The Ministers' Pension Fund was due for its triennial valuation at the end of 2008. Legislation requires us to value its assets based on a snapshot on a single day and unfortunately that day was when the stock market was close to its lowest point, making the market value of our investments appear abnormally low. They have since recovered but we are left with a theoretical deficit in the Pension Fund of almost £23m. Even without the stock market problem we would have had a deficit, albeit much smaller, due to the increased longevity of our retired ministers.

2.2 A great deal of work has followed to explore how best we handle this deficit. We are very grateful to the synods and their constituent churches, who have risen to the challenge of providing extra pensions support so we can provide the extra money that needs to be put in the Fund during 2010-12. We are also reviewing the level of benefits the Fund provides in the light of longer term trends.

2.3 However, much the most complex area has been finding a way in which the Pensions Regulator's demands can be matched with the ethos and structure of the United Reformed Church and the various pieces of legislation that relate to charities, on the one hand, and to pension funds on the other. We hope to be able to present an enabling resolution to Assembly as part of a mutually acceptable solution to this problem.

2.4 Behind all this technical work, it is worth stressing that there is no actual problem in the Pension Fund and no pension currently in payment, or expected to become payable in the near future, is under any threat whatsoever.

### **3 The Investment Story**

In the Pension Fund and elsewhere we want our money to work as hard as possible for us within the ethical investment guidelines set by Assembly. To help this we have strengthened and streamlined the processes for monitoring our investments and recommending investment policy. A single Investment Committee, with Richard Nunn as Convener, now serves all the central structures of the Church in this area of work.

### **4 The Charity Law Story**

4.1 Our Church's investment options are affected by our charitable status and over the last two years the impact of the Charities Act 2006 on the Church has had to be worked through in detail. One result of this is that at the end of 2009 the URC Trust has agreed a new Memorandum and Articles of Association and will in future be the legal vehicle which holds the central assets of the denomination.

4.2 In parallel, we have been able to give advice and support to local churches needing to register as charities with the Charity Commission.

### **5 Our Risk Register**

Whether or not we were formally a charity, it would be good practice to think about our risks. As Christians we know we are called to take risks for the sake of mission and we must not let any Act of Parliament cloud that principle. Nevertheless, we are also called to be good stewards of God's gifts to us and should take account of what risks we are running. As we have studied this question, we have refined the Risk Register for risks the Church needs to monitor centrally, but have recognised that many of the risks with the greatest impact are local ones for elders and others to keep in mind. Help with identifying the key questions to ask will be placed on the Church's website to supplement the material on the Charity Commission's website.

### **6 Our Church Treasurers**

We are very aware that in the local church it is often the treasurer who is expected to keep up with unfolding and complicated legislation affecting accounts, charity law, employment law, risks and insurance questions. To assist this vital and faithful group of volunteers, we negotiated in 2008 a special group membership of the Association of Church Accountants and Treasurers. Every Church Treasurer should now have a copy of their valuable handbook and be receiving the regular updates they circulate.

### **7 The Westminster Story**

Although much of our work is unglamorous, we are glad to be engaged with a variety of exciting projects in the life of the Church as well. Many of these will come to Assembly via other routes than this report. Few are larger than the Development Plan for Westminster College, at a potential cost of £6.2m. Shortly before Assembly the Finance Committee will fulfil its brief to undertake a financial scrutiny of this project and will consider the request of Mission Council to table resolutions at Assembly about funding options.

## 8 The Stewardship Story

8.1 In addition to a busy programme of immediate issues, the Finance Committee has given time over the last two years to consider what some of the longer term trends in the United Reformed Church are saying to us. One outcome, as foreshadowed at the last Assembly, was to set up a new Stewardship sub-committee.

8.2 The working ethos of the sub-committee is the belief that *Stewardship is the response to the grace of God in Jesus Christ. It is about giving, about giving ourselves, without reserve, to achieve God's purposes of love.* As such, stewardship embraces our response to all that we receive from God: the gospel, time, creation, money, etc.

8.3 The Stewardship sub-committee aims to explore and develop various resources through which it can support and facilitate individuals and churches in the way that they understand stewardship and hence respond to God. It sees its role as helping churches to achieve their goals, whilst imparting the message that appropriate stewardship of everything, not just money, should be at the core of church activity. It is not promoting a programme that churches sign up to, but rather a support network to underpin the work that churches are already doing or would like to do. Resources will be disseminated via electronic means wherever possible.

## 9 The Future Story

The Finance Committee also sees a clear need for some wider thinking about the way the Church uses its resources over the medium to long term. Not all current trends are sustainable, but our total assets remain very large, especially if we include our investment in buildings. The Committee therefore very much welcomes the initiative of the two incoming Moderators of Assembly to set up a Think Tank to explore creatively and positively these issues.

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**THE ROBINHOOD TAX**

**We are a multicultural church**

The Committee is responsible for the Ministry of Word and Sacrament, 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.

**Convener:** Peter Poulter

**Secretary:** Craig Bowman

**Committee members:** Yolande Burns, Brenda Jesse, Helen Renner, David Skitt, Kevin Watson, Ruth Whitehead, David Bedford (Convener of the Retired Ministers' Housing sub-committee), Graham Campling (Convener of the Assessment Board), Jan Harper (Convener of the Leadership in Worship sub-committee), Tony Haws (Convener of the Maintenance of the Ministry sub-committee), Geoff Townsend (Convener of the Accreditation sub-committee), Paul Whittle (Convener of the CRCW Programme sub-committee)

## **1 Personalia**

1.1 A considerable number of changes have taken place since the committee reported to the last General Assembly. The Revd Gwen Collins has been succeeded by the Revd Geoff Townsend as convener of the Accreditation sub-committee, Prof David Cutler has been succeeded by Dr Graham Campling as convener of the Assessment Board, the Revd Bob Day has been succeeded by the Revd Paul Whittle as convener of the Church Related Community Work Programme sub-committee, and the Revd Geoffrey Roper has been succeeded by the Revd Dr Anthony Haws as convener of the Maintenance of the Ministry sub-committee. We are extremely grateful to Gwen, David, Bob and Geoffrey for the faithful service they have given.

1.2 On the main committee we have said goodbye to the Revd Alan Evans, Dr Roger Allen and Mrs Joanna Morling, and we have welcomed Mrs Brenda Jesse and the Revd David Skitt. At General Assembly in 2008 we said thank you and farewell to the Revd Christine Craven at the end of 12 years of service and so we have also seen a new secretary, the Revd Craig Bowman, come into post.

1.3 At this Assembly we say farewell to the Revd Peter Poulter as he completes his term as convener of the committee. We have been well served by Peter and his extensive knowledge of the Church combined with a gentle but firm guiding hand have helped to ensure continued development in our work at a time of considerable change. We welcome the Revd Ruth Whitehead as the new convener, someone who already knows our work well.

## Continuing work

### 2 Challenge to the Church

2.1 *A Challenge to the Church* was issued at General Assembly in 2008 in which the need for local leadership was identified and the value of team pastorates affirmed. Following the request of synods to identify the number of stipendiary ministers and the number of local church leaders required, a consultation with representatives from all the synods was held in July 2009. This has proved to be a sobering exercise as it seems clear that in many places it is proving difficult to move beyond what has been a traditional expression of ministry, and the numbers indicated by the synods as necessary reflects this. The work necessary to identify leadership needs and to encourage new thinking has meant a longer time-frame for this process than originally envisaged.

2.2 As in many areas of our church's life, the synods are at different points in the process and moving at different speeds. What we heard through the consultation was the need to allow for synod variations, within the principles agreed by General Assembly in 2008, whilst Ministries provides encouragement and support through the sharing of good practice and ideas.

2.3 However the consultation was also encouraging as there is very real excitement being expressed about the possibilities and the opportunities granted by collaborative ministry and team working.

### 3 Local Mission and Ministry Review

3.1 In 2006 General Assembly agreed in principle to replace the existing scheme for Ministerial Accompanied Self-Appraisal (MASA), asked the Ministries Committee to develop a more comprehensive review scheme, and authorised Mission Council to implement such a scheme.

3.2 After consultation with the synods and a limited trial, in December 2008 Mission Council agreed to the introduction of the Local Mission and Ministry Review (LMMR). At the heart of the LMMR process are a number of principles including:

- the Pastorate Profile as a living document regularly reviewed which would identify the mission priorities for that pastorate or team;
- the tasks and activity expected of the minister in the light of the above would be clearly stated;
- the confidentiality of MASA would be maintained as an important part of this process;
- all Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Church Related Community Workers would eventually be included.

3.3 With these in mind the synods were asked to develop a scheme for LMMR appropriate to their circumstances, which recognised that the starting point for such a scheme varied across the synods. The Ministries Committee will be monitoring the development of the scheme, seeking to facilitate the sharing of good practice, and encourage the movement towards a commonly operated scheme.

3.4 The belief that a local church's mission priorities should help to direct the resources the wider church provides, including ministry, is one being expressed in other places besides the Ministries Committee. This issue is central to many of the strategies operated by synods as they seek to support local churches, and is found in the Mission Committee's *vision2020* proposals. We commend LMMR to the church as a way of supporting local churches in their mission, and as a tool in identifying leadership needs as part of the *Challenge to the Church*.

## Other Ministry

### 4 Eldership

Since late 2007 this has been a new responsibility for the committee and one that we welcome. Following on from the consultation on eldership held in 2006 we are working on the areas identified for more work, particularly on models of good practice in the identification of new elders, their preparation and development, and in the conduct, content and oversight of Elders' Meetings, alongside the role of ministers and elders together in Christian initiation.

### 5 Ministry of Evangelists

In 2001 the General Assembly passed a resolution seeking to encourage people to exercise their ministry as evangelists but in the subsequent reorganising of Assembly committees this work stalled. In November 2009 Mission Council agreed with a Ministries Committee proposal to use the Special Category Ministry scheme to enable synods or a grouping of churches to pilot the use of Ministers of Word and Sacrament as evangelists, by dedicating three posts to this particular ministry. The process will be reviewed by the Ministries Committee and the synods involved after 18 months' appointment to see what lessons have been learned and to determine whether to move towards creating a process of specific recruitment, assessment and training for evangelists within the United Reformed Church.

### 6 Chaplaincy

6.1 Numerous United Reformed Church ministers serve as chaplains in a variety of settings including, but not limited to workplace and industrial mission, healthcare, prisons, higher and further education and the armed forces. Planning is under way to bring together those involved in these many constituencies for mutual support, the sharing of experience and an opportunity to say something collectively to the United Reformed Church about their experience of ministry exercised beyond the walls of our church buildings.

6.2 With the ongoing deployment of HM Forces in Afghanistan we would wish to draw special attention to the contribution made by those United Reformed Church ministers who serve as chaplains to the armed forces through the United Board. With seven full-time chaplains we currently have our highest number for some time serving in this way, with at least one chaplain in each branch of the military. Some of these chaplains have been deployed to active war zones in the recent past and others will go in the future, and we offer our prayers for them, their colleagues from other traditions, and the men and women and their families amongst whom they minister.

## Responding to changes in the law

### 7 Points based system for immigration

7.1 In November 2008 a new system of regulation was introduced by the Home Office for those who wanted to work in the United Kingdom but who did not have an automatic right to do so. The introduction of the Points Based System for Immigration (PBS) raised concern amongst many within the United Reformed Church and our ecumenical partners with regard to fairness and the treatment of those from the poorer parts of our world.

7.2 However in order to enable ministers from other parts of the world to serve the United Reformed Church and to allow some who are already here to continue when their current visas expire, it became necessary to register under the system, and to keep such records as would enable us to maintain that registration. This led to a complicated bureaucratic task as we sought to check the right to work of all ministers who received remuneration from the United Reformed Church. We wish to record our thanks to all those who, despite some misgivings, have worked hard to make this happen. At the same time we must recognise that others have wished to make a personal stance which may have future serious implications for brothers and sisters who have come to us from other parts of Christ's world.

### 8 Safeguarding – Vetting and Barring

8.1 The report of the Bichard Inquiry into the murder of Jessica Chapman and Holly Wells in Soham, has led to the introduction of the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) and the Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS). Ministries has been working alongside the Youth and Children's Work Committee, to understand the implications for us at all levels of the United Reformed Church's life, and to provide guidance for those who will be affected by the implementation of VBS.

8.2 General Assembly is asked to support these measures to help safeguard vulnerable members of our community. **Resolution 21, page 254**

## Resolutions

### 9 The ministerial working week

9.1 Part of the remit of the Ministries Committee is a concern for the central care and conditions of service of Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Church Related Community Workers, and in the exercise of that concern the committee believes that some guidance should be given about the ministerial working week. Ministers need to be encouraged and allowed to establish and work within a proper relationship between living and working, doing and being.

9.2 Whilst taking note of the vocational life, which leads individuals to respond instinctively to the needs of others the Ministries Committee feels it right to offer guidelines on the ministerial working week, in order to take seriously the concept of work/life balance, and leave the minister/ Church Related Community Worker with time for family and friends as well as free to give voluntary time to any cause about which he/she feels passionate, but which is not part of the local church's planned vision and mission. **Resolution 11, page 248**



## 10 Guidelines on conduct and behaviour

10.1 From time to time discussion arises regarding the expectations churches have of those appointed to provide leadership, particularly ministers, both of Word and Sacrament and Church Related Community Workers, and elders. In presenting these guidelines we seek to draw attention to the implications of the promise made by ministers 'to live a holy life', outline what duty to colleagues may look like, and define the type of activities that may damage the well-being, purity and peace of the United Reformed Church.

10.2 Whilst recognising the wisdom in producing a proscribed list of activities for those in leadership within our Church we believed such a list, however long it was, would always be incomplete. Furthermore we wanted to encourage positive behaviour and attitudes as well as drawing attention to areas of potential difficulty. We therefore offer to the church the *Guidelines on Conduct and Behaviour* which mark out the boundaries, for the crossing of which an individual can be held accountable. **Resolution 12, page 251**

# Accreditation sub-committee

**Convener:** Geoff Townsend

**Secretary:** Craig Bowman

**Members:** Pat Evans, Tessa Henry-Robinson, Malcolm Fife, Sue Henderson, Terry Oakley, Graham Campling (Convener of the Assessment Board)

1 The Committee records its thanks to Gwen Collins who served as Convener from 2005-9

## 2 Certificates of eligibility

2.1 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. Ministers who accept a call to a pastorate 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.

2.2 For 2009 it was agreed that ten certificates of eligibility could be granted and following short-listing and an interview procedure, either in person, or in the case of some applying from overseas by telephone, ten certificates were granted. The committee were impressed by the quality of applicants who had a wide variety of expertise. Should no call be made and accepted within three years then the certificate will lapse.

2.3 Our timetable for 2009 meant that the names of these ten were received by the synod moderators' meeting at the same time as ordinands due to complete training and consequently following discussion with the moderators it has been agreed that this year there will be two sets of interviews, the first being in April when up to seven certificates may be granted. The number of certificates that may be issued later this year will be agreed in conjunction with the Ministries Committee which is monitoring the required number of ministers in stipendiary service.

### **3 Certificates of limited service**

3.1 These were formerly known as certificates of limited eligibility and, in contrast to the above, certificates of limited service do not enable a minister to transfer to the roll of ministers. A certificate of limited service 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.

3.2 One was granted in the second half of 2008, two in 2009 and three in 2010.

### **4 Special category ministry posts**

4.1. Previous decisions of General Assembly allow for 60 special category ministry posts. On 1<sup>st</sup> March there were 33 posts, with 4 applications being considered. As some of the posts are part-time, this equates to 29.2 Full Time Equivalents (FTE). Since General Assembly 2008, the posts at Cottam Hall, Cottingley, Wakefield-Flanshaw, Penrhys, Nottingham Boulevard, Poole, Andover and for Urban and Rural Research have all been completed. New posts have been agreed at Brackenhall, Crossways Elephant and Castle, Cambridge City Retail, Consultant for Emerging Churches, Exeter Inter-Faith Chaplaincy and Heathrow Airport. At least two further applications are in the process of being submitted. We have tried to maintain a balance between different types of special category ministry posts which fall into three broad categories: those which are church based, those which are workplace or higher education chaplaincies and those which are more innovative forms of ministry. As the number of ministers in stipendiary service available to a synod through deployment has often been reduced, one of the effects has been that synods have found it increasingly difficult to create ministries which are more innovative.

4.2 Discussions are being held with the synod moderators and Ministries Committee about the future number of special category ministry posts, as a part of a review process. It is recognised that any increase in the number of special category ministry posts reduces the number of ministers available to be deployed to pastorates.

4.3 Following discussion with the Ministries Committee it has been agreed that up to three posts will be created to enable specialists to be appointed as evangelists. It is also expected that new posts will be created to enable ministers to become interim or transitional ministers.

4.4 The committee is indebted to Mary Stacy who administers the special category ministry scheme.

### **5 Duty to consider**

A procedure has been agreed which enables consideration to be given to requests for a minister to continue in stipendiary service beyond the normal retirement age. Synods can agree extensions of up to six months and the Committee has the authority to grant applications for up to three years. Since General Assembly 2008, three such applications have been granted by the Committee.

### **6 The roll of ministers**

6.1 Admissions to the roll of ministers (from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010)

By ordination and induction:

Caroline Andrews, Michael Aspinall, Philip Baiden, Hilary Bell, Debbie Brown, Alan Crump, Sohail Ejaz, Paul Ellis, Claire Gouldthorp, Ian Gow, Kate Hackett, Janet Hopewell, Michele Jarmany, Shirley Knibbs, Peter Little, Steven Manders, Andrew Mann-Ray, Stan May, Helen Mee, Mark Meatcher, Romilly Micklem, Jenny Mills, Tim Mullings, Hilary Nabarro, Mary Playford, Andrew Royal, Timothy Searle, Darryl Sinclair, Wendy Swan, Graham Tarn, Wendy White, Roger Wood

### 6.2 By transfer from other churches:

Nancy Babarinde (New Testament Assembly), Uta Blohm (Evangelische Kirche im Rheinland), Shahbaz Javed (Presbyterian Church of Pakistan), Timothy Meadows (United Church of Christ, USA), Tanya Rasmussen (United Methodist Church, USA), Frances Ruthven (United Church of Christ, USA), Hans Stein (Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa),

### 6.3 By changes within the roll of ministers (from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010) non-stipendiary to stipendiary service: Ken Blanton (for 6 months from January 2010)

6.4 Deletions from the Roll of Ministers by resignation and/or transfer to other denominations: (from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010): John Hick (to membership of the Society of Friends), Alistair Jones (to the Methodist Church), Nigel Watson (to the Church of Scotland)

## 7 Church related community workers

Admission to the roll of church related community workers (from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010) by commissioning: Ann Honey

## 8 Assembly accredited lay preachers

The following have received Assembly accreditation between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010 as a result of having completed a United Reformed Church course of study or have prior accreditation from another denomination:

Northern Synod:	Elizabeth Barnes, Gillian Bustard, Maranny Jones, Joan Lamplugh
North-Western Synod:	Margaret Dexter-Brown, Alicia Jones, Danny Wilson
Mersey Synod:	Lorraine Aizlewood-Threfall, Elizabeth Warrington
Yorkshire Synod:	Judith Garthwaite, Claire Hodgson, Ian Morris, Clive Parkinson, Hedley Siddall, Peter Vince
East Midlands Synod:	Hazel Coley
West Midlands Synod:	Alan Cotgreave, Richard Gillett, Ruth Gillett, Lorraine Gilroy
Eastern Synod:	Trevor Andrews, Penny Flynn
South-Western Synod:	Ann Batten, Sylvia Hugget, Clive Illman, Joanna Morling, Maria Mills
Wessex Synod:	Pamela Humpheys, Mary Nicholson, Raven Scott
Thames North Synod:	Solomon Aryee-Brown, Mercy Danso
Southern Synod:	Ann Cook, Judith Johnson, Bea Pollard, Albert Wood, Elizabeth Wood
Synod of Wales:	Pam Passmore

# Assessment Board

**Convener:** Graham Campling

**Secretary:** Craig Bowman

**Members:** Jan Adamson, Lesley Charlton, Sian Collins, Paul Floe, Geoffrey Harrison, Mark Hayes, James Horton, David Jenkins, Margaret Jenkins, Irene John, Jamie Kissack, Jan Maxwell, Gary McGowan, Lis Mullen, Robin Pencavel, Edward Sanniez, Wendy Smith, Val Towler, Irene Wren, Bill Young.

## 1 Membership

Since the report to General Assembly 2008 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 Tina Ashitey, Judy Harris, Barbara Lancaster, Hugh Abel, Peter Clarke, and Cameron Wilson. Those who have served as chaplains at the conferences were specially valued.

## 2 Developments

2.1 The entire Board meets annually in September and reviews continually the processes involved in the selection of candidates for training for the ministry of Word and Sacrament and church related community workers. The resolutions accepted by Assembly in 2007 led to a new process that concludes with the final decision regarding acceptance for training being made by the Assessment Board rather than the synod. This new process has worked reasonably well but there are still some issues which need attention. In particular, the Board is still refining the manner in which the decision, whether positive or negative, is conveyed to the candidate by the Board, usually in the synod with synod people present; a balance needs to be struck between speed (perhaps involving insensitivity) and delay (perhaps causing unnecessary anxiety to the candidate).

2.2 The Board reaffirmed the need for candidates to demonstrate a willingness to serve the URC without undue geographical constraints when candidating for ministry in stipendiary service.

2.3 The Board noted that the state pension age for both men and women will rise. Currently candidating rules concerning age are related to retirement at 65 and the Board recognised that in due course alterations may need to be made to accommodate any changes in the URC pension age.

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

## 3 Numbers of candidates

3.1 The numbers of candidates attending Assessment Conferences has remained fewer than those prior to 2005. Thus there have continued to be only two rather than three Assessment Conferences in each academic year. One result of this has been that some members of the Assessment Board have been called infrequently to attend conferences as a result of the need to have a balance between male and female, ordained and lay members at each conference and taking into account the synods from which candidates have come. It was decided to reduce the total membership of the Assessment Board by inviting the Nominations Committee to provide only three new Board members annually in place of the four retiring.

3.2 **14 candidates attended the Assessment Conferences in 2008/2009**  
 9 for stipendiary service of whom 7 were accepted for training (1 withdrew);  
 3 for non-stipendiary service, all of whom were accepted for training;

0 church related community workers;  
2 re-assessment (transfer from non-stipendiary to stipendiary service), 1 accepted.

**18 candidates attended the Assessment Conferences in 2009/2010**

14 for stipendiary service of whom 13 were accepted for training;  
2 for non-stipendiary service, both of whom were accepted for training;  
0 church related community workers;  
2 re-assessment (transfer from non-stipendiary to stipendiary service), 2 accepted.

## Church Related Community Work Programme sub-committee

**Convener:** Paul Whittle

**Members:** Janine Atkinson, Mal Breeze, Sue Macbeth, John Mellor, Cristine Smalligan, Marie Trubic

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

### 1 A fresh strategy

A key and major element in the Programme Sub-committee's work has been a major strategy review in which we have sought to explore again how the CRCW ministry can take its full and proper place in the life and ministry of the URC.

### 2 Priorities

To this end we have identified and worked on six priorities. These are:

- 2.1 to increase awareness of the CRCW ministry at all levels by working on strategies for its promotion and development with a particular aim of attracting candidates;
- 2.2 to promote the CRCW ministry and programme by developing marketing and recruitment strategies for new CRCWs and Church-in-Community projects;
- 2.3 to work with the URC Education and Learning Committee, Resource Centres for Learning, TLS programme, the Northern College Course Development Group and ecumenical training providers to support and develop CRCW, Education for Ministry and lay training opportunities;
- 2.4 to provide a range of opportunities for consultation with and support of CRCWs and Church-in-Community projects;
- 2.5 to support and develop the working and contribution of the Programme Sub-committee and its members;
- 2.6 to facilitate and engage with the production of policy documents in order to provide the detailed resourcing needed for engagement with the programme.

### 3 A gift

The PSC spends a good deal of time, in a range of ways, reflecting on the different kingdom contributions its projects can and do make. We are grateful for all the support we receive, but firmly believe that the opportunities the programme creates are a gift to the URC and from the URC to the wider church. To enhance that, we hope to develop a higher profile.

# Leadership in Worship sub-committee

**Convener:** Jan Harper  
**Members:** Ed Strachan, Gwynfor Evans, Alan Cotgreave  
**Coopted member:** Janet Tollington

1 During the past two years, according to the new, broader remit of the committee, we have been discussing ways in which we can be of service to those who lead worship. We are grateful to Graham Campling, whose time with us has come to an end, and Christine Craven, who has moved on to pastures new. We have welcomed Craig Bowman, Richard Mortimer and Fiona Thomas who give valuable input.

2 Part of the remit of this committee is to ensure that any visitor invited to preach should automatically get full information from the church to be visited, and with that in mind we have up-dated the original leaflet 'Visitors Lead Worship in local churches: Towards Best Practice' and made it available to synods for distribution.

3 Within our new remit we do not intend to provide resources for those leading worship. However, we will help to direct people to where these resources may be found.

4 Lay preacher training and recruitment is an on-going concern. All those involved in leading worship are encouraged to follow TLS (Training for Learning and Serving) which is a course validated through Chester University. The Foundation Course plus one module leads to a Certificate; the Foundation Course plus two modules leads to a Foundation Degree. There is a variety of take-up across the synods, perhaps in reflection of financial support given. Post-TLS training has also been under discussion and there are a number of good courses available through the URC resource centres for learning including the Westminster Lay Preaching course. A £200 grant is available to accredited lay preachers for further study. We will monitor how these grants are being used.

5 One of the most exciting items on our agenda has been the possibility of closer working with the Methodist Church, who are in the midst of a major review of their local preachers. A paper outlining possibilities of joint action in the areas of training, encouragement and support of lay/local preachers and worship leaders was tabled at our August 2009 meeting, and although a number of issues were raised, the meeting encouraged further exploration.

6 By the time Assembly meets we will have held a consultation weekend at Swanwick, which will be looking at collaborative working in worship.

# Maintenance of the Ministry sub-committee

**Convener:** Tony Haws

**Secretary:** Craig Bowman

**Members:** Margaret Atkinson, Maurice Dyson (Convener of Pensions Executive), Brian Knight, Jane Mackerness, Catey Morrison, Peter Poulter (Convener of Ministries Committee), Kenneth Summers

## 1 Compensation allowances

Considerable time and effort was spent in research and discussions related to the compensation allowance paid to ministers in Assembly posts. During the course of this the sub-committee produced a discussion paper *Maintenance of Ministry Principles and Policy*. This paper identified three guiding principles that underpinned the policy of the sub-committee: parity of status, reimbursement of expenses to all ministers and the stipendiary principle. After appropriate consultation and careful consideration Ministries Committee concluded that it was not the right time for further action on the matter. Some work is in progress to clarify certain points of detail so that the records are in order should questions relating to compensation allowances arise in future.

## 2 Payment of expenses to ministers in non-stipendiary service

The sub-committee is examining possibilities for the payment of a removal grant on retirement to those ministers in non-stipendiary service who have moved home for the benefit of the United Reformed Church and at the request of a synod. The details of how such a grant might be paid are also under discussion.

## 3 Reimbursement of expenses for the use of motorcycles and bicycles

Following discussions at this sub-committee and a proposal from finance committee, mission council has agreed to an amendment to the *Plan for Partnership* relating to the reimbursement of expenses for the use of motorcycles and bicycles.

## 4 Long term sickness absence

It has been observed that the number of cases of long term sickness absence has increased in recent years and is becoming a cause for concern. Related to this is the increase in the number of early retirements on medical grounds. Both of these trends are a matter of both pastoral and financial concern. Consideration is being given to what positive steps might be taken to address these concerns.

# Retired Ministers' Housing sub-committee

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.

**Convener:** David Bedford

**Secretary:** Tony Bayley

**Members:** Anne Bedford, John Humphreys, Nanette Lewis-Head, Michael Spencer, Elizabeth Tadd

## 1 Grateful for generosity

1.1 The sub-committee are grateful for donations and legacies received which amounted in 2008 to approximately £826,000 and in 2009 to approximately £360,000 plus donations of property valued at approximately £800,000. 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.

1.2 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, many synods have agreed to this course of action, and others have offered to help in different ways.

## 2 The immediate challenge

2.1 Having carried out a survey of serving ministers in 2007 the sub-committee has tried to put all the different strands together, among which the most important estimates needed are:

- the proportion of retiring ministers requiring assistance;
- the amount of assistance required in each case;
- the effect of early and delayed retirement;
- the number of properties which are no longer needed and can be sold;
- the value of sold properties;
- the income from legacies and donations.

2.2 The conclusions reached were that in 2009, and to a somewhat lesser extent in 2010, the numbers of properties to be purchased would be relatively low (due to the low birth rate 65 years ago during World War II). From 2011 and reaching a peak in 2013 (the so-called baby boom) the numbers of houses required would increase and the funds needed would correspondingly increase. We can foresee a shortfall (after allowing for property sales, donations, legacies etc) probably in excess of £2 million per annum for a few years.

2.3 The assistance previously mentioned which is offered by various synods will clearly help but more is needed to help us over this hill and talks with synods continue.



### 3 Our ongoing work

3.1 During 2008 and 2009, 30 properties were acquired and 35 were sold, thus reducing the number of properties under management to 362 at the end of 2009.

3.2 In 2009 the standard rent payable was £116 per calendar month. New residents since the beginning of 2004 will pay between £119 and £197 per calendar month in 2010 (depending upon the amount of capital employed by the Society), while pre-2004 residents will pay £119. Widows/widowers are in receipt of a rent reduction (usually £10 per calendar month).

3.3 During 2009, visits were made by officers of the Society to 127 applicants, residents 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.

3.4 Retirement housing continues to figure prominently in the pre-retirement courses run at the Windermere Centre by Ministries. In most years three courses are run; three more are planned for this year and four for 2011 due to the number of retiring ministers. 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.

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



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The central task of the Mission Committee is to focus on mission, working with the whole of the Church to formulate and give expression to our mission and faith in ways which bring alive our vision of 'being Christ's people, transformed by the Gospel, making a difference to the world' (General Assembly 2007). The committee seeks to encourage growth in discipleship, evangelism and witness by:

reflecting on the church's mission practice and theology;  
formulating policy, strategies and programme (action) priorities;  
reading the signs of the times and speaking prophetically;  
working with partners; and  
continuously evaluating the place of mission and evangelism within the work of General Assembly.

**Convener:** Ed Cox

**Deputy Convener:** Elizabeth Caswell

**Staff Secretaries:** Francis Brien, Michael Jagessar, Graham Jones, Frank Kantor, Linda Mead, Jane Rowell, David Tatem

**Committee members:** Lindsey Sanderson, Chris Eddowes, Mike Walsh, Andrew Willett, Anne Parker, Clare Downing, Louise Franklin, Peter Pay, Peter Ball, John Macaulay, Tracey Lewis, Pauline Sparks, Simon Walkling

## 1 Introduction

1.1 General Assembly 2010 feels like the right time to break the mould. For the first time there will be no reports from each of the different 'silos' of the committees that pre-dated Mission Committee's formation. Of course, our work in fields such as ecumenical and international relations, racial justice, public issues and evangelism and witness still goes on, but now that we have a 'Mission Team' at Church House we thought it was appropriate to bring a report which gives a flavour of the team's work. Our report is broken down into 10 sections – each reflecting one of the themes of the *vision2020* framework we will also be discussing at General Assembly. This is not to pre-empt the outcome of General Assembly's discussions about *vision2020* but to show the breadth and depth of mission activity across the denomination.

1.2 Our report also places much emphasis on the activities of local congregations. This has been a significant priority for Mission Committee in its first two years and increasingly Mission Team effort is focusing on how it enables and engages with the local church. We hope that General Assembly provides an opportunity to tell more stories of local mission.

1.3 Critically though, one field where we struggled to find many stories was that of church growth. This is a crucial lacuna in the life of our denomination and we very much hope will be addressed by the important *Vision4Life* Evangelism Year and the *Marketing Campaign* programmes. Other areas of significant change and focus in the coming years will be through the introduction of a new Mission Grants programme – bringing together a wide range of grant-making processes into a single scheme – and a review of Ecumenical Relations.

1.4 Much of the rest of this report is a series of stories and examples of mission activity across the denomination, some supported directly by Mission Committee programmes, others are included simply as inspiration. We hope that by 2012, under the guiding framework of *vision2020*, every local church will have their own story to tell.

### 2 The ten themes

#### 2.1 Spirituality and prayer

2.1.1 Growing in our practice of spirituality and prayer is key to nurturing strength for our witness to Jesus Christ. In the past two years the Mission Committee has supported this work through a range of programmes such as Vision4Life, Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry and *Belonging to the World Church*.

2.1.2 In the past two years the Vision4Life process has enabled over 600 churches to re-engage with the Bible, with prayer and with evangelism. The Mission Committee is involved in this process in a variety of ways: by supporting the work of the coordinator and the steering group, by providing materials and through financial support. A full report on Vision4Life can be found on page 31 of the Book of Reports. This story, from the Marple, Marple Bridge and New Mills United Reformed Churches is an example of how Vision4Life is changing people's experience of prayer.

2.1.3 *We set up what we have called 'Food4Thought' and a group of 18 people came along. Each week over four weeks we covered a section in the Praying our Days booklet with a different focal point of food for each session. So for the final one, 'Exploring Prayer', we placed a bowl of exotic fruit on the centre table and invited people to taste a piece of fruit new to their experience, so exploring something they hadn't tried before. We were then able to link that in to exploring ways of praying which may be new to some, like prayer over the telephone. The group found the 'Let me tell you' sections very helpful and one particular story led to a very passionate debate on missed opportunities and opened the way for one group member to share her experience. On the previous day, when she had been praying in our prayer room at church, another person joined her and asked her to lay hands on her for specific prayer. She said she had never done this on her own before and felt very nervous, but she felt she must not say no and so she prayed with this person with the laying on of hands. She said to the group that if she had not done this, she would have missed a very special moment.*

2.1.4 The Racial Justice and Multicultural Advocates networks continue to consolidate and grow with a coordinator from every synod and many advocates across the synod. The residential consultations for 2009 and 2010 continue to be very important with their focus on available resources, sharing of good practices, helping congregations to be more welcoming, using the Bible in anti-racism awareness training and in-depth reflections on spirituality for racial justice work. Hence at the April 2010 overnight gathering advocates explored the theme 'Sustaining Spirituality (the work of standing and the joy of dancing)' where the facilitator shared his own journey in diversity awareness especially in working with his Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) friends and colleagues, inviting the group to share their stories. He then located biblical and historical examples of the significance of spirituality in advocacy and racial justice work. This was very well received by all.

2.1.5 Through the *Belonging to the World Church* programme a group of URC ministers recently visited Myanmar and discovered a church at prayer. One of the participants, Revd John Paul from Newcastle upon Tyne, wrote:

*You can't miss the pagodas in Myanmar, a country that is 95% Buddhist. At the Shwedagon Pagoda, with its gleaming gold roof, we watched people engaging in all manner of prayer activity – the young girl chanting prayers for hours, the many buying fruit and flowers to offer to an idol, the construction firm that had built an elaborate shrine to curry business success, and for the really desperate, the lottery, as they tried to throw a specially folded money note into the appropriately named bowl on a revolving table. What a contrast for our team to visit a town that was 95% Christian and to experience the enthusiasm and joy of the Presbyterian Churches we visited there. At the first service an explosion of prayer revealed their source of strength and power. The minister asked for prayer needs, the members stood up and shared, the minister said 'let's pray' and as the congregation stood up we were hit by a great wall of sound as all began to pray boldly and loudly together.*



URC ministers' visit to the Presbyterian Church in Myanmar

*We visited five churches there and each Elders' Meeting reported that prayer was their strength. Eventually I determined to discover more, so I asked if an elder would like to describe his personal prayer walk and he talked for at least 10 minutes – I wondered how many of the elders in my church could describe such a rich prayer life. For me personally the most startling moment was when an elder asked a very provoking question: 'We hear that in England many people spend a lot of time watching TV and football – how can this be when the church is in decline?' He then told us that they had been praying for the United Reformed Church and the message we were to take back was, 'Pray more, pray out loud and pray in tongues!' We did not all feel able to say 'Yes' to all of that, but my prayer is that we can all say 'Yes' to 'more prayer'. That challenge has rung in my ears since my return and has caused me to review my personal prayer life, and this has affected my preaching and my desire to share my faith. The impact in my churches: more prayer meetings, more attending prayer meetings, two groups studying a book on prayer, a new cell group started, and a renewed heart for evangelism.*

2.1.6 The members of the Mission Team have developed a range of resources to support local congregations in their prayer and worship. *Commitment for Life's* Prayer Partners 2010 provided ideas for prayer stations inspired by the partner countries. Prayer stations, using the theme of climate change, have also been produced for *Vision4Life*. The Mission Team has produced study notes to accompany the *vision2020* Mission Creed. The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) has produced worship resources for a number of their campaigns over the past two years, such as Migration Matters, prayer for children in detention, a study guide for the *Hope in God's Future* report and worship resources for *Peacemaking Sunday 2009*. The resources can be downloaded from [www.urc.org.uk](http://www.urc.org.uk) and [www.jointpublicissues.org.uk](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk)

## Mission

### 2.2 Identity

2.2.1 Through the *Marketing Campaign* and other programmes the Mission Committee is supporting local churches in strengthening their sense of identity, focus and purpose.

2.2.2 In March 2010 the *Marketing Campaign* steering group asked Mission Council's help in articulating what made them feel passionate or excited about the United Reformed Church.

*One member told the story of a man who was unconnected with the church (except through his wife) and who attended a church meeting. Afterwards he said it was one of the most amazing meetings he'd ever been to. It had discussed the church toilets, a scheme to treat dry rot, its commitment to work with families recommended by Social Services over a Christmas pageant, and a scheme to bring over a black South African student to study in Wales (in the middle of the apartheid regime) – all in one and a half hours. 'I'd like to work with this church,' he said.*

*This was echoed by a synod moderator a few days later. He said that they'd been inducting a new synod officer and the man's wife had come to attend the induction, which was during the opening worship. She had only intended to stay for that first half hour but stayed on for the presentation about climate change, then the one about children in detention, then the synod business. At 4.30 in the afternoon she was still there. 'I had no idea there was a church like this!' she said.*

It all confirms the conviction behind the *Marketing Campaign* – that if people knew a Church like ours existed, some of them would want to join us.

A full report on the *Marketing Campaign* can be found on page 37 of the Book of Reports.

2.2.3 Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry launched the Multicultural Congregation Story Award in 2009. This project, which is an invitation for any congregation of the URC to tell its story, has seen from the first year of its launch, a number of stories of congregational life and practice. What are these stories like?

*Heaton Way URC, Romford, a small church which has grown from being teeny tiny to small; from being 100% white working class to becoming multicultural and intergenerational. They told their story around 'The Heaton Way Tree.'*

*Balsall Heath URC, Birmingham – a small to reasonably sized congregation, intentionally diverse and always welcoming, told their story through 'The Tree of our Life' project. Their photo journey and the different colours of the fruit and leaves – vibrant and full of life – express the hope that the variety it represents will keep on growing and flowing outwardly.*



Launch of the Multicultural Congregation Story Award

*St Columba's URC, Oxford – with a vision to celebrate God's love in all aspects of their journey shared their story as one of being a diverse and welcoming space for all: ages, theological positions, (dis)abilities, cultures and ethnicities, gender and sexual orientation.*

*Avenue St Andrew's URC, Southampton shared their story of cutting edge work among students, asylum seekers and refugees and the use of their space as a welcoming one for a variety of groups.*

*South Aston URC, Birmingham tells of being a welcoming church for a diverse community of worshippers and a community base for a variety of groups in a plural neighbourhood.*

*Lea Road URC Community Church shared in the intentional ways it has shaped its ministry and mission to be outward looking and the exceptional and creative manner it uses its webpage to tell their story of migrating communities in their journey.*

All these stories are now online and can be found by following this link:  
[http://www.urch.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/rjmm/multicultural\\_stories\\_project](http://www.urch.org.uk/what_we_do/rjmm/multicultural_stories_project)  
 The Award will run for the next five years.

2.2.4 Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry also initiated an Intercultural Theology and Practitioner Conference. The first was held on 30 October 2009 on theme of 'Colouring Mission and Ministry'. The second gathering (26-27 October 2010) will further explore the theme: 'Who are we? Identity[ies] and belonging in the United Reformed Church'. These conferences are also geared to move our conversations from a multicultural to an intercultural Church.

## 2.3 Christian Ecumenical Partnerships

2.3.1 The search for ecumenical partnership and unity remains at the core of the life and work of the United Reformed Church and is facilitated by the secretary for Ecumenical Relations and other Mission Team members.

2.3.2 Although the common sense is that ecumenism has stalled or is failing in the UK there are many local, regional and national stories which counter this and paint a different picture. At local level there is a gradually increasing number of Local Ecumenical Partnerships. About a third of our local churches are now LEPs.

2.3.3 In South West Sussex a grouping of United Reformed Churches have come together to form the South West Sussex United Area with the Methodist Church. This is the second United Area to be created within Southern Synod. It reflects a growing cooperation between the United Reformed and Methodist Churches at all kinds of levels. We are committed to working and exploring mission together and this will be taken further in the joint Methodist/Mission Council meeting in October. In Cumbria cooperation took on a very tangible form in the churches' response to the floods there and ecumenical cooperation is deepening, as the following story which also appeared on the URC website demonstrates:

*The Reverend Alistair Smeaton, URC minister in Workington and Cockermouth and team leader for clergy response in the west of the county, has been managing Church support at the reception centres in Workington, Cockermouth and Keswick. Teams of volunteers coordinated by Churches Together were busy over the weekend; sorting clothes, registering arrivals, helping serve meals and running a refreshment drop-in at Christ Church, the local Anglican church, which has, at the request of the police, been operating 24 hours a day to serve the needs of all the people working in the town centre. Two churches in Keswick have started a drop-in facility at St Herbert's Hall.*



Flooded Lake House, Keswick, Cumbria, UK, 2009 © lionheartphotography/flickr

2.3.4 Nationally there is cooperation which extends to other denominations too. In Scotland a statement of partnership has been signed between the United Reformed Church, the Methodists in Scotland and the Scottish Episcopal Church. Once again, this is a commitment to closer cooperation in mission and to exploring the future together rather than apart.

2.3.5 The URC is now officially part of the *Fresh Expressions* movement which has until now been an Anglican/Methodist venture.

2.3.6 The Joint Public Issues Team continues its work of cooperation between Baptist, Methodist and URC in responding to many of the issues which are important in the whole of society. A good example of our ecumenical partnership on public issues was the campaign organised and coordinated on children in detention over the Christmas period called *One More Card*. This campaign involved sending a Christmas card to the Minister for Immigration, Phil Woolas, calling for an end to holding children in detention centres in the UK (<http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/childrenindetention/jpionemorecard.htm>).

2.3.7 For the 2009 Racial Justice Sunday materials and resources (*Who do you say that I am?*) were prepared with significant input from the United Reformed Church. This is an ecumenical initiative that is valued across the United Kingdom and the world.



2.3.8 In the past year the Rural Officer has been involved in developing Local Collaborative Ministry (LCM) in rural areas and significant progress is being made. LCM is an approach to ministry which empowers the laity and is bearing much fruit in churches as far afield as New Zealand and Canada. It has a strap-line of 'the ministry of the baptised' and encourages local teams of people to take responsibility for the mission and ministry of the church in the local context, resourced by an external enabler.

*In Coquetdale, a single road binds the people of the dale together and the 11 churches of four denominations know they form a single unit of faith, as recognised in the covenant signed by church leaders. The churches play a vital part in providing informal and formal care services. A retired local doctor supervises the bereavement visiting team; newcomers to the area are welcomed by the good neighbour scheme; and three couples provide the hospital car scheme. Christians in this dale worship together regularly and have a tent to house their presence at the three local agricultural shows.*

*Nidderdale is a discrete geographical area and ecumenical cooperation goes back to the 1890s when, with the arrival of the railway in the dale, day trippers began to arrive from Leeds. In more recent times, a covenant and a memorandum of understanding have been signed, but formal contracts have been avoided to allow for a more creative space.*

*The responsibility for youth and children's work is denominational but the activities are coordinated and run by the 'Church in the Dale' youth team. Other teams help to coordinate pastoral care, administration and the care of buildings. Church events are advertised under the 'Church in the Dale' banner, thus reinforcing the united approach. People from across the denominations meet together twice a year to review the joint mission of the churches.*



## 2.4 Community Partnerships

2.4.1 Many churches across the denomination are involved in 'community partnerships' of different kinds running everything from summer camps to community cafés to counselling services.

2.4.2 Over the past five years, Levenshulme United Reformed Church in inner-city Manchester has been transformed from a dilapidated building with a weary congregation into a vibrant, church-led community initiative – all with the help of local community partners. Church members joined forces with the Great Places Housing Group, Manchester City Council and a number of local community organisations to develop plans for a three million pound redevelopment of the building. With plenty of hard work and co-operation, piece by piece the funding has been drawn together and contractors are now putting the finishing touches to Levenshulme's only community facility since its old community centre was closed in 2005.

*By themselves, the small congregation felt overwhelmed by the scale of their building problems, but with the assistance of community partners their problem became a shared opportunity to meet lots of local needs. Alongside 14 apartments for those with the greatest housing needs, the Inspire Partnership includes a local social enterprise who will run a community café; a 'media suite' run by the community radio station; and a business 'incubator' designed to support young people and those with mental health needs setting up businesses. The church itself has set up a Community Interest Company to co-ordinate activities, to hire community rooms to local groups, but most importantly to share the partnership's principles and make sure that the gospel message is communicated in everything that goes on in the new centre.*

2.4.3 Enabling churches to be more active in the life of local neighbourhoods is also the focus of much of the work of Rural Mission.

In collaboration with two Anglican colleagues the Rural Officer has just published *Making Connections*, a workbook encouraging rural churches to engage with their communities in proactive and creative ways. It builds on research conducted in 2006 which confirmed the enormous contribution people of faith make to the well being of rural communities. The workbook is a very practical resource, aimed at local rural churches and groups seeking to share in God's mission through 'making connections' in their communities. It includes Bible study, stories, activities for groups and individuals, and some key learning points.

*The opening session in the book is entitled 'Working with Others' and explores how cooperation and collaboration can help identify people with the resources and skills needed to address the challenges in community life. It describes how in the Isle of Grain in Kent the United Reformed Church and the Anglican Church saw the value of sharing the use of the former URC building to provide training opportunities for young and old. A new project group was set up because some funders are shy of supporting religious bodies. The local library saw the benefits being delivered to IT students and have moved into the church premises, followed by a local youth worker and social workers. The former chapel has been recognised as a focus for the community, thereby extending the partnership started by church leaders thinking outside the box and being confident enough to talk to organisations that may seem, at first, to have little to do with religion.*

2.4.4 Over the past year, the Rural Officer has also initiated a programme called 'Rural Church Entrepreneurs'. In partnership with the Churches' Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber, he is exploring how entrepreneurial skills can be encouraged within lay and ordained leadership in the rural church. A seminar was held in York in November bringing together an ecumenical audience of church leaders and rural practitioners from the region to consider this initiative. There was a very positive response to the ideas put forward and the steering group is now planning the next stage in the process.

2.4.5 Community partnership also involves interfaith engagement, something which now comes under the remit of the Ecumenical Relations office.

*In Leicester Revd Clare Downing works as the coordinator for Lay Training at the St Philips's Centre where training courses and other initiatives are developed to encourage Christians of all traditions to engage creatively with people of other faiths and to provide a centre where interfaith contact can happen. In London, the Revd Maggie Hindley works at the London Interfaith Centre, another place where Christians of differing traditions are involved together in creating a meeting place for people of many different faith communities.*

2.5 Hospitality and diversity

2.5.1 A church committed to becoming even more welcoming and hospitable, and embracing all people equally is the vision of the *Marketing Campaign*, Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry and many other programmes facilitated by the Mission Committee.

2.5.2 *'The URC rocks'!* These are the words of one of the participants in describing our Second Multicultural Celebration of the United Reformed Church. It felt like Pentecost on Saturday December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009, with over 350 members and friends from congregations across the whole United Reformed Church attending at Carrs Lane United Reformed Church, Birmingham. Working with the theme 'A Table for All' there were cultural presentations, displays, worship, dancing, music, talks, eating and lots of conversations. It was a celebrating of the fact that WE are a multicultural church.  
[http://www.urc.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/rjmm/multicultural\\_celebration](http://www.urc.org.uk/what_we_do/rjmm/multicultural_celebration)

2.5.3 In 1991 the Council for World Mission made a special commitment to building a community of women and men in mission (CWMM). This programme has sought to promote equal partnership between women and men. In 2008, the United Reformed Church invited a CWMM team to report on progress made and obstacles faced in achieving gender equality and empowerment. The report concluded:

*It has been a great privilege to receive the hospitality of so many in the United Reformed Church. Everywhere we went, we were greeted warmly and invited into the life of the church or church-related institution. A number of women and men gave generously of their time and their patience. In our travels, we witnessed passion and commitment, intelligence and conviction. Nothing we have seen makes us think that the URC does not care about women and men, girls and boys. On the contrary, we are convinced that the Church has an abiding heart to bring the Good News to all people.*

The Mission Committee is currently in the process of looking at the recommendations of the report.

2.5.4 Migration 2010 is a joint initiative between the European Churches and the Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe. But long before this, migration has been a theme and reality in the UK and the life of the United Reformed Church.

2.5.5 One significant piece of work that is being carried out by the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry office is the mapping of the various church communities associated with migration that are sharing (in different ways) the worship space of United Reformed congregations and developing a variety of partnerships. The findings of this ongoing mapping will be made available online.



2.5.6 Further, Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry has been able to encourage and support the work of ethno-cultural gatherings (Ghanaian and Asian) and regular gatherings of the association of ethnic minority lay and ordained ministers (EMLOMA). With regard to the latter, colleagues from the Mission Team and other programme areas have been invited to engage with Black and Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) colleagues and vice versa. Colleagues from the Communication department, Mission, and Education and Learning have enabled gatherings on the themes of 'Communicating the Church's Mission', 'Mission in Multicultural Contexts' and 'Learning for Life: diverse discipleship in a diverse Church' that were practical, informative, interactive and engaging. This has resulted in greater attendance and participation at these events.

## 2.6 Evangelism

2.6.1 *Fresh Expressions*, *Vision4Life* and Rural Mission are some of the programmes through which the Mission Committee seeks to enable churches to become more confident to engage in evangelism.

2.6.2 After several years of building trust and relationship with the community of Sawston in Cambridgeshire, the church went into partnership with Opportunities Without Limits (OWL) helping people with learning difficulties have full and loving lives. Coming out of this was the upgrading of the buildings to make them user-friendly along with new additions, including a café that was fronted up by OWL members and supported by church volunteers and a paid manager. This led to around 800 people a week coming into the buildings for church run activities that included youth work with over 100 youngsters. The concern was that the church was not reaching the café users and parents of the youth work. The ministers at the time, Peter and Catherine Ball, told us:

*A church weekend away with outside leaders helped us to think about where we were as a church and how to strengthen already good community links and relationships/ friendships. After time together in prayer and Bible study it was clear that our usual Sunday worship and associated activities (though modern by some standards) would be an uncomfortable and inaccessible place for many in our community. After the weekend, we approached users of our café and parents of the young people asking them what they would attend at the church and where they felt the church could play a bigger part in community life.*

*Out of the responses 'Wednesdays at the Café' was developed. The evening started with food (home made), and was table based. The evening then had one topic such as debt, unemployment, or identity. Each evening included a practical activity, a knowledgeable speaker, table discussion and opportunity to share with the whole group, a chance to reflect with music and a quiet space, and a Christian view or views on the issue.*

2.6.3 Like the church in Sawston many churches and synods within the United Reformed Church are involved in establishing new forms of Church. This was one of the main reasons for the United Reformed Church accepting the invitation to join the second phase of *Fresh Expressions* in 2009, a joint Methodist and Anglican initiative to encourage new forms of Church for a fast changing world. A day for trainers and practitioners in the URC was held on 24 February 2010 which was an opportunity to share stories of where *Fresh Expressions* of Church are being formed, to explore the opportunities and the difficulties, to find out about training opportunities and to discuss how *Fresh Expressions* can support the mission and evangelism of the United Reformed Church. *Fresh Expressions* will be further promoted through vision days and through the mission-shaped intro and mission-shaped ministry courses. The Mission Committee supports this work in partnership with the Education and Learning Committee.

Mapping fresh expressions of church at *Fresh Expressions* Day on 24 February 2010



#### 2.6.4 Through Vision4Life, churches are beginning to look ahead to the Evangelism Year:

*A team of Christians from two congregations, Edgeley Community Church and The Heatons United Reformed Church and Heaton Mersey Methodist Church distributed free coffee and hot cross buns to commuters using nearby Heaton Chapel railway station between 7am and 9am from Monday 29 March to Maundy Thursday on 1 April.*

*Explaining why they're investing their time and energy in this way, the Revd Stuart Radcliffe said: 'We wanted to do something a bit different during Holy Week, to reach out and share something of God's love to busy working people as they rush to work. He concluded, 'It's definitely worth doing. I'd really recommend that other churches look for ways to surprise people in their community with the Gospel.' The event made a real and positive impact on people and was a real boost to morale and confidence for mission within the churches involved.*

2.6.5 For the minister a crucial step in deciding to do this bit of outreach was attending the *Thinking Ahead about Easter* evening held in Manchester in January 2010 for churches beginning to plan the Vision4Life Evangelism Year. The *Thinking Ahead* events are currently being trialled in the North Western Synod and will be part of the Vision4Life Evangelism Year. Members of the Mission Team are involved in producing materials for the year.

2.6.6 An important aspect of the Rural Officer's work is to support and resource the network of Synod Rural Officers who act as 'rural champions' in their respective areas. A key challenge facing the rural church is how to make best and most effective use of buildings and premises. Are they a mill-stone or a stepping stone? We are keen to promote around the network the many creative and imaginative uses that rural church buildings are put to – from school gyms to farmers' markets to post offices.



The cinema at Belford URC

*One of the most creative uses has been developed by the Revd Dave Herbert, Synod Rural Officer in Northern Synod. The URC in Belford, Northumberland, is now home to a cinema, showing films on a monthly basis – admission free, tuck shop provided and donations welcomed. It operates under a PVSL licence, which allows recent movies released on DVD to be shown, provided no admission charge is made and no general advertising is done.*

*The necessary equipment cost about £6,000 and is not unduly daunting – a good DVD player, a mixing desk for sound and a small projector of the kind you can run with a laptop or a DVD player, plus a good quality retractable screen. There is also now a mobile unit which operates from Seahouses on the coast, and along with Belford, is now one of the outposts of the Berwick Film Festival.*

*The community benefits are obvious but using films and moving images and simple video technology has also helped the church. Video and PowerPoint can be used in worship and there is a group of teenagers, some of whom would not be seen dead inside a church, who are happy to meet for 'The Matrix' – to watch films and gently explore the theology behind the themes.*

### 2.7 Church growth

2.7.1 Enabling the Church to grow and increase its membership remains a challenge for all of us and will be a key focus of *vision2020*.

2.7.2 The Multicultural Congregational Story Award is one of the ways we are encouraging stories to be told about the growth in multicultural congregations. These stories reflect that 'growing' takes a variety of shapes and is often nurtured through an intentionally missional focus that invests in embodying the good news in practice, a 'heart' for the wider community, a welcoming and inclusive outlook, and long term investment in enabling the sharing of a wide cross-section of giftings from among church members. Small, medium or large; rural, urban or suburban congregations – these stories of commitment, welcome, and hospitality are encouraging.

*A few years ago, Crossway United Reformed Church in South London was at a low ebb. Having had a succession of interim ministers and faced with the prospect of its building being subject to a compulsory purchase order by the local authority as part of a major regeneration programme, attendance had declined to around 15 people each Sunday. The local community included several colleges and universities and the church identified university students as one part of the community it could do more to engage with. Wanting to do more than just invite a few students to join the Sunday congregation, the church decided to employ a team of students to increase its capacity to reach out to its local community. The church had a simple message: small church wanting to grow seeks students to help make this happen.*

*The student team, combined with the efforts of long-standing church members, started to do new things – introducing new music in Sunday worship, organising outreach events, making new connections in the community. From small beginnings the church started to grow, with several existing members coming much more frequently and new visitors returning week after week. Two and a half years on, the church's future prospects have changed dramatically. With Sunday morning attendance around 35 people and since September a new (and very dynamic) minister in post – the church is now poised to play a major role in the local regeneration programme and looking for new ways to grow further.*

2.7.3 Sadly, at present stories of this kind are few and far between. The overall numerical decline of the United Reformed Church casts a long shadow over the future of the denomination. And so in the years to come we will work and pray for growth that is qualitative in terms of our spirituality and fellowship (our faithfulness) but also our quantitative growth (our fruitfulness). With resources such as the *Vision4Life* evangelism year, the *Marketing Campaign* and *Fresh Expressions* at our disposal we have every reason to be hopeful that our denomination can grow again.

### 2.8 Global partnerships

2.8.1 Being an active partner in God's global mission with others around the world is the focus of *Belonging to the World Church* and *Commitment for Life*. Both are crucial to the work of the Mission Committee.

*Back in January 2007 David Grosch-Miller and Barbara Madge from the South Western Synod, travelled out to Jamaica to meet with ministers of the then South Middlesex Area Council and the Deputy General Secretary, Rose Wedderburn, of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. Discussions continued after that visit and, nine months later, the South Western Synod welcomed visitors from Jamaica to the UK and a covenant between the synod and the South Middlesex Area Council was signed. The covenant focussed on four key areas:*

1. *mutual discipleship and friendship ;*
2. *exchange visits;*
3. *commitment to explore common issues;*
4. *shared liturgy.*



Signing the covenant between South Western Synod and the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

*The intention was to concentrate on one of these areas each year, but as with any relationship things don't always go to plan. It takes time to get to know each other and learn from each other's experiences, so perhaps the covenant was ambitious in hoping to achieve too much too soon. Interestingly, some visitors from the UK and some visitors from Jamaica have considerable experience of each other's countries, whilst others have little or no experience. Barbara had never been abroad before her trip in 2007 and now finds herself as the Global Partners Partnership Coordinator. Barbara says, 'In many ways the Church in Jamaica is currently where this country was fifty years ago. There are good congregations but numbers are declining and the influence of the Church is being eroded. Ministers are concerned because people are not becoming engaged in reading the Bible and worship.'*

The next visit is to Jamaica where they hope to explore the possibility of using the Vision4Life material. This partnership is facilitated by the *Belonging to the World Church* programme.

2.8.2 The *Belonging to the World Church* (BWC) programme remained a busy focus of our international work. Since the last General Assembly, there have been: BWC Global Partner visits to nine countries and reciprocal visits to the UK from Cuba, Jamaica, Malawi and Mozambique; church leaders' trips to Taiwan and Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories; International Student Placements to Botswana, India, Kenya, Switzerland, Taiwan, the US and Zimbabwe; a ministerial exchange visit to Myanmar; and sabbatical visits to Bolivia, the Caribbean, Italy, Malawi, New Zealand and the US.

2.8.3 The United Reformed Church has also been represented at many major gatherings, general assemblies and church meetings in Europe and beyond. All of these have fed into the life of the Church here with the sharing of experiences through personal relationships which lies at the heart of the BWC programme.



2.8.4 Through *Commitment for Life* we have given hope to our Christian Aid partners in Zimbabwe who have suffered extreme poverty, unrest and an economic crisis in the last two years. That support, both monetary and in solidarity, was particularly noticeable during the recent *Belonging to the World Church /Commitment for Life* trip to Zimbabwe. Albert Nkomo who featured in last July's materials is spreading the good news of farming 'God's Way' with his conservation farming techniques that have quadrupled his crop. His neighbour Daissy Moyo gave this message to *Commitment for Life* supporters: 'I'm thankful to you because now I have knowledge from the training. I used to be known as someone who is poor.'

2.8.5 The trip enabled *Commitment for Life* Advocate Mary Jeremiah from the Synod of Wales to see for herself how the money raised by *Commitment for Life* is used. Following the trip she said:

*I have seen for myself the wonderful work Silveira House is doing giving people an opportunity to change their lives for the better by learning a new skill and helping their own community at the same time. Now I can be a resource for all the churches who support Zimbabwe.*



## 2.9 Justice and peace

2.9.1 Church and Society (now part of the ecumenical Joint Public Issues Team), *Commitment for Life* and World Church Relations enable the Church to be a Church that is committed to peace and reconciliation, tackling poverty and challenging injustice.

2.9.2 The global financial crisis and pursuant economic recession have wrought havoc with the livelihoods of millions of the most vulnerable members of society in the UK and abroad. Following the adoption of an emergency resolution on the financial crisis at Mission Council in November 2009 which expressed support for the introduction of a global financial transactions tax, the URC was the first denomination in the UK to join the Robin Hood Tax (RHT) campaign which was launched on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2010. The campaign is a movement bringing together dozens of organisations that work to reduce poverty in the UK and overseas, and campaign to tackle climate change. They have come together during the economic crisis to campaign for a new deal between banks and society.

The campaign is calling for a tiny tax on bankers that would give billions to tackle poverty and climate change at home and abroad. The tax, 0.05%, would be on financial trading of stocks, bonds, commodities and foreign exchange. The URC has been responsible for building the moral authority behind this campaign by lobbying its



ecumenical partners and the G20 ambassadors in London to support such a tax. We have also campaigned to get this issue included in election hustings meetings and the design and distribution of a flyer and prayer card ahead of the General Election. For more information on this campaign see [www.robinhoodtax.org.uk](http://www.robinhoodtax.org.uk)

2.9.3 United Reformed Church congregations also continue to offer a pastoral response to this crisis which involves a wide range of activities including debt counselling, the promotion of credit unions, running community cupboards and using our buildings to assist job seekers with training, education and the development of social enterprises.

2.9.4 An effective network of practitioners and concerned individuals has been established to coordinate the United Reformed Church's response to immigration and asylum issues. Coordinated by Geoffrey Duncan of Thames North Synod, this network is actively engaged in educating and training events on migration and representing the views of the URC and our ecumenical partners to the UK Benefits Agency (UKBA) through regular meetings on the policy and practice of UKBA officials. This dialogue is on-going and has been instrumental in getting the UKBA to reconsider its procedures for issuing visitors visas to members of our partner Churches overseas and in its redefining and understanding of religious workers under Tier 5 of the Points Based System.

2.9.5 The URC is also actively supporting the Citizens for Sanctuary campaign and is calling for the review of the UKBA's policy on the detention of children – see [www.citizensforsanctuary.org.uk](http://www.citizensforsanctuary.org.uk) We remain committed to offering hospitality to the strangers in our midst regardless of their immigration status and are considering the theological and legal implications of being a Church that offers radical welcome to all. For more details contact Geoff on [world.churchandsociety@urcthamesnorth.org.uk](mailto:world.churchandsociety@urcthamesnorth.org.uk)

Val Morrison, Assembly Co-Moderator, represents the URC at the launch of the *Citizens for Sanctuary* campaign outside Westminster Palace on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2010



2.9.6 The URC's Peace Fellowship and Mission Committee have produced a report entitled *The Mission Imperative of Peacemaking and Reconciliation* which provides a timely reminder of Jesus' pronouncement of blessing on those who seek to build peace in their communities. This is predicated on an understanding of peace which is not simply the absence of conflict or violence, but which incorporates the notion of complete well being in relationships between individuals and God, their neighbours and the rest of created order. It also bases its understanding of security on the notion of common security (as opposed to national security) and recommends key actions for the URC to consider at Assembly, synod and local church level to ensure that peacemaking and reconciliation is mainstreamed in our missiology and ecclesiology as a Church. This report can be downloaded from the Church and Society website of the URC by following this link [www.urch.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/peace/peace\\_fellowship](http://www.urch.org.uk/what_we_do/peace/peace_fellowship)

2.9.7 A full report of the activities of the Mission and Joint Public Issues teams in the area of peace and justice since the last assembly is available on the URC website – go to [http://www.urch.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/church\\_and\\_society/home\\_page](http://www.urch.org.uk/what_we_do/church_and_society/home_page) and follow the links.

2.9.8 Issues of justice and peace also lie at the heart of the *Commitment for Life* programme. Through *Commitment for Life* interest in both Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories and climate change has seen dedicated church members attending day conferences to be inspired through hearing stories of people living daily with these issues. Having the opportunity to share campaigning and wider educational and action ideas helps participants take the message of God's love for all people as part of wider mission.

*Commitment for Life* Advocates Sylvia and Ian Salmon say:

*Israel/Palestine days give us the impetus to carry on campaigning for Justice and Peace. Selling Fairtrade goods from Palestine, in addition to our Traidcraft commitment, is a very practical way to help people support themselves. Fairtrade is very much part of Commitment for Life. All of us can make a real difference through our purchases.*

2.9.9 *Commitment for Life* continues to grow, with 42% of churches being part of the scheme and raising over one million pounds since Assembly last met. Thank you on behalf of our four partner countries. Please consider becoming an advocate in your synod or receiving moving stories (Israel/Palestine) and stories for change (Bangladesh, Jamaica and Zimbabwe) by email. Local churches find these extremely useful in helping congregations understand more about issues.

Please visit [www.cforl.org.uk](http://www.cforl.org.uk) for a wide range of resources for use within your church community.

2.10 The integrity of creation

2.10.1 In the past two years the Church has taken significant steps to safeguard the integrity of creation, at all levels. This has been strongly supported by the Mission Committee and the work of the Mission Team.

2.10.2 The centenary of a church is a significant anniversary. Tracey Lewis, Minister of Trinity-Henleaze URC and the URC Mission Committee member for South Western Synod tells the story of their celebrations and where it has led them:

*2007 was the year we turned 100 and we wanted to celebrate. The church was planted amongst fields and park land, before neighbouring houses were built to form what is now the community of Henleaze. So, 100 year later, we thought we should celebrate with our long-standing neighbours. We arranged four 'Community Conversation Evenings' and issued an open invitation, well advertised, to the first evening asking 'Is God Green?'*

*The chairs in church were moved (!) so that people could sit informally around tables ... and we waited, nervously! To our delight sixty people turned up – around half not church people! This was obviously an issue that people wanted to talk about. Whilst we had an invited speaker at our first meeting, for our follow-up we decided simply to talk to one another and to stay with questions of climate change and environmental care – particularly thinking about how we could encourage one another and make a difference locally.*

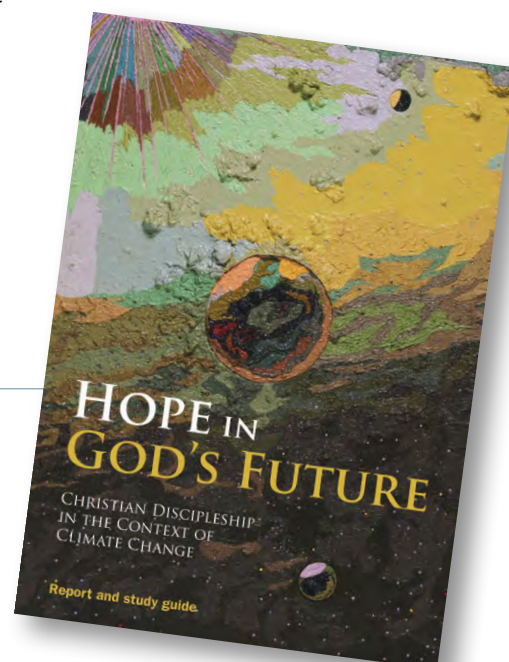
*These conversations led to the establishing of a local 'Sustainable Henleaze' group. Two years later Sustainable Henleaze has become a community forum around environmental issues in its own right run by local people, the church being involved as a partner and still being the place for meetings. Sustainable Henleaze is open to all and almost every meeting someone new turns up. It now has working groups getting involved in issues of waste and recycling, energy, transport and food. Sometimes speakers are invited to help us explore issues – often we simply talk with one another, share concern and knowledge and find the encouragement we need to act for a more sustainable future.*

*As for the church – we are now 102! We have had great conversations! We have made many new friends in our neighbourhood and been reminded that we are planted in this place to grow with the community.*

2.10.3 The Mission Committee has initiated and coordinated a number of activities in support of the Climate Change Resolution passed at General Assembly in 2007. These include the creation of a climate change task team to coordinate our activities on climate change, the appointment of green apostles at synod level to coordinate mission activities related to the environment, and the commissioning of consultants to assist the Mission Team in implementing the recommendations of the *Hope in God's Future* report which was adopted by Mission Council last year. These actions are on-going and we will update Mission Council on progress on each of these issues.

2.10.4 A full report on the activities undertaken by the Mission Committee related to climate change and the integrity of creation is posted on the URC website under the Climate Change link on the homepage.

Other useful resources for churches can be found on the Creation Challenge website – [www.creationchallenge.org.uk](http://www.creationchallenge.org.uk)





# 2010 THE COMMUNITY PROJECT AWARDS 2010

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Church 2010

This Committee nominates to Assembly the names of people to serve as conveners and secretaries of all Assembly committees, and as members of those committees. It also suggests names of URC representatives on other bodies. It recommends the people to make up appointment groups for moderators of synods and Assembly appointed staff.

**Convener:** Malcolm Hanson

**Convener elect:** John Durell

**Secretary:** Sarah Dodds

**Synod representatives:**

I Val Towler

II Chris Weddle

III John Oldershaw

IV Chris Reed

V Duncan Smith

VI Margaret Marshall

VII Mick Barnes

VIII Roz Harrison

IX Peter Pay

X Simon Fairnington

XI Derrick Sena Dzandu-Hedidor

XII Jean Silvan Evans

XIII Jim Merrilees

with the immediate Past Moderator and the General Secretary

## 1 Biennial meetings of General Assembly (Resolution 14, page 252)

1.1 With the change to biennial Assemblies there are consequences for the terms of some Assembly appointments. It seems desirable that whenever possible Assembly should continue to make its own appointments, particularly of Assembly officers, though there will be times when Mission Council needs to act on behalf of Assembly in making appointments.

1.2 Changes have already been made in relation to the Assembly moderators. Mission Council has also agreed to recommend to Assembly that the clerk's appointment be changed so that this will be for six years with the possibility of reappointment for a further four years. Ideally this appointment should be made two years in advance of service so that the new officer can shadow the outgoing clerk over a reasonable period, including one Assembly. It is not easy, however, to fit the terms of the general secretary and the deputy general secretary to biennial Assemblies. Their terms will therefore continue as seven years potentially renewable for a further seven years. Similarly, the terms of synod moderators will continue as seven years renewable for five.

1.3 In relation to the honorary treasurer, the present term of service of four years seems a very short timescale. Mission Council has therefore agreed that this should become a six year appointment with the possibility of renewal for a further four years. Ideally this appointment should be made in time for the treasurer to serve for one year as assistant treasurer, ie as treasurer-elect.

1.4 In relation to the convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee, Mission Council has agreed that the term of service should become six years preceded by a two year period as convener-elect, thus allowing for shadowing for two years including one Assembly, followed by service at three Assemblies.

1.5 In both these cases it is recommended that the terms of the present post holders be extended to bring them in line with these new patterns.

1.6 The directors of the United Reformed Church Trust are already subject to appointment on a two-yearly basis to coincide with General Assembly. For various practical reasons it is proposed that the Assembly-appointed members of the ministers' pension trust should be appointed on the same pattern. Only one member of the board is due to retire in 2011. It is recommended that his appointment be extended by one year.

1.7 One of the changes introduced under the new pattern of Assemblies is that instead of all former moderators, chairman and presidents of the respective uniting bodies and of the United Reformed Church being eligible to attend as full members, they should instead form a 'college' to elect two of their number to attend the next General Assembly. That process has been satisfactorily completed for this Assembly and those appointed are the Revd Elizabeth Welch and the Revd John Waller.

### **2 Clerk to General Assembly**

The nominating group for the post of clerk to General Assembly, convened by the Revd Dr Stephen Orchard, recommends the appointment of Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith from the conclusion of Assembly 2012 to the conclusion of Assembly 2018, subject to review before the end of this period. Mrs Carrick Smith previously served in this role from 1998 to 2003. **Resolution 15, page 252**

### **3 Assembly staff appointments**

3.1 Staff appointments, such as staff secretaries, made in the name of General Assembly, currently go through a process which involves the following steps:

- (a) The staffing advisory group reviews the existing post or advises on a new post;
- (b) General Assembly (or Mission Council acting on behalf of Assembly) agrees to the post continuing or being established;
- (c) a nominating group is appointed by Nominations Committee;
- (d) the nominating group reports its recommendation to Nominations Committee which brings the name to Mission Council or General Assembly, which then resolves to appoint.

However, the time taken under (d) for an appointment to be ratified by a council of the church has led to difficulties and delays in confirming appointments.

Mission Council has therefore agreed to recommend to General Assembly that the responsibility for making such appointments should be delegated to the appointing groups themselves. This should ensure that appointing groups have authority to negotiate and complete appointments. **Resolution 16, page 252**

#### **3.2 Mersey synod moderator**

The review group for the post of moderator of the Mersey synod, convened by the Revd Nanette Lewis-Head, recommends the reappointment of the Revd Howard Sharp for a further term from 1 February 2011 to 30 June 2014. **Resolution 17, page 253**

#### **3.3 Director of Old Testament Studies, Westminster college**

The review group for the post of director of Old Testament Studies at Westminster college, Cambridge, convened by Professor Sir Anthony Bottoms, recommends the reappointment of the Revd Dr Janet Tollington until she reaches retirement age.

**Resolution 18, page 253**

### **4 The United Reformed Church Trust**

4.1 This is the first year in which some of the members of the URC Trust have been due to complete their terms of service. The relevant procedures for the appointment of new directors, including the provision of references, have been followed in consultation with the present board, and the proposed membership is listed in the main section of this report.

4.2 Because of changes to the constitution of the trust, the governing document agreed by General Assembly in 2007 is being revised.

4.3 There is one vacancy for a young person with relevant skills and experience to join the board, and a suitable candidate is being sought.

## 5 Monitoring

5.1 Monitoring of the composition of committees and of responses from those invited to serve is now a routine part of the committee's work. That could be described as a process of assessment and comparison. More actively, every effort continues to be made to achieve balance as names are considered for all committee vacancies. That part of the process, of course, has to be in conjunction with finding the best available people for each situation. The committee regularly consults with the Equal Opportunities Committee and the secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry.

5.2 When people are invited to serve, they are also sent a response form on which they can indicate, among other things, any reasons which influenced their decision to accept or decline. The return of these forms over the past year has been an impressive 84%. These immediately show very large variations year on year, which is no doubt partly due to the relatively low numbers involved statistically. Spread over the next five years (from the base year of 2008) some trends may be identifiable. However, some observations can be made now:

- some 20% of invitations are declined;
- refusals seem to be spread relatively evenly across the categories;
- the age profile of those serving is not as young as we would wish, but inevitably reflects people's availability;
- there is still an under-representation of black and Asian minority ethnic members, although every effort is being made to include them; there have been some recent improvements in numbers here; the greater involvement of black and Asian minority ethnic (BAME) members at local and synod level should help to provide a more natural and healthy balance;
- total committee membership has increased by 14% over the past year, due largely to the completion of committees and groups following the *Catch the Vision* process; the total committee membership (currently about 220) is nevertheless 13% below that for 2006; these figures do not include advisory and task groups as these were not counted in previous calculations.

## 6 Publication of Nominations Committee report

6.1 The main part of the Nominations report is taken up with the list of committees, groups, boards and panels and the people who serve on them and who represent the Church in a variety of capacities. It is important for the work of the committees, for the individuals concerned and for the whole Church that this list is as accurate as possible and that it is readily accessible. Up to now the definitive version has been that published each year in the Record of Assembly. With the move to biennial Assemblies there is a question about how the list should be published in the interim year when Mission Council approves the list and when committees change on 1<sup>st</sup> July. The question of how it should be published and made available has now been passed by Mission Council to the Communications and Editorial Committee. It is hoped that it will be issued annually in a consistent form from this Assembly onwards. Consideration is also being given to making it available on the website.

6.2 There are some significant changes to the content of the major listing of committees and representatives this year:

- i) the list now includes advisory groups and task groups whether appointed by Mission Council or General Assembly;
- ii) it now includes networks within the denomination or in ecumenical groupings with which we have a relationship;
- iii) it has been thoroughly reviewed for accuracy and to include all aspects of representation carried out in the name of the General Assembly;
- iv) it has been reordered; the numbering will not therefore correspond with previous years.

6.3 The aim in this review has been to achieve greater transparency about how the church works and who is serving it, to provide as comprehensive an overview as possible of the structures of the Church, and, so far as possible, to bring all appointments within one report.

6.4 Inevitably this is a constantly changing list. It is helpful if details about any changes and corrections in relation to committees and personnel can be given to the committee secretary, Sarah Dodds, [nominations@urc.org.uk](mailto:nominations@urc.org.uk) **Resolution 19, page 253**

## 7 Thanks to those who serve

The Church is exceptionally well served by those who represent it and those who serve on its committees. This is an opportunity for the Church to acknowledge its debt and to express its thanks. **Resolution 20, page 253**

## 8 Assembly committees and other appointments

Notes:

1. The moderators, the immediate past moderator and the general secretary are members *ex officio* of every standing committee.
2. Symbols have been used as follows:
  - \* denotes those appointed since the 2009 Mission Council report;
  - \*\* denotes those whom General Assembly is invited to appoint for the first time;
  - † denotes those who have been invited to extend their periods of service;
  - # denotes a convener elect who will become convener in 2011;
  - / the name after the slash is the alternate for the one before it.
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. When a member of a committee is there as a representative of another body or a particular category this is indicated in round brackets following the name.
5. Committee membership is normally for a period of four years, though this may sometimes exceptionally be renewable. Committee conveners serve an additional preliminary year as convener elect. In sections 1-4 of the report, appointments with a different term are noted.
6. The date in square brackets following the name indicates the date of retirement, assuming a full term.
7. In accordance with the decision of General Assembly 2000 some nominations are made directly by the National Synods of Wales and Scotland.
8. In years when General Assembly meets, new committee members normally take up their roles at the conclusion of Assembly. In years when General Assembly does not meet, they normally begin on 1<sup>st</sup> July.

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## 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.

*(Synods appoint and decide terms for their representatives)*

Northern Synod	Revd John Durell, Miss Elaine Colechin, Mr Justice Semuli
North Western Synod	Mr Geoffrey Clarke, Mr George Grime, Revd Sally Thomas
Mersey Synod	Mr Arthur Swift, Miss Emma Pugh, Revd Gordon Smith
Yorkshire Synod	Mr Chris Reed, Revd Kay Alberg, Mrs Jenny Poulter
East Midlands Synod	Mr Duncan Smith, Mrs Jill Turner, Revd Jane Campbell
West Midlands Synod	Mr Bill Robson, Mrs Adella Pritchard, Mrs Val Phillips
Eastern Synod	Revd Catherine Ball., Mrs Linda Harrison, Mr Clifford Patten
South Western Synod	Revd Roz Harrison, Revd Stephen Newell, Mrs Sarah Lane Cawte



Wessex Synod	Mr Peter Pay, Mrs Margaret Telfer, Revd Mary Thomas
Thames North Synod	Mr Simon Fairnington, Revd Maggie Hindley, Revd David Lawrence
Southern Synod	Revd Derrick Sena Dzandu-Hedidor, Revd Christopher Parker, Revd Zamantha Walker
National Synod of Wales	Revd Shelagh Pollard, Revd Peter Cruchley-Jones, Miss Iris Williams
National Synod of Scotland	Miss Irene Hudson, Mr Patrick Smyth, Revd John Sanderson

### 1.1 Mission Council Advisory Group

Convener: Moderator of General Assembly

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary

Revd David Grosch-Miller (2011)      Revd Derrick Sena Dzandu-Hedidor (2014)

Revd Elizabeth Nash (2014)      Moderators elect of General Assembly

[*ex officio*: General Secretary      Honorary Treasurer]

### 1.2 Staffing Advisory Group

Convener: Revd Rowena Francis

Secretary: General Secretary

Revd Ann Jack

Mr Peter Pay

Mr Keith Webster

Head of Human Resources

### 1.3 Law and Polity Advisory Group

Convener: Revd Prof David Thompson (2012)

Secretary: Dr Auger Pearce

Mr David Eldridge (2012)

Ms Morag McLintock (2012)

Revd John Durell (Synod Clerk)

Mr Donald Swift

[*ex officio*: Clerk to General Assembly, Legal Adviser]

### 1.4 Listed Buildings Advisory Group

Convener: Mr Hartley Oldham

Secretary: Mr David Figures

Correspondent for each synod

### 1.5 Ethical Investment Advisory Group

Convener: Revd Raymond Singh

Secretary: Secretary for Church and Society

Mr Mark Chaloner

Mr Richard Nunn (Investment Committee)

Mr Simon Loveitt

Mr Simon Peters

Chief Finance Officer

Deputy General Secretary

[*ex officio*: Honorary Treasurer]

### 1.6 Sexual Ethics Advisory Group

Convener: Revd David A L Jenkins\*\* [2014]

Revd Rowena Francis (Synod Moderator)

Revd Elizabeth Gray-King (Education and Learning)

Revd David Skitt

[*ex officio*: Deputy General Secretary, Coordinator Pastoral Response Team]

### 1.7 MIND (Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline) Advisory Group

Convener: Revd Julian Macro

Secretary: Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith

Mrs Kathleen Cross

Revd Alison Davis

Mrs Wilma Frew

Revd Heather Kent

Mr Hartley Oldham

Revd David Skitt

Clerk to General Assembly

Secretary for Ministries

Legal Adviser

### 1.8 Resource Sharing Task Group

Convener: Revd David Grosch-Miller

Secretary: Mr John Rea

Treasurer: Revd Dick Gray

Miss Margaret Atkinson

Mr Richard Turnbull

Mrs Rachel Wakeman

[*ex officio*: Honorary Treasurer]

### 1.9 Human Sexuality Task Group (2008)

Convener: Revd John Waller

Secretary: Revd Lucy Brierley

Revd Dr John Bradbury

Sr M Cecily Boulding OP

Revd Richard Church

Revd Claire Gouldthorpe

Ms Doreen Daley

Mrs Val Morrison

### 1.10 London Synod Task Group

Convener: Revd Bill Mahood

Secretary: Mrs Sheila Brain

Revd Nicola Furley-Smith (11)

Revd David Varco (10)

Revd Raymond Singh (11)

Mr Keith Webster (10)

## 2 Mission department

### 2.1 Mission Committee

Convener: Revd Ed Cox [2012]

Deputy Convener: Mr Peter Pay\*\* [2012]

Mrs Chris Eddowes (1) [2011]

Revd Andrew Willett† (3) [2014]

Revd Clare Downing (5) [2012]

Revd Peter Ball (7) [2011]

Revd Peter Hurter\*\* (9) [2014]

Vacancy (11) [2012]

Revd Lindsey Sanderson\* (13) [2011]

Revd Michael Walsh (2) [2012]

Mrs Anne Parker (4) [2011]

Revd Louise Franklin† (6) [2014]

Revd Tracey Lewis (8) [2012]

Revd John Macauley\* (10) [2011]

Vacancy (12) [2014]

#### 2.1.1 International Exchange Reference Group

Convener: Revd Linda Elliott [2011] #Mr Chris Wright\*\* [2015]

Secretary: Secretary for World Church Relations

Members: Revd Andrew Prasad \*\* (Synod Moderator) [2014]

Miss Angela Quinn\*\* (13) [2014]

#### 2.1.2 Commitment for Life Reference Group

Convener: Mrs Helen Lidgett [2012]

#### 2.1.3 Methodist/URC Interfaith Reference Group

*(Members normally serve for six years – in parallel with Methodist terms)*

Co-Convener: Revd Peter Brain [2013]

Revd Clare Downing (5) [2013]

Revd Bill Burgess (3) [2015]

Mr David Jonathan (10) [2014]

Revd Tim Clarke (10) [2015]

#### 2.1.4 Joint Public Issues Team Strategy and Policy Group

Mr Simon Loveitt (Spokesperson on Public Issues for the URC)

*(Other members appointed by the Methodist Church and the Baptist Union of Great Britain.)*

#### 2.1.5 Rural Strategy Group (URC/Methodist)

Revd Peter Noble (Co-Chair)

Revd Elizabeth Caswell

Revd David Herbert

#### 2.1.6 Vision4Life Steering Group

Revd Dr John Hall (Co-Chair)

Ms Francis Brien (Secretary)

Revd Ray Adams

Revd Robert Day

Revd Dr Michael Jagessar

Mr Steve Summers

Revd Roberta Rominger (Co-Chair)

Revd Dr Janet Lees (Coordinator)

Mr John Brown

Revd Dr Susan Durber

Mr Lawrence Moore

Revd Michael Walsh

Ms Denese Chikwendu

Revd Brian Harley

Revd Paul Snell

Revd Sally Willett

#### 2.1.7 Marketing Campaign Steering Group

Revd Roberta Rominger (Co-Chair) Mr Laurence Moore (Co-Chair)

Ms Lucy Berry (10)

Revd Martin Hazell

Miss Victoria Paulding (7)

Ms Denese Chikwendu

Mr Graham Law (6)

Mr Simon Peters (13)

Ms Francis Brien

Revd Peter Noble (12)

Revd Michael Walsh (2)

## 3 Ministries of the church department

### 3.1 Ministries Committee

Convener: Revd Ruth Whitehead [2014]

Secretary: Secretary for Ministries

Mrs Helen Renner (3) [2011]

Revd Yolande Burns (2) [2012]

Ms Brenda Jesse (8) [2013]

Revd David Skitt (11) [2013]

Revd John Cox\*\* (7) [2014]

Mr Andy Buxton\*\* (12) [2014]

Convener, Assessment Board

#### 3.1.1 Ministries – Accreditation Sub-committee

Convener: Revd Geoffrey Townsend [2013]

Secretary: Secretary for Ministries

Revd Sue Henderson (11) [2011]

Revd Malcolm Fife (5) [2013]

Revd Terry Oakley (Synod Moderator) [2011]

Mrs Tessa Henry-Robinson (7) [2013]

Mr Jim Murison\*\* (4) [2014]

#### 3.1.2 Ministries – CRCW Programme Sub-committee

Convener: Revd Paul Whittle [2012]

Secretaries: CRCW Development Workers

Ms Janine Atkinson (CRCW) [2012]

Revd Susan Macbeth (4) [2012]

Ms Christine Smalligan (10) [2012]

Prof John Mellor (9) [2013]

Vacancy [2014]

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

Convener and Assembly Lay Preaching Advocate: Mrs Jan Harper [2011]

# Mrs Judith Johnson\*\* (1) [2015]

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 Dr Anthony Haws [2013]

Mrs Jane Mackerness (12) [2011]

Miss Margaret Atkinson (4) [2012]

Revd Catey Morrison (1) [2012]

Mr Andrew Martlew\*\* (3) [2014]

Revd Alison Hall\*\* (3) [2014]

[*ex officio*: Honorary Treasurer, Convener, Pensions Executive]

#### 3.1.5 Ministries – Retired Ministers' Housing Sub-committee

*(In future, members will normally serve for four years but appointments may be extended for a further two years.)*

Convener: Revd David Bedford [2015]

Secretary: Secretary, Retired Ministers Housing Society Ltd

Revd Michael Spencer (6) [2011]

Revd Nanette Lewis-Head (12) [2012]

Revd Anne Bedford 3) [2015]

Revd John Humphreys (Synod Moderator) [2013]

[*ex officio*: Honorary Treasurer]

*(Properties are managed by a Company viz: **Retired Ministers' Housing Society LTD.***

*Details of the Members of the Board etc may be obtained from the secretary, Mr Tony Bayley, at Church House.)*

#### 3.1.6 Assessment Board

*(Members normally serve for five years as training is required.)*

Convener: Dr Graham Campling [2014]

Retiring 2011 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)

## Nominations

Retiring 2014 Mr Mark Hayes (7), Mr Robin Pencavel (8), Revd Jamie Kissack (4),  
Revd Paul Floe (12)

Retiring 2015 Mrs Judith Garthwaite\*\* (4), Mr Rod Morrison\*\* (4),  
Ms Mercy Nimako\*\* (11), Mrs Maureen Campbell\*\* (10)

### 3.2 Education and Learning Committee

Convener: Professor Malcolm Johnson [2011]

#Revd John Smith\*\* [2015]

Secretary: Secretary for Education and Learning

Revd Dr Robert Pope (12) [2011]

Revd Jennifer Snashall (11) [2012]

Revd Dr James Coleman (4) [2012]

Mrs Fiona Weighton-Smith (4) [2012]

Revd Dr Susan Durber (Resource Centre) [2013]

Revd Dr David Whiting (1) [2013]

Mr Celvon Binns\*\* (6) [2014]

Mrs Lindsey Cole\*\* (5) [2014]

Ms Sue Matthews\*\* (6) [2014]

#### 3.2.1 Windermere Management Committee

Convener: Revd Howard Sharp\* [2013]

Minute Secretary: Mrs Jenny Poulter \*\* (4) [2013]

Dr Peter Clarke (1) [2011] Mr Nick Andrews (1) [2011] Mr Graham Law (6) [2013]

Mrs Joan Stocker (representative of Carver URC)

Secretary for Education and Learning

*(The number of members may change in the light of future experience.)*

#### 3.2.2 Education for Ministry Phase 2 and 3 (EM2/3) Sub-committee

Convener: Dr Ian Morrison

Minute Secretary: Revd Elizabeth Gray-King (EM2/3 Officer)

Revd David Poulton (EM3 minister)

Revd Zam Walker (EM2 minister)

Ms Pat Oliver (CRCW)

Revd Stephen Collinson (Training and Development Officer)

Ms Sandra Wellington (Training and Development Officer)

Vacancy (Resource Centre)

Secretary for Education and Learning

*[ex officio: Convener, Education and Learning Committee Secretary for Ministries]*

#### 3.2.3 Education and Learning Finance Sub-committee

Convener: Mr Mike Downing

Minute Secretary: Secretary for Education and Learning

Professor Malcolm Johnson (Convener, Education and Learning Committee)

Mr Graham Law

*[ex officio: Honorary Treasurer*

*In attendance: Chief Finance Officer]*

### 3.3 Youth and Children's Work Committee

Convener: Revd Robert Weston [2013]

Secretary: Children's Work Development Officer

Mrs Anthea Coates (8) [2011]

Mr Chris Gill (11) [2011]

Mr Matthew Franks (8) [2011]

Mrs Memona Shahbaz (10) [2012]

Revd Stuart Radcliffe (2) [2012]

Mr Phillip Timson (5) [2013]

Revd Shirley Knibbs (4) [2013]

Revd Meg Robb (1) [2013]

Miss Tamara Oates (5) [2013]

Vacancy [2014]

FURY Chair

FURY Council Member

#### 3.3.1 Pilots Management Sub-committee

Convener: Revd David Downing [2011]

#Mrs Soo Webster \*\* [2015]

Member: Mrs Marilyn Armstrong \*\* (1) [2014]

*(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 Committee

Convener: Dr David Robinson [2012]

Secretary: Facilities Manager

Moderator Moderators elect General Secretary Clerk to General Assembly

Convener, Local Arrangements Committee

#### 4.1.1 Tellers at Assembly 2010 for the election of the General Assembly Moderators 2010-2014

Dr Jim Merrilees (Convener), Mr Simon Fairnington, Mr Duncan Smith

*(These are all synod clerks who are appointed in rotation.)*

### 4.2 Communications and Editorial Committee

Convener: Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe [2011] #Revd Richard Bittlestone\*\* [2015]

Secretary: Director of Communications

Mrs Esther Searle (8) [2011]

Ms Lucy Berry (10) [2012]

Mr Andy Littlejohns (11) [2012]

Mr Justin Brierley (11) [2012]

Mr Stanley Hazell (8) [2012]

Revd Peter Lyth (3) [2013]

Mr Peter Ranscombe (13) [2013]

Mr Orin Stephens (10) [2013]

Mrs Helen Jones (6) [2013]

### 4.3 Equal Opportunities Committee

Convener: Revd Elizabeth Nash [2014]

Secretary: Mr Andrew Jack (10) [2013]

Ms Mary Jeremiah (12) [2012]

Revd Barbara Exley (11) [2012]

Mrs Gwynneth Tilley (7) [2013]

Mrs Tina Ashitey (10) [2013]

Revd Tom Arthur (12) [2013]

Mr Tunde Biyi\*\* (7) [2014]

### 4.4 Faith and Order Reference Group

*(Members normally serve for six years.)*

Convener: Revd Dr Robert Pope [2012]

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary

Revd Dr John Bradbury [2012]

Revd Dr Susan Durber [2012]

Revd Fleur Houston [2012]

Revd Dr Michael Jagessar [2014]

Revd Dr Sarah Hall [2014]

Revd Dr Neil Messer [2014]

### 4.5 Finance Committee

Convener: Honorary Treasurer

Chief Finance Officer

Mrs Jane Humphreys (7) [2011]

Mr Brian Hosier (10) [2011]

Revd David Walton (13) [2012]

Mr Angus Massie (10) [2012]

Dr Harry Potter OBE (3) [2013]

Mr Richard Dewar (9) [2013]

Mr David Aplin (10) [2013]

Revd Edward Sanniez\*\* (10) [2014]

Chairman of the Trustees

#### 4.5.1 Stewardship Sub-committee

Convener: Mrs Faith Paulding [2013]

Mr Gareth Curl (8) [2011]

Mr Keith Berry (10) [2012]

Revd Dick Gray (8) [2013]

Revd Leslie Morrison\*\* (13) [2014]

*(The members of this sub-committee are appointed by the Finance Committee.)*

### 4.6 Nominations Committee

*(Synods appoint and decide terms for their representative.)*

Convener: Revd John Durell [2014]

Secretary: Miss Sarah Dodds [2013]

Synod Representatives:

Revd Val Towler (1)

Revd Chris Weddle (2)

Revd John Oldershaw\* (3)

Mr Chris Reed\* (4)

Mr Duncan Smith (5)

Mrs Margaret Marshall\* (6)

Mr Mick Barnes (7)

Revd Roz Harrison (8)

Mr Peter Pay (9)

Mr Simon Fairnington (10) Revd Derrick Sena Dzandu-Hedidor (11)

Dr Jean Silvan-Evans (12) Dr James Merrilees (13)

with the Immediate Past Moderator and the General Secretary.

### 4.6.1 Panel for General Assembly appointments

*(Members normally serve for five years as training is required.)*

- 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 Durell (1), Revd Roz Harrison (8), Revd John Oldershaw (3),  
Revd Deborah McVey (7), Revd Robert Street (9), Mrs Susan Wilkinson (2),  
Mrs Carol Dixon (1), Revd John Young (13),
- Retiring 2015 Revd Terry Hinks\*\* (9), Mr Chris Maple\*\* (3), Mr Duncan Smith\*\* (5),  
Ms Helen Stenson\*\* (13)

### 4.7 Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee

Convener: Revd Alasdair Pratt [2011]#Revd Sheila Maxey \*\* [2015]

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary

Mrs Delyth Rees (12) [2011]

Revd Adrian Bulley (Synod Moderator) [2011]

Revd Birgit Ewald (7) [2012]

Dr Paul Ashitey (10) [2013]

[*ex officio*: Honorary Treasurer

General Secretary Secretary for Welfare]

### 4.8 Disciplinary Process – Commission Panel

*(Members serve for five years as regular training is required. They may be invited to continue serving beyond this as experience is especially valuable on this panel. Members may not serve beyond the age of 70 for legal reasons.)*

Convener: Miss Kathleen Cross [2014]

Deputy Convener: Revd Christine Craven [2014]

Secretary: Mrs Wilma Frew [2011]

Secretary elect: Vacancy [2016]

Members:

- Retiring 2011 Mr Geoffrey Milnes (5), Revd David Pattie (13), Mr Neil Robinson (4),  
Revd Yvonne Stone (6)
- Retiring 2012 Revd Nicholas Adlem (8), Revd Kay Cattell (5),  
Revd Kenneth Chippindale (6), Revd Alison Davis (7),  
Revd John Du Bois (11), Revd Joan Grindrod-Helmn (1),  
Miss Judith Haughton (2), Miss Elizabeth Lawson QC (10),  
Revd Julian Macro (9), Dr Jim Merrilees† (13), Revd Colin Offor (1),  
Mr Nicholas Pye (3), Revd Raymond Singh (11), Revd Carolyn Smyth (13),  
Revd Prof David Thompson (7), Mr David Westwood (4)
- Retiring 2013 Revd Pauline Calderwood (4), Revd Bill Bowman (11),  
Dr Peter Campbell Smith (11), Mr Roger Tucker (9)
- Retiring 2014 Revd Hazel Allen (8), Mr Mick Barnes (7), Revd James Brown (6),  
Revd Mary Burgess (8), Miss Kathleen Cross (2), Mrs Mary Cummings (6),  
Mr Peter Etwell (1), Revd Christine Fowler (8), Mrs Barbara Groom (8),  
Mr Andrew Harvey (8), Revd Naison Hove (10), Mr Peter Jolly (9),  
Mrs Barbara Lancaster (2), Mrs Barbara Madge (8), Revd Nicholas Mark (5),  
Mrs Pat Poinen (1), Revd Shelagh Pollard (12), Mrs Lynne Upsdell (12),  
Ms Elizabeth Whitten (7)
- Retiring 2015 Revd Meryl Court† (10), Mrs Pat Crozier\*\* (3), Dr Fiona Liddell† (12),  
Mr Colin Macbean\*\* (9), Mrs Pamela Sharp† (3), Mr Patrick Smyth† (13)

### 4.9 Standing Panel for the Incapacity Procedure

*(This panel is normally convened by the member with legal experience.)*

Secretary: Revd Heather Kent [2012]

Revd Bill Mahood (Past Moderator of General Assembly) [2012]

Revd Rowena Francis (Synod Moderator) [2013]

Mr Donald Swift (Legal experience) [2013] Dr Gillian Patterson (GP) [2013]

#### 4.10 Criminal Records Bureau (Churches' Agency for Safeguarding) Advisory Group

Revd Adrian Bulley (Synod Moderator)	Ms Liz Crocker (Child Care Specialist)
Mrs Wilma Frew (Magistrate)	Youth Work Development Officer
Children's Work Development Officer	Deputy General Secretary

#### 4.11 United Reformed Church Trust

*(Directors normally serve for six years. The directors of the trust elect the chair from among their own number and appoint a secretary and deputy secretary.)*

Chair: Mr Alan Small

Secretary: Ms Sandi Hallam-Jones

Deputy Secretary: Mr Tony Bayley

Directors:

*Group 1*

Mr Alan Small (3) [2012]

Dr David Robinson (4) [2014]

Mr Andrew Atkinson\*\* (1) [2016]

*Group 2*

Dr Augur Pearce (12) [2012]

Mrs Rachel Wakeman (6) [2014]

Revd Richard Gray\*\* (8) [2016]

*Group 3*

Revd Prof David Thompson (7) [2012]

Mr John Woodman (7) [2014]

Revd Michael Davies\*\* (11) [2014]

Mission Council nominated Directors:

Mrs Claudette Binns [2014]

Vacancy for FURY nominated young person [2016]

Coopted Directors:

Miss Joyce Bain† [2014]

Mr Brian Woodhall† [2014]

[*ex officio*: Moderator(s) of General Assembly

General Secretary

Deputy General Secretary

Honorary Treasurer

Clerk to General Assembly

[*in attendance*: Convener, Investment Committee]

#### 4.11.1 Church House Management Group

Convener: Mr Donald Swift

Revd Meryl Court

Mr Mike Gould

Mr John Woodman

Head of Human Resources

[*ex officio*: General Secretary Chief Finance Officer Director of Communications]

#### 4.11.2 Remuneration Sub-committee

Convener: Deputy General Secretary

Secretary: Head of Human Resources

Ms Carmila Legarde (Methodist HR)

Mr William McVey (URC elder)

Mrs Mary Steele (Church House Staff representative)

Honorary Treasurer

Chief Finance Officer

#### 4.12 The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd Board Members

*(Members normally serve for six years. Terms run until the AGM in September. The board members elect the chair from among their own number and appoint the company secretary.)*

Chair: Revd Rowena Francis [2014]

Secretary: Ms Sandi Hallam-Jones

Members of URC: Mr Andrew Perkins [2011] Revd Dr John Dyce [2014]

Revd Rowena Francis [2014] Revd Roger Woodall\*\* [2016]

Members of Fund: Revd Kate Gartside\* [2015] Revd Duncan Wilson [2012]

Revd David Bedford [2012] Revd Jacky Embrey [2014]

[*ex officio*: Honorary Treasurer Convener, Investment Committee

Convener, Maintenance of Ministry Sub-committee Convener, Pensions Executive]

### 4.13 Pensions Executive

Convener: Mr Maurice Dyson [2012]

Secretary: Mrs Judy Stockings

Members: Revd Kathryn Taylor [2012]      Revd Roger Woodall\* [2013]

[*ex officio*: Convener, 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.*)

### 4.14 Investment Committee

Convener: Mr Richard Nunn [2013]

Secretary: Ms Sandi Hallam-Jones

Members:

Mr Michael Goldsmith [2012]

Dr Brian Woodhall [2012]

Mr Malcolm Littlefair [2013]

Mr Andrew Perkins [2014]

## 5 Representatives to meetings of sister Churches

- |      |   |   |
|------|---|---|
| 5.1  | Presbyterian Church in Ireland                              | Mrs Val Morrison [2011]<br>Revd Dr James Coleman [2011]                                 |
| 5.2  | General Synod of Church of England                          | Revd Graham Maskery [2013]  |
| 5.3  | Methodist Conference  | Secretary for Ecumenical Relations  |
| 5.4  | Congregational Federation                                   | Secretary for Ecumenical Relations  |
| 5.5  | General Assembly of Church of Scotland [note 7]             | Mrs Val Morrison [2011]<br>Revd Dr James Coleman [2011]<br>Revd Mitchell Bunting [2011] |
| 5.6  | United Free Church of Scotland [note 7]                     | Revd John Humphreys   |
| 5.7  | Scottish Assembly of the Congregational Federation [note 7] | Revd John Humphreys<br>Revd Mitchell Bunting  |
| 5.8  | Scottish Episcopal Church [note 7]                          | Revd J Ross McLaren   |
| 5.9  | Methodist Church in Scotland [note 7]                       | Revd John Humphreys   |
| 5.10 | Baptist Union of Scotland [note 7]                          | Revd Peter Noble/Revd Peter Trow  |
| 5.11 | Presbyterian Church of Wales [note7]                        | Revd Peter Noble/Revd Peter Trow  |
| 5.12 | Union of Welsh Independents [note 7]                        | Revd Peter Noble/Revd Peter Trow  |
| 5.13 | Church in Wales Governing Board [note 7]                    | Revd Peter Noble/Revd Peter Trow  |
| 5.14 | Provincial Synod of the Moravian Church                     | To be decided   |

## 6 Representatives on ecumenical Church bodies

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

### 6.1 Council for World Mission (CWM) from Assembly 2008-11

Revd Dr John Parry, Ms Patricia Akoli, Revd John Sanderson, Secretary for World Church Relations

#### 6.1.1 CWM European Region Meeting 2008-11

Revd Dr John Parry, Ms Patricia Akoli, Revd John Sanderson, Secretary for World Church Relations, Secretary for Mission

### 6.2 World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) General Council

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

### 6.3 World Council of Churches (WCC) Central Committee

Represented indirectly

### 6.4 WCC Faith and Order Commission

Represented indirectly



**6.5 Conference of European Churches Assembly**

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

**6.6 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) Church Leaders' Meeting**

General Secretary

**6.6.1 CTBI Senior Representatives' Forum**

General Secretary, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

**6.6.2 CTBI Environmental Issues Network**

Revd David Coaker, Revd Dr David Pickering

**6.6.3 CTBI Church and Public Issues Network**

Mr Simon Loveitt, Secretary for Church and Society

**6.6.4 CTBI Churches' Criminal Justice Forum**

Mrs Wilma Frew

**6.6.5 CTBI Stewardship Network**

Mrs Faith Paulding

**6.6.6 CTBI Churches' International Students' Network**

Vacancy

**6.6.7 CTBI Consultative Group on Ministry amongst Children (CGMC)**

Mrs Karen Bulley, Ms Jo Williams

**6.6.8 CTBI Inter-Religious Network**

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

**6.6.9 CTBI Racial Justice Network**

Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry

**6.6.10 CTBI Churches' Network for Mission**

Secretary for Mission

**6.6.11 CTBI China Forum**

Revd Dr Walter Houston

**6.7 Churches Together in England (CTE) – from Forum 2009-12**

Mrs Val Morrison, Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe, Revd Bernie Collins, Revd Ian Smith, Revd Stephen Wilkins, General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary, Secretary for Ministries, Secretary for Mission, Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

**6.7.1 CTE – Enabling Group**

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

**6.7.2 CTE – Coordinating Group for Local Unity**

Revd Terry Oakley, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

**6.7.3 CTE – Churches Together for Healing**

Revd Deborah McVey, Vacancy

**6.7.4 CTE – Churches' Joint Education Policy Committee**

Mr Graham Handscomb

**6.7.5 CTE Churches' Theology and Unity Group**

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

## Nominations

### **6.7.6 CTE – Group for Evangelisation**

Secretary for Mission

### **6.7.7 CTE – Spirituality Coordinating Group**

Revd Sue Henderson

### **6.7.8 CTE – Churches' Rural Group**

Revd David Herbert

### **6.7.9 CTE – Minority Ethnic Affairs Group**

Revd John Danso, Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry

### **6.7.10 CTE Youth Work Matters Group**

Secretary for Youth Work

### **6.8 Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) Members Meeting**

[see note 7]

Revd John Humphreys, Revd Mitchell Bunting/Revd Sue Kirkbride

### **6.9 National Sponsoring Body for Scotland** [see note 7]

Revd John Humphreys, Revd Mitchell Bunting

### **6.10 Churches Together in Wales (CYTUN)** [see note 7]

Revd Peter Noble/Revd Peter Trow

### **6.11 Commission of Covenanted Churches** [see note 7]

Revd Peter Noble/ Revd Peter Trow

### **6.12 Joint Liturgical Group**

Secretary for Mission

### **6.13 Free Church Education Committee**

Mr Graham Handscomb, Mrs Gillian Kingston

### **6.14 European Churches' Environmental Network**

Revd David Coaker

### **6.15 Churches' Refugee Network**

Mr Geoff Duncan, Revd Fleur Houston

### **6.16 Churches' Committee on Funerals and Crematoria**

Revd Sally Thomas, Vacancy

### **6.17 Churches' Agency for Safeguarding**

Secretary for Youth Work

### **6.18 Churches' Forum for Safeguarding**

Secretary for Youth Work

### **6.19 Churches' Network for Non-Violence**

Secretary for Youth Work

### **6.20 Fresh Expressions**

*(Still under discussion)*

## 7 Representatives on formal bi-lateral and multi-lateral committees

### 7.1 Methodist/United Reformed Church Liaison Committee

Co-Convener: Revd Terry Oakley (Synod Moderator)  
 Revd Kay Alberg, Miss Emma Pugh, Vacancy, Vacancy, Revd Peter Rand (co-opted)  
 Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

### 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  
 Staff Secretary responsible to be decided.

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

Revd Elizabeth Welch, Revd Dr David Peel  
 Deputy General Secretary

### 7.4 Partnership Conversations of the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church and the National Synod of 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 Northern College

Miss Margaret Atkinson (4) [2011]	Mrs Helen Brown [2011]
Revd Dr Robert Pope [2011]	Revd David Jenkins [2013]
Mr Steve Wood [2013]	Secretary for Education and Learning

#### 8.1.1 Luther King House Educational Trust

Secretary for Education and Learning

### 8.2 Westminster College: Board of Governors

Convener: Professor Sir Anthony Bottoms [2014]	
Clerk: Revd Cecil White [2012]	Honorary Treasurer: Vacancy [2016]
Members: Dr Jean Stevenson [2013]	Revd Craig Muir [2015]
Revd Nigel Appleton [2015]	Vacancy [2016]
Vacancy [2016]	Secretary for Education and Learning

#### 8.2.1 Cheshunt Foundation

Mr Guy Morphet** [2013]	Revd Craig Muir [2011]
-------------------------	------------------------

#### 8.2.2 Cambridge Theological Federation

Convener, Westminster College Governors

### 8.3 The Queen's Foundation

Revd Roy Lowes	Mr Simon Rowntree
[In attendance: Secretary for Education and Learning]	

## 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]

## Nominations

### 9.4 Milton Mount Foundation

Mr Graham Rolfe [2011]      Mr Brian West [2011]      Revd Nicola Furley-Smith [2011]  
Ms Hilary Miles† [2013]      Revd David Cuckson† [2013]

### 9.5 Silcoates School

Prof Clyde Binfield [2011]      Mrs Valerie Jenkins [2011]      Dr Peter Clarke [2013]  
Dr Moira Gallagher [2013]      Revd Janet Lees [2013]      Vacancy [2014]

### 9.6 Taunton School

Revd David Grosch-Miller (Moderator, South Western Synod)

### 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:

### 10.1 Arthur Rank Centre

Revd David Herbert [April 2011]

### 10.2 Churches Legislation Advisory Service

Mrs Sheila Duncan  
General Secretary  
Deputy General Secretary

### 10.3 Congregational Fund Board

Revd Margaret Taylor [2012]  
Revd Eric Allen [2012]  
Mr Anthony Bayley [2011]  
Revd Geoffrey Roper [2011]  
Mrs Jackie Haws [2013]

### 10.4 Congregational Memorial Hall Trust

Mr Hartley Oldham [from before 1999]  
Mr Graham Stacy [from before 1999]  
Dr John Thompson [from 2004]  
Dr Brian Woodhall [from 2006]  
Revd Derek Wales [2011]  
Vacancy

### 10.5 Discipleship and Witness Board of Trustees

Mrs Patricia Hubbard [from before 1999]

#### 10.5.1 Publications Development Group

Ms Jo Williams [from 2008]

### 10.6 English Heritage's Places of Worship Forum

Mr Hartley Oldham (Convener of the Listed Buildings Advisory Group)

### 10.7 Guides' Religious Advisory Panel

Mrs Susan Walker [from before 1999]

**10.8 Lord Wharton's Charity**

Dr John Thompson [2013]

**10.9 Retired Ministers' and Widows' Fund**

Mr Ken Meekison [from before 1999]

Mrs Jill Strong [from 1999]

Revd Julian Macro [from 2004]

**10.10 Samuel Robinson's Charities**

Mr Tony Alderman [from 2004]

**10.11 Scouts' Religious Advisory Group**

Revd David Marshall-Jones [from before 1999]

**10.12 United Reformed Church History Society Council**

Vacancy [2012]

Revd Michael Hopkins [2012]

Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe [2013]

Dr David Robinson [2011]

Revd Prof David Thompson† [2014]

**10.13 United Reformed Church Scout and Guide Fellowship**

Revd David Marshall-Jones

**10.14 Westhill Endowment Fund**

Mr Howard Bridge

Revd Dr Stephen Orchard

Revd Elizabeth Welch (co-opted)

# Loaves, fishes and more ...

Tasty recipes from church leaders and cooking enthusiasts

Donation to Christian Aid for each copy sold

**Light Bites**  
**Apple and Leek Soup**

**Ingredients - Serves 4**  
6 medium cooking apples  
3 - 4 leeks  
1 large onion  
1 litre chicken or vegetable stock  
300ml single cream  
natural yoghurt  
Stilton cheese  
salt and pepper

**Method**  
1. Slice the apples  
2. Cover with the cream  
3. Cook until soft  
4. Add cream (or yoghurt)  
5. Serve hot and fresh

**Why raspberries**  
cinnamon  
- it brings

With high standards and an aspiration to be...  
his end goal.  
"I was brought up to believe that if you do some...  
your abilities so that is what I have always aimed...  
From the kitchen, Kevin moved into academia...  
UK's leading establishments for food technology...  
"I loved the process of lecturing and communica...  
watching people develop - it's something I miss do...  
Kevin moved from teaching students in a lectur...  
their own homes via his television career.  
"I love doing live shows because it takes me back t...  
"I didn't choose a life in the media but I don't regret...  
fascinating career."  
Kevin's latest show, *Flavour Cook*, is aimed at a youn...  
about food and healthy eating through cooking.  
"It really shows the value of preparing and eating go...  
the better; everyone should be able to cook there is no...  
There's something cooking...  
Page 10

**Kevin Woodford**

**Loaves, fishes and more...**

Tasty recipes from church leaders and cooking enthusiasts

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Page 11

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**Convener:** Revd Alasdair Pratt

**Secretaries:** Deputy General Secretary, Secretary for Welfare

**Committee members:** Dr Paul Ashitey, Revd Adrian Bulley, Revd Birgit Ewald, Margaret Carrick Smith (to 2009), Delyth Rees

- 1 The committee considers the cases of ministers and church related community workers which are referred to it by officers or councils of the Church when there is perceived pastoral need. Such help may be sought:
  - i) when there is a breakdown in relationship between the minister and congregation or the wider Church;
  - ii) when synod moderators or pastoral committees seek assistance;
  - iii) when the continuation of a minister's service within the existing pastoral charge, or the URC itself, is in question;
  - iv) when financial assistance is sought from welfare funds.
- 2 There has been a perception that response to welfare applications is the primary purpose of the committee. This is, indeed, an important part of the committee's remit and every meeting receives a report from the Senior Finance Officer on specific requests for help that have been received, as well as the administration of grants agreed by the Assembly. However, from the time when the committee was set up, its primary function has been to be a body to which pastoral problems that cannot be resolved locally may be referred. The committee is available to consider the issues and to consult with the parties involved. It will seek ways to enable a minister's service within the Church to be continued if that is seen to be appropriate. To this end it may consider some financial support for courses of re-training, therapy or counselling. The committee's work is always totally confidential.
- 3 During the past two years the committee has reviewed its role. Initially this was partly because the number of pastoral situations referred had significantly reduced. However, there has been consultation with the moderators' meeting to explore possible areas of closer cooperation. As a result several new referrals have been received, showing the value of having a body which brings a more objective view of a conflict that seems intractable to those most closely involved. With that said, PRWC is advisory and has no authority to determine any minister's future within the Church.
- 4 One of the key questions to have been raised in recent months is – where in the URC is there a 'pastoral think-tank'? Increasingly, broader issues have emerged that have revealed gaps in the way the Church can respond to particular situations of pastoral breakdown. The committee and Church officers are exploring ways in which these challenges can be met.

## Pastoral Reference and Welfare

5 When the Sexual Ethics Advisory Group came into being, one of the proposals agreed was the setting up of a Pastoral Response Team that would be available to support congregations that have been through some specific trauma. Training for this programme took place in the latter months of 2009. The oversight of the work and development of the team has been given to PRWC, which will receive regular reports and give support to the coordinator.

6 We continue to commend the work of the Churches Ministerial Counselling Service from which ministers – in active service, in training or in retirement – and their families can receive completely confidential support. The Church pays for this service without knowing who is in receipt of it. We also have links with *Broken Rites*, an ecumenical body set up to support the spouses of clergy families where there has been separation or divorce. Though primarily for the female spouse, the organisation can now give advice and information to the male partner of a woman minister.



Worshipping at General Assembly 2008





**Convener:** Robert Weston

**Committee members:** Jo Williams (Children's Work Development Officer), Karen Bulley (Pilots Work Development Officer), John Brown (Youth Work Development Officer), Anthea Coates, Dave Downing, Malcolm Evans, David Harvey, Matthew Franks, Chris Gill, Shirley Knibbs, Tamara Oates, Victoria Paulding, Meg Prowting, Stuart Radcliffe, Meg Robb, Memona Shahbaz, Philip Timson, Heather Whyte.

## 1 Introduction

1.1 Since we presented our vision document two years ago we have been busy helping that vision become a reality in local United Reformed Churches across the United Kingdom. This report contains a flavour of the work that has been undertaken to support local churches through our programme of Assembly level activities, through the synod children and youth development officers and through the dedicated volunteers delivering excellent support to our young people week by week.

1.2 The Youth and Children's Work Committee has been fully involved in other exciting initiatives within the URC including *Vision4Life*, the *Marketing Campaign* and *vision2020*. Children and young people are a vital element in each of these initiatives and we are working to ensure that the voices of young people are incorporated in all the developments in our Church. As always, it is a great joy and privilege to see young people involved at all levels of church life and witness, and we thank God for our young people who contribute in so many ways.

1.3 The Youth and Children's Work Vision has five headings: **worship, talking about God, growth, telling our stories, and community**. These are just some of the ways we've been turning the vision into a reality for the United Reformed Church.

## 2 Worship

2.1 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.

2.2 The Child Friendly Church Award encourages local churches to engage seriously with children and young people by reflecting on different aspects of worship. We are delighted that 55 churches have received the award and a further 60 are working towards this recognition. Local churches have already given us feedback to say that the award has attracted new families to the church and has improved their work with young people.

2.3 One way in which we can support children and young people in their involvement in worship, is by providing opportunities for a range of worship and reflection for children at children's events. But we also need to empower children to plan and lead worship for and with children and adults; this is something that we have supported through synod children's events and at Assembly level events too.

2.4 We are in the process of printing a new resource for those local churches thinking about children and Holy Communion. Over the past five years, many churches have spent time discerning an appropriate response and the Youth and Children's Work Committee will offer support to any local church that is interested.

2.5 We have continued to support publishing organisations such as Scripture Union, Roots and Bible Reading Fellowship, to ensure that a broad range of worship resources is available to churches. This has included writing, and finding other URC writers for Roots, to ensure a breadth of theology and that the needs of the URC are represented.

2.6 Worship in the Pilots' context continues to thrive in the mid week meetings with more and more Pilots companies leading worship in their churches, some on a regular basis, using the annual Pilots worship materials.

2.7 At residential Pilots' events, worship plays a key role and many Pilots are involved with the planning and delivery of worship in these contexts. Many of our Pilots are confident and competent worship leaders and enjoy the opportunities they are offered in their local church to participate in the life of the church in this way.

2.8 FURY Assembly in 2010 focused on prayer, as did the 24/7 prayer initiative during Holy Week in 2010. Throughout FURY Assembly the young people concentrated on the importance of prayer, reflecting that sometimes even the simplest act can be regarded as prayer. Prayer was explored through art, drama and silence. The 24/7 week of prayer captured the imagination of the young people and the rest of the Church and it is hoped that this can be repeated in the future.

2.9 FURY Assembly over the past two years has offered a variety of ways into worship. In order to respond to the diversity of the young people attending, worship has included Taizé style, a worship band, an elaborate labyrinth, gospel music, contemplative prayer and traditional expressions. Through this variety we have seen young people encountering God.

### 3 Talking about God

3.1 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.

3.2 The Pilots Worship pack: *All together now* produced in 2009 looked at the context of the local church, its mission in the local community and its relationship with the world. *The Trinity* pack produced in 2010 engages with the concept of the Trinity, exploring the three aspects of God as we experience them in our day to day lives. Through a number of themed sections Pilots engage with the subject and culminate their understanding of the theme by leading their local church in worship on Pilots Sunday. All Pilots materials are written for the ecumenical context in which Pilots serves and is aimed at a predominantly non-church user group as the majority of Pilots are from our local communities and not from our local churches, initially.

3.3 Creating space and environment for conversation about God is vital. At the summer residential event last year, four Pilots engaged in a conversation about prayer. Their ages were between 11 and 13 and their backgrounds were no church, Roman Catholic, URC and Methodist. Their question was: why do the routes to God feel so complicated in their school or church situations when in Pilots they are all the same?

3.4 *God is still speaking* has been a major focus for the young people in our Church for the past year. At FURY Assembly 2009 and 'What Do You Think?' event in 2009 Ron Buford from the *God is still speaking* campaign in America gave a series of inputs which both excited and stimulated our young people. This culminated in groups of young people going back to their synods pledging to undertake particular projects and action

plans. It also led to a motion being passed at FURY Assembly 2010 which stated that FURY Assembly supports the *Marketing Campaign* renewal programme and commits to promoting it.

3.5 Churches Together in England (CTE) have re-established the Youth Matters Network. Once again youth officers from all denominations and other organisations have had the opportunity to discuss ways in which we can support young people in their faith journey. This exciting and positive ecumenical venture can be followed on the CTE website.

3.6 At FURY Forum *Being Human* explored what it is like to live as a young Christian with workshops on human trafficking, Fair Trade, drama and what it means to be human. The Bible study allowed the young people to explore how God is speaking in their lives.

3.7 *My Church Children's Voices*, is an exciting piece of research that has been conducted across the URC to explore what children value, want and need from the Church. As well as a valuable piece of research this approach has been integrated into the child friendly church award to help churches hear the voices of children.

3.8 The Youth and Children's Work Committee has been reflecting on other research about children, particularly the Children's Society report entitled 'A Good Childhood'. We are working with the Children's Society on rolling out *Good Childhood Conversations* to help engage churches and their communities in thinking about children's needs and how we can best respond to them.

## 4 Growth

4.1 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.

4.2 We are delighted that growth is a part of the *vision2020* framework. We have a vision for greater numbers of young people to be a part of our Church. We want to see more children and young people accessing the wide range of Assembly, synod and local events. We are working to support children's workers, family workers and youth workers across the URC by developing networks and gatherings to offer support and development. Our team of Children and Youth Development Officers (CYDO) across the United Kingdom are vitally important in helping to support and develop these networks.

4.3 To enable growth we need to understand our context and this is where the research project *My Church Children's Voices* has much to offer us. The results of this research will be disseminated to local churches and synods to ensure that growth can be enabled and facilitated.

4.4 New Pilots companies continue to open and many existing companies are experiencing growth at the local level, both in commitment and numbers. The number of Pilots companies in denominations outside the URC continues to rise steadily.

4.5 Following the restructuring of FURY and the introduction of Children's Assembly we have established a more integrated way of working. For the first time young people who had attended Children's Assembly were seen to participate in both FURY Forum and FURY Assembly. This can only be good for the young people and for our Church as we see young people developing on their faith journey.

4.6 The introduction of the synod youth representative group has provided a valuable link with the structures operating in each synod. On many occasions we do

not hear of the positive growth of young people's activities associated within our Church. We are inclined to judge our young people's activity in relation to how many sit in our local church on a Sunday. The synod youth representative group has shown the diversity of involvement and we encourage everyone to be inspired by our young people at the Assembly, synod and at the local church level.

4.7 Growth has many aspects. The FURY Advisory Board have followed a series of training sessions on subjects such as communication skills, presentation skills, group work and learning to chair a group. They have also had the opportunity to prepare and lead their groups in various acts of worship.

### 5 Telling our stories

5.1 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.

5.2 Communication is an essential aspect of our work and we are aware of the tensions surrounding the transition from paper to computers. Some people have limited access to the internet, but children are increasingly dependent on electronic media – 74% of homes in the UK now have access to the internet, a fact that we must acknowledge as we seek to communicate more effectively with young people.

5.3 The new URC website is now operational and we continue to look for new ways to communicate effectively; for example, the Children's Assembly will use blogs and a Video Diary room and FURY Assembly reports can be found on YouTube. We have a programme in place to add new webpages to the youth and children's section of the URC website. In addition, the Pilots web pages have been updated and refreshed.

5.4 The Youth and Children's Work Committee has a new initiative called *Focus Synods* in which our Assembly appointed staff rotate round the synods, offering support and encouragement. This approach allows us to share good news and good practice as we see and experience the range of inspirational work around the UK.

5.5 Bridge magazine is produced to share the stories of Pilots companies and to share information. The magazine is colourful and newsy and has become a great tool for sharing ideas and encouraging new ways of doing many things.

5.6 Regional Pilots Officers (RPO) are appointed in most of the URC synods and work across the denominations to engage with churches who are thinking about starting a Pilots company. In many synods the RPO is the link between the existing companies and they work hard to create opportunities for Pilots to get together and to enable training for the leaders.

5.7 The committee has recently produced a pack for new youth and children's workers in the church. Its aim is to enable them to fully embrace the activities of the URC and to encourage them to promote URC programmes and initiatives within the church in which they are employed. This pack is available via the CYDO team and is not yet available online as it contains a number of leaflets and fliers.

5.8 Every three months the young people of the United Reformed Church produce *F2*. This is a small but colourful publication designed to inform both young people and adults what is going on in the Fellowship of United Reformed Youth.

5.9 Each Synod is encouraged to form a synod youth committee. A few of these committees have produced publications highlighting good practice in youth work. This has been a good exercise in promoting work within the synods.

5.10 Through a few young people telling the story of human trafficking at FURY Assembly a small task group was set up and has produced a working pack for local churches to explore the issue. Copies of the pack are available to encourage others to become involved in the campaign.

## 6 Community

6.1 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.

6.2 Pilots at Warwick Castle, May 15<sup>th</sup> 2010, was an opportunity where the Pilots' community, along with the whole Church community, could come together with their families and friends for a day of fun and fellowship and simply to be a people of God in one place together. 4000 gathered to enjoy a fabulous site, the interactive Worship Zone and the 'all together' worship at the close of the day.

6.3 Voyagers and Navigators are Pilots aged 11 to 18. Each year a themed event is run for them in an old manor house in Kintbury, near Newbury. The event lasts for four days and the past two themes have been Christmas, a real look at the historical background and the main story itself and how it impacts on our lives today (August is the perfect time in which to do this!) and Choices – using the Harry Potter stories to explore the theme in the context of our lives and our faith. This event is generally fully booked within a week of tickets being offered. It is clearly meeting a need. This year we will be running the sixth event of this kind.

6.4 *Peace Builders* was a collaborative project with the Methodist Church and focussed on peace in the context of our lives and not the context of being the alternative to war. Pilots created peace boxes which they took into their communities and passed around asking for people's prayers and wishes for peace. The boxes were embraced in far greater ways than we could have imagined and local newspapers reported their movements as they travelled around the communities.

6.5 Pilots has always been part of the communities in which it is based, both because most of those in the groups are resident there but also because many companies actively seek an involvement in the life of the community. In Bolton a plaque has been erected in the community commending the work of Red Lane Pilots who regularly pick litter up to keep their area litter free.

6.6 For the past four years the Youth and Children's Work Committee has been supporting a project in the Holy Land called *Kids for Hope*. This has provided around 40 young Palestinian Christians the opportunity to participate in an educational and social programme. For many of the young people, mostly from West Bank villages, it is the only chance they get to meet with their peers.

6.7 Safeguarding and child protection have been high on the priority list of the committee, working in close collaboration with the Ministries Committee. Having to develop an updated version of our Good Practice pack, coping with the introduction of the vetting and barring scheme, and sitting on the board of trustees for the Churches Agency for Safeguarding means a great deal of time is spent on this area of work which is important but not always visible.

6.8 Some young people from the United Reformed Church are volunteering to participate in a nine month voluntary project in the CWM Mission House in Amsterdam. During this time they will work alongside established projects within the city and be linked to a local church for support and faith development. We celebrate the fact that one of the former URC volunteers now serves as the full time project manager, a testimony to the good work this project undertakes.

6.9 We have continued to support the training of children's workers, both volunteers and paid workers, through *CORE Skills*, an excellent ecumenical training package delivered by our CYDO team, often with colleagues from other denominations.

## 7 Conclusion

7.1 There is much to celebrate with regards to the Youth and Children's Work in the United Reformed Church, whilst recognising the huge challenges we face together. We are blessed with dedicated professionals at all levels of our Church who enable the faith development of tens of thousands of young people in our communities.

7.2 We want to record our immense gratitude to the CYDO task group that has completed the review of the CYDO programme and has produced the new CYDO handbook. We should also recognise and thank the team of CYDO managers who are appointed by synods to ensure the good management and support of each CYDO. Since the last report we have appointed four new members of the CYDO team across the UK. Only one synod has been unable to fund a CYDO post.

7.3 In 2011, Pilots will be celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary and we look forward to joining in the many celebration activities that are planned around the country.

7.4 In addition to supporting our links with Pilots, the Youth and Children's Work Committee maintains links with many other organisations including the Girl's Brigade, Boy's Brigade, Guiding and Scouting. We want to thank the many volunteers in our churches who support these groups.

7.5 An area for further development is in helping churches think about and develop their involvement in local schools. We hope to develop greater awareness, training and resources over the next two years.

# New Mission Projects

## Bournemouth International Church

The Bournemouth International Church was established in 2000. They meet in the premises of East Cliff United Reformed Church (Bournemouth) and worship in English. Their congregation is drawn from the international community in Bournemouth, especially language school, university and college students. This is a somewhat nomadic population.

They are structured with a pastoral group consisting of senior pastor Joshua Han, an assistant pastor and an elder. Cell group leaders and worship group leaders are also consulted. BIC's vision is to reach all nations locally and internationally, training highly effective kingdom workers and sending lay missionaries to the world. They aim to build up a lively and firmly mission based church to be a witness to Jesus Christ, encouraging everyone to be involved and utilising their gifts and talents for God's work in the church and in the community.

The leadership has long harboured a desire to integrate more fully into the United Reformed Church, ultimately becoming a member church. In March 2010 Wessex Synod voted to request that General Assembly recognise the Bournemouth International Church as a Mission Project. The Synod will continue to work with BIC on a process of helping the church to prepare structurally and financially to become a full member church by Assembly 2012. The Revds Michael Jagessar and Craig Bowman are advising on the separate but parallel process of recognising the ministry of Joshua Han within URC structures.

## West London Asian Christian Fellowship

In 2008 an approach was made to Heston United Reformed Church for the planting of a church to serve the Asian Christian community in the West London area. The Thames North Synod agreed the establishment of a mission project that autumn and the first service was held on 7<sup>th</sup> September under the leadership of the Revd Noble Samuel. On the 18<sup>th</sup> October the Revd Dr Andrew Prasad, Moderator of the Thames North Synod, inducted Mr Samuel as the minister of the project. Since then the group has experienced an exciting youth-oriented revival and the congregation continues to grow, in spirit and maturity as well as numbers. An initial group of 22 now numbers 175 at festival services. They anticipate that they will soon outgrow the building.

Since 2008 there have been three adult baptisms (converts from Islam and Hinduism), four marriage blessings and eighteen infant baptism services. Lent Bible studies focussing on Ephesians and Romans have been held for 30 to 40 people in five groups.

The fellowship prays that they will soon be able to reinstate Mr Samuel's *Asian Gospel* television show which had to be suspended due to lack of funds. They also hope to reach out through international conventions and seminars.

Their mission statement is, 'We exist to preach, teach and live the redeeming love of God to a lost but changing world'. Immediate priorities include worship, fellowship/membership, care, discipleship education, spiritual gifts and evangelism.

# Churches which have closed

## **Alfriston United Reformed Church Southern Synod**

In 1801 a group of Sussex dissenters established an independent chapel in Alfriston, nestling in the Cuckmere Valley. It is an idyllic location for resident and tourist alike. Over two centuries of faithful and distinctive witness enriched the life of the village; the chapel and school room at the heart of the community were valued resources. For a long time, but increasingly of recent years, ecumenical relationships have been significant. A covenant with St Andrew's Parish Church deepened the congregations' trust in each other's goodwill. In 2008 it became clear that the United Reformed Church was so small that the responsibility of discrete witness was becoming burdensome. The Anglicans' signing of a Declaration of Ecumenical Welcome enabled the URC members to face the thought of closure confident of their place within the life of the parish church. They were not empty handed: serious discussions continue in an attempt to retain the listed Dissenters' Chapel for use as a centre for nurturing the life of both church and community.

At Pentecost 2009 a final service was held, thanking God for 208 years of mission and ministry and trusting that the Spirit of reconciliation will enable that united witness which is for the greater glory of God and blessing of the village.

## **Trinity Church, Baddesley Ensor (LEP) West Midlands Synod**

In the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Baddesley Ensor was a thriving village. It relied on forestry, coal mining and the hatting industry in Atherstone. The mine was the main employer until its closure in 1989.

The Congregational chapel was built near Keys Hill in 1863 and was a thriving church. It became part of the United Reformed Church in 1972. By 1995 an LEP was formed with the Methodist Church – the two Chapels were known as 'Top' – (Methodist) and 'Bottom' – (United Reformed) Chapels, with the combined chapels called Trinity. A United Reformed minister was called in 2004, the Revd David Yeo Poulton.

In that year meetings were held to discuss the future and the decision was taken to keep the church open. This situation continued until January 2009. Numbers of members had continued to fall, over the years, until the church was left with only four active and three non-active members. After careful prayer and consideration, the decision was taken that church should seek to close. A service of celebration for the 146 years of witness in Baddesley Ensor took place on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2009.

## **St Luke's United Church, Bedford Thames North Synod**

Bedford suffered an outbreak of smallpox in 1738, and contacts with Moravians in London brought welcome support. As a result the Moravians were offered land and the first church was started in 1745. A boarding school for young ladies was opened in 1801. A new Victorian Italianate church was built in 1865 and extended in 1888. To celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation a daughter church was opened to serve the industrial community to the west of the railway.

In 1942 a Presbyterian church was founded and found a welcome with the Moravians. Howard Congregational Church also joined. Thus began the high point of influence and achievement, with music, drama and work with uniformed organisations. The constitution for St Luke's United Church was adopted in 1984.



As a town centre church, St Luke's found its purpose as a 'community' church, serving the homeless and people with learning difficulties. A new hall was built but further resources needed to refurbish the older buildings proved elusive. Plans to set up an Ecumenical Partnership with the Parish Church never came to fruition.

With an aging congregation and a tired building, closure became inevitable. Over 200 people came to the final service on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2008 and the joyous sounds of the Moravian 'Hosanna' anthems brought the worship to its close. The buildings were bought by Bedford School, and they have promised to respect the history and integrity of the buildings in their new future.

## **Throop United Reformed Church, Bournemouth Wessex Synod**

Since the 1800's this little country church has been spreading the Word of God faithfully to the people of Throop and Muscliff in the Bournemouth area of Dorset including being the village school for many years.

Now after 128 Years that ministry has come to an end, as, sadly, through the conditions of the building and the age of the worshippers it has been forced to close. The church has left a legacy that will be remembered by the people who have attended it through the years.

## **Felton Chapel, Bristol South Western Synod**

*No statement was submitted on behalf of this church.*

## **Bushey United Reformed Church Thames North Synod**

Founded as a Congregational fellowship in 1809, Bushey United Reformed Church's building stood proudly at the top of Bushey High Street for 150 years. In latter years the church's premises were widely used for community activities, from maternity clinics to recording episodes of Eastenders. Redevelopment gave the church building a new lease of life, with welcoming worship space, hall and a variety of rooms.

Though a small number of new members joined the church in its last years, the age structure of the congregation took its toll. Within a period of three years the Sunday congregation halved through a combination of death, infirmity and members moving away.

Despite these problems, in its last few years the church experimented widely with new activities to attempt to bridge the gap to the local community. An annual craft fair proved highly successful, with the entire proceeds going to support a home for disabled children in Calcutta. In 2009 the church celebrated 200 years as a fellowship with a variety of successful events.

A Church Meeting in January 2010 confirmed the Elders' recommendation that the church cease to meet for worship after Easter 2010. Paradoxically, the last months of the church were among its happiest in recent years, as friends and well-wishers attended to lament the passing of *their* church. There were tears and hugs but also a real sense of release – with a joyous final service on Easter Sunday bursting at the seams.

### **Cannock United Reformed Church West Midlands Synod**

Founded in 1814, the church was the oldest nonconformist church in Cannock. Worship commenced 1816 in an adapted barn known as the Independent Meeting House. The flock worshipped there until completion of the church building in 1824. The fortunes of the church revolved round the rise of coal mining industry in Cannock area in the mid 1800s with an influx of miners from the south of the county, and was most prosperous during this expansion.

The church never had more than 50 members at any one time but survived the pressure of many coal strikes. One minister resigned in the eighteen seventies to relieve the church of its duty to pay his stipend. The church held a prominent role in the religious life of Cannock until gradual decline coincided with the demise of the coal mining industry in the 1960s and the closure of all the pits and large industry in the area. A Grade 2 listed building sited in a Conservation Area and surrounded by recent development, the building is hemmed in on all boundaries and unable to provide expansion, car parking and modern facilities.

For the remaining six elderly members, decisions had to be made about the future. On 16<sup>th</sup> August 2009 they voted to close and all have since found worship in other churches.

### **Cefn Mawr United Reformed Church Synod of Wales**

In 1865 John Garside moved from Ashton-under-Lyne to Cefn Mawr to take up employment in the local iron works. With 12 relatives and friends he planted a new church. Bible classes started in the foundry at the iron works and later moved to a room over a shop. Eventually the money was raised, £400, to build an independent chapel.

The chapel opened in 1866 with 16 members. In March 1891 a new school room opened, offering space for prayer meetings, choir practice, sewing classes, the 'Good Templars'(?), concerts and lectures. A Young Worshippers League and a Mother's Union branch were formed and in 1909 Sunday School attendance hit a high of 137.

In 1918 the local men who had survived 'The Great War' returned home. Many of them were forced to 'take to the hills' scratching for coal on pit waste heaps. To support them the church fitted the school room with a billiard table, rope quoits and a library. During World War II the local council used the school room to organise billeting and rationing.

In 1940 the pastorate grew to three churches who shared ministry. A 25 year vacancy 1968 to 1993 finally ended when the church joined the URC and the Wrexham Pastorate. History went full circle when their last minister was ordained in 2001. At that service the charge was preached by the Revd Lorraine Mycroft who had gone into the ministry from Albion URC, Ashton-under-Lyne!

### **Carr Vale United Reformed Church, Chesterfield East Midlands Synod**

In common with many churches, this church fellowship mirrors the growth and decline of local industry. Carr Vale was a pit village and the housing round the church were built by the mine owners. With the demise of the industry, Carr Vale is no longer a close mining community.

With the creation of the United Reformed Church, Carr Vale was in a joint pastorate with Bolsover and Rose Hill United Reformed Churches and later with Calow URC.

The original church was replaced in 1975 by a prefabricated building attached to 'the Tabernacle'. In the early 1990 the older part of the building was declared unsafe and fund-raising began to build a new sanctuary adjoining the prefabricated building, which became the church hall. The new building was opened in 1998.

Despite a dwindling and elderly congregation, the church continued to be viable until 2005 and Carr Vale was joined with Rose Hill as one church worshipping on two sites. This arrangement continued until June 2008 when the decision was made to close the building. The premises have been sold and although most of the members are now housebound they remain within the pastoral care of Rose Hill.

## **St Mark's LEP, Coulby Newham Northern Synod**

St Mark's was the first church founded in this new Local Authority development south of Middlesbrough. A few of the first residents began to meet for worship in one another's homes, then in a local hall. In June 1978 St Mark's was established as a Local Ecumenical Project of the Church of England, Methodist Church and United Reformed Church.

In its early days the church saw the absence of a building as one of its strengths: the congregation were able to concentrate on service to the growing community. But over the years the church seemed to regret this lack of bricks and mortar, while acknowledging that it was now too late to go down the building route. It seemed people were more ready to attend 'real' churches outside the community than worship with St Mark's in the local school. Other changes in the neighbourhood, including the building of a new Roman Catholic cathedral on the doorstep, and the establishment of an evangelical Christian faith school, also had their effect on the congregation's potential.

A review by the sponsoring body in 2007 gave the LEP the courage it needed to make the necessary hard decisions. They resolved to close, but to do so in a spirit of celebration and thanksgiving for thirty years of life and witness – and at the point when a new Anglican *Fresh Expressions* ministry was being promised to the area. The closing service was held on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2008.

## **East Howe United Reformed Church Wessex Synod**

A chapel was planted in the village of East Howe by Skinner Street Congregational Church in 1834 and in due course a chapel was built. Oversight was given by the chapel in the nearby village of Throop. In 1905 the William Saunders Memorial Church was built. The village developed between the wars and due to the tremendous increase in population and need in what had now become part of Bournemouth a new and more commodious building came into existence. Again over the years there was a need to expand further. In 1956, the 1905 church became the church hall and a larger separate church on the same site was built. In the 1960s there was a strong family orientated congregation having many youth organisations such as Boys Brigade, Life Brigade and Cabin Boys as well as Guides and Brownies. It declined in the 70s and 80s in spite of the district's efforts to keep it going to meet the needs of the area.

In 1996, a Church of England congregation asked if it would be possible for them to share the premises. The two congregations never met together for worship or social functions and in 2006 the Sharing Agreement was terminated. The buildings suffered increasing vandalism which made it impossible for the small congregation to maintain them and in 2008 the church was closed and the members moved to other churches.

## **Frizinghall United Reformed Church Yorkshire Synod**

In 1877, a preaching station was established at Airedale College Hall. Church membership increased, a Mission Hall was built and a Sunday School began serving the employees of Lister's Mill. By 1886 it was decided that a new building was needed. The opening service was held in March 1887, the total cost being £4000. By 1897 average attendance at morning worship was 23 with that at evening worship being 29.

In 1907 a Diaconate was formed with six men (though by 1911 it had been decided that women were eligible to join as well). By 1923 the average attendance at the principal Sunday service was 150, with 90 attending the Sunday School. Finance has always been a concern at Frizinghall and membership numbers have fluctuated over the years. There were twelve ministers in total during the first 100 years with the number of years in vacancy being almost equivalent to the number with ministry.

Frizinghall joined the United Reformed Church in June 1973. Ministry was shared with a neighbouring church. A declining and aging congregation eventually made the painful decision to close and the final service was held on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2008.

## **Brighton Road United Reformed Church, Gateshead Northern Synod**

In 1899, Park Road Presbyterian Church was unable to accommodate all those attending worship and the Presbytery decided to open a church in the Bensham area of Gateshead. Beginning in Brighton Ave School, they erected their first church building on Brighton Road three years later. In the same year the Presbytery agreed that a full time minister should be called. In 1908 the second minister, Revd James Gilmour, was called and his 23 years of service culminated in the opening of a new church sanctuary in 1931.

In addition to the Sunday School and youth groups, the church was fortunate to have active and lively Boys Brigade and Girls Brigade companies. Indeed, the Girls Brigade were able to celebrate their centenary in 2009. Although the Boys Brigade company closed, a scout troop, who were looking for a new home, were welcomed into the church community.

Sadly the cost of maintenance of the sanctuary became unsustainable and the church meeting decided to sell the building to a housing trust and it was demolished in 1986. The congregation went back to worshipping in the hall of the original building, naming the worship space 'the upper room' and began to share ministry with Cromer Ave URC.

With a declining membership, the congregation felt that good stewardship required a decision to close. A service of celebration and thanksgiving was held on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2009.

## **Blackheath United Reformed Church, Halesowen West Midlands Synod**

Blackheath Congregational Church was founded in 1900 through the vision of Revd CT Plank of Halesowen Congregational and TG Vinson of Lye who brought the spiritual needs of Blackheath to the attention of the Worcestershire Congregational Union. There had been a tented mission in the area for Independents. This was soon replaced by a 'Tin Chapel' which served until 1908 when the congregation moved to the present building.

An interregnum of 20 years ensued, followed by a 20 year ministry. In 1975, Blackheath decided to join with Halesowen United Church – this arrangement having been rejected some 50 years earlier! A Methodist minister led both churches in the 1990s.

Eventually the church meeting came to the unanimous decision that after a presence of over 100 years, the church should close. The remaining members had already decided to disperse to other local congregations while they were able. The final service at Blackheath was held on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2008.

## **Haltwhistle United Reformed Church Northern Synod**

Situated two miles south of the Roman wall, Haltwhistle Presbyterian Church was the proud possessor of a pair of pewter communion cups dated 1745. The congregation comprised mainly of farmers and shepherds and was small in comparison with other churches in the area, but when the town had a period of prosperity in the 1890s the members moved from their small eighteenth century church to a more commodious building, complete with spire, on the Main Street.

A time of growth was followed by years when the members had to struggle to keep the church as a vibrant living organisation. Decrease in the number of farms due to forestry, the closure of the coal mines, and the movement away of young people were all factors in a gradual decline in numbers.

In 1990 the Roman Catholic Diocese bought into the equity of the building, leading to building adopting the name 'Two Churches', and a very harmonious relationship between the two congregations. However, faced with another vacancy and increasing costs, the aging congregation felt that they had no option but to close. They held their final service on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2009 when all the local churches plus many former members, who had moved away, joined with them in giving thanks for over 250 years of Christian witness. In keeping with the good ecumenical relations in the town, the majority of members have moved across the road to worship with their Methodist friends.

## **Houghton Chapel Centre Eastern Synod**

*No statement was submitted on behalf of this church.*

## **Laira United Reformed Church South Western Synod**

The first chapel in Laira was constructed in 1850 on the edge of the newly arrived railway. At that time Laira was just a village, and a church plant from Norley, now Sherwell United Church, went from strength to strength.

A second building was opened with great celebration in December 1886. In 1895 there were 98 members and over 160 children, with youth clubs, a sick club to support the poorly paid, and the Band of Hope.

The third and current church was built directly opposite in 1935, with a hall added in 1957. Throughout the 60s and 70s Guiding and Scouting groups, run by members, were very much part of the church. There was also a strong youth club.

The fellowship at Zion Methodist Church came to share the building in 1992. Sadly the joining of the two churches only gave a brief respite. Membership numbers declined as the nature of the area around the church changed. Large family houses turned into flats and bed-sits and a Naval estate gave way to council and trust houses. The church struggled to find ways to take the gospel out to the community.

In the last 20 years the building suffered vandalism that depleted the congregation's resources. Faced with a very small elderly congregation and a building that needed increasing maintenance they decided to close. A thanksgiving service was held on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2010.

### **Earle Road United Reformed Church, Liverpool Mersey Synod**

Founded by Sefton Park Presbyterian Church, the church opened in 1883 and in 1912 it became a sanctioned charge with 424 members and adherents. Numbers increased requiring a large extension in 1894 and the purchase of a manse in 1926.

The church was in the centre of a dense area of mainly terraced streets. It was damaged by enemy action in 1941 but repaired, but many houses were lost. In 1965 the Hartington Road Congregational Church united with Earle Road and their deacons became elders. In 1994 talks began with the Anglican Church to form an LEP on St Dunstan's site but these came to nothing. Most of the houses around the church had been demolished but replaced with a few modern houses built for the now multi-ethnic population.

In 2003, the building was sold and the congregation moved into the recently vacated and modernised Salvation Army hall. They had a mission to the local community and worked hard at that mission, telling many good news stories.

At that time the church shared a minister with the City Centre special category chaplaincy. In 2007, the few remaining members felt that they could not face another vacancy and a decision was made to close. The congregation dispersed to other Liverpool churches leaving the inner city with no URC presence. However, a full time special category ministry has recently been inducted to the City Centre.

### **Westminster Road United Reformed Church, Liverpool Mersey Synod**

In 1866, the Revd John Jones left Claremont Chapel with part of the congregation and built an iron church at Chadwick Mount. Within a few years this had been replaced by a new church and lecture hall. Despite wartime damage, worship continued there until 1974 when the lecture hall was refurbished as a chapel and the previous sanctuary as a large games hall.

In recent years many members moved out of the area and found travel hard, particularly the elderly, and various options for use of the building were considered. Eventually it was concluded that the only real option was to close the building and for the fellowship to disperse to other congregations. The final service was held on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2008.

### **Long Sutton United Reformed Church East Midlands Synod**

Beginning in 1817 a minister from Wisbech travelled to Long Sutton to offer independent worship in a barn fitted for that purpose. 'Attendance proving very numerous', a student minister was called who presided over the building of a chapel for 300 people at a cost of £1,134.16s. 5d.

The chapel became part of the Congregational Union and flourished as it served the people of Long Sutton. At the beginning of the twentieth century an additional building was constructed to provide for the growing Sunday School, Women's Group, the first Girls' Brigade company in Long Sutton and a very popular youth club. There was a stage for plays and concerts. Spring, Autumn and Christmas bazaars were held. Every year the church organized a sponsored walk to Gorefield, approximately nine miles away.

In the early 1970s the chapel building was found to have severe rot problems. It was sold and the members moved across the road to the school building. In 1972 they joined the newly formed United Reformed Church and later shared ministry with Wisbech URC. Unfortunately in recent times the number of people attending the

church declined due to age and frailty. The congregation realized that the building could no longer be maintained and decided to merge with the Wisbech church, which was undergoing extensive refurbishment to maintain its mission to the community. On 1<sup>st</sup> August 2008 members from Long Sutton joined members at Wisbech to form Castle Square United Reformed Church.

## **Llandeilo United Reformed Church Synod of Wales**

In 1882 the deacons of Tabernacl Welsh Congregational Church agreed to establish an English speaking congregation in the town of Llandeilo. Services were held in 'The Davies Memorial Hall', erected by Tabernacl in 1874 in memory of a well loved former minister.

The cause was formally established on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1883 with a membership of 34. The church appointed it's own full time minister shortly afterwards and membership grew until it reached it's peak in 1944 at a total of 102.

In 2004, the church was confronted with the prospect of significant expenditure to bring Memorial Hall up to modern standards. Members felt that this was not a responsible use of funds since the church was about people and not bricks and mortar. Alternative venues were explored and following a final service in Memorial Hall on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2004 the congregation moved to worship once again at Tabernacl as Llandeilo URC.

Declining membership in recent years led the church to the conclusion that its work had been done and that it was time to close. The final service took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2008 bringing to an end 126 years of witness through the medium of English and service to the community.

## **Morley Green United Reformed Church North Western Synod**

In 1862, the village of Morley Green consisted of 80 families, a deprived agricultural community. Manchester City Mission held cottage meetings offering worship and Sunday School teaching. In 1869 a chapel was built, in 1874 a day school began on the same premises, and in 1883 the building was expanded to accommodate more children. In 1917 the day school closed, but was reopened for evacuees during World War II, after which it remained in use as a primary school until the 1970s.

The chapel was always closely linked with and supported by the nearby Wilmslow congregation, while maintaining its own independent identity. In 1957 it had 45 members, but all the young people who grew up in the community had to leave to find work, as agriculture no longer needed large numbers of people. For the last years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the chapel maintained its place in the local community, while membership slowly fell and an increasing number of the congregation travelled in from outside. The reluctant decision to close was accelerated by the problems of an ageing building and a lack of potential elders.

From the impoverished community of 150 years ago Morley has become a commuter hamlet with a number of homes behind electric gates, where one family may now live in accommodation that previously housed three. Morley Green URC's story was one of a mission to agricultural families that was successfully completed with a service of thanksgiving on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

## **Tabernacl United Reformed Church, Narberth Synod of Wales**

*No statement was submitted on behalf of this church.*

## **Netherfield United Reformed Church East Midlands Synod**

During 1841 seventeen members of the Church of Christ meeting in Barker Gate Nottingham were 'dismissed' to form a separate church in Carlton. This grew significantly in the 1890s and the church looked to acquire its own building, purchasing a site on Foster Street in the growing neighbourhood of Netherfield in 1897. The chapel opened on 9<sup>th</sup> January 1904.

In 1932 land was purchased at the rear and a new building opened in 1935, providing extra accommodation for the Sunday school and also for the evening Gospel services (average attendance 160) which had outgrown the chapel. During the war the hall was requisitioned by the army. In the centenary year a membership of 215 was recorded. At this time fifteen members were serving in the armed forces, but several of the men registered as conscientious objectors and two joined the Friends ambulance unit.

In 1981 the chapel became part of the United Reformed Church. Becoming part of a much larger structured denomination was hard for some. By 1999 members were already talking about how long they could continue, but were encouraged to keep going. During 2001 Revd Barry Drake became the interim minister and there were times when things looked more promising with work with the young people in the youth church, the annual playscheme and in the local school.

The church doors finally closed for Sunday worship on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2009. A final service of thanksgiving was conducted on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

## **Portland United Reformed Church, Dorset Wessex Synod**

*No statement was submitted on behalf of this church.*

## **Roath Park United Reformed Church Synod of Wales**

*No statement was submitted on behalf of this church.*

## **Ryton United Reformed Church Northern Synod**

The church stemmed from the spiritual instruction by Joseph Lamb at a school which met in a joiner's shop near the Tollgate in Crawcrook in 1833. Somewhat surprisingly, Mr Lamb obtained a licence from the Bishop of Durham to open a Congregational chapel, which duly took place on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1837. Originally a rural area, Ryton was transformed with the advent of coal mining. The first minister was appointed in 1845 and in 1861 the church sanctuary was built and opened.

During the early years the congregation was a mixture of miners and a remarkable number of men with means! In the 1880s more comfortable pews were installed and the Sunday School building enlarged. An innovation in the early 1900s was a monthly young people's service. Membership after the First World War was 239.



During the 20<sup>th</sup> century activities played a large role: young peoples' fellowship, including exchange visits to the Lutheran Church in Germany; a thriving Sunday school with coach trips to the seaside; Girls' and Boys' Brigade companies; followed by Brownies and Girl Guides; Ladies' meetings; and a choir. Recently there has been a new initiative with Ryton Churches Together in the hosting of their 24/7 prayer event using the halls for a prayer room, creative activities, sleeping accommodation and refreshments.

Finance and reduced numbers led the congregation to agree closure in May 2010. We give thanks for the witness of the Christian faith in the community over these many years.

## **Trinity United Reformed Church, Swansea Synod of Wales**

*No statement was submitted on behalf of this church.*

## **Hampton Road United Reformed Church, Southport Mersey Synod**

In 1855 land was donated by four men for a place of worship and in 1889 a foundation stone was laid for the Mission Hall and a pastor was appointed. Revd Tom B Baker ministered for 20 years including the time of the Great War when 20 members gave their lives.

In 1924 a kitchen extension was opened and in 1926 the church became independent of its founding church. The first wedding was that of the church secretary. A choir was formed in 1936 and in 1937 a sisterhood, later the women's guild. A mixed fellowship group was formed which continued till closure and in 1974, a wives group.

Over the years there was a Sunday school, noted for success in the Scripture Examination, and there were holiday clubs attended by 70 children. In 1971 Guide and Brownie packs were formed after the closure of a nearby Methodist church. A Mother and Toddler Club started in 1998, now continuing at Lord Street West URC/ Methodist church. An elder, Graham Knights, entered Northern College and was ordained in South Wales in 1990, retiring eventually from Poulton-le-Fylde.

In later years the church was part of joint pastorates within Southport. The last minister, Revd Peter Lyth, was shared with Churchtown. The building required major works and the congregation, feeling unable to cope, decided upon closure in 2008. A final service was conducted on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2009 by the minister and was attended by the moderator and many friends.

## **Three Mile Cross United Church Wessex Synod**

*No statement was submitted on behalf of this church.*

## **Welling United Reformed Church Southern Synod**

This acknowledges the work of Mr Douglas Anderson, on whose history of the church this note draws heavily. In 1825 a few earnest Christians began holding meetings for prayer in each other's houses. In time, needing a larger room, they met in the back of a silk weaver's shop. But the need for a purpose built chapel increased. A public meeting was held which raised £40 on the spot. A site was secured in Danson Lane and the building of 'Providence Chapel' seating about 120 people was started in 1831. In 1899 a new church was built in New Road. The name 'Providence Sunday School' can still be seen on the wall of what is now the Pentecostal church.

## Church changes

Again larger premises were needed and in 1936 the church received the offer of a site in Kelvin Road, Belle Grove. War breaking out prevented building until 1955, when the new church hall was completed. With help from war damage compensation from a bombed church at West Dulwich the sanctuary was added in 1960.

Faithful ministry has been offered over the years. Playgroups, a concert group, crafts groups and Bible study have all flourished. Banners and hand-crafted furniture have all been given for the glory of God.

After much prayerful consideration, and for the wellbeing of those involved, the decision was made that the church should close. A service of thanksgiving, looking both to the past and the future, was held on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2009.

### **Trinity United Reformed Church, Whitley Bay Northern Synod**

On 18<sup>th</sup> May 1894 a plot of land was purchased in the Esplanade, Whitley Bay. Plans were drawn up for a church and hall. On 31<sup>st</sup> July 1895 Sir George Barclay Bruce laid the memorial stone for the hall, which opened for public worship on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 1895 at a cost of £1600. There were 55 members and 21 adherents and on the 25<sup>th</sup> November 1900 the church itself was opened.

By the 1930s the membership reached a peak of more than 900, the largest Presbyterian congregation in the area. At the Diamond Jubilee the celebrations included the renaming of the church as St Cuthbert's United Reformed Church, and on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1975 the church joined forces with the Park Avenue Congregational church and became Trinity United Reformed Church, part of the coast group of Churches. Latterly it was linked as a single pastorate with St Andrew's URC in neighbouring Monkseaton.

In 2008 the decision was taken to close, and the congregation dispersed amongst the other local churches. It was a brave decision; the Church was both physically and financially sound, but age and mortality were taking their toll of the leadership. Northern Synod decided not to sell the premises; instead they have been offered for lease and will almost certainly be occupied by one or another of various interested community groups. This means that 113 years of witness and service will continue, albeit with a different form and name.

### **Wigton United Reformed Church North Western Synod**

Non-conformist witness in Wigton was certainly evident from 1666, possibly the result of restoration legislation or the 1665 Five-Mile Act. Whatever buildings in the town may have been used, in 1819 a new stone chapel was built. However in 1830 the Revd Edward Leighton could write – 'About ten years ago the Independent Congregation erected for themselves a small place of worship capable of containing 290 persons...': he then continued to emphasise its inadequacy, citing the need to provide for some 200 children. By October 1834 the problems had been solved when the present building was opened with seating for 600, a burial ground, which remained open for 20 years, and a separate schoolroom, which served as a British School for some 45 years.

A vigorous fellowship continued into the twentieth century. Worship was well attended, a notable event being the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The former day schoolroom was used by a lively and well led Sunday school, also serving during the week as a centre for the wider community.

The last full time Minister died in office in 1967. There followed a period of joint pastorates with neighbouring churches. Unfortunately, over the last fifteen years, problems with the fabric of the building, the lack of resources, and above all a dwindling and ageing membership made it difficult to continue. After much discussion and prayer for guidance, it was resolved to close. The final service of thanksgiving was held on 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2009.

## **Woodbridge United Reformed Church Eastern Synod**

In 1651, the Revd Frederic Woodhall led a group of 55 dissenters to leave the Anglican church of St Mary's, Woodbridge. The new congregation met in an 'upper room' at the bottom of Quay Street, and although Woodhall was subsequently imprisoned, this site became home to the first dissenting congregation in Woodbridge.

The premises in Quay Street have been improved, extended, flattened, rebuilt and reordered a number of times over its 350-plus years of history. The people who worshipped on the site eventually became the local URC congregation.

In 1780 Mr Jonathan Beaumont saw a need for a second dissenting chapel in Woodbridge and he left Quay Street. Travelling back up Church Street to Market Hill he gained a licence for preaching and by 1787 a chapel, which eventually became Beaumont Baptist Church, was built in what is now Chapel Street.

In May 2005 those serving as leaders in these two congregations met to explore whether the URC premises in Quay Street could be made available on temporary loan to the Baptist congregation on Sunday afternoons. From there conversation progressed, with an invitation to explore amalgamating the two congregations. This process was unanimously welcomed by both parties and the journey has led to the point where the new Woodbridge Quay Church has been established. Formally this has been a church closure, for the URC congregation (which was very much the smaller partner) has wound up its membership and sold its building to the Baptists.



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# Education for Ministry Phase 1 Students

(Information as of 31 March 2010, listed under home synods)

## *Northern*

### **Non-Stipendiary**

Kate Baxter (Westminster)  
Alison Mills (NEOC)

## *North Western*

### **Stipendiary**

Mark Bates (Northern)  
Ruth Watson (Northern)  
Anthea Wickens (Northern)  
Kaze Yemtsa (Northern)  
Alan McGougan (Northern)

## *Mersey*

### **Stipendiary**

Lorraine Aizlewood-Threlfall (Northern)  
Jeff Hughes (Northern)

### **Non-Stipendiary**

Allison Claxton (Northern)

## *Yorkshire*

### **Stipendiary**

Christopher Kemshell (Westminster)  
Catherine Lewis-Smith (Westminster)  
Paul Robinson (Northern)

## *East Midlands*

### **Stipendiary**

Julian Sanders (Westminster)  
Elizabeth Thomson (Westminster)

### **Non-Stipendiary**

Heather-Ann Adlem (Westminster)

### **CRCW**

Jennie Crane (Northern)

## *West Midlands*

### **Stipendiary**

Helen Carr (Queen's)  
Melanie Frew (Westminster)  
Mhari McIntock (Northern)  
Kim Plumpton (Westminster)

### **Non-Stipendiary**

Chris Burgham (Northern)

## *Eastern*

### **Stipendiary**

James Church (Westminster)  
Matthew Stone (Westminster)  
James Taylor (Westminster)

## *South Western*

### **Non-Stipendiary**

Sue Cossey (STETS)  
Meryl White (Northern)

## *Wessex*

### **Stipendiary**

Andrew Hall (Northern)  
Kay Blackwell (Westminster)

### **Non-Stipendiary**

Graham Dadd (Northern)  
Nicky Gilbert (Westminster)  
John Lee (STETS)

## *Thames North*

### **Stipendiary**

Lucy Berry (Northern)  
Heather Cadoux (Westminster)  
Felicita Grabe (Westminster)  
Anne Lewitt (Westminster)  
Sue McCoan (Westminster)  
Bridget Powell (Westminster)  
Matthew Prevett (Westminster)



## Appendix 1

### *Southern*

#### **Stipendiary**

Sue Fender (Westminster)  
Mark Robinson (Westminster)  
Phil Wall (Westminster)

#### **Non-Stipendiary**

Bernard Fidler (STETS)  
Emma Perry (Westminster)  
Rosemary Shirley (STETS)

### *Wales*

#### **CRCW**

Laura Collins (Northern)

### *Scotland*

#### **Stipendiary**

Nick Brindley (SURCC)  
William Young (SURCC)



## Statistics of students in Education for Ministry Phase 1

# Appendix 2

	Students in training			Anticipated entry into URC service			
	Feb 2007	Feb 2008	Mar 2010	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>Stipendiary</b>							
<i>Full-time courses</i>							
Mansfield College	5	3	-	-	-	-	-
Northern College (RCL)	14	10	8	3	1	1	3
Queen's Foundation	3	3	1	1	-	-	-
SURCC (RCL)	1	2	2	-	1	-	1
Westminster College (RCL)	20	19	18	8	4	3	3
<i>Part-time courses</i>							
NEOC	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Northern College (RCL)	3	2	2	1	1	-	-
SWMTC	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>CRCW</b>							
Northern College (RCL)	4	4	2	-	1	1	-
<b>Non-stipendiary</b>							
<i>Full-time courses</i>							
Westminster College (RCL)	-	-	2	1	-	-	1
<i>Part-time courses</i>							
ERMC	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
EMMTC	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Northern College (RCL)	3	4	5	-	2	1	2
NEOC	2	2	1	1	-	-	-
SEITE	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
STETS	7	6	4	4	-	-	-
Synod	3	3	-	-	-	-	-
Westminster College (RCL)	1	3	3	-	2	1	-
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</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

Anticipated entry does not take into account those who have been selected at recent assessment conferences but who have not yet formally begun their studies through one of the RCLs.



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# Guidelines on conduct and behaviour for Ministers of Word and Sacrament

## 1. Introduction

This paper sets down expectations of ministers of Word and Sacrament within the United Reformed Church. Parallel papers about the expectations of church related community workers and elders and local churches are to be read alongside this document.

## 2. Basis of Union

The foundation for the conduct of ministers is in the Basis of Union, summarised in Schedule E paragraph 2,

‘Ministers must conduct themselves and exercise all aspects of their ministries in a manner which is compatible with the unity and peace of the United Reformed Church and the affirmation made by ministers at ordination and induction (Schedule C) and the Statement concerning the nature, faith and order of the United Reformed Church (Schedule D) in accordance with which ministers undertake to exercise their ministry.’

The relevant promises in Schedule C are:

- a) ‘to live a holy life and to maintain the truth of the Gospel whatever trouble or persecution may arise’;
- b) ‘to fulfil the duties of your charge faithfully, to lead the church in worship, to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight, to take your part in the councils of the Church, and to give leadership to the church in its mission to the world; and
- c) as a minister of the United Reformed Church ‘to seek its well-being, purity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church’.

## 3. Standards of professional behaviour

### 3a *Personal integrity and health*

- To live a Christian life as a person of prayer and integrity.
- To be aware of the need to have appropriate boundaries that safeguard personal health and welfare and which promote healthy relationships with others.
- To recognise the need for and have concern for a healthy lifestyle, to balance availability and accessibility to ministry demands with time for family and friends, personal renewal and rest and spiritual growth.
- To maintain strict confidentiality of all matters shared with them in confidence, except when required by law to do otherwise, eg with regard to the safety of children.
- To exercise care and sensitivity in seeking counsel from colleagues and to protect the identity of third parties unless permission has been granted.
- To attend meetings, respond to correspondence and keep appropriate records efficiently and effectively, having regard to the Data Protection Act.
- To account carefully for expenses and any funds held on behalf of others.
- Not to undertake duties whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs or when medically advised not to do so.

- To refrain from using privilege or power for personal advantage or gain, whether financial, emotional, sexual or material.
- Not to do anything to undermine the spiritual health of another.

### **3b Relationships with ministerial colleagues**

All ministers:

- To strive to protect colleagues from prejudicial discrimination on the basis of gender, race, age, disability or sexual orientation.
- To consider very carefully taking any position of responsibility in a pastorate served by another minister and to support the direction of church life initiated through the leadership of the pastorate.
- To respect the work of predecessors and successors and deal honourably with their record.
- To consider carefully the location of retirement housing and try to avoid living in the immediate area of past pastorates.

Ministers in pastoral charge:

- To support the ministry of other ministers and not interfere with the conduct of ministry or the direction of church life of other pastorates.
- To sever all professional ties with a previous pastorate and refer any requests or enquires of previous pastorates to the interim moderator or new minister.
- To welcome retired colleagues and those ministers serving the wider church as members and worshippers in the pastorate.

### **3c Relationship with elders, members and others**

- To regard all persons with equal love and concern.
- To uphold values of faithfulness, trust and respect.
- To share leadership and pastoral care with others called to these purposes.
- Not to seek to influence inappropriately a pastorate in the call of a new minister.
- To work collaboratively and safeguard the contribution of the whole church in decision-making processes.
- To seek advice from colleagues or other professionals who may offer specialist advice if in doubt about one's competence to deal with any issue or situation.
- To consult with colleagues, elders and others as appropriate when considering taking on extra work.
- To observe proper boundaries in relationships and not to enter into a sexual relationship with anyone in their care.
- Not to be alone with a child or children or young people in a place quite separate from others.

### **3d Relationship with Councils of the Church**

- To be active in the councils of the Church.
- To accept the oversight of synod and the pastoral care of synod moderators.
- To submit to disciplinary procedures when initiated by the councils of the church and to inform as soon as possible the synod clerk and synod moderator, or where appropriate the deputy general secretary, when involved in legal proceedings (civil or criminal).
- To participate in accompanied self-appraisal and review as appropriate.
- To work to the agreed terms of settlement.
- To be aware of the guidelines for on-going ministerial training issued by the Education and Learning Committee.

# Guidelines on conduct and behaviour for Church Related Community Workers

## 1. Introduction

This paper sets down expectations of church related community workers within the United Reformed Church. Parallel papers about the expectations of ministers of Word and Sacrament and elders and local churches are to be read alongside this document.

## 2. Basis of Union

The foundation for the conduct of church related community workers is in the Basis of Union, Paragraph 22,

‘Some are called to the ministry of church related community work. After approved preparation and training, they may be called to be church related community workers in a post approved by the United Reformed Church, are then commissioned and inducted to their office to serve for a designated period. This commissioning and induction shall be in accord with Schedules D and F. Church related community workers are commissioned to care for, to challenge and to pray for the community, to discern with others God’s will for the well-being of the community, and to endeavour to enable the church to live out its calling to proclaim the love and mercy of God through working with others in both church and community for peace and justice in the world. Their service may be stipendiary or non-stipendiary, and in the latter case their service is given within the area of a synod and in a context it has approved.’

CRCWs make promises as laid out in Schedule F, in particular they promise, ‘to live a holy life, and to maintain the truth of the gospel, whatever trouble or persecution may arise; to care for, to challenge and to pray for the community, to discern with others God’s will for the well-being of the community; to take their part in the councils of the Church and to enable the church to live out its calling to proclaim the love and mercy of God through working with others in both church and community for peace and justice in the world, and as a church related community worker of the United Reformed Church to seek its well-being, purity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.’

## 3. Standards of professional behaviour

### 3a *Personal integrity and health*

- To live a Christian life as a person of prayer and integrity.
- To be aware of the need to have appropriate boundaries that safeguard personal health and welfare and which promote healthy relationships with others.
- To recognise the need for and have concern for a healthy lifestyle, to balance availability and accessibility to ministry demands with time for family and friends, personal renewal and rest and spiritual growth.
- To maintain strict confidentiality of all matters shared with them in confidence, except when required by law to do otherwise, eg with regard to the safety of children.

- In seeking counsel from colleagues care and sensitivity will be exercised and the identity of the person shall not be revealed unless permission has been granted.
- To attend meetings, respond to correspondence and keep appropriate records efficiently and effectively, having regard to the Data Protection Act.
- To account carefully for expenses and any funds held on behalf of others.
- Not to undertake duties whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs or when medically advised not to do so.
- To refrain from using privilege or power for personal advantage or gain, whether financial, emotional, sexual or material.
- Not to do anything to undermine the spiritual health of another.

### **3b Relationships with colleagues**

- To support the ministry of other CRCWs and ministers of Word and Sacrament and not interfere with the conduct of ministry or the direction of church life of other pastorates.
- To strive to protect colleagues from prejudicial discrimination on the basis of gender, race, age, disability or sexual orientation.
- To sever all professional ties with a previous post and refer any requests or enquires of previous posts to the interim moderator or new CRCW.
- To respect the work of predecessors and successors and deal honourably with their record.
- To consider carefully the location of retirement housing and try to avoid living in the immediate area of past posts.
- To welcome retired colleagues as members of the pastorate.

### **3c Relationship with elders, members and others**

- To regard all persons with equal love and concern.
- To uphold values of faithfulness, trust and respect.
- To share leadership and pastoral care with others called to these purposes.
- Not to seek to influence inappropriately a pastorate in the call of a new minister.
- To consider very carefully taking any position of responsibility in a pastorate served by another CRCW or a minister of Word and Sacrament and to support the direction of church life initiated through the leadership of the pastorate.
- To work collaboratively and safeguard the contribution of the whole church in decision-making processes.
- To seek advice from colleagues or other professionals who may offer specialist advice if in doubt about one's competence to deal with any issue or situation.
- To consult with colleagues, elders and others as appropriate when considering taking on extra work.
- To observe proper boundaries in relationships and not to enter into a sexual relationship with anyone in their care.
- Not to be alone with a child or children or young people in a place quite separate from others.

### **3d Relationship with councils of the Church**

- To be active in the councils of the Church.
- To accept the oversight of synod and pastoral care of synod moderators.
- To submit to disciplinary procedures when initiated by the councils of the church and to inform as soon as possible the synod clerk and synod moderator when involved in legal proceedings (civil or criminal).
- To participate in accompanied self-appraisal and review as appropriate.
- To work to the agreed terms of settlement.
- To be aware of the guidelines for on-going training issued by the Education and Learning committee.

# Guidelines on conduct and behaviour for elders

## 1. Introduction

This paper sets down expectations of elders in relation to ministers of Word and Sacrament and church related community workers (CRCWs) within the United Reformed Church. Parallel papers about the expectations of ministers and CRCWs are to be read alongside this document.

## 2. Basis of Union

The foundation for the conduct of ministers is in the Basis of Union, summarised in Schedule E paragraph 2,

‘Ministers must conduct themselves and exercise all aspects of their ministries in a manner which is compatible with the unity and peace of the United Reformed Church and the affirmation made by ministers at ordination and induction (Schedule C) and the Statement concerning the nature, faith and order of the United Reformed Church (Schedule D) in accordance with which ministers undertake to exercise their ministry.’

The relevant promises in Schedule C are

- a) ‘to live a holy life and to maintain the truth of the Gospel whatever trouble or persecution may arise’,
- b) ‘to fulfil the duties of your charge faithfully, to lead the church in worship, to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight, to take your part in the councils of the Church, and to give leadership to the church in its mission to the world, and
- c) as a minister of the United Reformed Church ‘to seek its well-being, purity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church’.

Elders ‘share with ministers of the Word and Sacrament in the pastoral oversight and leadership of the local churches, taking counsel together in the elders’ meeting for the whole church and having severally groups of members particularly entrusted to their pastoral care. They are ‘associated with ministers in all the councils of the Church’. Elders promise at their ordination to ‘accept the office of elder of the United Reformed Church’ and promise ‘to perform its duties faithfully’.

Elders and members receive ministers at their induction or CRCWs at their commissioning ‘as from God’ to serve among them and with them in the world. They promise to pray for the minister/CRCW, to seek together the will of God and ‘give due honour, consideration and encouragement, building one another up in faith, hope and love’.

Members promise, ‘in dependence on God’s grace, to be faithful in private and public worship, to live in the fellowship of the church and to share in its work’, and to give and serve, as God enables them, ‘for the advancement of his kingdom throughout the world’ They also promise ‘by that same grace, to follow Christ and to seek to do and to bear his will’ all the days of their life’

### 3. Standards of Christian Behaviour

#### 3a *Personal integrity and health*

- To live a Christian life as persons of prayer and integrity.
- To be committed to growing in faith and discipleship and developing the gifts each has been given.
- To be aware of the need of ministers, elders and members to have appropriate boundaries that safeguard personal and spiritual health and welfare, to promote healthy relationships with others and not to do anything to undermine the spiritual health of another.
- To recognise the need for ministers, elders and members to have a healthy lifestyle and to balance demands on ministers'/CRCWs' availability and accessibility with respect for ministers'/CRCWs' time for family and friends, personal renewal and rest and spiritual growth.
- To maintain strict confidentiality of all matters shared in confidence, except when required by law to do otherwise, eg with regard to the safety of children, and to respect ministers' needs to maintain that same confidentiality.
- To exercise care and sensitivity when seeking counsel from others and in discussion about pastoral concerns, in order that the identity of any person shall not be revealed unless permission has been granted.
- To refrain from using privilege or power for personal advantage or gain, whether financial, emotional, sexual or material.

#### 3b *Relationships with ministers*

- To work collaboratively with ministers/CRCWs and elders and members in all aspects of the life of the pastorate.
- To support the ministers/CRCWs, through prayer, encouragement and partnership, including honouring the terms of settlement with regard to holidays, financial benefits and continuing training.
- To regard all persons with equal respect and concern and not discriminate against anyone on the basis of gender, race, age, disability or sexual orientation, including ministers/CRCWs.
- To honour the ministers/CRCWs currently called to serve and not invite or encourage other ministers to be involved in the life of the church or to offer pastoral care without the ministers'/CRCWs' consent.
- To refrain from raising pastoral issues with a previous minister/CRCW.
- To respect the work of previous ministers/CRCWs and deal honourably with their record.
- To welcome retired ministers/CRCWs as members and worshippers in the pastorate.

#### 3c *Relationship with elders, members and others*

- To regard all persons with equal love and concern.
- To uphold values of faithfulness, trust and respect.
- To share leadership and pastoral care with others called to these purposes.
- To work collaboratively and safeguard the contribution of the whole church in decision-making processes.
- To seek advice from others if in doubt about one's competence to deal with any issue or situation.
- To consider very carefully taking any position of responsibility and to support the direction of church life initiated through the ministers/CRCWs, elders and church meetings.
- Not to enter a sexual relationship with anyone in their care.
- Not to be alone with a child or children or young people in a place quite separate from others.

#### 3d *Relationship with councils of the Church*

- To recognise that the pastorate is part of the wider United Reformed Church and that the ministers/CRCWs are committed to play their part in the wider councils of the Church and in ecumenical relationships.
- To engage positively with all the councils of the church.
- To participate in synod's consultation and review of the pastorate as appropriate.

**Memorandum of Association of  
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST**

Charity Registration No. 1133373

Adopted by Special Resolution 18 December 2009

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## **Company Limited by Guarantee**

**Memorandum of Association of  
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST**

**1. The Company's name is:**

“United Reformed Church Trust”  
(and in this document it is called “the Charity”).

**2. The Charity's registered office is to be situated in England.**

**3. Unless the context otherwise requires, words or expressions contained in these Articles have the same meaning as in the Companies Act 1985 or the Companies Act 2006, but excluding any statutory modification not in force when this constitution became binding on the Charity.**

**4. Apart from the exception mentioned in Clause 3, a reference to an Act of Parliament includes any statutory modification or re-enactment of it for the time being in force.**

**5. The Charity's Objects (the Objects) are:**

5.1 To advance the Christian religion for the benefit of the public in accordance with the doctrines, principles and usages, and the Scheme of Union of the United Reformed Church (“the Church”).

**6. Other Powers**

6.1 In addition to any other powers it may have, the Charity has the following powers in order to further the Objects (but not for any other purpose):

- (a) to raise funds. In doing so, the Charity must not undertake any substantial permanent trading activity and must comply with any relevant statutory regulations;
- (b) to acquire, deal with, manage, direct the management of, purchase, take on lease or in exchange, hire, or otherwise acquire, and to accept by way of gift, subscription, donation, devise, bequest, or otherwise, and to hold buildings, lands, securities, stocks, shares, and debentures, money and other property in the United Kingdom

or elsewhere, whether for the Objects or to be held by the Charity as Trustee for and on behalf of, or otherwise, for the use or benefit of, any person, church, charity or committee connected with, or supported by, the United Reformed Church;

- (c) to receive gifts or moneys subject to annual or other payments;
- (d) to acquire by purchase or otherwise, and undertake (so far as it lawfully may), the property, liabilities, and work, either wholly or in part, of any Charity formed for any of the purposes the furtherance of which is contemplated by this Charity, and possessed of property suitable to such purposes;
- (e) to administer and manage as trustee, factor or agent in accordance with any trusts, expressed or implied, affecting the same, any trust property vested in the Charity otherwise than as bare trustee and to exercise any rights of ownership or any rights or powers discretionary or otherwise relating to the administration, management or conduct of, or in any manner to, any such trust property and to give bonds or guarantees on account of any covenants given, titles asserted, or trusts or agencies taken by the Charity;
- (f) to take over and assume the managing trusteeship of the whole or any of the assets and liabilities currently held or which may hereafter come under the control and direction of any of the bodies specified below:
  - (i) the General Assembly of the Church (or such other body specifically authorised to act on its behalf), whether for the general purposes of the Church or special charitable trusts appertaining to the Church or;
  - (ii) the Committees

which may, in either of the above cases, be legally transferred to or vested in the Charity;

- (g) to provide housing for serving and retired ministers and other Church workers and for their families, civil partners, widows, widowers and other dependants;
- (h) to sell, lease or otherwise dispose of all or any part of the property belonging to the Charity. In exercising this power, the Charity must comply as appropriate with sections 36 and 37 of the Charities Act 1993, as amended by the Charities Act 2006;
- (i) to borrow money and to charge the whole or any part of the property belonging to the Charity, or held by the Charity as Trustee, as security for repayment of money borrowed or as security for the discharge of any other obligation incurred provided that if the Charity wishes to offer as security property it holds subject to any Trusts it shall only do so in such manner as is permitted by the terms of such Trusts and as is allowed by law having regard to such Trusts. The Charity must also comply as appropriate with Sections 38 and 39 of the Charities Act 1993 as amended by the Charities Act 2006 if it wishes to mortgage land.
- (j) to lend money, either with or without security or give financial assistance by way of donation or subscription or otherwise to any person or persons, church, charitable, benevolent, or other body for purpose of forwarding the Objects;



- (k) to act as or to exercise any power which may be confided to the Charity of appointing managers, treasurers, trustees, auditors, inspectors, examiners, or other officials of any such societies, clubs, trusts, missions, organisations, schools, colleges, homes, institutes, pension or other funds and charities with connections to the United Reformed Church and to manage and carry on the same or any of them;
- (l) to appoint and employ and pay agents, professional advisers, officers and servants for any of the purposes of the Charity;
- (m) to assist and to contribute towards the training of Ministers, Church-related community workers and others, and the provision and payment of a stipend or salary for such persons and, where appropriate, the provision of living accommodation;
- (n) to assist in sending out ministers and evangelists and contributing to their support, promoting itinerant evangelistic work, promoting or assisting the building of places of worship, ministers' houses, mission rooms, schools, colleges, institutions, and other buildings, and providing the moneys required for the same;
- (o) to grant pensions and retiring allowances to, or otherwise provide for, the pension of any officers, agents, or servants, of the Charity;
- (p) to undertake and carry on the office and duties of trustee, custodian trustee, executor and administrator, attorney or nominee of, or for, any person, company, corporation, association, scheme or trust fund, in furtherance of the said Objects;
- (q) to carry on a publishing and printing business whose objective is the promotion of the Objects, and in connection therewith to print, publish, circulate, sell, buy, manage or support books, reports, newspapers, periodicals, tracts, magazines, circulars, and other publications, and to publish information by way of electronic mail, Internet, or other forms of communication;
- (r) to promote, sponsor, organise, hold, run and manage discussions, lectures, classes, conferences, exhibitions and any other type of meeting with the purpose of propounding the doctrines of the United Reformed Church;
- (s) to co-operate with other charities, voluntary bodies and statutory authorities and to exchange information and advice with them;
- (t) to establish or support any charitable trusts, associations or institutions formed for any charitable purpose consistent with the Objects;
- (u) to acquire, merge with or to enter into any partnership or joint venture arrangement with any other Charity formed for any charitable purpose consistent with the Objects;
- (v) to set aside income as a reserve against future expenditure but only in accordance with a written policy about reserves;
- (w) to employ and remunerate such staff as are necessary for carrying out the work of the Charity. The Charity may employ or remunerate a Director only to the extent it is permitted to do so by Clause 8.3, and provided it complies with the conditions in that Clause;

## Appendix 4a

- (x) to:
  - (i) deposit or invest funds;
  - (ii) employ a professional fund-manager; and
  - (iii) arrange for the investments or other property of the Charity to be held in the name of a nominee;
- in the same manner and subject to the same conditions as the trustees of a trust are permitted to do by the Trustee Act 2000;
- (y) to institute, conduct, defend, or compromise legal proceedings by and against the Charity or its officers as such, and to do and authorise to be done all acts, deeds, or assurances which may be necessary to register this Charity or any of its properties in such local or foreign register as may be found necessary or desirable;
- (z) to pay out of the funds of the Charity, or out of any particular part of such funds which can properly be applied for the purpose, all expenses of or incidental to the management of the Charity, or of administering any special trust, or otherwise carrying out any of the foregoing Objects, including the payment of salaries to persons employed, stipends to Ministers and contributions to the Ministers' and Staff Pension Funds.
- (aa) to hold any or all securities or other property in bearer form, or in the name of the Charity, or in the name of some other Company person, or partnership, or in the name, or names, of nominees, and to deposit the said securities and any title deeds or other documents belonging or relating to any property of which the Charity is a trustee in any part of the world with any bank, firm, trust company, or other company that undertakes the safe custody of securities as part of its business without being responsible for the default of such bank, firm, trust company or for any consequent loss;
- (bb) subject to any necessary consent of the Court or the Charity Commission under Section 17(7) of the Charities Act 1993, to pay out of the funds of charities administered by the Charity costs incurred in preparing or promoting any Bill in Parliament provided that such application is consistent with the trusts of the charities concerned;
- (cc) to procure the Charity to be domiciled and legally recognised in accordance with the laws and constitution of any country or state in which any of its operations may be carried on or its property situate, and with a view thereto to make all requisite deposits and comply with the necessary requirements and conditions;
- (dd) to provide indemnity insurance for the Directors, or any other officer of the Charity, in relation to any such liability as is mentioned in Clause 6.3 but subject to the exclusions specified in Clause 6.4;
- (ee) to pay out of the funds of the Charity the costs of forming and registering the Charity and if considered appropriate the future conversion of the Charity into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.
- (ff) to do all such other lawful things as are necessary for the achievement of the Objects.

- 6.2 PROVIDED THAT:
- 6.2.1 Subject always to conformity with the Objects set out in Clause 5.1 hereof, none of the powers set forth in any sub-clause of Clause 6.1 hereof shall be restrictively construed but the widest interpretation shall be given to each such power, and none of such powers shall, except where the context expressly so requires, be in any way limited or restricted by reference to or inference from any other powers set forth in the said Clause 6.1 or by reference to or inference from the terms and conditions of any other sub-clause of such Clause, or by reference to or inference from the name of the Charity.
- 6.2.2 None of the powers specified in Clause 6.1 hereof shall be deemed subsidiary or ancillary to any other powers specified therein and the Charity shall have as full a power to exercise each and every one of the powers specified in each sub-clause of Clause 6.1 as though each such sub-clause contained the powers of a separate trust subject always to conformity with the Objects of the Charity specified in Clause 5.1 hereof.
- 6.2.3 The Objects of the Charity shall not extend to the regulation of relations between workers and employers, or organisations of workers and organisations of employers, nor shall the Charity support with its funds any object or endeavour to impose on or procure the observance by its members or others of any regulation, restriction or condition which, if an object of the Charity, would make it a trade union.
- 6.3 The liabilities referred to in Clause 6.1 (dd) are:
- (a) any liability that by virtue of any rule of law would otherwise attach to a director of a company in respect of any negligence, default breach of duty or breach of trust of which he or she may be guilty in relation to the Charity;
  - (b) the liability to make a contribution to the Charity's assets as specified in Section 214 of the Insolvency Act 1986 (wrongful trading).
- 6.4 The following liabilities are excluded from Clause 6.3:
- (a) fines;
  - (b) costs of unsuccessfully defending criminal prosecutions for offences arising out of the fraud, dishonesty or wilful or reckless misconduct of the Director or other officer;
  - (c) liabilities to the Charity that result from conduct that the Director or other officer knew, or must be assumed to have known, as not in the best interests of the Charity or about which the person concerned did not care whether it was in the best interests of the Charity or not;
  - (d) there is excluded from Clause 6.3(b) any liability to make such a contribution where the basis of the Director's liability is his, or her, knowledge prior to the insolvent liquidation of the Charity (or reckless failure to acquire that knowledge) that there was no reasonable prospect that the Charity would avoid going into insolvent liquidation.
7. The income and property of the Charity shall be applied solely towards the promotion of the Objects.

### 8. Directors

#### 8.1 A Director:

- (a) is entitled to be reimbursed from the property of the Charity, or may pay out of such property, reasonable expenses properly incurred by him or her when acting on behalf of the Charity;
- (b) may benefit, subject to the exclusions in Clause 6.4 from trustee indemnity insurance cover purchased at the Charity's expense;
- (c) may receive an indemnity from the Charity in the circumstances specified in Article 19.1.

#### 8.2 None of the income or property of the Charity may be paid or transferred directly or indirectly by way of dividend bonus or otherwise by way of profit to any member of the Charity. This does not prevent a member who is not also a Director receiving:

- (a) a benefit from the Charity in the capacity of a beneficiary of the Charity;
- (b) reasonable and proper remuneration for any goods or services supplied to the Charity.

#### 8.3 No Director may:

- (a) buy any goods or services from the Charity on preferential terms;
- (b) sell goods, services, or any interest in land to the Charity;
- (c) be employed by, or receive any remuneration from, the Charity;
- (d) receive any other financial benefit from the Charity;

unless in any of the above events:

- (i) the financial benefit accruing to the Director as a result thereof is permitted by Clause 8.4, does not exceed an amount that is reasonable in all the circumstances, and does not result in a majority of the Directors having received a financial benefit from the Charity; or
- (ii) in a case where the Director is a serving Minister of the Church, the financial benefit consists of payments (including stipend, expenses and contributions to a Pension Fund) made out of the funds held by the Charity in line with the Church's normal arrangements for ministerial remuneration and reimbursement; or
- (iii) in a case where the Director is a serving CRCW (Church Related Community Worker) of the Church, the financial benefit consists of payments (including salary, expenses and contributions to a Pension Fund) made out of the funds held by the Charity in line with the Church's normal arrangements for remuneration and reimbursement of CRCWs; or
- (iv) in any other case involving either ministerial or lay personnel, the payment made out of funds held by the Charity consists of remuneration or expenses in respect of the Director's duties within the Church and does not in any way arise out of the person concerned being a Director of the Charity; or
- (v) the Directors obtain the prior written approval of the Commission and fully comply with any procedures it prescribes.

- 8.4 (a) A Director may receive a benefit from the Charity in the capacity of a beneficiary of the Charity;
- (b) A Director may enter into a contract for the supply of goods or services to the Charity where that is permitted in accordance with, and subject to the conditions in, Section 73A to C of the Charities Act 1993;
- (c) A Director may receive interest on money lent to the Charity at a reasonable and proper rate which must be 2% (or more) per annum below the base rate of a clearing bank to be selected by the Directors with a minimum of 0%.
- (d) A Company of which a Director is a Member may receive fees, remuneration or other benefit in money, or money's worth, provided that the shares of the Company are listed on a recognised stock exchange and the Director holds no more than 1% of the issued capital of that company.
- (e) A Director may receive rent for premises let by the Director to the Charity, if the amount of the rent and the other terms of the lease are reasonable and proper, and provided that such a Director shall withdraw from any meeting at which such a proposal or the rent or other terms of the lease are under discussion.
- (f) The Directors may arrange for the purchase, out of the funds of the Charity, of insurance designed to indemnify the Directors in accordance with the terms of, and subject to the conditions in Section 73F of the Charities Act 1993.
- 8.5 The employment or remuneration of a Director includes the engagement or remuneration of any firm or company in which the Director is:
- (r) a partner;
- (s) an employee;
- (t) a consultant;
- (u) a director; or
- (v) a shareholder, unless the shares of the company are listed on a recognised stock exchange and the Director holds less than 1% of the issued capital.
9. In Clauses 8.1 to 8.5:
- (a) "Charity" shall include any company in which the Charity:
- (i) holds more than 50% of the shares; or
- (ii) controls more than 50% of the voting rights attached to the shares; or
- (iii) has the right to appoint one or more directors to the Board of the company;
- (b) "Director" shall include any child, parent, grandchild, grandparent, brother, sister, spouse or civil partner of the Director or any person living with the Director as his or her partner.
10. If a conflict of interests arises for a Director because of a duty of loyalty owed to another organisation or person, and the conflict is not authorised by virtue of any other provision in this memorandum or the articles, the unconflicted Directors may authorise such a conflict of interests where the following conditions apply:

- (a) the conflicted Director is absent from the part of the meeting at which there is discussion of any arrangement or transaction affecting that other organisation or person;
- (b) the conflicted Director does not vote on any such matter and is not to be counted when considering whether a quorum of Directors is present at the meeting;
- (c) the unconflicted Directors consider it is in the interests of the Charity to authorise the conflict of interest in the circumstances applying.

- 11.** The liability of the members is limited.
- 12.** Every member promises, if the Charity is dissolved while he or she is a Member or within twelve months after he or she ceases to be a Member, to contribute such sum (not exceeding £10) as may be demanded of him or her towards the payment of the debts and liabilities of the Charity incurred before he or she ceases to be a Member, the costs charges and expenses of winding up, and the adjustment of the rights of the contributories among themselves.
- 13.** The members of the Charity may, at any time before, and in expectation of, its dissolution, resolve that any net assets of the Charity after all its debts and liabilities have been paid, or provision has been made for them, shall on or before the dissolution of the Charity be applied or transferred in any of the following ways:
- (a) directly for the Objects; or
  - (b) by transfer to any Charity or charities for purposes similar to the Objects; or
  - (c) to any Charity for use for particular purposes that fall within the Objects.
- 14.** Subject to any such resolution of the members of the Charity, the Directors of the Charity may at any time before and in expectation of its dissolution resolve that any net assets of the Charity after all its debts and liabilities have been paid, or provision made for them, shall on dissolution of the Charity be applied or transferred:
- (a) directly for the Objects; or
  - (b) by transfer to any Charity or charities for purposes similar to the Objects; or
  - (c) to any Charity or charities for use for particular purposes that fall within the Objects.
- 15.** In no circumstances shall the net assets of the Charity be paid to or distributed among the Members of the Charity (except to a member that is itself a Charity) and, if no such resolution is passed by the Members or the Directors, the net assets of the Charity shall be applied for charitable purposes as directed by the court or the Commission.

*Articles of Association of*  
**UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST**  
Charity Registration No. 1133373

Adopted by Special Resolution 18 December 2009

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# The Companies Acts 1985 and 2006 Company Limited by Guarantee

*Articles of Association of*  
**UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST**

## 1. Interpretation

### 1.1 In these Articles:

“the 1985 Act”	means the Companies Act 1985;
“the 2006 Act”	means the Companies Act 2006;
“address”	means a postal address or, for the purposes of electronic communication, a fax number, an e-mail or postal address or a telephone number for receiving text messages in each case registered with the charity;
“the Charity”	means the company intended to be regulated by these articles;
“the Church”	means the United Reformed Church
“the General Assembly”	means the General Assembly of the Church
“Date of Adoption”	means the date upon which the Memorandum and Articles of Association are formally adopted.
“clear days”	in relation to the period of a notice means a period excluding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ the day when the notice is given or deemed to be given; and</li><li>■ the day for which it is given or on which it is to take effect;</li></ul>

## Appendix 4b

“the Commission”	means the Charity Commission for England and Wales;
“the memorandum”	means the memorandum of association of the charity;
“officers”	includes the Directors and the secretary;
“the seal” “secretary”	means the common seal of the Charity if it has one; means the secretary of the Charity or any other person appointed to perform the duties of the secretary of the Charity, including a joint, assistant or deputy secretary;
“the Directors”	means the directors of the Charity. The directors are charity trustees as defined by Section 97 of the Charities Act 1993;
“the United Kingdom”	means Great Britain and Northern Ireland;

and words importing one gender shall include all genders, and the singular includes the plural and vice versa.

- 1.2 Unless the context otherwise requires words or expressions contained in these articles have the same meaning as in the 1985 Act or the 2006 Act but excluding any statutory modification not in force when this constitution becomes binding on the Charity.
- 1.3 Apart from the exception mentioned in the previous paragraph a reference to an Act of Parliament includes any statutory modification or re-enactment of it for the time being in force.
- 1.4 The provisions of the Memorandum to the extent that they could have been contained in the Articles shall take effect as though repeated here.

## 2. Members and Directors

- 2.1 The following persons shall subject to the provisions of Articles 2.2, 2.4, 2.5 and 2.7 be members of the charity:-
  - (a) the persons who, for the time being, hold the following offices in the Church: the incumbent Moderators of the General Assembly, the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary, the Treasurer of the Church and the Clerk to the General Assembly, each of whom shall be an ex-officio Member of the Charity;
  - (b) the persons (in addition to members by virtue of Article 2.1 (a)) who were on the Date of Adoption members of the Charity and who have not since that date ceased to be members thereof;
  - (c) such other persons (not being members by virtue of Article 2.1(a) or Article 2.1(b)) as shall be appointed as members of the Charity by the General Assembly;

and provided that in all cases all such persons mentioned in sub-clauses (a), (b) and (c) are eligible to become Directors and are not disqualified from acting in accordance with the provisions of Article 11.

- 2.2 No person shall be appointed to membership of the Charity without his or her consent.



- 2.3 Every person being or becoming a member of the Charity shall also be appointed as a Director thereof at a General Meeting of the Charity to be held as soon as conveniently possible after the date of the admission of that person to membership of the Charity. No person, not being a Member of the Charity shall be eligible for appointment as a Director thereof and in the event of any person ceasing to be a member of the Charity he or she shall also thereupon cease to be a Director.
- 2.4 Every person being or becoming a member of the Charity by virtue of Article 2.1(a) shall ipso facto cease to be a member when he or she ceases to hold the office in the United Reformed Church which qualifies him or her for membership of the Charity.
- 2.5 Every person being a member by virtue of Article 2.1(b) or (c) shall ipso facto cease to be a member on the expiry of the term specified in the appointing resolution of the General Assembly, or six years from the date of adoption, whichever is the sooner.
- 2.6 The Directors must keep a register of names and addresses of the members.
- 2.7 Every person who shall for whatever reason cease to be a Director of the Charity or be found to be ineligible for appointments as such, shall at the same time cease to be a member thereof.
- 2.8 No person who ceases to be a member of the Charity shall be eligible for appointment to membership thereof under Article 2.1(c) for a period of one year from the date of cessation of membership.
- 2.9 The name of any person proposed to be appointed a Director at General Meeting, and the particulars which would be required to appear in the Charity's Register of Directors if that person were appointed, shall be included in the Notice summoning that meeting under Article 2.3.
- 2.10 Membership shall not be transferable and shall cease on death.
- 2.11 Any member of the Charity who shall desire to resign his or her membership shall signify the same in writing to the Secretary and upon receipt of such writing his or her name shall be removed from the list of members and he or she shall be deemed to have ceased to be a member.

### **3. General Meetings**

- 3.1 The Charity is not required to hold an annual general meeting.
- 3.2 The Directors may call a general meeting at any time.

### **4. Notice of General Meetings**

- 4.1 The minimum period of notice required to hold a general meeting of the charity is fourteen clear days.
- 4.2 A general meeting may be called by shorter notice if it is so agreed by a majority in number of members having a right to attend and vote at the meeting who together hold not less than 75% of the total voting rights.
- 4.3 The notice must specify the date time and place of the meeting and the general nature of the business to be transacted. If the meeting is to be an annual general meeting, the notice must say so. The notice must also contain a statement setting

out the right of members to appoint a proxy under section 324 of the Companies Act 2006 and Article 6 hereof.

4.4 The notice must be given to all the members and to the Directors and auditors.

4.5 The proceedings at a meeting shall not be invalidated because a person who was entitled to receive notice of the meeting did not receive it because of an accidental omission by the Charity.

### **5. Proceedings at General Meetings**

5.1 No business shall be transacted at any general meeting unless a quorum is present.

5.2 A quorum is 9 of the members entitled to vote upon the business to be conducted at the meeting, of which at least three such members must be present in person rather than by proxy.

5.3 If:

(a) a quorum of 9 is not present within half an hour from the time appointed for the meeting; or

(b) during a meeting a quorum ceases to be present;

the meeting shall be adjourned to such time and place as the Directors shall determine.

5.4 The Directors must reconvene the meeting and must give at least seven clear days' notice of the reconvened meeting stating the date, time and place of the meeting.

5.5 If no quorum is present at the reconvened meeting within fifteen minutes of the time specified for the start of the meeting the members present in person or by proxy at that time shall constitute the quorum for that meeting.

5.6 General meetings shall be chaired by the person who has been appointed to chair meetings of the Directors.

5.7 If there is no such person or he or she is not present within fifteen minutes of the time appointed for the meeting a Director nominated by the Directors shall chair the meeting.

5.8 The members present in person or by proxy at a meeting may resolve by ordinary resolution that the meeting shall be adjourned. In the event of such an adjournment:

(a) the person who is chairing the meeting must decide the date time and place at which the meeting is to be reconvened unless those details are specified in the resolution;

(b) no business shall be conducted at a reconvened meeting unless it could properly have been conducted at the meeting had the adjournment not taken place.

(c) if a meeting is adjourned by a resolution of the members for more than seven days, at least seven clear days' notice shall be given of the reconvened meeting stating the date time and place of the meeting.

### 5.9 Votes and Polls:

Any vote at a meeting shall be decided by a show of hands unless before, or on the declaration of the result of, the show of hands a poll is demanded:

- (a) by the person chairing the meeting; or
  - (b) by at least two members present in person or by proxy and having the right to vote at the meeting.
- 5.10 (a) the declaration by the person who is chairing the meeting of the result of a vote shall be conclusive unless a poll is demanded;
- (b) the result of the vote must be recorded in the minutes of the Charity but the number or proportion of votes cast need not be recorded;
  - (c) a demand for a poll may be withdrawn, before the poll is taken, but only with the consent of the person who is chairing the meeting;
  - (d) if the demand for a poll is withdrawn the demand shall not invalidate the result of a show of hands declared before the demand was made.

### 5.11 Polls:

- (a) a poll must be taken as the person who is chairing the meeting directs, who may appoint scrutineers (who need not be members) and who may fix a time and place for declaring the results of the poll;
- (b) the result of the poll shall be deemed to be the resolution of the meeting at which the poll is demanded;
- (c) a poll demanded on the election of a person to chair a meeting or on a question of adjournment must be taken immediately;
- (d) a poll demanded on any other question must be taken either immediately or at such time and place as the person who is chairing the meeting directs;
- (e) The poll must be taken within thirty days after it has been demanded.
- (f) if the poll is not taken immediately at least seven clear days' notice shall be given specifying the time and place at which the poll is to be taken.
- (g) If a poll is demanded the meeting may continue to deal with any other business that may be conducted at the meeting.

## 6. **Proxies: Appointment and Voting**

- 6.1 Any member is entitled to appoint another person as a proxy to exercise all or any of the member's rights to attend and to speak and vote at a general meeting of the Charity.
- 6.2 The appointment of a proxy shall be executed by or on behalf of the appointor and shall be in the following form (or in a form as near thereto as circumstances allow or in any other form which is usual or which the directors may approve):—

“United Reformed Church Trust

I/We, ....., of ....., being a member/members of the above named charity, hereby appoint ..... of ....., or failing him/her, ..... of ....., as my/our proxy to vote in my/our name[s] and on my/our behalf at the general meeting of the Charity to be held on ..... 20....., and at any adjournment thereof.

Signed on ..... 20.....”.

- 6.3 Where it is desired to afford members an opportunity of instructing the proxy how to act the appointment of a proxy shall be in the following form (or in a form as near thereto as circumstances allow or in any other form which is usual or which the directors may approve):-

“United Reformed Church Trust

I/We, ....., of ....., being a member/members of the above named charity, hereby appoint ..... of ....., or failing him/her, ..... of ....., as my/our proxy to vote in my/our name[s] and on my/our behalf at the general meeting of the Charity, to be held on ..... 20....., and at any adjournment thereof.

This form is to be used in respect of the resolutions mentioned below as follows:

Resolution No. 1 \*for \*against

Resolution No. 2 \*for \*against.

\*Strike out whichever is not desired.

Unless otherwise instructed, the proxy may vote as s/he thinks fit or abstain from voting.

Signed this ..... day of ..... 20.....”.

- 6.4 The appointment of a proxy and any authority under which it is executed (or a copy of such authority certified by a notary or in some other way approved by the directors) may be lodged with the Charity as follows:

- (a) in the case of an instrument in writing be deposited at the office or at such other place within the United Kingdom as is specified in the notice convening the meeting or in any instrument of proxy sent out by the Charity in relation to the meeting not less than 48 hours before the time for holding the meeting or adjourned meeting at which the person named in the instrument proposes to vote; or
- (b) in the case of an appointment contained in an electronic communication, where an address has been specified for the purpose of receiving electronic communications:-
  - (i) in the notice convening the meeting, or
  - (ii) in any instrument of proxy sent out by the Charity in relation to the meeting, or
  - (iii) in any invitation contained in an electronic communication to appoint a proxy issued by the Charity in relation to the meeting;

it must be received at such address not less than 48 hours before the time for holding the meeting or adjourned meeting at which the person named in the appointment proposes to vote;

- (c) in the case of a poll taken more than 48 hours after it is demanded, be deposited or received as aforesaid after the poll has been demanded and not less than 24 hours before the time appointed for the taking of the poll; or
  - (d) where the poll is not taken forthwith but is taken not more than 48 hours after it was demanded, be delivered at the meeting at which the poll was demanded to the person chairing the meeting or to the secretary or to any director.
- 6.5 An appointment of proxy which is not deposited, delivered or received in a manner described in Article 6.4 shall be invalid.
- 6.6 A vote given or poll demanded by proxy shall be valid even if the authority of the person voting or demanding a poll has been determined unless notice of the determination was received by the charity at:
- (a) its registered office, or
  - (b) at such other place at which the instrument of proxy was duly deposited, or
  - (c) (where the appointment of the proxy was contained in an electronic communication) at the address at which such appointment was duly received

before the commencement of the meeting or adjourned meeting at which the vote is given or the poll demanded or (in the case of a poll taken otherwise than on the same day as the meeting or adjourned meeting) the time appointed for taking the poll.

## **7. Written Resolutions**

- 7.1 A resolution in writing agreed by a simple majority of the members who would have been entitled to vote upon it had it been proposed at a general meeting shall be effective provided that a copy of the proposed resolution has been sent to every eligible member and a simple majority of members has signified its agreement to the resolution in an authenticated document which has been received at the registered office within the notice period prescribed in Article 4 beginning with the circulation date. A resolution in writing may comprise several copies to which one or more members have signified their agreement.

## **8. Votes of Members**

- 8.1 Every member shall have one vote.
- 8.2 Any objection to the qualification of any voter must be raised at the meeting at which the vote is tendered and the decision of the person who is chairing the meeting shall be final.

## **9. Directors**

- 9.1 A Director must be a natural person aged 16 years or older.
- 9.2 No one may be appointed a Director if he or she would be disqualified from acting under the provisions of Article 11.

## Appendix 4b

- 9.3 The number of Directors shall be not less than 9 but (unless otherwise determined from time to time by resolution of General Assembly) shall not be subject to any maximum.
- 9.4 A Director may appoint an alternate director or anyone to act on his or her behalf at meetings of the Directors.

### **10. Powers of Directors**

- 10.1 The Directors shall manage the business of the Charity and may exercise all the powers of the Charity unless they are subject to any restrictions imposed by the 1985 Act or the 2006 Act, the memorandum, these articles or any special resolution.
- 10.2 No alteration of the memorandum or these articles or any special resolution shall have retrospective effect to invalidate any prior act of the Directors.
- 10.3 Any meeting of Directors at which a quorum is present at the time the relevant decision is made may exercise all the powers exercisable by the Directors.

### **11. Disqualification and Removal of Directors**

- 11.1 A Director shall cease to hold office if he or she:
- (a) ceases to be a Director by virtue of any statutory provision or is prohibited by law from being a director;
  - (b) is disqualified from acting as a Trustee by virtue of section 72 of the Charities Act 1993 (or any statutory re-enactment or modification of that provision);
  - (c) is no longer a member of any local church of, or of any Local Ecumenical Partnership in connection with, the United Reformed Church;
  - (d) becomes incapable by reason of mental disorder, illness or injury of managing and administering his or her own affairs;
  - (e) resigns as a Director by notice to the Charity (but only if at least two Directors will remain in office when the notice of resignation is to take effect); or
  - (f) is absent without the permission of the Directors from all their meetings held within a period of six consecutive months and the Directors resolve that his or her office be vacated.

### **12. Directors' Remuneration**

- 12.1 The Directors must not be paid any remuneration unless it is authorised by clause 8 of the Memorandum.

### **13. Proceedings of Directors**

- 13.1 The Directors may regulate their proceedings as they think fit, subject to the provisions of the articles.
- 13.2 Any Director may call a meeting of the Directors.

- 13.3 The secretary must call a meeting of the Directors if requested to do so by a Director.
- 13.4 Questions arising at a meeting shall be decided by a majority of votes.
- 13.5 Subject to the articles, Directors participate in a Directors' Meeting, or part of a Directors' Meeting, when:
- (a) the meeting has been called and takes place in accordance with the articles; and
  - (b) they can each communicate to and receive from the others any information or opinions they or the other participants have on any particular item of business of the meeting.
- 13.6 In determining whether Directors are participating in a Directors' Meeting, it is irrelevant where any Director is or how they communicate with each other.
- 13.7 If all the Directors participating in a meeting are not in the same place, they may decide that the meeting is to be treated as taking place wherever any of them is.
- 13.8 No decision may be made by a meeting of the Directors unless a quorum is participating at the time the decision is purported to be made.
- 13.9 The quorum shall be 9 of which no more than 4 should be Ex-Officio Directors or such larger number as may be decided from time to time by the Directors.
- 13.10 A Director shall not be counted in the quorum present when any decision is made about a matter upon which that Director is not entitled to vote.
- 13.11 If the number of Directors is less than the number fixed as the quorum, the continuing Directors or Director may only act in calling a General Meeting for the purpose of filling vacancies.
- 13.12 The Directors shall appoint a Director to chair their meetings and may at any time revoke such appointment.
- 13.13 If no-one has been appointed to chair meetings of the Directors or if the person appointed is unwilling to preside or is not present within fifteen minutes after the time appointed for the meeting, the Directors participating may appoint one of their number to chair that meeting.
- 13.14 The person appointed to chair meetings of the Directors shall have no functions or powers except those conferred by these articles or delegated to him or her by the Directors.
- 13.15 A resolution in writing agreed by a simple majority of all the Directors entitled to receive notice of a meeting of Directors or of a committee of Directors and to vote upon the resolution shall be as valid and effectual as if it had been passed at a meeting of the Directors or (as the case may be) a committee of Directors duly convened and held provided that:
- (a) a copy of the resolution is sent or submitted to all the Directors eligible to vote; and
  - (b) a simple majority of Directors has signified its agreement to the resolution in an authenticated document or documents which are received at the registered office within the period of 28 days beginning with the circulation date.

- 13.16 The resolution in writing may comprise several documents containing the text of the resolution in like form to each of which one or more Directors has signified their agreement.

### **14. Delegation**

- 14.1 The Directors may delegate any of their powers or functions to a committee of two or more Directors but the terms of any delegation must be recorded in the minutes.
- 14.2 The Directors may impose conditions when delegating, including the conditions that:
- (a) the relevant powers are to be exercised exclusively by the committee to whom they delegate;
  - (b) no expenditure may be incurred on behalf of the Charity except in accordance with a budget previously agreed with the Directors.
- 14.3 The Directors may revoke or alter a delegation.
- 14.4 All acts and proceedings of any committees must be fully and promptly reported to the Directors.
- 14.5 A Director must declare the nature and extent of any interest, direct or indirect, which s/he has in a proposed transaction or arrangement with the Charity or in any transaction or arrangement entered into by the Charity which has not previously been declared. A Director must absent himself or herself from any discussions of the Directors in which it is possible that a conflict will arise between his or her duty to act solely in the interests of the Charity and any personal interest (including but not limited to any personal financial interest).
- 14.6 Subject to Article 14.7, all acts done by a meeting of Directors, or of a committee of Directors, shall be valid notwithstanding the participation in any vote of a Director:
- (a) who was disqualified from holding office;
  - (b) who had previously retired or who had been obliged by the constitution to vacate office;
  - (c) who was not entitled to vote on the matter, whether by reason of a conflict of interest or otherwise;
- if without:
- (d) the vote of that Director; and
  - (e) that Director being counted in the quorum;
- the decision has been made by a majority of the Directors at a quorate meeting.
- 14.7 Article 14.6 does not permit a Director to keep any benefit that may be conferred upon him or her by a resolution of the Directors or of a committee of Directors if, but for Article 14.6, the resolution would have been void, or if the Director has not complied with Article 14.5.



## **15. Seal**

- 15.1 If the Charity has a seal it must only be used by the authority of the Directors or of a committee of Directors authorised by the Directors. The Directors may determine who shall sign any instrument to which the seal is affixed and unless otherwise so determined it shall be signed by a Director and by the secretary or by two Directors.

## **16. Minutes**

- 16.1 The Directors must keep minutes of all:
- (a) appointments of officers made by the Directors;
  - (b) proceedings at meetings of the Charity;
  - (c) meetings of the Directors and committees of Directors including:
    - (i) the names of the Directors present at the meeting;
    - (ii) the decisions made at the meetings; and
    - (iii) where appropriate the reasons for the decisions.

## **17. Accounts**

- 17.1 The Directors must prepare for each financial year accounts as required by the 2006 Act. The accounts must be prepared to show a true and fair view and follow accounting standards issued or adopted by the Accounting Standards Board or its successors and adhere to the recommendations of applicable Statements of Recommended Practice.
- 17.2 The Directors must keep accounting records as required by the Companies Act 2006 Act.

## **18. Annual Report and Return and Register of Charities**

- 18.1 The Directors must comply with the requirements of the Charities Act 1993 with regard to:
- (a) the transmission of the statements of account to the Commission;
  - (b) the preparation of an Annual Report and its transmission to the Commission;
  - (c) the preparation of an Annual Return and its transmission to the Commission.
- 18.2 The Directors must notify the Commission promptly of any changes to the Charity's entry on the Central Register of Charities.
- 18.3 Any notice to be given to or by any person pursuant to the articles:
- (a) must be in writing; or
  - (b) must be given using electronic communications.

## Appendix 4b

- 18.4 The Charity may give any notice in writing to a member/director either:
- (a) personally; or
  - (b) by sending it by post in a prepaid envelope addressed to the member/director at his or her address; or
  - (c) by leaving it at the address of the member/director; or
  - (d) by giving it using electronic communications to the member's/directors address.
- 18.5 A member who does not register an address with the Charity or who registers only a postal address that is not within the United Kingdom shall not be entitled to receive any notice from the Charity.
- 18.6 A member/director present in person at any meeting of the Charity shall be deemed to have received notice of the meeting and of the purposes for which it was called.
- 18.7 Proof that an envelope containing a notice was properly addressed, prepaid and posted shall be conclusive evidence that the notice was given.
- 18.8 Proof that a notice contained in an electronic communication was sent in accordance with current guidance issued by the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators shall be conclusive evidence that the notice was given.
- 18.9 A notice shall be deemed to be given:
- (a) 48 hours after the envelope containing it was posted; or
  - (b) in the case of an electronic communication, 48 hours after it was sent.

## 19. Indemnity

- 19.1 The Charity may indemnify any Director or other officer of the Charity against any liability incurred by him or her in that capacity to the extent permitted by sections 232 to 234 of the 2006 Act.

## 20. Rules

- 20.1 The Directors may from time to time make such reasonable and proper rules or bye laws as they may deem necessary or expedient for the proper conduct and management of the Charity.
- 20.2 The bye laws may regulate the following matters but are not restricted to them:
- (a) the admission of members of the Charity and the rights and privileges of such members, and the entrance fees, subscriptions and other fees or payments to be made by members;
  - (b) the conduct of members of the Charity in relation to one another, and to the Charity's employees and volunteers;
  - (c) the setting aside of the whole or any part or parts of the Charity's premises at any particular time or times or for any particular purpose or purposes;

- (d) the procedure at general meetings and meetings of the Directors in so far as such procedure is not regulated by the Act or by these Articles;
  - (e) generally, all such matters as are commonly the subject matter of Charity rules;
- 20.3 the Charity in general meeting has the power to alter, add to or repeal the rules or bye laws;
- 20.4 the Directors must adopt such means as they think sufficient to bring the rules and bye laws to the notice of members of the Charity;
- 20.5 the rules or bye laws, shall be binding on all members of the Charity. No rule or bye law shall be inconsistent with, or shall affect or repeal anything contained in, the memorandum or the articles.



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Mission Committee: *vision2020***Resolution 1**

- a) General Assembly celebrates God's calling to each and every member, local church, synod, council and committee to join in God's transformational journey of good news for all creation.
- b) General Assembly gives thanks for the mission journey of the United Reformed Church in years gone by but recognises the significant challenges ahead in our denomination and in our world.
- c) General Assembly adopts the *vision2020* Framework as the primary process of mission planning and church growth for the United Reformed Church in the coming decade.

## Mission Council: ethical investment statement of principle

**Resolution 2**

General Assembly welcomes the statement 'Ethical investment principles for the use of the United Reformed Church' for the guidance of those responsible for making investment decisions.

## Mission Council: Nestlé

**Resolution 3**

Having conducted a thorough review of Nestlé's reporting and management systems related to the marketing of breast-milk substitutes and compliance with the relevant international health codes and resolutions based on:

- a) the guiding principles for the revised Ethical Investment Policy of the URC;
- b) the latest EIRIS Profile Report on Nestlé (December 2009);
- c) the engagement with Nestlé management and CIG members on 4 December 2009; and, the commitment by Nestlé's management to continue engaging with the FTSE4Good inclusion criteria for marketing of breast-milk substitutes;

General Assembly:

- i. agrees that Nestlé should no longer be treated on a different investment basis from all other companies;
- ii. recognises that this means URC bodies may consider engagement with Nestlé through the selective purchase of shares if and when the

## Resolutions

- appropriate investment managers deem such purchase appropriate. This will facilitate better engagement with Company policies and practices from within; and
- iii. instructs that this decision and its context be reported to those entrusted with investment decisions on behalf of the URC as well as Nestlé management and the Church Investors Group.

## Mission Committee: Nestlé

### Resolution 4

In light of the resolution to lift the investment boycott on Nestlé, General Assembly agrees to rescind the boycott on Nestlé products outlined in the 1992 Assembly resolution.

*N.B. This resolution will only be moved if resolution 3 is agreed.*

At their meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> April, Mission Committee in considering Mission Council's resolution to lift the investment boycott on Nestlé considered the following:

- the fact that this has been a long standing boycott which Nestlé acknowledges had an impact on the company and in changing their practice with regard to the marketing and distribution of baby milk substitutes;
- that significant changes have been made in Nestlé's operational practices, accountability, reporting and engagement over the past 18 years;
- that the company still has a number of issues which are of concern to members of the URC and wider public;
- continuing the boycott of Nestlé products (outlined in the 1992 Assembly Resolution) was now inconsistent with the URC's new stance on ethical investment;
- recognises that individual members of the URC will continue to be guided by their conscience on purchasing of Nestlé products.

Mission Committee therefore resolved to ask General Assembly to consider the above resolution 4 in conjunction with Mission Council's resolution 3 on Nestlé.

## Mission Council: Disciplinary Process Part I

**Resolution 5**

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to Part I of the Disciplinary Process (Section O):

Paragraph 1.1

In the second sentence after the words '**Assembly Commission**' remove the words '**or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission**'.

*{Note: Do not remove these words in the first or third sentences. They are correct there.}*

In the final sentence, after the words '**is also able to**' remove the words '**make recommendations (other than recommendations under Paragraph 1.3) and**'.

After the words '**Section F**' insert '**or, in the event of an appeal, Section G**'.

Paragraph 1.3.1

Remove the words '**or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission**'.

Paragraph 1.3.2

Replace the words '**within the time limit therein specified**' with '**with all due expedition, consistent with the consultation process laid down by the Incapacity Procedure**'.

*{Note: This ties in with the change made by Mission Council to Part II, Para E.5.3.15.}*

Remove the words '**or the Appeals Commission**'.

Paragraph 1.3.3 and Paragraph 1.3.4

Remove the words '**or the Appeals Commission**'.

Paragraph 2

After the words '**Appeals Commission**' insert '**, the Special Appeals Body**'.

Paragraph 7.2

After the words '**case law**' add '**and/or official statements of good practice issued by a government department or agency**'.

## Mission Council: Incapacity Procedure Part I

**Resolution 6**

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to Part I of the Incapacity Procedure (Section P):

Paragraph 1.1

The existing Paragraph 1 to become 1.1.

Paragraph 1.2

Add a new paragraph as follows:-

**'The Review Commission may also decide to make a recommendation/referral in accordance with Part II Section H. The Review Commission or, in the event of an appeal the Appeals Review Commission, is also able to make recommendations (other than recommendations under Part II Section H) and offer guidance, but only within the limits prescribed in Part II Sections K and L'**

Paragraph 2

After the words '**Appeals Review Commission**' insert '**, the Special Appeals Body**'.

Paragraph 7

After the words '**case law**' insert '**and/or official statements of good practice issued by a government department or agency**'.

## Mission Council: Disciplinary Procedure Part I

### Resolution 7

General Assembly agrees to make the following change to Part I of the Disciplinary Process (Section O):

Paragraph 7

Remove this paragraph in its entirety.

## Mission Council: Incapacity Procedure Part I

### Resolution 8

General Assembly agrees to make the following change to Part I of the Incapacity Procedure (Section P):

Paragraphs 6 and 7

Remove these two paragraphs in their entirety.

## Mission Council: amendments to the Structure

### Resolution 9

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

Paragraph 2(6)(A)(xi)

Remove the words '**Part I of the Statement of the Ministerial Disciplinary Process referred to in Function (xxxiii) below, and Part I of the Incapacity Procedure referred to in Paragraph 6 of the Structure.**'

Paragraph 3.(1)

Change the reference in the text from '**Paragraph 2.5.xi.**' to '**Paragraph 2(6)(A)(xi).**'

Paragraph 5.(2)

Change the reference in the text from '**Paragraph 5(3)**' to '**Paragraph 6**'.  
{Note: The 2nd and 3rd of these changes are in order to correct errors in the current Structure.}



## Mission Council: Disciplinary Procedure Part II

## Resolution 10

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

Paragraph A.4.1

Remove the words '**recommendations or**'

Paragraph A.5.20

Remove the words '**the particular recommendation(s) or**' and insert the word '**any**' before the word '**guidance**'.

Paragraph E.9.3

Replace the words '**and/or to append recommendations to its decision under Paragraph F.2.3 or where, of its own accord, it might have it in contemplation to adopt either or both of those courses**' with the words '**or where, of its own accord, the Assembly Commission might have it in contemplation to adopt that course**'.

Paragraph F.2.3

Delete entirely.

Paragraph F.2.4

Re-number as F.2.3.

Paragraph F.5.2

Remove the words '**recommendations or**' and '**or Paragraph F.2.4**'.\*

Paragraph F.6.4

Remove the words '**recommendations or**'.

Paragraph G.8.4

Remove the words '**recommendations or**' and '**or Paragraph F.2.4 as the case may be**'.\*

Paragraph G.13.4

Delete entirely, renumbering the subsequent subparagraphs of G.13

Paragraph G.13.6 (to become G.13.5)

Replace the existing paragraph with the following:

**'In addition to its power to offer guidance under Paragraph G.13.4, the Appeals Commission may if it sees fit endorse, overrule, vary or modify in any way any 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 guidance offered by the Appeals Commission, even where this simply endorses that offered by the Assembly Commission in its entirety.'**

Paragraph G.14.4

Remove the words '**recommendations or**' and '**or Paragraph G.13.5 as the case may be**'.\*

Paragraph G.14.6

Remove the words '**recommendations or**'.

Paragraph J.1.5

Remove the words '**Recommendations or**' and give the word '**guidance**' a capital G.

**\*Note:** At present, Paragraphs F.2.4 and G.13.5 relate to the power to issue guidance and, at first sight, it may therefore appear incorrect to remove the references to those paragraphs. However, with the deletion of the immediately preceding Paragraphs F.2.3 and G.13.4 (see above), the 'guidance' paragraphs move up to become F.2.3 and G.13.4, so the references above are correct.

## Ministries Committee: the ministerial working week

### Resolution 11

General Assembly approves the following as the principles governing the ministerial working week:

- a) there should be more clarity in defining working hours;
- b) the working week, translated into hours in a four week period, should be not less than 160 hours and not more than 192;
- c) a note on the working week should be included in the Plan for Partnership and the rationale for the working week, set out as supporting text for this resolution, should be available on request from the Ministries office.

1 Paragraph 7.1 of the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration sets out holiday provision for ministers and Church Related Community Workers, but the Plan contains no definition of the working week. This can lead to two extreme assumptions, that those in ministry work only one day a week or that they are available 24/7.

2 Custom and practice means that those in ministry have for some years been encouraged to have a day a week 'off' and congregations are instructed to check that this is happening. However this suggests that ministers have a six day working week and begs the question: 'Is there any common agreement about the length of the ministerial working day?'

3 Part of the remit of the Ministries Committee is a concern for the central care and conditions of service of ministers of Word and Sacrament and CRCWs, and in the exercise of that concern the committee believes that some guidance should be given about the ministerial working week.

4 Underlying this concern is a recognition of the need for ministers to be encouraged and allowed to establish and work within a proper relationship between living and working, doing and being. The biblical witness on this is rooted in the story of creation. God's period of work is followed by the Sabbath and this is presented as example and injunction to build into a faith-based lifestyle a creative balance of activity and rest. This guidance is intended to give ministers the challenge and permission to reflect on such balance as they build their own working style, and as they consider the example that their pattern of working offers to all members of the church community.

5 Any guidance on the working week, arising from a wholly admirable desire to care for the minister/CRCW and his/her family, is set within the context of ministerial status being that of office holder with all the flexibility and autonomy that implies. Such guidance must also take account of the unpredictability of ministerial life in which some weeks are filled with crises and others are as eventful as the minister cares to make them.

6 Furthermore, such guidance must take note of the vocational life, which leads individuals to respond instinctively to the needs of others, whenever that need arises. However, such an instinct needs to be treated with immense care in order to safeguard the health and well being of individual ministers/CRCWs and their families. Ministry is not only a series of tasks (e.g. writing the sermon; arranging community events) which can be finished; but is focused on the life of the congregation and/or community and therefore, in a very real sense, can never be finished or quantified.

7 Nevertheless the Ministries Committee feels it right to offer guidelines on the ministerial working week, in order to take seriously the concept of work/life balance, and leave the minister/CRCW with time for family and friends as well as free to give voluntary time to any cause about which he/she feels passionate, but which is not part of the local church's planned vision and mission. In this respect the Church may be seen to be 'counter-cultural' challenging the working ethos of much of our society.

8 Rather than talk of 'days off', it might be more appropriate to talk in terms of hours over and above which ministers/CRCWs should view themselves as within their own time, time to be used as they want without any sense of guilt. Because ministry does not fit easily into a routine working week, the hours should be treated with flexibility, possibly dealt with in four-weekly blocks and managed by the minister/CRCW who alone will know the complexity of his/her ministry.

9.1 Although the Church may wish to be counter-cultural in some of the things it does, it is wise to take note of societal guidance which is intended to nurture health and well being. For this reason we should be aware of what others would regard as an excessive working week, and here we could be guided by the working time regulations.

9.2 'For the purposes of the Working Time Regulations (WTR) 1998, organisations are required to monitor the hours of their employees to ensure that individuals do not work in excess of an average of 48 hours per week over a 17 week period unless by mutual agreement.'

9.3 Although WTR does make it possible for employees to work an average of more than 48 hours per week by mutual agreement, the principle behind the regulations is that there is something unhealthy in working excessive hours, both in terms of the individual's well-being and the quality of work undertaken.

9.4 By the same token when considering ministers/CRCWs there should be concern both for the individual's well being and a recognition that quantity does not equate to quality, indeed quality can be adversely affected by quantity.

10 A standard full-time ministerial working week could therefore be anything up to 48 hours per week, though secular standard working weeks are probably between 35 and 42 hours with the standard full time working week of employed staff at Church House being 35 hours. The Ministries Committee would suggest a minimum of 40 hours per week. This includes Sunday and does not preclude the practice of a designated day off. The Ministries Committee also recommends that the highest average number of working hours should be 48 hours per week in any four week period (192 hours per month). This would allow for the weeks of extreme business and for those ministers who are currently working much longer hours to cut down gradually.

11.1 If guidance on the working week is accepted by the Church, there is no suggestion that the minister/CRCW should fill out a 'time sheet' to submit to the elders. Equally there is no reason why a minister/CRCW should not inform the elders, or a support group, of the hourly element of the working week. Indeed it ought to be part of the elders' responsibility to minister/CRCW and local pastorate or post to ensure that the minister/CRCW does not regularly overwork to the detriment of individual health. It may be illuminating for congregations to know the breadth of the ministerial task. The most important factor is the relationship between minister/CRCW and pastorate or post. Where the minister/CRCW is felt to be fulfilling their role within the total life of the congregation most church members will not think in terms of the time a minister/CRCW gives.

11.2 It is hoped that this framework will offer a useful benchmark for the reflection involved in the processes of Ministerial Accompanied Self Appraisal and Local

## Resolutions

Mission and Ministry Review. Similarly the guidance should be reflected in the management and support structures put in place for ministers engaged in General Assembly and synod appointments, including Church House staff and Synod Moderators. The principles involved should also inform how ministers in non-stipendiary service are deployed and supported.

12 In setting clear guidelines for 'working time' several factors need to be borne in mind.

12.1 For some ministers their local ministry is their only passion. That has to be accepted, although open to being questioned by the elders or by the appraisal partner in the accompanied self appraisal element of the ministerial review.

12.2 An essential part of the minister's work is reflection, prayer and study. This is not additional to, but an integral part of, the working time. Frenetic activity is counterproductive.

12.3 Ministry also has a creative quality about it and the creative process is notoriously difficult to quantify. It is the end result of time spent in apparent inactivity that is important.

12.4 A clear working time will not prevent the majority of those in ministry being 'on call'. But it may enable them to decide how to respond to any request and to feel able to take time off after a particularly busy or stressful period.

12.5 Setting clear guidelines about the hours which form a reasonable working week should help reduce stress in those ministers who are diligent. It might also help those dealing with ministers who do not seem to pull their weight. But we may also need to address, perhaps more stringently in the assessment process, those who 'need to be needed'. This need can produce levels of over-commitment to others which eventually places considerable strain upon the individual minister as well as others. Such stress can lead to a sense of being put on, which may manifest itself in grievance. Furthermore, over-commitment on the part of some ministers also creates quite unrealistic expectations in congregations of the responsibilities of the average minister.

## Ministries Committee: guidelines on conduct and behaviour

### Resolution 12

General Assembly, recognising the high standard of conduct and behaviour displayed by the vast majority of ministers of Word and Sacrament, Church Related Community Workers, and elders within the United Reformed Church, encourages all in leadership positions within the church to continue to maintain those standards. Realising, however, that there are times in the life of the church when disagreement arises over the boundaries of acceptable conduct and behaviour, General Assembly adopts the Guidelines on Conduct and Behaviour for ministers of Word and Sacrament, Church Related Community Workers and elders.

1 These three documents have been produced in response to concerns regarding the expectations churches have of those appointed to provide leadership, particularly ministers, both of Word and Sacrament and Church Related Community Workers, and Elders. These papers are an attempt to draw attention to the implications of the promise made by ministers 'to live a holy life', outline what duty to colleagues may look like, and define the type of activities that may damage the well-being, purity and peace of the United Reformed Church.

2 Considerable time and thought has been given to the status these papers should have within the church with regard to whether they should be lists of proscribed activities or guidelines marking out the boundaries, for the crossing of which an individual can be held accountable. In the light of various discussions and contributions submitted to the Ministries Committee, the latter understanding has been adopted recognising that it would be impossible to detail adequately every behaviour which would be inappropriate, but knowing that there are clear areas of concern which need to be drawn to the attention of those who provide leadership and seek to hold it to account.

3 Those candidating for the ministries of Word and Sacrament and Church Related Community Work will be expected to be aware of the content of these papers and this will be included in the assessment process of the United Reformed Church. It is to be hoped that the content of these documents will be discussed with those who are being prepared for ordination as elders within the United Reformed Church, and that they will be a valued resource for those already ordained as they reflect on their role as elders.

## Church changes

### Resolution 13

- a) General Assembly welcomes the Bournemouth International Church and the West London Asian Christian Fellowship as Mission Projects of the United Reformed Church.
- b) General Assembly receives notice of the closure of the local churches listed on pages 198-209 and gives thanks to God for their worship, witness and service.

## Nominations Committee: appointment extensions

### Resolution 14

General Assembly agrees that:

- (i) the present term of service of Mr John Ellis as Honorary Treasurer of the United Reformed Church be extended from Assembly 2011 until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2013;
- (ii) the present term of service of Dr David Robinson as Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee be extended from Assembly 2012 to the close of Assembly 2014;
- (iii) the appointment of Mr Andrew Perkins as a Director of the URC Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd be extended to 2012.

## Nominations Committee: Clerk to the General Assembly 2012-18

### Resolution 15

General Assembly appoints Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith as Clerk to General Assembly from the close of Assembly 2012 to the close of Assembly 2018.

## Nominations Committee: power of appointment

### Resolution 16

General Assembly agrees that the power to appoint Assembly staff members, other than officers of Assembly and synod moderators, shall be delegated to appointing groups duly appointed so long as appropriate processes and employment and related criteria have been met. All such appointments shall have effect from the date determined by the appointing group, and shall be reported to the next meeting of Mission Council or General Assembly.

## Nominations Committee: Moderator of the Mersey Synod

**Resolution 17**

General Assembly reappoints the Revd Howard Sharp to serve as Moderator of the Mersey Synod from 1 February 2011 to 30 June 2014.

Nominations Committee:  
Director of Old Testament Studies, Westminster College**Resolution 18**

General Assembly reappoints the Revd Dr Janet Tollington to serve as Director of Old Testament Studies at Westminster College, Cambridge, from 1 August 2011 to 31 July 2016, subject to review.

Nominations Committee: appointment of committees  
and groups**Resolution 19**

General Assembly appoints committees and representatives of the Church as set out on pages 171-187 of the Book of Reports, subject to additions and corrections contained in the Supplementary Report to Assembly.

## Nominations Committee: vote of thanks

**Resolution 20**

General Assembly records its deep appreciation for all the work done by those who serve as committee members and representatives.

## Ministries and Youth and Children's Work: vetting and barring

### Resolution 21

The United Reformed Church has committed itself to being a Safe Church. General Assembly therefore encourages local churches to make themselves fully aware of the implications for them of the introduction of the Vetting and Barring Scheme (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and to follow guidance on safer recruiting when appointing people to work with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults. Furthermore General Assembly recognises the need for those Assembly appointees and others working on behalf of the denomination who will be undertaking 'Regulated Activity' to be ISA registered and, following the principles of safer recruiting, to obtain a Criminal Records Bureau enhanced disclosure.

### Independent Safeguarding Authority – Vetting and Barring Scheme

1. The introduction of the Independent Safeguarding Authority's Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS) for England and Wales affects those working with children, young people or vulnerable adults within the United Reformed Church both locally and in the wider Church. The Ministries and Youth and Children's Work Committees have been working together to understand the implications in two areas.

2.1 First, local churches and synods need advice regarding their duties under the new scheme and mailings have been sent out to all churches. Additionally Church House officers have also set up a new email account ([safeguarding@urc.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@urc.org.uk)) to support local churches through the changeover. This is the central point for ISA information and enquiries and will also offer a facility to help those churches which do not have internet access to check a person's ISA registration

2.2 Separate guidance will be issued to our Scottish churches once the timescale for the introduction of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme is clear.

3.1 The introduction of VBS means that certain General Assembly appointees and others undertaking roles for the denomination, including ministers, will be deemed to be engaging in 'Regulated Activity' and therefore will require ISA registration in order to do so. It will become a criminal act to employ someone new to undertake such work without making the necessary check, and in due course it will also be necessary to check those who are currently undertaking such work.

3.2 Below is a list of the roles that we believe are covered by this necessity, but it should be recognised that roles do change over time and new roles are created. When a role is reviewed, or a new one created those overseeing that process should consider whether a person undertaking that role is going to be undertaking 'Regulated Activity'. If the conditions for 'Regulated Activity' are met the Ministries office should be informed in order that registration can be checked.



3.3 In this area we are taking our guidance from 'Recruiting Safely' produced by the Children's Workforce Development Council, which 'applies to everyone employed in a role (paid or volunteer) within an organisation working with children, who is likely to be seen by the children as a safe and trustworthy adult.' We would also apply the principles of this guidance to work undertaken amongst vulnerable adults. This guidance and the practice of our ecumenical partners indicates that it will also be necessary to seek Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) enhanced disclosures for those whose role is identified as requiring ISA registration.

3.4 General Assembly is asked to support this policy as an indication of the desire to have in place the best protection policies as well as procedures that will satisfy the demands of the law and the expectations of our insurers.

		Legal Requirement		Safer Recruitment Requires a new CRB disclosure on change of post and/or every 5 years
		ISA	ISA	
		VA	C	
Ministers, stipendiary/non-stipendiary and Church Related Community Workers	Serving	x	x	x
Ministers, stipendiary/non-stipendiary and Church Related Community Workers	Non-serving and Retired	x	x	x
Ministers of other denominations employed by the United Reformed Church		x	x	x
Others in Special Category Ministry Posts		x	x	x
Ministers and CRCWs in training		x	x	x
URC Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers		x	x	x
Senior Assembly Appointed Staff and Relevant Church House Support Staff		x	x	x
Synod recognised Lay Pastors / Local Leaders / Interim Moderators / Interim Ministers		x	x	x
United Reformed Church Trustees		x	x	x
Children and Young People's Workers			x	x
TLS Students studying the 'Gateways into Worship' or 'Gateways into Care' courses		x	x	
Safe Church Advisers		x	x	
Pastoral Response Team members		x	x	

**Definition of ‘Regulated Activity’**



**Involves contact with children or vulnerable adults and is:**

<p><b>of a specified nature</b> e.g. teaching, training, care, supervision, advice, guidance, assistance, treatment, or transport <b>or</b></p>	<p><b>“frequently, intensively and/or overnight”</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ once a week</li> <li>➤ 4 or more occasions in a period of 30 days</li> <li>➤ Overnight: between 2 - 6am</li> </ul>
<p><b>in a specified place</b> e.g. schools, children’s homes and hospitals, juvenile detention facilities, adult care homes</p>	

**Also covers Fostering, Childcare and ‘Defined Office Holders’**

Eg Directors of Children’s Services, Trustees of children’s Charities, School Governors.

Assembly Arrangements Committee:  
dates and venue of 2012 Assembly

**Resolution 22**

*This resolution will be tabled at Assembly.*

## Homerton College, Cambridge

**Resolution 23**

Assembly sends greetings and good wishes to the Principal, Fellows and students of Homerton College on the occasion of its reception of a Royal Charter as a college of the University of Cambridge and expresses gratitude to all who have served as Trustees.

1 In 1850 the Congregational Board of Education decided to use the former buildings of the Homerton Academy (which goes back to the 1670s) in order to train teachers. The Academy moved to Cambridge in 1894 and since the 1970s it has been an Approved Society of the University of Cambridge. Its present path was set in 2001 when its teacher training work was merged with that of the University as a whole and it began to admit students to read all subjects for Cambridge degrees. Nominees of the United Reformed Church have been active members of the College's Board of Trustees throughout this period of development and transition, with several occupying key roles.

2 In March 2010 the Royal Seal was affixed to the new Charter and Statutes of Homerton College making it a full college of the University of Cambridge. Responsibility for its governance passed from the Trustees to the Principal and Fellows of the College. It is now the third largest college in the University, after Trinity and St John's.

### Proposed changes to the Rules of Procedure (Section C of the Manual): term of appointment of the Clerk to the Assembly

**Resolution 24**

General Assembly resolves to amend paragraph 5.1 of the Rules of Procedure to read

5.1 The General Assembly may appoint a clerk of Assembly as distinct from the general secretary. In that case the Nominations Committee shall submit a name to the General Assembly for appointment as clerk, for six years in the first instance, renewable for a maximum additional period of four years, but ensuring an overlap with a period of service of the general secretary.

The clerk to the Assembly is an Assembly appointment. The term of service for the clerk has previously been five years with the possibility of re-appointment for a further five years. Mission Council agreed the proposal of the Nominations Committee that the term of service be changed to an even number of years to enable a biennial Assembly to continue to take responsibility for appointing the clerk.

## Proposed changes to the Rules of Procedure: application of the standing orders

### Resolution 25

General Assembly resolves to amend clause 1.3 of the Rules of Procedure to read

- 1.3 All meetings of the Assembly shall be convened and held as provided by these rules. The Standing Orders which are printed in the Book of Reports to General Assembly shall apply to all meetings of the Assembly and the Mission Council and, in so far as they are applicable, to meetings of synods, district councils and their committees

The amendments in resolutions 25 and 26 are proposed from discussions in Mission Council about the roles of Mission Council and Assembly arising from the change to a biennial Assembly. For convenience the current version is shown with the changed words underlined. The resolution then shows the final version. Changes to the Rules of Procedure are effected by a simple majority vote at one Assembly while changes to the Structure are subject to the 'two Assembly' rule and thus need to be referred to the synods and confirmed by a final vote in Assembly 2012.

Resolution 25 is a change to the rules of procedure and concerns standing orders. Mission Council has always had a dual function serving both as an Assembly Committee and as an Assembly executive. When exercising the powers of Assembly it has worked under Assembly Standing Orders, but when sitting as a committee it has had no standing orders. Increasingly this has proved problematical and with the adoption of consensus procedures which allow for a greater variety of methods of debate it has seemed appropriate to bring all Mission Council business under the Assembly Standing Orders.

- 1.3 All meetings of the Assembly shall be convened and held as provided by these rules. The Standing Orders which are printed ~~each year~~ in the Book of Reports to General Assembly shall apply to all meetings of the Assembly and the Mission Council and, in so far as they are applicable, to meetings of synods, district councils and their committees

## Changes to the Structure (section B of the Manual): the 'Two Assemblies' rule

### Resolution 26

General Assembly resolves to amend paragraph 3 of the Structure of the United Reformed Church to read:

3.(1) No exercise of the function of constitutional amendment contained in 2.5.xi shall have effect unless the following procedure has been followed:

- (a) The proposal for the amendment shall be made in accordance with the Standing Orders of the General Assembly.
- (b) Either The General Assembly or, in years when the General Assembly does not meet, the Mission Council shall vote on a motion to approve the proposal which shall require a majority of two-thirds of the members present and voting to pass.
- (c) If such motion to approve the proposal is passed the General Assembly or the Mission Council, as the case may be, shall refer the proposal to synods and may, if it deems appropriate, in exceptional cases also to local churches.
- (d) If the proposal has been agreed by the General Assembly it shall set a final date for responses to be made, which shall normally be at an appropriate time before a meeting of the Mission Council not less than nine months after the meeting of the General Assembly at which the proposal was agreed.
- (e) If the proposal has been agreed by the Mission Council it shall set a final date for responses to be made which shall normally be at an appropriate date before the next ordinary meeting of the General Assembly.
- (f) If by such date notice has been received by the General Secretary from more than one third of synods (or, if it has been so referred, more than one third of local churches) that a motion 'that the proposal be not proceeded with' has been passed by a majority of members present and voting at a duly convened meeting of such body, then the Assembly or the Mission Council, as the case may be, in its concern for the unity of the church shall not proceed to ratify the proposal.
- (g) If by such date such notice has not been received, a motion to agree the proposed amendment shall come before the General Assembly at its next meeting or before the Mission Council at a meeting specified by the General Assembly. Such a motion shall require a majority of two-thirds of the members present and voting to pass. In its concern for mutual understanding within the life of the church, before voting on such a motion the General Assembly or Mission Council shall invite a representative of any synod from which the General Secretary has duly received notification under 3(1)(e) to present the main reasons for its objection.
- (h) If such a motion is passed by such a majority the amendment shall have effect.
- (i) For the purposes of this paragraph 3(1), only synods and local churches in existence on the date set for responses to be made shall be counted in the calculations.

3.(2) In the case of motions which would have the effect of terminating the separate existence of the United Reformed Church, or of a synod within it, by union with other churches, the voting process to be used shall be not less stringent than in 3 (1) and that process shall be determined by a single vote of the General Assembly which shall require a two-thirds majority of those present and voting to pass. In the case of a proposed union affecting only Scotland or Wales no action will be taken by the General Assembly until a decision in favour of union has been taken by the relevant synod.

1 The rule for making changes to the Constitution of the Church was produced when the General Assembly met annually. It requires a vote in two Assemblies. With an Assembly every two years it could result in very long delays before necessary changes could be made. After detailed debate it was agreed to recommend that Mission Council be allowed to act on behalf of the Assembly in one of these votes, but that rather than the current rule which requires a 2/3rds vote in the first Assembly and only a simple majority in the second, Mission Council recommends that the bar be raised and a 2/3rds vote be required both in Mission Council and Assembly.

### Constitutional Amendments

3.(1) No exercise ~~by the General Assembly~~ of the function of constitutional amendment contained in 2.5.xi shall have effect unless the following procedure has been followed:

- (a) The proposal for the amendment shall be made in accordance with the Standing Orders of the General Assembly.
- (b) Either The General Assembly or, in years when the General Assembly does not meet, the Mission Council shall vote on a motion to approve the proposal which shall require a majority of two-thirds of the members present and voting to pass.
- (c) ~~The General Assembly shall~~, if such motion to approve the proposal is passed the General Assembly or the Mission Council, as the case may be, shall refer the proposal to synods and may, if it deems appropriate, in exceptional cases also to local churches.
- ~~(d) The General Assembly shall in making any such reference set a final date for responses to be made, which shall normally be at an appropriate time before the next annual Assembly.~~
- (d) If the proposal has been agreed by the General Assembly it shall set a final date for responses to be made, which shall normally be at an appropriate time before a meeting of the Mission Council not less than nine months after the meeting of the General Assembly at which the proposal was agreed.
- (e) If the proposal has been agreed by the Mission Council it shall set a final date for responses to be made which shall normally be at an appropriate date before the next ordinary meeting of the General Assembly.
- (f) If by such date notice has been received by the General Secretary from more than one third of synods (or, if it has been so referred, more than one third of local churches) that a motion 'that the proposal be not proceeded with' has been passed by a majority of members present and voting at a duly convened meeting of such body, then the Assembly or the Mission Council, as the case may be, in its concern for the unity of the church shall not proceed to ratify the proposal.

- (g) If by such date such notice has not been received, a motion to agree the proposed amendment shall come before the General Assembly at its next meeting or before the Mission Council at a meeting specified by the General Assembly. Such a motion shall require a simple majority of two-thirds of the members present and voting to pass. In its concern for mutual understanding within the life of the church, before voting on such a motion the General Assembly or Mission Council shall invite a representative of any synod from which the General Secretary has duly received notification under 3(1)(e) to present the main reasons for its objection.
- (h) If such a motion is passed by such a majority the amendment shall have effect.
- (i) For the purposes of this paragraph 3(1), only synods and local churches in existence on the date set for responses to be made shall be counted in the calculations.

3.(2) In the case of motions which would have the effect of terminating the separate existence of the United Reformed Church, or of a synod within it, by union with other churches, the voting process to be used shall be not less stringent than in 3 (1) and that process shall be determined by a single vote of the General Assembly which shall require a two-thirds majority of those present and voting to pass. In the case of a proposed union affecting only Scotland or Wales no action will be taken by the General Assembly until a decision in favour of union has been taken by the relevant synod.

## Finance Committee and URC Trust: Trustee's Report and Accounts

### Resolution 27

General Assembly receives the Trustee's Report and adopts the Annual Accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2009.

## Finance Committee: appointment of Auditors

*(N.B. The form of this Resolution is provisional pending further legal advice before Assembly meets.)*

### Resolution 28

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, or the Annual General Meeting of the URC Trust, and that their remuneration be set by the Finance Committee.

## Finance Committee: giving to the Ministry and Mission Fund

### Resolution 29

General Assembly gives gratitude to God for the giving of local churches to the Ministry and Mission Fund and expresses its thanks to synod and church treasurers and to all those who made possible a total fund income of £20.6m in both 2008 and 2009.

## Mission Council: resolution 49 of General Assembly 2008

### Resolution 30

General Assembly resolves to amend the Structure of the United Reformed Church paragraph 2(5)(f) to read

A staff representative and a student representative being members of the URC, from each of such theological colleges as the General Assembly has designated as resource centres for learning, and a staff representative and a student representative being members of the URC, from such other colleges or centres as shall from time to time be designated by the Education and Learning Committee as engaged in significant training for the United Reformed Church.

and to add a new paragraph 2(5)(o) to read

The Chair of the United Reformed Church Trust

1 As a change to the Structure of the United Reformed Church, this resolution is subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Rules of Procedure. It was referred to the synods and no objections were lodged. It now comes to Assembly for a second vote.

## Mission Council: Memorandum and Articles of Association of the United Reformed Church Trust (appendices 4a and 4b)

### Resolution 31

General Assembly approves the adoption of the Memorandum of Association and the Articles of Association of the United Reformed Church Trust.



## Communications and Editorial Committee: 2012 Olympics and Queen's Jubilee

### Resolution 32

General Assembly welcomes the work being done by the Mission and Communications and Editorial Committees in preparation for the Church's involvement in the Queen's Jubilee celebrations and in events surrounding the Olympic Games in 2012. It encourages churches to engage in the celebrations and events that will take place throughout the year as an opportunity for witness and service, doing so wherever this is possible with partners from their community, including members of other churches and faiths.

## East Midlands Synod: properties advice for local churches

### Resolution 33

In the light of the 2008 resolution seeking closer co-operation between the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church, Assembly instructs its officers to explore the possibility of collaboration in the area of property advice to local churches.

*Proposer: Duncan Smith  
Seconder: Revd Paul Bedford*

1.1 One of the local churches in the East Midlands Synod presented a draft resolution to the November 2009 synod seeking the appointment of centrally based property officer(s) at Church House to co-ordinate the work of property officers at synod level and advise churches of legislation, initiatives and responsibilities that they must heed. We greatly value the work of all property officers who work at the synod level.

1.2 In discussing the proposed resolution with the URC Treasurer and the Chair of the Trust, it became clear that such a resolution was unlikely to gain support given the high cost of employing central staff. The local church that proposed the resolution agreed to a different approach. The Methodist Church has centrally based property officers who give the advice and encouragement required. The East Midlands Synod urges the United Reformed Church to develop closer links with the Methodist Church to assist our synod property officers in the area of advice to churches.

## North Western Synod: children in immigration detention centres

### Resolution 34

General Assembly calls on Her Majesty's Government to cease holding children in Immigration Detention Centres.

*Proposer: Revd Marion Tugwood  
Seconder: Revd Geoffrey Clarke*

1 In the UK, about 2,000 children a year are taken from their beds at daybreak by uniformed enforcement officers and transported to a removal centre. Over the past five years, some 889 children have been detained in prison conditions for more than 28 days; of these more than half have eventually been released.

2 The consequences for the children's physical and emotional well-being are documented in a recent joint statement by the Royal College of Paediatrics, GP's and Psychiatry and the Faculty of Public Health. Previously healthy children are severely traumatised, 73% showing clinically significant emotional and behavioural problems. Their schooling is severely disrupted. Serious concerns about the well-being of detained children have also been expressed by the European Commission for Human Rights, the Children's Commissioner for England, and the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Prisons has recently reported that 'the plight of detained children remains of great concern.' The UK is the only country in Europe that allows indefinite detention of children despite the fact that there is no evidence that locking up children is helpful in immigration control.

3 The resolution above calls for an end to this inhumane practice.