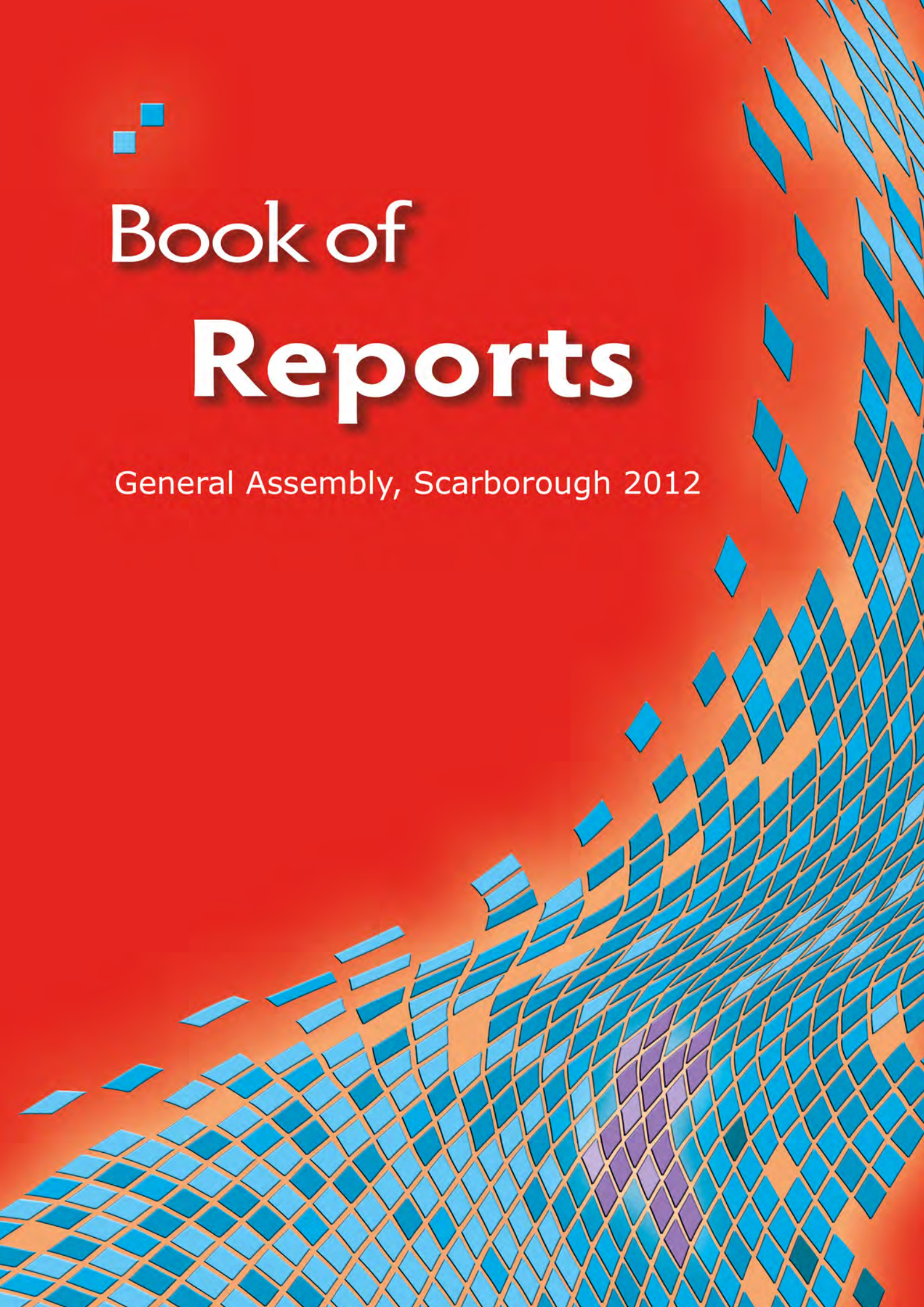




Book of **Reports**

General Assembly, Scarborough 2012



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vision2020



United Reformed Church General Assembly, Scarborough 2012

Dear friends,

The reports before you tell the story of our life as a Church for the last two years. What a time it has been! It seems as though every year there are more questions to confront and more issues to wrestle with. Sometimes people ask, “What are we here for? What kind of Church is God calling us to be?” I believe that we answered the question of our purpose and vocation at the last Assembly when we adopted the *vision2020* mission framework which is printed overleaf.

Mission is our purpose – God’s mission. All the rest follows.

The question I find myself wrestling with is, what does vibrant and effective conciliar life look like in a Church like ours? We have big decisions to make about the use of our resources. Before you dismiss this as “planning for decline”, consider that it may be the prodding of the Spirit. We do need to leave some old ways behind and embrace some new practices. We need to celebrate programmes and projects that have served their time and then let them go to release resources for the new things that excite us. As the synod moderators remind us (see page 166), when we get this right, the church thrives – and by God’s grace it grows.

Reading these reports makes me proud to belong to the United Reformed Church. This is a Church worth praying and working for. It is also a Church worth telling other people about. The Zero Intolerance campaign was created as a primary vehicle for this proclamation, but it did not capture the imagination of the churches as we on the steering group had hoped. How do we tell people about the community of imagination, theological integrity, openness and hope that we are? What’s next? I look forward to discovering this with you.

Yours in Christ,

Robusta Rominger





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.

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.

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.

Statement 4: Community partnerships

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

Statement 5: Hospitality and diversity

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

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.

Statement 7: Church growth

We will be a growing Church with an increasing membership.

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.

Statement 9: Justice and peace

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

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.



Mission Council

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.

1.1 Mission Council supports and furthers the work of the United Reformed Church between meetings of the 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, the chair of the United Reformed Church Trust and three FURY members, including the FURY moderator. Its task is to take a comprehensive view of the work of the United Reformed Church, to decide on priorities, and to encourage the 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.

1.2 Meetings

Since the last General Assembly, Mission Council has met on four occasions. The first of these, in October 2010, included joint sessions with the Methodist Council. Acknowledging the common challenges of our time, the two councils explored possibilities for children's and youth work, committing their staff teams to work together to devise plans for joint working. They also received the report of a Buildings Think Tank and called for the formation of a follow-on group to do strategic thinking in relation to church buildings.

1.3 The different roles of Mission Council

1.3.1 Mission Council acts *on behalf of General Assembly* on matters which require action between meetings of the Assembly. Some of this work arises from decisions of the Assembly which are referred to Mission Council for implementation. Section 2 records this activity. Sometimes there are matters requiring a decision which must be taken before the General Assembly is due to meet. Such decisions are reported to the following Assembly and are contained in section 3 of this report.

1.3.2 Mission Council also *acts on its own behalf*, taking advice from its advisory groups (e.g. Staffing Advisory Group, Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline Advisory Group) which report to its meetings, and which may bring resolutions. It may also instigate work, appointing a special task group or asking several Assembly committees to cooperate in undertaking a piece of work on its behalf. It is often asked to be a sounding board for committees as they shape new policies for the approval of General Assembly. These actions and discussions are reported in section 4.

2 Actions taken on previous Assembly resolutions

2.1 Nestlé

In accordance with the instructions of General Assembly 2010, Mission Council rescinded the boycott on Nestlé products adopted by General Assembly in 1992 but instructed Mission Committee to continue to monitor Nestlé's response to the issues raised in the Price Waterhouse Cooper Assessment Report and its compliance with the FTSE4Good's breast milk substitutes criteria in higher risk countries and to report any changes.

2.2 Safeguarding

Mission Council received a statement about progress towards two safeguarding policies, one for children and the other for vulnerable adults. Drafts will be sent to synods asking for replies by the end of July 2012 so that the policies can be brought to Mission Council in October for approval on Assembly's behalf.

2.3 Departmental structures and Mission Council effectiveness

General Assembly 2007 created a Mission Department at Church House, bringing together the work of Church and Society, Ecumenical Relations, World Church Relations, Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministries and Mission. The 2007 resolution mandated a review in 2010. A low-key review took place in 2010 but was only reported to Assembly in passing because there was an expectation that a review of the Mission Department would take place in greater depth within a review of the full range of work carried out at Church House. Mission Council agreed that this major review should remain in abeyance pending the outcome of various other reviews currently underway. Similarly, there had been plans for a review of the effectiveness of Mission Council in 2011 in light of new practices instigated in response to the new pattern of biennial Assemblies. It was agreed that this too should be postponed so that account could be taken of the insights of reviews currently in process. Responsibility was given to the Mission Council Advisory Group to determine when the time was right for these two pieces of work.

3 Actions taken on behalf of General Assembly

3.1 Appointments

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council appointed the full list of committee members and representatives as presented by the Nominations Committee in the year in which Assembly did not meet. Other appointments were as follows:

3.1.1 the Revd Clare Downing as Moderator of Wessex Synod from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2017.

3.1.2 the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith as Moderator of Southern Synod from 1 March 2011 to 28 February 2018.

3.1.3 the Revd Peter Meek as Moderator of East Midlands Synod from 1 September 2011 to 31 August 2018.

3.1.4 the Revd Simon Walkling as Moderator of the Synod of Wales from 1 September 2012 to 31 August 2019.

3.1.5 Mr John Ellis and Mr Andrew McKenzie to serve on the COIF Advisory Board for the Ethical Fund.

3.1.6 Jane Rowell, David Coleman, Zaidie Orr and Phillip Timson as representatives to the 2012 Council for World Mission Global Assembly.

3.1.7 the Revd John Humphreys as convener of the Communications and Editorial Committee from November 2011 until 20 June 2015.

3.2 Reappointments

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council reappointed:

3.2.1 the Revd Graham Jones as the Methodist/URC National Rural Officer for a period of five years from 1st September 2011.

3.2.2 the Revd Neil Thorogood as Director of Pastoral Studies at Westminster College, Cambridge, from July 2012 until 2019.

3.2.3 the Revd Martin Hazell as Director of Communications from 1 January 2012 to 15 August 2017.

3.3 Resolutions on behalf of General Assembly

3.3.1 The Trustee report and Accounts for the year ending 31 December 2010 were received. The budgets for 2011 and 2012 were agreed. Mission Council noted the deficit included in the 2012 budget and asked for each Assembly committee's support in enabling significant reductions in the 2013 budget. The Mission Council Advisory Group was given the task of developing an appropriate process for determining the shape of the 2013 budget in the light of the necessary reductions.

3.3.2 Mission Council approved the continuation of the Commission of Covenanted Churches in Wales for a period of five years from 2011 to 2016 to pursue the agenda set out in the report entitled *The Commission of Covenanted Churches in Wales* (June 2010). It further requested a review of the situation in 2016.

3.3.3 Mission Council approved changes to the Ministerial Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure. It is within the powers of Mission Council to amend Part II of each of these processes. (Appendices 2a-2c.)

3.3.4 Amendments to The Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration were approved (see Appendix 1).

3.3.5 Mission Council adopted a process for medical and psychological screening of candidates for the ministry to take effect immediately. (Appendix 3)

3.3.6 Mission Council resolved to increase the number of FURY representatives at General Assembly and Mission Council from two to three.

3.3.7 Lay pension scheme

Mission Council reaffirmed the commitment of the United Reformed Church to the lay staff pension scheme and undertook to make arrangements to meet any deficits in the funding arrangements which might arise from time to time.

3.3.8 Mission Council agreed new terms of reference for the Equal Opportunities Committee and increased its membership from eight to ten.

3.3.9 Mission Council received the resignation of Mr Lawrence Moore as Moderator Elect of General Assembly for 2012 – 2014.

3.3.10 Mission Council resolved to create an Assembly Standing Committee to be called the Faith and Order Committee, with as its current membership those individuals serving on the Mission Council Faith and Order Reference Group. The terms of reference for the new committee were agreed and the Reference Group was discharged.

Mission Council

4 Other actions

4.1 Good governance

4.1.1 Mission Council agreed a communications protocol: “We ask those present to agree to abide by a protocol that we will not circulate information from, or opinions about, Mission Council on social networking sites, or by any other means which has potential for widespread dissemination, until after reports have been communicated by the Communications team.”

4.1.2 Mission Council agreed to reflect carefully on the number of denominational initiatives it was authorising and the way these were rolled out to synods and local churches. It also reconfirmed its commitment that decisions at Assembly level should be made with openness and clarity in consultation with synods and local churches as well as with attention to agreed budgets.

4.1.3 Mission Council welcomed the proposal from the national Synods of Scotland and Wales that documents should be proofread to ensure that the implications for synods in all three nations were taken into account, as far as this was reasonable.

4.1.4 Affirming the importance of mutual accountability, Mission Council asked every synod to submit a report on its progress with *vision2020*.

4.1.5 Mission Council resolved that as in 2010, a hard copy of the Book of Reports should be sent to all Assembly members with the contents posted on the URC website, a CD rom be sent to all churches, and a user-friendly booklet outlining the major themes coming for Assembly decision be prepared and sent to every church as a discussion tool for Church Meetings and synods.

4.1.6 Mission Council instructed the general secretariat to consider issues relating to the employment of children and youth development officers (CYDOs) and to bring a report to a future meeting of Mission Council.

4.2 Reviews

4.2.1 A review was commissioned of the role of the synod moderator. (Appendix 4 and Resolution 14)

4.2.2 Upon receiving news of the departure of the Head of Human Resources, Mission Council asked the Staffing Advisory Group to conduct a review of Church House management structures and report to the October 2012 meeting of Mission Council.

4.2.3 Mission Council participated in the review of ecumenical relations which was commissioned by the Mission Committee.

4.3 Ecumenical work

4.3.1 Terms of Reference were agreed for a Methodist/URC Joint Buildings Group. Mission Council approved the principle of funding half the costs of an Executive Officer (three years fixed-term) to support the Group.

4.3.2 It was agreed that the meetings of the Mission Council and the Methodist Council should be scheduled in October 2012 to offer the opportunity for further joint working. A working party was appointed to plan the joint sessions.

4.3.3 Mission Council noted with approval the first draft of model governing documents for a United Area Association (Methodist/United Reformed Church) and instructed the National Ecumenical Officers to do further work, consulting ecumenically as appropriate, in order to present a final version for approval by the Methodist/URC Liaison Committee.

4.3.4 It was agreed that the URC should continue to send a representative to meetings of the Methodist Council. This role is fulfilled by the Assembly moderators/moderators elect, one of whom attends each meeting. They hold this responsibility for two years, commencing one year before induction and concluding after one year as moderator.

4.3.5 Mission Council received and approved the recommendation of the Church of England and the United Reformed Church Study Group to hold a joint event in 2012, marking both the 350th anniversary of the Great Ejection of 1662 and the 40th anniversary of the inauguration of the United Reformed Church, which would involve a public declaration of their penitence for the divisions of the past and their mutual recognition of each other in the present as churches belonging to the one Church of Jesus Christ. Building on this service, further work will be undertaken on the range of topics for continuing study identified in the report of the Joint Study Group, namely, the reconciliation of memories, the structures of Church government, the forms of lay and ordained ministry, relations between Church and state, the relationship between baptism and church membership, the development of doctrine and practice in the Church and how this is related to the constancy and originality of God, the nature of discernment in our two churches and the exploration of the spiritualities of the Anglican and Reformed traditions.

4.3.6 Mission Council agreed that from 2012 the Assembly budget should include provision for a 50% ecumenical officer post to be held by a minister of Word and sacraments in each of the two national synods, with a corresponding reduction in the number of stipendiary ministers available for local deployment in the Church as a whole.

4.4 Finance

4.4.1 A subsidy of £90,000 p.a. was approved for *REFORM* magazine for the budget years 2012 to 2014.

4.4.2 Mission Council would seek, in setting future budgets, to phase out not later than 2016 the current request for special pensions support from the synods and requested the Finance Committee, in the light of the 2012 Valuation of the Ministers' Pension Fund, to discuss with the synods the ways in which they contributed in the interim.

4.4.3 Mission Council recommended that General Assembly agree a financial Safety Net for synods in the form outlined in Resolution 21.

4.4.4 All synods have been requested to prepare three year budget plans in a common format as a matter of routine and to copy them to the Finance Committee, with the first plan being provided not later than the end of 2013.

4.5 Ministers' Pension Fund

Mission Council supported the recommendations set out in the document, *The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund, Proposals for Change*. Although the church's policy on retirement processes would not change and ministers would remain able to retire at various ages, the calculation of pension entitlements would gradually move from being based on age 65 to being based on age 68. Mission Council asked the Pensions Executive and Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee to arrange a consultation with the members of the Fund, and a discussion within the councils of the church, in order that the General Assembly could make a decision on the matter in 2012. (Appendix 5, Resolution 22)

4.6 Advisory groups

4.6.1 Listed Buildings Advisory Group

4.6.1.1 Mission Council noted the retirement on 23 November 2010 of Hartley Oldham from the position of convener of the Listed Buildings Advisory Group after sixteen years outstanding service. It confirmed changes to the United Reformed Church procedure for the control of works to buildings. The procedure may be found on the URC website. It also approved terms of reference for the Listed Buildings Advisory Group.

4.6.1.2 Mission Council adopted a checklist on the care and disposal of artefacts, commending it to synods and churches. (Appendix 6)

Mission Council

4.6.2 Ethical Investment Advisory Group

Mission Council discharged its Ethical Investment Advisory Group, agreeing to look to the Church Investors Group to bring an informed and united Christian voice to bear on issues of ethical investment and company behaviour. If an issue relating to ethical investment should arise which, for reasons of urgency, potential wider implications or otherwise, falls outside the remit of URC Investment Committee, the Deputy General Secretary would take responsibility for establishing an appropriate process for addressing the issue.

4.7 Zero Intolerance

In May 2011 Mission Council had a major discussion about the Zero Intolerance ad campaign. Noting both the enthusiasm and the anxiety which the campaign provoked, it was agreed to form an independent review group to consult with synods and local churches and address concerns. The Group was given the authority of Mission Council to require changes to the content and implementation of the campaign. The review report with its list of mandatory changes was circulated to the members of Mission Council and formally received in November 2011. However, by March 2012 there was a consensus that the campaign had not gained sufficient support from the churches to proceed and the decision was taken that it should be terminated.

4.8 Human sexuality

4.8.1 Mission Council agreed amended terms of reference for the Human Sexuality Task Group, asking the Group to report to each meeting of Mission Council and General Assembly. (Appendix 7)

4.8.2 Mission Council accepted in principle the argument that, given the different convictions held within the URC on the blessing of civil partnerships, this was a matter for local church decision, and therefore General Assembly 2012 should be advised to pass an enabling resolution allowing each local church to reach its own decision on whether or not to seek approval for civil partnerships to be registered within its buildings. It resolved that General Assembly should be the body which should make the enabling decision. (Appendix 8, Resolution 13)

4.8.3 Mission Council asked the Human Sexuality Task Group to prepare materials to help guide synods with preparatory discussions in the period autumn 2011 to spring 2012. Circulated early in 2012, these highlight the Commitment on human sexuality from General Assembly 2007.

4.8.4 Mission Council asked the Law and Polity Group to respond to the Government's consultation paper (May-June 2011) on the registration of civil partnerships on religious premises on behalf of the URC.

4.9 Church and Society

4.9.1 Asylum seekers

Mission Council resolved:

- 4.9.1.1 to ask the Joint Public Issues Team to speak out at the highest level against the injustice of cuts to agencies providing support and legal advice services to people seeking sanctuary in the UK;
- 4.9.1.2 to ask the Communications department to launch an on-line petition campaign to support this initiative;
- 4.9.1.3 to encourage local churches to continue to extend hospitality and welcome people seeking sanctuary in the UK as a deliberate and strategic focus of their pastoral care in areas local to them and in the UK, in a time of economic austerity;
- 4.9.1.4 to encourage synods to identify strategic partnerships with other agencies to expand the model of multi-agency drop-in centres for asylum seekers and refugees and to encourage the URC to explore funding streams to support these centres.

4.9.2 Poverty and inequality

In its joint meeting with the Methodist Council, Mission Council considered a report on poverty. A joint resolution called upon both Churches to promote the just distribution of income by confirming their commitment to the Living Wage and by calling for benefit and wage policies that would provide the opportunity for all to live and work in dignity. They urged the Joint Public Issues Team to assist the churches in challenging the causes of poverty and inequality, including the stigmatising of those in poverty as “lazy” or “scroungers”. They affirmed the Churches’ role in standing alongside the poorest and most vulnerable, beginning by listening to the stories of those who struggle on low incomes, and demanding that the burdens of the current economic situation do not place a further burden upon them.

4.9.3 UK Border Agency and the Council for World Mission

Mission Council passed a resolution in support of the Revd Dr Collin Cowan who had repeatedly been denied a visa to permit him to enter the UK to take up his role as the new general secretary of the Council for World Mission.

4.10 Ministry

4.10.1 Education for Ministry Phase 2

Mission Council resolved that all entrants to public ministry as ordained ministers of Word and sacraments or commissioned church related community workers in the United Reformed Church should be required to engage actively in the Education for Ministry Phase 2 programme for three years after ordination or commissioning. At the end of this period the synod would decide whether to issue a Certificate of Completion or to extend the period of EM2 training. This requirement would be stated at the time of entry to Education for Ministry Phase 1. Mission Council further resolved that there would be occasions on which it was right for General Assembly to make certain training mandatory for particular groups of ministers of Word and sacraments and Church related community workers. It would be for Mission Council to agree the nature, duration, and monitoring of such training.

4.10.2 Employees or office holders?

In March 2012 Mission Council received a statement about the legal status of ministers. Currently there was no clarity as to whether ministers were employees or office holders, and the question would only be finally decided by a court of law. In the meantime the United Reformed Church continued to assert that its ministers were office holders.

4.11 Equal Opportunities

Mission Council received a paper from the Equal Opportunities Committee on the training of interim moderators and commended it to the Ministries Committee for inclusion in their document on *The Movement of Ministers*.

4.12 Relationship with the Presbyterian Church of Ghana

Mission Council received a disturbing report from the secretary for world church relations in November 2011. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana Assembly, meeting the previous summer, had voted to sever ties with any of its partners that ordained homosexual people to the ministry. Mission Council affirmed the actions that had been taken in which the United Reformed Church’s 2007 Commitment had been quoted and a plea made for continuing partnership. The World Communion of Reformed Churches was monitoring developments as this affected other churches besides the United Reformed Church.

4.13 Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline Advisory Group (MIND)

4.13.1 In 2010, General Assembly passed resolution 9, which proposed amendments to the Structure of the United Reformed Church. This resolution will be presented for ratification by the 2012 Assembly. If ratified, its effect will be to remove the Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure from the list of constitutional items which require the lengthy process of amendment spelled out in paragraph 3 of the Structure. If 9 is ratified, it means that Mission Council will have the authority to act on Assembly’s behalf in making whatever future amendments may be required to the Disciplinary

Mission Council

Process and the Incapacity Procedure. The intention is that in future, all amendments to both the Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure will be made by Mission Council, subject always to the overriding power of Assembly to review any such changes should it wish to do so.

4.13.2 The Advisory Group has prepared a series of changes to both the Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure. Currently each contains a Part I and a Part II and the effect of the changes is to conflate the two parts into a single process, taking the opportunity to make some minor amendments at the same time. It is not necessary to burden Assembly with the detailed minutiae of all these changes, although the proposed revisions of the Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure will be available for inspection, together with short papers explaining how the particular paragraphs of Parts I are being incorporated within Parts II. The proposed changes will be brought to the autumn 2012 meeting of Mission Council for approval.

4.13.3 Mission Council is proposing a further resolution 15 which sets out a series of amendments to the Structure of the United Reformed Church in order to ensure that the Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure as amended will operate fully in accordance with the Church's Structure. As constitutional amendments these changes will require ratification by the procedure spelled out in paragraph 3 of the Structure.

4.13.4 Resolutions 5, 6, 7 and 8 of General Assembly 2010 also come to Assembly 2012 for ratification. These relate to proposed changes to Part I of the Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure. The changes referred to in these resolutions will be incorporated in the amendments to be considered by Mission Council in the autumn, as explained in paragraph 4.13.2 above.

4.13.5 Julian Macro now completes his term of service as the convener of the advisory group and the advisory group wishes to place on record its heartfelt thanks for his wise counsel, his skill in keeping a firm grip on all the different aspects of this complicated subject, and the support he has given to those involved in the training aspects of the work. Thanks are also due to Margaret Carrick Smith who served as secretary to the group until her appointment as clerk elect of the General Assembly. In saying goodbye to Julian and Margaret, the group takes the opportunity to express its good wishes and support to its new convener and secretary, the Revds Peter Poulter and Hugh Graham.

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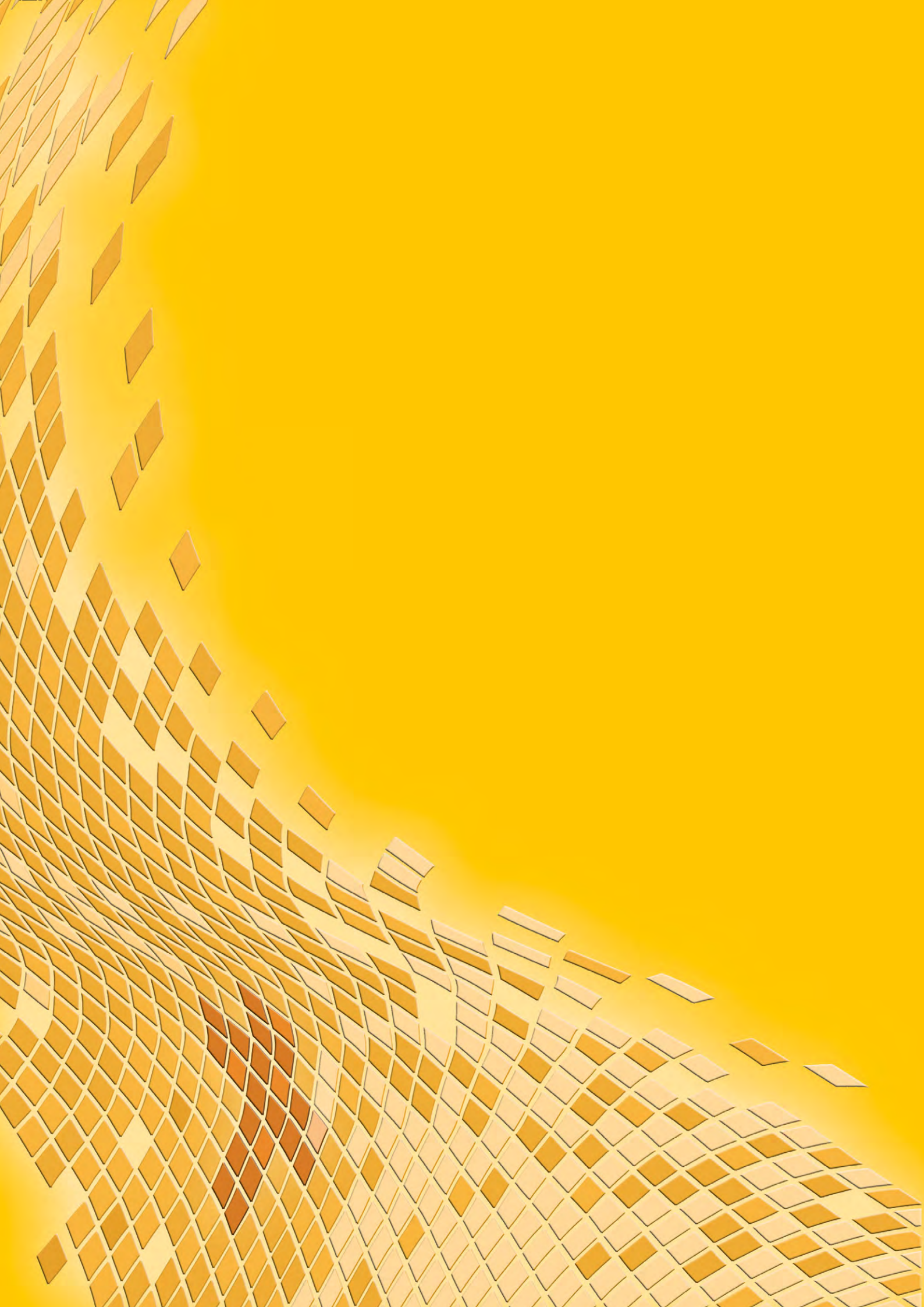
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Appendix 1

Plan for Partnership amendments

1 Introduction

1.1 General Assembly 2010 approved 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, is recommended to 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.

1.2 The Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee meeting 18 June 2009 agreed that, as the Overseas Recruitment Programme ended some years ago, the second paragraph of Appendix C – Removal Costs be deleted.

1.3 Mission Council is asked to consider two further clarifying amendments as follows: revise the wording of existing para.7.2 and set out the holiday provision for part-time ministers;
Appendix B – Housing Allowance Guidelines Note to include the reference for ministers serving in Scotland that both Council Tax and Water Rates should be paid directly by the local church.

2 Amendments

The amendments approved by Mission Council on behalf of General Assembly are set out below. Insertions are shown (*italics*) and deletions are shown [**bold**].

2.1 Ministerial working week – a new paragraph 7:

(7. MINISTERIAL WORKING WEEK

The 2010 General Assembly resolved that there should be more clarity in defining working hours and recommended that the ministerial working week, translated into hours in a four week period, should be not less than 160 hours and not more than 192 hours.)

Re-number paragraphs 7 – 10 to read 8 – 11

2.2 Appendix C – Removal costs

The receiving local church is responsible for paying the costs of removal (see para 6.3.3). Where the removal is within the United Kingdom reimbursement of up to 50% of the cost incurred (subject to a maximum reimbursement of £1,500) is available from the Ministry and Mission Fund and application should be made via the MoM Office. Where a minister/CRCW is called from abroad reimbursement from that Fund to the local church will be based on the removal costs from the port of entry.

[For ministers/CRCWs called to the URC under the Overseas Recruitment programme in conjunction with the Ministries Committee, 75% of the cost of removal of themselves, their families, and their baggage from abroad to the pastorate in the UK, up to a maximum of £2,000, will be reimbursed from the Ministry and Mission Fund. A similar reimbursement will be made for their return on termination provided that the period of service has continued for more than three years.]

Appendix 1 – Plan for Partnership

2.3 Paragraph 8 of the Plan for Partnership

8. HOLIDAY ENTITLEMENT

8.1 Ministers/CRCWs are entitled to 5 weeks holiday in each calendar year and one further Sunday away from the pastorate. When a minister/CRCW only serves for part of a year the holiday provision should be pro rata. One week of holiday may be carried forward to the following year. Holiday entitlement is not affected by sick leave, parental leave, Jury Service, in-service training courses or sabbatical leave. Such periods of leave/absence may result in more than one week's holiday being carried forward into the following year.

8.2 If a minister/CRCW resigns(/retires) from a pastorate or post [**immediately following any such period of leave/absence,**] stipend should be paid for any outstanding holiday entitlement untaken at the date of resignation(/retirement), which may include outstanding holiday entitlement from the previous year, always provided that synod concurs with the arrangements. *(For part-time ministers untaken holiday will be calculated based on the proportion of stipend paid).*

2.4 Changes to appendix b – GUIDELINES FOR HOUSING ALLOWANCES

Paragraph 2. Allowance specifically 'in lieu of manse accommodation'

When calculating housing allowances the following should be taken into consideration:

- i. rates (where payable), Council Tax
- ii. water/sewage charges
- iii. interior and exterior re-decorations (estimated yearly average)
- iv. repairs (estimated yearly average)
- v. property insurance.

Note: The reference above to Council Tax (and Water Rates) does not apply in Scotland where *(they are)* [**Council Tax is**] the responsibility of the local church even if the minister/CRCW owns the property.

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Appendix 2a

Changes to Part II of the Ministerial Disciplinary Process

Approved by Mission Council on behalf of General Assembly in October 2010

[Note: Most of the changes shown here arise out of the proposed introduction of a Caution Stage, which are contained in a new Section AA, but some other important changes are being brought forward as well.]

A.3 After the word “Paragraphs” add “**AA.8.1**,”.

A.5 In the opening sentence of this paragraph insert the words “**including Section AA**” after “Sections A to J”

Insert the following additional definitions, placing them in the correct alphabetical sequence and making the necessary consequential amendments to the sub-numbering of the other definitions in this Paragraph:

“**Capability Procedure**” shall mean the Procedure adopted by the General Assembly of the Church in July 2008 (or any subsequent modification thereof) for maintaining and improving the performance of ministers and known as the Capability Procedure.

“**Caution**” shall mean a sanction in the form of a written Caution imposed on a Minister in accordance with the procedures set out in the Caution Stage under Section AA (not to be confused with the Written Warning defined later in this Paragraph A.5).

“**Caution Stage**” shall mean the first stage in all disciplinary cases not involving Gross Misconduct, the rules applicable thereto being set out in Section AA.

“**Final Caution**” shall mean a Final Caution imposed under Paragraph AA.7.

“**Gross Misconduct**” shall mean misconduct which is considered by the Synod Moderator to be so serious as to justify bypassing the Caution Stage and calling in the Mandated Group under Section B immediately to conduct its Initial Enquiry.

“**Guidelines of Conduct and Behaviour**” shall mean the Guidelines of Conduct and Behaviour for ministers of Word and sacraments and the Guidelines of Conduct and Behaviour for CRCWs adopted by the General Assembly of the Church in July 2010 (or any subsequent modification thereof).

“**Independent Safeguarding Authority**” shall mean the Independent Safeguarding Authority established by Section 1 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.

“**Initial Caution**” shall mean an Initial Caution imposed under Paragraph AA.6.

“**Synod Appointees**” shall mean the persons appointed to examine a disciplinary case within the Caution Stage and, if considered appropriate, to impose Cautions upon the Minister.

“Written Warning” shall mean a written warning issued to a Minister by the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission and appended to and forming part of its decision under Sections E or G as the case may be (not to be confused with a Caution imposed on a Minister under the Caution Stage).

A.5.33 Replace the words “from which persons shall be appointed to be members of the Mandated Group” with **“which shall serve the purposes set out in that Paragraph”**.

A.12 Add a new Paragraph A.12 as follows:

In the event of the Minister having already been the subject of the Capability Procedure, the record of any decisions (including decisions on appeal) taken under that procedure, together with such papers, records, and statements and other data as formed the body of information relevant in that procedure (save only such as may be protected on the grounds of confidentiality) shall be made available to all those persons responsible at various stages and in various capacities for the conduct of the Section O Process.

A.13 Add a new Paragraph A.13 as follows:

Whilst the Guidelines for Conduct and Behaviour are not intended to be rigorously applied in the same manner as precise rules they nevertheless have an important part to play in the process of considering whether, in any given case, the Minister might be in breach of his/her ordination promises under Part I, Paragraph 4.1 and consequently it would be appropriate for reference to be made to these Guidelines as appropriate within the Section O Process.

A.14 Add a new Paragraph A.14 as follows:

In any case where it is necessary or appropriate to make a referral to the Independent Safeguarding Authority in accordance with the Referral Guidance from time to time issued by that Authority, whether as a mandatory or a voluntary referral as described in the said Guidance, any such referral made pursuant to such Guidance shall be deemed to be made in furtherance of a public responsibility and not as part of any decision made in accordance with these Rules of Procedure.

B.2.1 To become B.2.1.1 and open the Paragraph with the words **“Subject to Paragraph B.2.1.2, every Synod....”**.

After the words “from that Synod” add the following words: **“(see also Paragraph B.2.1.2)”**

Add the following sentences at the end of this Paragraph:

The purposes of the Synod Panel are to enable the following appointments to be made from that Panel when a disciplinary case arises, that is to say (i) the appointment of two persons in accordance with Paragraph B.3 to act as members of the Mandated Group in that case and (ii) the appointment of two persons in accordance with Paragraph AA.1.5 to act as the Synod Appointees during the Caution Stage if initiated. The same persons shall not act as Synod Appointees and members of a Mandated Group in the same case.

B.2.1.2 Add a new paragraph as follows:

“A Synod may appoint to its Synod Panel persons from any other Synod so long as the number of such persons does not exceed 25% of the total membership of the Synod Panel.”

B.3.1 After the words “Synod Panel for that Synod” insert the following **“(or in an emergency one person from the Synod Panel of that Synod and one person from the Synod Panel of another Synod)”**.

B.6.3 Add the following words at the beginning of this Paragraph:

“If the Synod Moderator has proceeded directly to the calling in of the Mandated Group without first initiating the Caution Stage,”

B.6.4 Add the following words at the end of the first sentence:

“, together with all reports, papers and other documents relevant to the case, including, if relevant, a copy of the Synod Appointees’ report to the Synod Moderator at the conclusion of the Caution Stage and all supporting papers, copies of any Cautions issued and of the record of any appeals decisions made in respect of such Cautions.”

In the final sentence replace the words “that statement” with **“the written statement mentioned above”**.

B.8.2 The existing Paragraph B.8.2 to become B.8.2.1.

B.8.3 The existing Paragraph B.8.3 to become B.8.2.2.

B.8.4 The existing Paragraph B.8.4 to become B.8.3.

E.5.1.3 After the words “written statement(s)” insert **“signed by both parties”**.

E.8.6 Add a new Paragraph E.8.6 as follows:

“The terms of any Caution imposed on the Minister at the Caution Stage and the Minister’s reaction thereto, particularly in terms of his/her performance and the level of his/her response to the Caution during the period whilst the Caution was in place.”

F.2.3 At the end of the paragraph, delete the full-stop and add the following: **“as a consequence of which it cannot form the subject matter of any appeal.”**

F.3.2 At the end of the paragraph, add the following:

“...and shall specify the Council(s) of the Church whom it charges with the responsibility of monitoring the minister’s future conduct in the light of such warning, provided; (i) that the monitoring process may be dealt with by the pastoral committee of that Council or in any other manner considered appropriate by that Council and; (ii) that, should the minister subsequently move from the oversight of one Council to another, the first Council shall advise the second Council of the existence of the warning and supply such information as is necessary for the second Council to take over the monitoring process.”

F.4 Remove the words: **“,except as to its responsibilities under Paragraph J.3,”**.

G.16.1 Remove the words: **“,except as to its responsibilities under Paragraph J.3,”**.

J.1 After the words “Paragraph E.5.3” insert **“or decisions of the Synod Appointees or the appeals body as to the impositions of Cautions during the Caution Stage”**.

Appendix 2b

Changes to Part II of the Incapacity Procedure

Agreed by Mission Council on behalf of General Assembly in October 2010

[Note: The changes fall into the five categories shown below and the paragraphs containing the proposed changes are allocated to the relevant category:

- A. The introduction of a Commission Officer.**
A.1.1 (definition of “Commission Officer” and “Enquiry Stage”), B.3.3, C.4.1/2/3, D.3.4, the whole of the new Sections F and G, J.1, J.2.1, J.2.3, J.3, L.8, L.9.8.
- B. The need to remove the power to make recommendations.**
A.1.1 (definition of “Outside Organisation”), A.3, J.10, K.5.2, K.5.3, K.6, K.7, L.11.2, L.11.3, L.12.1, L.12.2.
- C. The requirement that the case has passed through PRWC and that PRWC can do no more.**
A.1.1 (definition of “Certificate of Entry”), B.1.1, B.2.2, B.2.3, B.3.1, B.3.2, D.3.2, D.3.3, D.3.4 and F.8.
- D. The removal of adversarial-type language.**
J.2.3, J.3, J.4.1/2, J.5, J.6, J.8, L.9.6, M.4
- E. Miscellaneous.**
B.6, E.8, J.2.2.]
- A.1.1 “Certificate of entry”** Add the following definition:-
“Certificate of entry” means the Certificate duly completed and signed by the Convener of the PRWC in the format set out in the Appendix to this Part II.
- “Commission Officer”** Add the following definition:-
“Commission Officer” means the person appointed to act under the instructions of the Review Commission in carrying out an investigation and assembling the relevant information and documentation for the assistance of the Review Commission and whose role and functions are set out in Section G.
- “Enquiry”** – Change the definition to **“Enquiry Stage”** and continue **“means the pre hearing stage during which the Review Commission conducts its enquiry in accordance with Section F assisted by the Commission Officer.”**
- “Outside Organisation”** – Replace the words “recommendation(s) or guidance being issued under the relevant paragraph of these Rules of Procedure” with **“guidance being issued under the relevant paragraph of the Incapacity Procedure”.**
- A.3** Delete the words “recommendations or”.
- B.1.1** After the words “Paragraph 1 of Part I” replace the remainder of the Paragraph with the following:

“...s/he shall enquire from the Convener of the PRWC (i) whether the PRWC has been involved with the Minister and, if so, (ii) whether it has now reached the point where it believes it can do no more for him/her. If, and only if, the answer to both questions is in the affirmative, s/he shall, wherever possible, consult the other of them (i.e. the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary as the case may be) and s/he shall also consult the Convener of the PRWC and those persons (“the Consultation Group”) shall decide whether the Incapacity Procedure should be initiated. For the avoidance of doubt, unless and until the questions posed at (i) and (ii) above can both be answered in the affirmative, the Incapacity Procedure cannot be initiated.”

B.2 Replace the existing wording with:

“As part of the consultation referred to in Paragraph B.1.1, the Consultation Group must satisfy itself as to the following matters:-”

B.2.1 Replace the word “made” with “attempted”.

B.2.2 Insert the word “**Church’s**” immediately before the word “procedures”.

B.2.3 Replace the existing wording with:

“...that the PRWC has been involved with the Minister but has now stated that it believes it can do no more for him/her; and....”

B.3 Replace the existing Paragraph B.3 with the following:-

B.3.1 **If, having so consulted, the Consultation Group is satisfied unanimously that all the conditions contained in Paragraphs B.1.1 and B.2 have been complied with, the Group shall send or deliver to the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary as the case may be a Certificate of Entry* completed in strict accordance with the format set out in the Appendix to this Part II, this being an essential pre-condition to a case entering the Incapacity Procedure. When this step has been completed, the Incapacity Procedure shall apply and the procedures set out in Paragraphs B.3.2 and B.3.3 shall come into operation.**

B.3.2 **The Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary shall forthwith send or deliver to the Secretary of the Review Commission* the Certificate of Entry and a Commencement Notice* (together with such accompanying papers as are germane to the case) in order to activate the Incapacity Procedure, setting out the reasons for the issue of such Notice and s/he shall at the same time inform the Minister that this step has been taken. As to the procedures to be followed regarding suspension, see Section E.**

B.3.3 **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.3.4 **On receipt of the Commencement Notice, the Secretary of the Review Commission shall forthwith activate the procedure for the calling in of**

the Commission Officer to carry out his/her functions as described in Section G when instructed to do so by the Review Commission.

- B.6** In the expression “Paragraph B.1 and B.2” add an “s” to the word “Paragraph”.

After the words “to the contrary” remove the comma and insert the words “and so long as the Consultation Group is satisfied that the conditions contained in Paragraphs B.1.1 and B.2 have been complied with,”.

- C.4.1** Add a new paragraph as follows:

Mission Council shall, on behalf of General Assembly, appoint a person with some legal, tribunal or professional experience or other similar background to act as the Commission Officer in cases coming within the Incapacity Procedure and a second person with similar credentials to act as a reserve Commission Officer should the person firstly appointed be unable for any reason to participate in a particular case.

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

In the event that neither of the persons referred to in Paragraph C.4.1 is able to act as Commission Officer in any particular case, the Secretary shall invite the Officers of General Assembly to appoint another person to act as Commission Officer in that case, making every effort to appoint someone with similar credentials.

- C.4.3** Add a new paragraph as follows:-

The principle enunciated in Paragraph D.1 must be taken into account in considering whether a person is eligible to act as Commission Officer in any given case.

- D.3.2** After the words “copies of” add “the Certificate of Entry,”.

- D.3.3** Replace the words “a copy of” with “copies of the Certificate of Entry,”.

- D.3.4** Add a new paragraph as follows:

The Secretary shall send to the Commission Officer copies of the Certificate of Entry, the Commencement Notice and any supporting documentation, together with a notice requesting confirmation that the addressee is unaware of any circumstances which in the present case might prevent him/her from serving as Commission Officer and, in the event that that person is unable to serve as the Commission Officer, the Secretary shall repeat the procedure with the second person referred to above.

- E.8** Insert a new E.8 as follows:

Suspension does not imply any view about the correctness or otherwise of the reasons for the entry of the case into the Incapacity Procedure nor of any statements made or information given concerning the Minister, nor does it affect the Minister’s stipend or the CWCW’s salary or the Minister’s or the CRCW’s pension arrangements made under the relevant United Reformed Church Pension Scheme.

Sections F and G Replace the existing Sections F and G with the following:

- F. Role and responsibilities of the Review Commission at the Enquiry Stage**

- F.1. The Review Commission shall have control of all procedural matters at the Enquiry Stage, including the gathering of information and any**

issues relating to the Minister's suspension. The Review Commission shall also have discretion as regards the extent to which written statements, reports, videos, recorded interviews and other recordings and transcripts may be taken into account. This discretion will be particularly apposite when considering any report, information and documentation submitted by the Commission Officer under Paragraph G.4

- F.2** Where cases come into the Procedure following a recommendation from the Disciplinary Process, information may already have been considered within that Process. However, the Review Commission must always carry out its own enquiry and cannot rely upon such information simply because it was presented and considered within the Disciplinary Process.
- F.3** The members of the Review Commission shall consult together as soon as possible to consider the information laid before them and to agree upon the course which their enquiry should take.
- F.4** At the outset the Review Commission will need to address the following questions:
- F.4.1** Have all the steps outlined at Paragraphs B.1 and B.2 been taken?
- F.4.2** Are there any issues regarding suspension which need to be resolved by the Review Commission (see Section E)?
- F.4.3** How has the Minister responded, if at all, to the issues raised in the Commencement Notice, particularly those relating to his/her conduct and/or behaviour or to any other concerns and/or problems expressed about his/her ministry and will it be necessary to meet with other persons with knowledge of any relevant events or circumstances to test the accuracy and weight of these matters and their importance to the enquiry?
- F.4.4** Is specialist advice and guidance relevant as to the question of whether, based on the criteria set out in Part I, Paragraphs 1 and 5, the Minister is or is not capable of exercising, or of continuing to exercise, ministry? If so, what steps should be taken to ensure that such advice and guidance are available for consideration by the Review Commission? Has any such advice or guidance already been taken and, if so, can this be made available to the Review Commission?
- F.5** The Review Commission shall be entitled to call for and consider all minutes of meetings, correspondence, notes, reports and documents which it considers appropriate to its enquiry. This provision shall not apply where those from whom such documentation is requested can demonstrate that it is protected by confidentiality.
- F.6** Should the Review Commission consider that at any time the Minister might, whether or not deliberately, be in danger of infringing any of Paragraphs K.1.5/8, it shall, wherever practicable, draw this to the attention of the Minister or his/her representative.
- F.7** Having carried out its initial review, the Review Commission will consider the information so far available and consider the implications of this information in the light of the criteria set out in Paragraphs 1 and 5 of Part I and will then issue instructions to the Commission Officer to enable him/her to carry out his/her responsibilities under Section G. In doing so, the Review Commission should draw the particular attention of the Commission Officer to Paragraphs A.2, H.1 and K.1.
- F.8** The Review Commission shall at the same time supply the Commission Officer with copies of the Certificate of Entry, the Commencement Notice,

any supporting documentation and all necessary information for the better performance of his/her responsibilities. Information relating to any specific advice or guidance as mentioned in Paragraph F.4.4 is particularly pertinent in this respect. Furthermore the Review Commission must make clear to the Commission Officer the issues identified by the Review Commission to which it wishes the Commission Officer to direct his/her enquiries so that there is consistency and the avoidance of duplication in the gathering of information.

- F.9** The Review Commission will at all times be able to issue guidance and instructions to the Commission Officer as s/he carries out his/her role under Section G.
- F.10** The Review Commission may, if it considers it appropriate so to do, adjourn the Enquiry and direct the Commission Officer to put his/her investigation on hold pending further instructions. Bearing in mind the need to move the Procedure along in a timely manner, this power should only be used sparingly when warranted by the special circumstances of the case and any such adjournment should last only so long as is strictly necessary.
- F.11** On receipt of the dossier and accompanying papers from the Commission Officer referred to in Paragraph G.7, the Secretary of the Review Commission shall forthwith supply copies of all such papers to each member of the Review Commission who may seek clarification and/or further information from the Commission Officer on any of the matters referred to therein.
- F.12** The members of the Review Commission, in considering the material presented to them, should always have in mind the desirability of reaching agreement with the Minister or the Minister's representative as to any information and advice which is accepted as common ground with a view to simplifying the Hearing and making it appear less confrontational.
- F.13.1** When the Review Commission has satisfied itself as to the matters referred to in Paragraph F.11, the Secretary of the Review Commission shall thereupon, acting on the instructions of the Review Commission, send to the Minister or the Minister's representative a copy of the Commission Officer's statement and copies of all the statements, reports and other documents contained in the accompanying dossier (save only that, if the Commission Officer shall have already provided the Minister with copies of the documents in the agreed bundle in accordance with Paragraph G.6, the Secretary is not required to send to him/her further copies of those particular documents at this stage).
- F.13.2** At the same time s/he shall notify the Minister or his/her representative by letter that, should s/he wish to make any observations or representations on any of the matters contained in the said statement and dossier or should s/he wish to submit any further statements, reports, or other papers, these should all be lodged with the Secretary within 21 days of receipt of the said letter. The Secretary shall forthwith on receipt supply each member of the Assembly Commission with a copy of any such observations, representations or documents.
- F.14** After the expiration of the said period of 21 days or, if a request for an extension of time is received, within such further period of time, if any, as the members of the Review Commission consider reasonable, the Review Commission will instruct the Secretary to put in hand arrangements for a hearing to take place in accordance with Section J.

G Role and Responsibilities of Commission Officer

- G.1 The role and responsibilities of the Commission Officer shall be:-**
- G.1.1 To study the Commencement Notice and any supporting papers and any representations made by the Minister and/or others and**
 - G.1.2 To note the instructions of the Review Commission and any supporting information supplied with them (see Paragraphs F.7 and F.8) and**
 - G.1.3 In pursuance of those instructions, to obtain such reports, carry out such interviews and consultations and take such other steps as are deemed appropriate within the scope of those instructions including the assembling of all the relevant information in a dossier for presentation to the Review Commission and**
 - G.1.4 To attend the Hearing in order to respond to any questions which may be put to him/her by the Review Commission and/or the Minister or the Minister's Representative.**
- G.2 The Commission Officer shall have regard to the following:-**
- G.2.1 S/he must act within the scope of the instructions issued by the Review Commission under Paragraph F.7.**
 - G.2.2 Should the Commission Officer, in the course of his/her investigation, be drawn into a new line of enquiry, s/he must refer back to the Review Commission for further instructions.**
 - G.2.3 The Commission Officer must not commission reports or incur costs without specific authorisation from the Review Commission.**
- G.3 Subject always to the terms of the Review Commission's instructions, the following questions (which are not necessarily exhaustive) should be addressed by the Commission Officer in the course of carrying out his/her responsibilities in accordance with Paragraph G.1:-**
- G.3.1 How has the Minister responded, if at all, to the issues raised in the Commencement Notice, particularly those relating to his/her conduct and/or behaviour or to any other concerns and/or problems expressed about his/her ministry and will it be necessary to meet with other persons with knowledge of any relevant events or circumstances to test the accuracy and weight of these matters and their importance to the investigation?**
 - G.3.2 Is specialist advice and guidance relevant as to the question of whether, based on the criteria set out in Part I, Paragraphs 1 and 5, the Minister is or is not capable of exercising, or of continuing to exercise, ministry? If so, what steps should be taken to ensure that such advice and guidance are available for consideration by the Review Commission?**
 - G.3.3 Are there any special factors in the particular case which should be taken into account at this stage? This is particularly relevant in cases coming into the Incapacity Procedure following a recommendation from the Disciplinary Process.**
- G.4 So long as such actions fall within the scope of the Review Commission's instructions and are within the constraints set out in Paragraph G.2, the Commission Officer may seek the written permission of the Minister or his/her representative (but only so far as the latter has the authority in law to grant such permission on behalf of the Minister) to apply for copies of all the Minister's medical notes, records and reports from his/her General Practitioner and copies of the reports from any specialist who**

may have examined or been consulted by the Minister. If the Commission Officer is unable to obtain copies of any such notes, records and reports s/he shall report this to the Review Commission and the Procedure shall continue with the best information available.

- G.5.1** The Commission Officer should seek to obtain from each person from whom s/he obtains information a written statement setting out such information and summarising the discussion at the meeting. This statement should, wherever possible, be agreed and signed by the Commission Officer and the person concerned immediately after the meeting and whilst they are still together. The Commission Officer should inform that person that s/he may be called later to attend the Hearing and answer questions which may be put to him/her by the Review Commission and/or the Minister or the Minister's representative.
- G.5.2** If any such person refuses or expresses an unwillingness to attend any Hearing in person or if the Commission Officer has any other reason to believe that that person will not in fact do so, the Commission Officer shall report this to the Review Commission, which may if it thinks fit invoke its discretionary powers as set out in Paragraph F.1. In such situations, it is essential that the Commission Officer should use every endeavour to obtain an agreed written statement from the person concerned as described in Paragraph G.5.1.
- G.6.** The Commission Officer shall consult, or endeavour to consult, with the Minister or his/her representative for the purpose of securing an agreed bundle of documents. A list of the documents in the agreed bundle should be prepared by the Commission Officer and signed by him/her and by the Minister or his/her representative. The Minister may request copies of the documents in the agreed bundle there and then. Otherwise they will be sent to him/her by the Secretary of the Review Commission (see Paragraph F.13.1). Should the Commission Officer be unable to secure an agreed bundle of documents for whatever reason, s/he shall prepare a report which shall explain why it has not proved possible to do so.
- G.7** When the Commission Officer has completed his/her investigation, s/he shall lodge with the Secretary of the Review Commission a dossier containing (i) a written statement setting out the result of his/her investigation, summarising the information contained in the dossier and adding any comments which s/he deems appropriate and (ii) either of the following:-
- G.7.1** If it has proved possible to secure an agreed bundle of documents in accordance with Paragraph G.6, the originals (or copies if the originals are not held by the Commission Officer) of the documents forming the agreed bundle, the signed copy of the agreed list of documents and the originals or copies of any further documents which are not included in the agreed bundle but which, in the opinion of the Commission Officer, should nonetheless be passed on to the Review Commission or
- G.7.2** If it has not proved possible to secure an agreed bundle of documents in accordance with Paragraph G.6, the originals (or copies if the originals are not held by the Commission Officer) of all statements, reports and other documents considered by him/her to be relevant to the case, including the report referred to in Paragraph G.6 as to why it has not been possible to secure an agreed bundle of documents.

- J.1** After the words “the Minister” add “**the Commission Officer**”.
- J.2.1** The existing J.2 shall become J.2.1 and the following shall be inserted as the fifth bullet point:
- **The Commission Officer**
- J.2.2** The existing J.3 shall become new Paragraph J.2.2. Also replace the word “should” with “**shall**”.
- J.2.3** Add a new J.2.3 as follows:
- The Convener shall open the proceedings by introducing him/herself and the other members of the Commission and such other persons as may be present. S/he shall also explain their respective roles and the manner in which the Hearing will be conducted. The Review Commission shall have complete discretion as to the manner of conducting the Hearing and may, if considered appropriate, invite the Commission Officer at the outset to present his/her report to the Hearing.**
- J.3** Insert the following as new J.3:
- J.3 If invited to do so by the Review Commission, the Commission Officer will present the information set out in the written dossier and its supporting papers and, if any of the persons referred to in the dossier are present, the Review Commission may invite him or her to provide their information orally. Any such persons will be subject to questioning by the Convener (and by other members of the Commission with the Convener’s permission) and by the Minister or the Minister’s representative.**
- J.4.1** Replace the words “All witnesses called by the Review Commission to give evidence shall be subject to questioning...” with “**All persons attending the Hearing in person to provide information may be questioned...**” Also at the end, replace the word “witnesses” with “**persons**”.
- J.4.2** Remove the words “When the process described in Paragraph J.4.1 has been completed,” and replace the words “witnesses called by him/her to give evidence” with “**persons attending at his/her request to provide information**”.
- J.5** After the words “directs otherwise,” replace the existing words with “**persons attending to provide information and/or answer questions shall only be present whilst they are doing so**”.
- J.6** Replace the existing paragraph with the following:
- “When the procedures outlined in Paragraphs J.3 and J.4 have been completed, the Minister or the Minister’s representative may if s/he wishes address the Review Commission”.**
- J.8** Delete the words “evidence and”.
- J.10** Insert a space between “Commission” and “will wish”
- Delete the words “and/or recommendation(s)”.
- Change the paragraph reference in the text from B.1 to **B.3**.
- K.5.2** Delete this paragraph.
- K.5.3** The existing K.5.3 to become **K.5.2**.

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- K.6** Delete the words “recommendations or”.
- K.7** Delete the words “...and any recommendations appended to the Decision (as regards any Outside Organisation, only those recommendations which it expressly states to be its wish that such be passed on to that Outside Organisation) and sent to the Minister in accordance with Paragraph K.6...”.
- L.8** After the words “shall take” replace the remainder of the first sentence with **“having in mind but not being bound to follow the procedures laid down for the Review Commission in Section F”**.
- Delete the words “In addition” at the beginning of the second sentence.
- L.9.6** Replace the words “, evidence and interpretation” with **“and any legal issues which may arise relating to the interpretation of the information provided at the Hearing”**.
- L.9.8** This paragraph to become L.9.8.2 (see below):
- L.9.8.1** Add a new L.9.8.1 as follows: **“If requested to do so by the Appeals Review Commission, the General Secretary shall invite the Commission Officer to attend the Hearing of the Appeal and at some point during the Hearing the Convener may invite the Commission Officer and the Minister or his/her representative to address the Appeals Review Commission on the subject matter of the Appeal.**
- L.9.8.2** The existing Paragraph L.9.8 shall become **L.9.8.2**
- L.11.2** Delete this paragraph.
- L.11.3** The existing L.11.3 to become **L.11.2**.
- L.12.1** Delete the words “recommendations or”.
- L.12.2** Delete the words “recommendations or” both times they appear.
- M.4** Replace the word “served” with **“sent or delivered”**.

ADDENDUM TO THE INCAPACITY PROCEDURE

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Form [...]

**THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
MINISTERIAL INCAPACITY PROCEDURE
(as set out in Section P of the MANUAL)**

**CERTIFICATE OF SUITABILITY FOR ENTRY INTO THE PROCEDURE
(defined in the Procedure as “the Certificate of Entry”)**

re:

This Certificate of Entry has been completed by the Convener of the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee (PRWC) to fulfil the requirements of Paragraphs B.1.1 and B.2 of Part II of the Procedure.

As Convener of the PRWC I hereby certify as follows:

1. Pursuant to Paragraph B.1.1, the Consultation Group (as defined in Paragraph A.1.1 of the Procedure) has carried out its responsibility to consider the question of whether the Incapacity Procedure should be initiated in respect of the above named minister/Church related community worker (CRCW) and has reached the conclusion that it should be so initiated and
2. The PRWC, after having given full consideration to the concerns relating to the above named Minister/CRCW as required by Paragraph B.2, has reached the following conclusions:
 - (i) That all reasonable steps to rehabilitate the Minister/CRCW have been attempted (B.2.1): and
 - (ii) That the Church’s procedures for ill health retirement do not apply and that there is no reasonable prospect of their implementation or of the resignation of the Minister (B.2.2): and
 - (iii) That the PRWC has been involved with the Minister/CRCW but has now stated that it believes it can do no more for him/her (B.2.3): and

either

 - (iv) That no case against the Minister/CRCW is already in progress under the Ministerial disciplinary Process:

or

 - (iv) That the Minister/CRCW is already involved in a Ministerial Disciplinary case, but the provisions of Paragraph B.6 of Part II apply.

[delete whichever does not apply]

Dated.....20...

Signed.....Convener of PRWC

Appendix 2c

Ministerial Disciplinary Procedure - Caution Stage

to take effect on 30 April, 2011

Approved by Mission Council on behalf of General Assembly in October 2010

Section AA to be inserted after Section A of Part II of the Disciplinary Process (Section O)

AA.1.1 This Section AA sets out a Caution Stage which provides the mechanism whereby an enquiry can be set up to examine matters of concern involving ministers which fall short of Gross Misconduct, leading, if appropriate, to an Initial Caution and a Final Caution being issued to the Minister in the form of written notices.

AA.1.2 Any such matters of concern shall only fall within the Section O Process if demonstrating a degree of blameworthiness attributable to deliberate intent or to a blatant lack of care and concern, the effect of which, if substantiated, would indicate a breach of the criteria laid down in Part I, Paragraph 4.1. In the absence of these elements, no case for discipline arises under this Section AA.

AA.1.3 If at any time during the Caution Stage the Synod Moderator becomes aware of any information suggesting the possibility of Gross Misconduct on the part of the Minister, s/he shall have the power to bring the Caution Stage to an immediate conclusion and call in a Mandated group to commence its Initial Enquiry in accordance with Section B of these Rules. Any relevant information already gathered within the Caution Stage shall be passed on to the Mandated Group and the Synod Moderator shall discharge the Synod Appointees from any further responsibility.

AA.1.4 References in this Section AA to the Synod Moderator can also be taken as a reference to the Deputy General Secretary, except where precluded by the context.

AA.1.5.1 Each Synod is required to appoint from its Synod Panel two persons to conduct the enquiry under the Caution Stage and to take such other actions as are required under this Section AA and two persons to act as reserves for such purposes should the principal appointees be unable for whatever reason to act in that capacity in a particular case.

AA.1.5.2 The Synod may make these appointments in any of the following ways: (i) it may appoint persons from its own Synod Panel or (ii) it may appoint persons from the Synod Panel(s) of one or more other Synods, with the consent of the Moderator of that Synod or those Synods, or (iii) it may appoint persons who, although not members of any Synod Panel, have legal, tribunal or other appropriate professional experience. The appointments do not need to be made from one and the same group.

AA.1.5.3 These appointments should, wherever possible, be standing ones and made in advance, not made ad hoc when the situation arises. If, however, there shall not be any Synod Appointees in place at the time when the Synod Moderator wishes to initiate the Caution Stage, s/he may call upon the Synod to make the necessary appointments at that time.

AA.1.5.4 The persons appointed to act in any given case under this Paragraph shall be referred to as “the Synod Appointees”.

AA.2.1 Should the Synod Moderator wish to initiate the Caution Stage in relation to a particular minister, s/he shall call in the Synod Appointees, by written notice to each of them, to carry out the enquiry in accordance with the procedure set out in this Section AA.

AA.2.2 Should the Deputy General Secretary wish to initiate the Caution Stage in relation to any particular minister, s/he shall follow the procedure set out in Paragraph AA.1.5 to appoint two persons to act as the Synod Appointees in that case.

AA.2.3 Should either or both the principal and the reserve appointee(s) of the Synod be unable to act in a particular case, the Moderator of the Synod shall, with the consent of the Moderator(s) of another Synod or other Synods, call in the principal or reserve Synod Panel Member(s) for that/those Synod(s) to carry out the functions of the Synod Appointees in that case. The two so appointed need not be members of the same Synod Panel.

AA.2.4 In calling in the Synod Appointees as above, the Moderator of the Synod shall inform the Minister that this step has been taken and supply both the Synod Appointees and the Minister with a written statement setting out the matters of concern which have led to the calling in of the Synod Appointees, the names of possible informants and other sources of information at that time available and any observations as to ways in which the Moderator considers that the Minister's perceived shortcomings might be addressed. The statement supplied to the Synod Appointees shall be accompanied by any reports, statements and other documents which the Synod Moderator considers might be helpful to the Synod Appointees, including, if applicable, all papers relative to a recommendation that the Section O Process should be commenced, made in accordance with Section H of Part II of the Incapacity Procedure.

AA.2.5 The principle enunciated in Paragraph B.4 regarding membership of a Mandated Group shall be equally applicable when considering the eligibility of persons to act as Synod Appointees in any given case.

AA.2.6 For purposes of confidentiality and the chain of continuity of the Process, the Disciplinary Case against a particular minister shall, if the Caution Stage is invoked, be deemed to have commenced on the calling in of the Synod Appointees in accordance with this Paragraph AA.2. It should be noted that the initiation of the Caution Stage will not involve the suspension of the Minister.

AA.2.7 At all meetings with the Synod Appointees, the Minister and any other persons interviewed by the Synod Appointees may, if they wish, be accompanied by a friend.

AA.3 The purpose of the enquiry is to establish whether, in the opinion of the Synod Appointees, the matters of concern referred to in Paragraph AA.2.4, whilst they may fall short of Gross Misconduct, do nonetheless amount to a failure on the part of the Minister to live up to the promises which s/he made at ordination (see Part I, Paragraph 4.1) and whether if the Synod Appointees do come to that conclusion it would be appropriate for them to issue a Caution in the form of a written notice to the Minister and, if so, in what terms or, if they consider the case more serious, whether to recommend to the Synod Moderator that s/he should take the case into the main part of the Disciplinary Process by calling in a Mandated Group under Section B of these Rules.

AA.4.1 The Synod Appointees will have discretion as to the manner in which they conduct their enquiry in the light of the circumstances of the case. However, as a general rule the following steps should be taken:

AA.4.1.1 The Synod Appointees should at the earliest possible stage in their enquiry seek a meeting with the Minister.

AA.4.1.2 At the outset of that meeting the Synod Appointees should explain that the purpose of the meeting is to raise with the Minister the concerns set

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out in the statement referred to in Paragraph AA.2.4 and to make clear that the outcome might be the issue of a Caution or Cautions or even (if the Synod Appointees viewed the matter as sufficiently serious) a recommendation to the Synod Moderator to call in a Mandated Group and thus to take the matter directly into the main part of the Disciplinary Process.

AA.4.1.3 The Synod Appointees should then discuss, or endeavour to discuss, the said concerns with the Minister, listen to the Minister's explanations and consider any reports, written statements and papers which the Minister produces which are germane to the case and, if possible, should attempt to reach agreement with the Minister as to the areas of concern and as to how the problems should be resolved. If the Minister is co-operative and agrees to the accuracy and validity of the concerns expressed by the Synod Moderator, the Synod Appointees may well feel able to omit the steps suggested at Paragraphs AA.4.2, AA.4.3 and AA.4.4 and proceed straight to the steps set out at Paragraph AA.5.

AA.4.2 The Synod Appointees may wish to meet with some or all of those who, according to the information provided in the Synod Moderator's statement, have had involvement with the Minister and who may have relevant knowledge of the causes of those concerns.

AA.4.3 The Synod Appointees may wish to refer back to the Synod Moderator for discussion upon any matters which arise during the course of their enquiry, including the appropriateness of the terms of any Caution which they are minded to impose.

AA.4.4 If, following the meeting with the Minister referred to at Paragraph AA.4.1.1, the Synod Appointees have held meetings or discussions in accordance with Paragraph AA.4.2 or Paragraph AA.4.3, the Synod Appointees should once more meet with the Minister for a further discussion and, if possible, should attempt to reach agreement with the Minister as to the areas of concern and as to how the problems should be resolved.

AA.4.5 At the conclusion of every interview taking place under this Paragraph AA.4, including any meetings with the Minister, the Synod Appointees should prepare a detailed minute thereof and seek the interviewee's agreement to the wording thereof, whereupon the Synod Appointees should sign two copies, requesting the interviewee to do the same, whereupon they should retain one copy and hand the other copy to the interviewee. If the interviewee should decline to sign the minute, an endorsement to this effect should be made explaining the reasons for this.

AA.5 Having satisfied themselves that they have taken all the steps necessary under Paragraph AA.4, the Synod Appointees will conclude their enquiry in one of three ways:

AA.5.1 The Synod Appointees may conclude that no further action needs to be taken, in which case they may give written notice to this effect to the Synod Moderator and the Minister as soon as they reach this conclusion, or

AA.5.2 They may invoke the procedure relating to the issue of Cautions set out in the succeeding Paragraphs of this Section AA or

AA.5.3.1 They may, if in their view the concerns are sufficiently serious to justify such a course, serve a written notice on the Synod Moderator consisting of a recommendation that s/he should call in a Mandated Group and thus take the matter out of the Caution Stage and directly into Section B of these Rules of Procedure (this course, involving as it does a recommendation only, cannot be the subject of an appeal by the Minister). The notice shall set out the reasons for making such a recommendation. At the same time, they shall serve on the Minister a written notice informing him/her that this step has been taken.

- AA.5.3.2 Should the Synod Moderator be unwilling to accept this recommendation, s/he may by written notice to each of the Synod Appointees, request them to continue with their enquiry and, if they accede to this request, they will proceed with the remainder of the Caution Stage in accordance with this Section AA.
- AA.5.3.3 Should the Synod Appointees be unwilling to continue with their enquiry, they may, by giving written notice to the Synod Moderator within one month of the receipt of the notice from him/her, decide to reject his/her request (see also Paragraph AA.10.2).
- AA.6.1 If, in accordance with Paragraph AA.5.2, the Synod Appointees invoke the procedure relating to the imposition of Cautions, they shall first of all issue to the Minister a written notice consisting of an Initial Caution setting out the following:
- AA.6.1.1 the matters of concerns which they have identified as amounting to a breach of discipline at the light of Part I, Paragraph 4.1 and
- AA.6.1.2 the steps which they require the Minister to take to resolve those concerns in order to bring his/her ministry back to a level compatible with his/her ordination promises and
- AA.6.1.3 the period of time, not exceeding twelve months, within which those steps must be taken and
- AA.6.1.4 the consequences which would follow from a failure on the part of the minister to comply with the terms of the Initial Caution, which would be the issue of a Final Caution in accordance with Paragraph AA.7, unless in the opinion of the Synod Appointees the Minister's failure to comply with the terms of the Initial Caution was sufficiently serious as to justify the bypassing of a Final Caution and the issuing of a recommendation to the Synod Moderator in the terms of Paragraph AA.5.3.1, and
- AA.6.1.5 a statement informing the Minister of his/her right to appeal against the imposition of the Caution, drawing attention to the period of time within which the notice of appeal must be lodged and the fact that time is of the essence in the lodging of the appeal notice (for further information as to the lodging of an appeal and in particular the time allowed for this, see Paragraph AA.8.1).
- AA.6.2.1 The written notice of an Initial Caution issued under Paragraph AA.6.1 may either be handed to the Minister at the conclusion of the Synod Appointees' final interview with the Minister at the Initial Caution Stage or it may be sent to the Minister within ten days of that interview, either method constituting service for the purposes of Paragraph H.2.
- AA.6.2.2 The Minister has the right to appeal against the imposition of an Initial Caution issued under Paragraph AA.6.1 and the appeal provisions are contained in Paragraph AA.8.
- AA.6.3.1 During the period whilst the Initial Caution is in place, the Synod Appointees shall keep the situation under review and, if they become aware of conduct or behaviour on the part of the Minister which indicates that s/he is not adhering to the terms of the Caution, they have the authority to call the minister to account at any time and, if the circumstances should so require, to issue a Final Caution under Paragraph AA.7 or bypass the Final Caution Stage and to proceed directly to a recommendation to the Synod Moderator in the terms of Paragraph AA.5.3.1 without waiting for the period of the Caution to expire.
- AA.6.3.2 The provisions of Paragraph AA.4 as to the conduct of meetings with the Minister and other interviewees shall also apply during and at the expiration of the period of the Initial Caution.

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AA.6.4 At the expiration of the period of the Initial Caution (or sooner if warranted under Paragraph AA.6.3.1), the Synod Appointees shall carry out a further review, which will involve a meeting with the Minister and possible meetings or discussions with others who might have information to assist the Synod Appointees in their review. Arising out of this review, the Synod Appointees must take one of the following steps:

AA.6.4.1 They may conclude that the Caution should be removed and that no further disciplinary action is necessary in the light of the improvements and the positive response made by the Minister following the imposition of the Initial Caution, in which case they may give written notice to this effect to the Synod Moderator and the Minister as soon as they reach this conclusion, or

AA.6.4.2 They may proceed to the Final Caution Stage in accordance with Paragraph AA.7 or

AA.6.4.3.1 If they form the view that the Minister has failed to comply with the terms of the Caution and if their concerns are sufficiently serious to justify such a course, they may serve a written notice on the Synod Moderator consisting of a recommendation that s/he should call in a Mandated Group and thus take the case out of the Caution Stage and directly into Section B of these Rules of Procedure (this course, involving as it does a recommendation only, cannot be the subject of an appeal by the Minister). The notice shall set out the reasons for making such a recommendation. At the same time, they shall serve on the Minister a written notice informing him/her that this step has been taken.

AA.6.4.3.2 Should the Synod Moderator be unwilling to accept this recommendation, s/he may by written notice to each of the Synod Appointees, request them to continue with their enquiry and, if they accede to this request, they will proceed with the remainder of the Caution Stage in accordance with this Section AA.

AA.6.4.3.3 Should the Synod Appointees be unwilling to continue with their enquiry, they may, by giving written notice to the Synod Moderator within one month of the receipt of the notice from him/her, decide to reject his/her request (see also Paragraph AA.10.2).

AA.7.1 If, having followed the procedure outlined at Paragraph AA.6 and in accordance with Paragraph AA.6.2, the Synod Appointees continue with the next step in the procedure relating to the imposition of Cautions, they shall issue to the Minister a written notice consisting of a Final Caution setting out the following:

AA.7.1.1 the matters of concerns which they have identified as amounting to a breach of discipline at the light of Part I, Paragraph 4.1, which shall include a statement as to why, in considering the Minister's response to the Initial Caution, they have deemed it necessary to issue a Final Caution, and

AA.7.1.2 the steps which they require the Minister to take to resolve those concerns in order to bring his/her ministry back to a level compatible with his/her ordination promises and

AA.7.1.3 the period of time, not exceeding twelve months, within which those steps should be taken and

AA.7.1.4 the consequences which would follow from a failure on the part of the minister to comply with the terms of the Final Caution, which would be the issuing of a recommendation to the Synod Moderator in the terms of Paragraph AA.5.3.1, the Synod Appointees having no authority to issue any further cautions, and

- AA.7.1.5 a statement informing the Minister of his/her right to appeal against the imposition of the Caution, drawing attention to the period of time within which the notice of appeal must be lodged and the fact that time is of the essence in the lodging of the appeal notice (for further information as to the lodging of an appeal and in particular the time allowed for this, see Paragraph AA.8.1).
- AA.7.2.1 The written notice of a Final Caution issued under Paragraph AA.7.1 may either be handed to the Minister at the conclusion of the Synod Appointees' final interview with the Minister at the Final Caution Stage or it may be sent to the Minister within ten days of that interview, either method constituting service for the purposes of Paragraph H.2.
- AA.7.2.2 The Minister has the right to appeal against the imposition of a Final Caution under Paragraph AA.7.1 and the appeal provisions are contained in Paragraph AA.8.
- AA.7.3.1 During the period whilst the Final Caution is in place, the Synod Appointees shall keep the situation under review and, if they become aware of conduct or behaviour on the part of the Minister which indicates that s/he is not adhering to the terms of the Caution, they have the authority to call the minister to account at any time and, if the circumstances should so require, to issue a recommendation to the Synod Moderator in the terms of Paragraph AA.5.3.1 without waiting for the period of the Caution to expire.
- AA.7.3.2 The provisions of Paragraph AA.4 as to the conduct of meetings with the Minister and other interviewees shall also apply during and at the expiration of the period of the Final Caution.
- AA.7.4 At the expiration of the period of the Final Caution (or sooner if warranted under Paragraph AA.7.3.1), the Synod Appointees shall carry out a further review, which will involve a meeting with the Minister and possible meetings or discussions with others who might have information to assist the Synod Appointees in their review. The outcome of this further review will be one of the following:
- AA.7.4.1 They may conclude that the Caution should be removed and that no further disciplinary action is necessary in the light of the improvements and the positive response made by the Minister following the imposition of the Final Caution, in which case they must give written notice to this effect to the Synod Moderator and the Minister as soon as they reach this conclusion, or
- AA.7.4.2 If they form the view that the Minister has failed to comply with the terms of the Caution and if their concerns are sufficiently serious to justify such a course, they may serve a written notice on the Synod Moderator consisting of a recommendation that s/he should call in a Mandated Group and thus move the case into Section B of Part II of these Rules of Procedure (this course, involving as it does a recommendation only, cannot be the subject of an appeal by the Minister) (see also Paragraph AA.10.2). The notice shall set out the reasons for making such a recommendation. At the same time, they shall serve on the Minister a written notice informing him/her that this step has been taken.
- AA.8.1 Should the Minister wish to appeal against a Caution, whether an Initial Caution imposed under Paragraph AA.6 or a Final Caution imposed under Paragraph AA.7, s/he must serve on the Synod Moderator as the person authorised to accept service a notice of such appeal no later than 21 days from the service upon him/her of the Notice of the Caution, time being of the essence for the purpose of the lodging of the appeal. The Notice shall state the grounds of the appeal (which may be in detail or in summary form as the minister chooses) and the Minister may lodge with the Notice any statements or documents in support of the appeal if s/he so wishes.

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AA.8.2 The body to hear the appeal shall consist of three persons and shall be constituted as follows:

AA.8.2.1 The Synod Moderator shall request the Moderator of another Synod to constitute the appeals body and to make the appointments in accordance with the criteria laid down for the appointment of Synod Appointees under Paragraph AA.1.5.

AA.8.2.2 Should a Minister who has previously appealed against the imposition of an Initial Caution (“the Initial Caution Appeal”) lodge an appeal against the imposition of a Final Caution (“the Final Caution Appeal”) in the same case, the Synod Moderator shall request the Moderator of a Synod other than his/her own or that of the Moderator who constituted the body which heard the Initial Caution Appeal to constitute the body to hear the Final Caution Appeal and to make the appointments in accordance with the criteria laid down for the appointment of Synod Appointees under Paragraph AA.1.5.

AA.8.2.3 In a situation arising under Paragraph AA.8.2.2, the Synod Moderator making the appointments must not appoint any person who served on the body which heard the Initial Caution Appeal.

AA.8.2.4 The principle enunciated in Paragraph B.4 regarding membership of a Mandated Group shall be equally applicable when considering the eligibility of persons to act as the appeals body and as the secretary thereof.

AA.8.2.5 Having made the appointments required under Paragraph AA.8.2.1 or Paragraph AA.8.2.2/3 as the case may be, the Moderator(s) of the other Synod(s) shall have no further part to play and all references to the Synod Moderator, apart from specific references to any other such Synod Moderator, shall denote the Synod Moderator who appointed the Synod Appointees.

AA.8.2.6 The Synod Moderator shall be responsible for appointing a suitable person to act as the secretary to the newly constituted appeals body. The person so appointed shall not be a member of the appeals body.

AA.8.3 Immediately following the appointment of the appeals body, the Synod Moderator shall provide each member thereof with copies of the written notice containing the Caution, all statements and other documents accompanying the report and the Minister’s notice of appeal and any accompanying statements and documents. In the case of an appeal against a Final Caution, if the Minister had appealed against the imposition of an Initial Caution, the record of the decision of the appeals body hearing that appeal shall also be included.

AA.8.4 As the appeal must be strictly limited to the terms of the Caution, it would be inappropriate for the Synod Moderator to supply any other information, statements or documents. Nor should the Synod Moderator make any personal reflections or offer any opinions on the issues before the appeals body.

AA.8.5 The members of the appeals body shall not be required to carry out any enquiry or investigation of their own but, having considered the material provided by the Synod Moderator, they shall meet with the Minister and provide him/her with the opportunity of addressing them on the ground of the appeal.

AA.8.6 Thereafter the members of the appeals body shall retire to make their decision in private.

AA.8.7 Within ten days of the reaching of the decision, the secretary of the appeals body shall serve on the Minister, the Synod Appointees and the Synod Moderator notice of the decision together with a statement setting out the reasons for the decision.

AA.8.8 If the appeal is successful the notice of the decision shall also declare that the Caution is discharged with immediate effect, that the Disciplinary case against the Minister is at an end and that the Synod Appointees are discharged from any further responsibility. The Synod Appointees shall thereupon present their report to the Synod Moderator in accordance with Paragraph AA.9.

AA.8.9 If the appeal is unsuccessful the Caution will remain in place.

AA.8.10 No appeal is possible from the decision of the appeals body.

AA.8.11 The service of the notice of the appeals decision under Paragraph AA.8.7 shall have the effect of discharging the members of the appeals body from any further involvement in that disciplinary case.

AA.9.1 The Synod Appointees shall, at the conclusion of the Caution Stage, present their report to the Synod Moderator, which shall summarise the steps which they took and state the manner in which they conducted their review, stating which of the courses they took under Paragraph AA.5 and, if they proceeded to the issue of Cautions under Paragraphs AA.6 and AA.7, the steps they took and the nature of the Minister's response. If they have resolved to issue a recommendation that the Synod Moderator should call in a Mandated Group and thus move the case into Section B of these Rules of Procedure, they shall set out such recommendation clearly in their report, giving their detailed reasons for such recommendation.

AA.9.2 They shall attach to their report copies of all statements and other documents which were germane to their enquiry, including copies of any written Cautions (both Initial and Final) issued to the Minister.

AA.9.3 Except in cases where the Synod Appointees have made a recommendation that the Synod Moderator should call in Mandated Group under Section B of these Rules of Procedure (see Paragraph AA.10.3 below), the Caution Stage shall be concluded immediately upon the issue of the Synod Appointees' report to the Synod Moderator and their responsibilities will terminate at same time.

AA.10.1 Should the Synod Appointees conclude, whether under Paragraph AA.5, Paragraph AA.6 or Paragraph AA.7, that no further action should be taken, the Caution Stage and indeed the Disciplinary Process itself shall end with the lodging of their report with the Synod Moderator in accordance with Paragraph AA.9.1 and the involvement of the Synod Appointees shall cease at the same time.

AA.10.2.1 Should the Synod Appointees, whether under Paragraph AA.5.3.1, Paragraph AA.6.4.3.1 or Paragraph AA.7.4.2, recommend to the Synod Moderator that s/he should call in a Mandated Group under Section B, the disciplinary case shall remain in abeyance pending the calling in of the Mandated Group by the Synod Moderator.

AA.10.2.2 In cases where the recommendation is made under either Paragraph AA.5.3.1 or Paragraph AA.6.4.3.1, the involvement of the Synod Appointees shall, subject to Paragraph AA.10.3.2, cease when the Mandated Group has been so called in. The Synod Moderator shall notify them in writing as soon as this has happened.

AA.10.2.3 In a case where the recommendation is made under Paragraph AA.7.4.2 following the imposition of a Final Caution, the involvement of the Synod Appointees will cease as soon as they present their report to the Synod Moderator in accordance with the procedure set out in Paragraph AA.9.1.

AA.10.2.4 If, following a recommendation such as is referred to in Paragraph AA.10.2.1, the Synod Moderator has not, within a period of six months from the date of receipt of the notice of such recommendation from the Synod

Appointees, called in a Mandated Group, then unless Paragraphs AA.5.3.3 or Paragraph AA.6.4.3.3 applies (as to which see Paragraph AA.10.2.5) the Disciplinary Process shall come to an end immediately upon the expiration of such period. In such a case, the involvement of the Synod Appointees shall, where either Paragraph AA.5.3.1 or Paragraph AA.6.4.3.1 applies, cease at that time. The Synod Moderator shall notify the Synod Appointees at the expiration of that period that no Mandated Group has been called in, whereupon they should present their report to the Synod Moderator, following the procedure set out in Paragraph AA.9.1.

AA.10.2.5 If either Paragraph AA.5.3.3 or Paragraph AA.6.4.3.3 applies, the Disciplinary Process shall come to an end when the Synod Appointees give written notice to the Synod Moderator of their rejection of his/her request to proceed with the Caution Stage, at which time their involvement shall cease at that time and they should then present their report to the Synod Moderator in accordance with the procedure set out in Paragraph AA.9.1. The Synod Moderator shall have the remainder of the six months period to decide whether or not to call in a Mandated Group under Section B and if s/he shall have failed to do so at the expiration of that period the Disciplinary case shall come to an end.

Changes to Part II of the Ministerial Disciplinary Process

Approved by Mission Council on behalf of General Assembly, May 2011

Paragraph A.6.1 Delete the words: “Subject to the age limit imposed by Paragraph A.6.4,” and begin the following word “appointment” with a capital letter.

Paragraph A.6.2 Delete the words: “Subject to the age limit imposed by Paragraph A.6.4,” and begin the following word “members” with a capital letter.

Paragraph A.6.4 Delete.

Incapacity Procedure (Section P, Part II)

Paragraph C.2 Delete the words: “Subject to the age limit imposed by Paragraph C.3,” and begin the following word “members” with a capital letter.

Paragraph C.3 Delete.

Changes to Part II of the Ministerial Disciplinary Process

Approved by Mission Council on behalf of General Assembly, November 2011

A.5.22 Replace the existing wording with: “ **‘Joint Panel’ shall mean the Panel referred to in Paragraph B.2.2 which shall serve the purposes set out in that Paragraph.**”

AA.1.5.1 Replace the words “Each Synod is required to appoint from its Synod Panel two persons ...” with “**Acting in accordance with Paragraph AA.1.5.2, each Synod shall appoint two persons (known as “the Synod Appointees”)** ...”. The words “from its own Synod Panel” do not appear in the replacement wording.

AA.1.5.2 Replace the existing paragraph in its entirety with the following:-

“The Moderator of the Synod in consultation with such officers of the Synod as s/he considers appropriate shall forthwith appoint persons to act as the Synod Appointees (and reserves) in any particular case in the following manner:-

- (i) s/he shall appoint the first of the Synod Appointees from the Joint Panel (with another from the Joint Panel to act as reserve) and;**
- (ii) s/he shall appoint as the second Synod Appointee one of the following, that is:-**
 - (a) one person from its own Synod Panel or**
 - (b) one person from the Synod Panel(s) of another Synod with the consent of the Moderator of that Synod, or**
 - (c) one person who, although not a member of any Synod Panel, is a member of the United Reformed Church with legal, tribunal or other appropriate professional experience.**

S/he shall also appoint in the same manner one person to act as reserve to the second Synod Appointee.”

AA.1.5.3 No change required.

AA.1.5.4 Delete the current paragraph (now covered at AA.1.5.1) and substitute the following:-

“In the event that one of the Synod Appointees is obliged to withdraw during the Caution Stage, the reserve appointed from the same Panel may, subject to the approval of the Moderator of the Synod following consultation with such officers of the Synod as s/he considers appropriate, take over his/her position and, jointly with the other Synod Appointee, continue with the enquiry, join in issuing Cautions (if considered necessary) and bring the Caution Stage to its conclusion. Should the Moderator of the Synod, following such consultation as stated above, consider that this would not be appropriate in any particular case, s/he will discharge the Synod Appointees and appoint two new ones in accordance with the above procedure.”

AA.2.3 Delete the current paragraph in its entirety and substitute the following:-

- “AA.2.3.1** Should both the principal and reserve Appointees under Paragraph AA.1.5.2(i) be unable to act in a particular case, the Moderator of the Synod shall, following such consultation as stated above, appoint two other members of the Joint Panel to act as Synod Appointee and reserve Synod Appointee respectively.”
- AA.2.3.2** Should both the principal and reserve Appointees appointed under paragraph AA.1.5.2(ii) be unable to act in a particular case, the Moderator of the Synod shall, following such consultation as stated above, appoint two other persons to act as the other principal and reserve Synod Appointee respectively in accordance with the provisions of that Paragraph.
- B.2.1.1** After the words “and (ii) the appointment of,” replace the words “two persons in accordance with Paragraph AA.1.5 to act as” with **“one person in accordance with Paragraph AA.1.5.2(ii) to act as one of”**.
- B.2.2** Replace the words “assuming a role as part of a Mandated Group” with **“(i) appointment in accordance with Paragraph B.3 as a member of a Mandated Group or (ii) appointment in accordance with Paragraph AA.1.5(i) to act as one of the Synod Appointees during the Caution Stage if initiated. The same persons shall not act as Synod Appointees and members of a Mandated Group in the same case.”** The final sentence of Paragraph B.2.2 remains unchanged.
- B.3.1** Replace the words at the beginning of the paragraph up to “...under the authority of that Synod,” with the following:-

“In cases arising under Paragraph 2(4)(A)(xvii) of the Structure (Synods) in respect of any Minister in membership or under the authority of the Synod in question, if the Moderator of that Synod either (i) believes that there is or may be a disciplinary issue involving Gross Misconduct or (ii) resolves (where the case has already passed through the Caution Stage) to act upon a recommendation from the Synod Appointees to call in a Mandated Group,....”
- B.3.2** Replace the words “believes that there is or may be a disciplinary issue in respect of any Minister” with **“(i) believes that there is or may be a disciplinary issue involving Gross Misconduct in respect of any Minister or (ii) resolves (where a case has already passed through the Caution Stage) to act on a recommendation from the Synod Appointees to call in a Mandated Group,....”**
- B.3.4** After the words “justify the calling in of” insert the words **“the Synod Appointees under the provisions of Section AA or”**.

Appendix 3

Medical and psychological screening

On behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council adopted this process for medical and psychological screening of candidates for the ministry. It took effect immediately.

Phase of training and/or calling
Pre-Training and Training
<p>Stage 1 – Candidate Application Candidate makes an application to be accepted for training.</p>
<p>Stage 2 – Candidating Process Candidate goes through the Candidating Process. Includes interviews by local church and synod, along with the completion of some reflective work and, for candidates for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments, leading worship.</p>
<p>Stage 3 – Assembly Assessment Conference Candidate attends an Assembly Assessment Conference which includes interviews with assessors (who ultimately make the decision to accept or not), an Education and Learning panel (who decide on length and nature of training), and a Personal Development Officer, which includes a group exercise and a one-to-one interview, (whose role is to provide support/information for the assessors but has no decision-making function.)</p>
<p>Stage 4 – Offer and Pre-training Screening The Candidate is accepted and provided with a written offer of training subject to medical and psychological screening. The Secretary for Ministries will provide InterHealth with an outline of the expected training programme for this candidate (including expected duration, schedule of study, i.e. at home, evenings, full time, residential, etc). The Candidate completes a Pre-Training Health Screening Form which is returned to InterHealth. Further consultation between the Candidate and InterHealth will occur in following up pre-existing health conditions. For Pre-Training Health Screening, a fitness for training certificate, with any recommendations for reasonable adjustment, will be provided. The Candidate is requested to book and undertake a Psychological Clearance Appointment at InterHealth. For Psychological Clearance purposes, a report will be provided to the Secretary for Ministries giving an opinion on the individual's psychological wellbeing at the date of the appointment, and advising on any areas of risk affecting the individual's ability to fulfil their training. In the case of any uncertainty the Assessment Board would need to evaluate the report and make a decision.</p>
<p>Stage 5 – Training confirmation and commencement The Secretary for Ministries confirms the offer to the candidate of the training post. The candidate commences their training. Subject to the United Reformed Church Assessment Board approval, in their last year they seek a call to ministry from a church/pastorate.</p>
Upon ordination or acceptance of a call
<p>Stage 6 – Acceptance of a call A trainee has sought a call from a church and has been successful in identifying a role for their future ministry. The trainee is provided with a written offer of a ministry position subject to satisfactory medical clearance.</p>
<p>Stage 7 – Pre-Ministry Screening / Pre-Employment screening A full medical with InterHealth is required. A report on fitness for ministry as well as any reasonable adjustments for the role are provided.</p>

Appendix 4

Review of the Role of Synod Moderator

1.1 The Task

In October 2010 the Mission Council of the URC appointed a group under the leadership of Revd Professor Stephen Orchard to consider the role of the synod moderator, with the following terms of reference.

- 1) To develop a new role description for the synod moderator.
- 2) To draft resolutions to amend the Structure of the URC as appropriate.
- 3) To make recommendations regarding the role of the Moderators' Meeting.
- 4) In undertaking the review to:
 - a) consider the issues of responsibility, leadership, authority, authorisation, accountability and episcopacy;
 - b) consider possibilities arising from collaborative working;
 - c) consider and take note of ecumenical work on the issues in 4(a) including episcopate under the Church of England/Methodist Covenant and the Welsh explorations into an ecumenical bishop, and assess their relevance for the URC;
 - d) consider and take note of "The role of the Synod Moderator" paper presented to Mission Council, October 2010;
 - e) consult widely across the councils of the church and other appropriate groups;
 - f) identify wider issues arising from the review in liaison with the Moderators' Think Tank so that these may be referred for further work as appropriate;
 - g) report progress to Mission Council in November 2011.

1.2 Composition of the Group

The Task Group met for the first time in April 2011. It subsequently met on four further occasions including a two day residential meeting. The membership of the Task Group was: Mrs Susan Bush, Revd Sarah Hall, Revd David Hamblin, Ms Linda Harrison, Revd John Humphreys and Revd Professor Stephen Orchard. The group had been chosen to form a representative mix of the United Reformed Church rather than individuals being delegated by a particular group to represent their perspectives. Dr Anthony Berry, a member of the Church of England, was added as a technical consultant.

1.3 Background to the Task

1.3.1 At the outset the Group recognised that a radical review of the role of the moderator was required. Their key role leaves them as the lightning conductors for the problems of the whole Church at every level. The Group wanted to avoid tinkering at the edges, which it was felt would not resolve the problems facing the denomination. It was noted that the URC could be considered a denomination in thirteen parts because each synod has a different approach to its role. It was also evident that widely differing levels of resources in the synods can create problems in carrying out Assembly requirements or complying with government legislation.

1.3.2 Lines of authority are unclear for the moderators; they are not sure to what extent they can direct and to what extent they are consultants. Ideas are often put forward but founder because of lack of clarity or ownership. Assembly staff approach moderators to assist them in implementing ideas but then they fail to be implemented because they fall across various remits or conflict with local policies.

1.3.3 It was acknowledged that part of the over-stretching of moderators is that they get involved in too much detail, often for lack of volunteers or staff to share the work. The Church needs to re-establish the credibility of Assembly and synod structures with local churches. The moderators are highly valued across the Church and are seen at their best when engaged with congregations.

1.3.4 The Review Group recognised that many Assembly initiatives were floated some of which were taken up and flourished in the synods but that the number of these in recent years has been counterproductive in many places. The moderators are caught between their loyalty as officers of the Assembly and their judgement that there are more pressing matters locally. They also have little time to nurture such initiatives and are forced to make choices.

1.3.5 The Group also was aware of the mismatch between employment processes in the URC and current legislation. The central payment of ministers sits uneasily with the local management of ministers by churches. There is a lack of clarity about accountability. The result is that issues such as the underperformance of ministers can take up a significant amount of a moderator's time and create an undue level of anxiety. The moderator is also responsible for initiating formal disciplinary and incapacity processes. The pastoral care/disciplinary, the encourager/compliance roles and the confidant/referee role all embodied in the current job description make it difficult for all aspects of the role to be carried out effectively.

1.3.6 Year by year there has been an increasing level of bureaucratic requirements which sap the energy of moderators, who have become de facto managers of synod systems created to deal with these. An overview of administrative processes within synods suggests that gains would be made from simplification. Some activities could be centralised rather than being done thirteen times. Consideration needs to be given to the possibility of synods sharing resources and working together. This may be particularly relevant for smaller synods where funds do not permit a full complement of staffing resources.

1.3.7 In common with other denominations the URC is in decline and it needs to consider how changes to the role of the Moderator can help the Church to survive and prosper. The role has to be made both more workable and more influential. Ultimately the moderator's role is strategic and key to the mission of the Church.

2 Data gathering

2.1 The Group recognised that it needed to gather data from as wide a perspective of the church as possible:

- 1) All the current job descriptions of moderators were examined to find the areas of difference and commonality.
- 2) The theory and practise of the role was reviewed from the perspective of the synod clerks.
- 3) The staffing structure in each synod was reviewed.
- 4) The views of the church at large were sought via Reform, publicising the terms of reference for the group and seeking comments from readers.
- 5) Students undergoing training for ministry were asked to comment.
- 6) FURY were asked to contribute to the discussions.

2.2 The group began by issuing a general invitation through Reform and the website for submissions relevant to the terms of reference it had been given. This provided a significant source of useful data in a free form fashion often from contributors with long experience of ministry and the moderatorial role. In addition, the group carried out a systematic survey of a representative sample of local churches and ministers.

3 Survey

3.1 A survey was devised, with professional assistance, which was sent to 1 in 4 ministers and local churches. Thirty percent of these were returned and the collated data was tested for statistical reliability. The current synod moderators were also consulted and submitted comments and answers to the survey. The answers to the survey did not determine our recommendations but were extremely helpful in clarifying the issues of most importance to the Church at large.

3.2 The themes of the survey were:

- the respondent (age, gender, role);
- significance of factors affecting the URC;
- significance of issues for the role of the moderator;
- rating of effectiveness of current moderator;
- rating of priority given and extent given to pastoral care;
- assessment of role in inductions and ordinations;
- rating of the extent to which moderators should be and are involved in discipline, grievance, mediation and incapacity procedures;
- rating of the degree to which Moderators' Meetings assist moderators;
- views on what role the Moderators' Meeting should fulfil;
- ecumenical role;
- other work undertaken by moderators;
- other requirements of moderators;
- URC options for the role of the moderator.

A full copy of the survey results can be viewed on the URC website.

3.3 The survey was designed in the summer of 2011 and tested on several respondents for clarity. A random sample of churches from each region was taken. A similar approach was taken to ministers in service and in retirement. Surveys were sent to serving moderators, synod clerks, and Assembly staff.

3.4 287 usable responses were received, a response rate of 30%. The received sample was split in half in order to check consistency of data. The split samples were analysed and found to be not different from each other (i.e. differences were not statistically significant), thus establishing the response validity. Analysis of the data was undertaken using the SPSS computer programme.

4 The findings – a brief summary

4.1 The majority of respondents favoured the retention of the role of moderator and wanted to maintain the scope of the role. There was broad agreement that there should be improvements in selection, pre-appointment preparation and training and in service professional development for moderators, and some neutrality or less conviction that changes here would remove the need to redesign the role.

4.2 Confidence in the Gospel and calibre of ministry were considered very significant in the life and witness of the URC. There were indications that respondents wanted to see a focus on mission rather than a bias towards buildings and finance. Moderators should focus on spiritual and pastoral rather than on managerial or control issues.

4.3 There was a neutral response to creating new structures. Whilst changes in structure were not sought a majority of respondents thought consideration might be given to changing some operating procedures.

4.4 General Assembly and synod initiatives and the Local Ministry and Mission Review were considered of less significance to the work of the United Reformed Church than confidence in the gospel and the calibre of ministry.

4.5 In terms of the significance of issues affecting the moderator's role respondents considered competence and work load ranked highest; the necessity and complexity of the role were next, while the variability between synods was ranked lowest.

4.6 In the question relating to the effectiveness of the moderator, leadership was clearly seen as important, while dealing with disciplinary matters and grievance handling were rated at a similar level. In general respondents considered that moderators should give pastoral care a greater focus than was actually given. It was perceived that moderators did delegate their work but that they were still limited by geography and the number of churches they were responsible for. Moderators were highly rated for their work of filling vacancies. Moderators carry out the vast majority of ordinations and inductions themselves and delegate the task very sparingly.

4.7 In a similar pattern to the extent of pastoral care it was believed that moderators should be involved in disciplinary, grievance, and mediation procedures, but the perception was that they were involved at a lesser level. The response for incapacity involvement was similar. To some extent the moderators were not seen to be fulfilling the expectations people held in this area.

4.8 A high level of support for the role of the Moderators Meeting in assisting moderators was found with provision of support for each other being highest. However all the elements – interpretation of role, enactment of role, meeting others expectations, and gathering new insights – were highly rated, as were the representation of national to local and local to national.

4.9 The views on what role the Moderator's Meeting should fulfil showed a widespread agreement that it should not be a council or a committee. The most strongly supported view was that it should be an enabling or support group for the moderators.

4.10 Respondents gave very widespread support for the inclusion of an ecumenical function in the role of the moderator; this was perceived as of importance to the URC in the future.

4.11 Some further statistical analysis was undertaken to check the coherence of the responses. The statisticians were satisfied that the results were valid within the limitations of a questionnaire approach.

4.12 A bonus of this exercise was that in the completed questionnaires there were a considerable number of additional comments, worthy of consideration, beyond those submitted through the website.

- a) From ministers and churches:
- district councils should be re-established;
 - there was value in the central management of buildings;
 - merge some of the smaller synods;
 - centralise the trusts into one body;
 - increase staff levels in some synods and reduce staffing in Church House;
 - reduce the number of committees;
 - operate with a team of moderators;
 - many comments focused on the URC being half its size since 1972 and the impact this should have on structures.
- b) From moderators- these comments arose from responses to the questionnaire as well as from an occasion when Stephen Orchard joined a Moderators' Meeting:
- queries as to whether they had institutional authority and whether the Church accepted that;
 - they wanted to spend more time on witnessing and on the gospel but this required a diminution of their administrative burden;
 - there was concern about synods having radically different perspectives on the role of moderator. In some the moderator took line management responsibility for all staff and in others moderators took no such role and were not expected to chair committees;
 - many moderators felt unsupported – particularly in the increasing number of tasks coming from Assembly;
 - there was concern about the process of cooperation between moderators and Assembly.

5 Personal episcopate

5.1 A thorough study of authority and personal episcopate was concluded five years ago and was much discussed at Mission Council. The review Group accepted the basic principles of the report of this work and has nothing to add to its understanding of authority within a Reformed Church, although it is recognised that discussions around these areas will long continue. The Group believes its conclusions are consistent with those of the earlier report.

5.2 It is recognised that the term “moderator” is more appropriate for the person presiding over a council of the church than for the continuous pastoral and leadership role within the synod, but the group does not believe that now is the time to consider proposals for any change of the title “synod moderator”. It considered the issues of workload and clarity of purpose to be of more importance and needing urgent consideration.

6 Principles

Assembly is invited to endorse the principles set out below on which a re-drafting of the synod moderator’s role might be based and changes in the operating procedures of the Church as a whole be made. If these principles are agreed there would be further work to be undertaken with synods, Mission Council and central staff to implement the changes by the time General Assembly meets in 2014. This work would take into account the distinctiveness of each synod and the outcomes of various reviews presently concerned with the future of the URC. (The present group is open to a request to carry out such work.) In the event of it being unable to complete this task, because of unforeseen problems which may arise, the outstanding matters will be brought to the 2014 General Assembly for resolution. The principles will need to be developed over the next two years and put into effect by common consent.

Principle 1:

Pastoral Leadership

All the Group’s consultations and discussions confirmed the view that pastoral leadership is the fundamental role of a synod moderator. If asked to explain that in more detail it would take the local pastorate as a model, since moderators are required to be ordained to a ministry of Word and sacraments. In the case of local ministers the Church has certain overall expectations, whether they are paid a stipend or not: the gospel must be preached, the faith must be taught, people must be encouraged and reproved, the leading of the Spirit discerned, the servant leadership of Jesus Christ exemplified. The synod moderator’s job must reflect these same priorities. All ministers can be deflected from these basic tasks. Claiming to be taking up the towel, people get involved in the mundane at the expense of the overall mission of the Church. As he washed feet Jesus was signifying his greater sacrificial ministry, not diversifying into domestic service. The story of Mary and Martha reminds us that becoming engrossed in detail may lead to missing the main aim. The two sisters were both valued by Jesus but the teaching of the gospel was paramount.

Principle 2:

Strategic focus on core role

Most ministers are not vocationally trained to deal with matters of legal compliance and few bring that competence from a former career. The kind of people trained as ministers are intellectually capable of learning to take up these issues, or keeping the accounts, or supervising building work, or a hundred other things which have the potential to take over the time and imagination needed for the core responsibilities of ministry. The temptation then is to become reactive to problems as they arise rather than to address the bigger issue of whether the task is necessary and, if so, who can be found to do it. This may not be able to be stopped altogether, but the Church should not structure the role of synod moderator in such a way that the organisational gifts needed to carry out the core role are absorbed in covering for shortfalls elsewhere in the system.

Principle 3:

Moving the oversight of compliance issues

The Group proposes that some management or administrative tasks at present dispersed to synods would be more effectively and economically provided by one central office, or three or four regional offices, employing people with the appropriate expertise. These offices would be readily accessible by telephone and electronic mail. Local churches and ministers needing specific advice on such matters as child protection, HR issues, responsibilities of local trustees, employment law and so on would be entitled to a speedy and authoritative reply. This is not a personal criticism of those providing such services in synods, sometimes in a spare-time or voluntary capacity, or of Tavistock Place at present. The consequences of getting such advice wrong can be very damaging financially and reputationally. The courts would expect the URC Trust to have satisfied itself that a consistent approach reflecting the current law was being taken in these matters across the whole Church.

Consideration might also be given to the possibility of trust activities being coordinated centrally. The Methodist Church which is three times the size of the URC has a centralised administrative function. A central office would not be without risk, but the risks are more easily addressed than in a dispersed system. In stating this the Group is aware that such conversations are also being explored by other groups.

Principle 4:

A change of ethos to focus on the mission of the local church

The Church's theology declares that the power of the Holy Spirit works in individuals and local congregations, as well as in synods and Assemblies. This principle should be seen to be put into action, as well as declared. The proposals for bringing some services to local churches together at Assembly or regional level is not intended to move power to the centre but to recognise the limits on the resources, human and financial, of a small denomination, and to try to maximise their effectiveness. With it must come a change of ethos, in which the local church is more committed to witness and evangelism and expects to be supported in this from our shared resources, rather than told what to do. The synod moderator's ministry is then focussed on ministers and churches who are trying to understand and develop their mission and pointing them towards resources which are available. The synod moderator should not be burdened with the responsibility for sustaining and managing these resources; that should belong elsewhere, within the synod or the Assembly. There is a widespread fallacy in the United Reformed Church that power lies elsewhere. In the local church it seems to lie at synod and Assembly level or even with a few within the local church itself. The synod often finds itself powerless to effect change at a local level and constrained by Assembly expectations which are burdensome. Assembly officers find great difficulty in making Assembly decisions effective in the synods and local churches. As the survey shows, there is antipathy in some local churches and ministers to initiatives and programmes originating from Assembly or synod. Systems designed to sustain the mission of the Church end up constraining it. This is why the Group speak of a necessary change of ethos and the need for the moderators, as well as the apparatus of synods and Assembly, not only to aspire to encourage and support the work of the local church but to be seen and felt to be doing so.

Principle 5:

The separation of pastoral care and formal discipline

The synod moderator will spend some time as a solver of pastoral problems, by which it is meant fallings-out and misbehaviour in the life of the Church. Addressing these is an essential task but it can be overwhelming unless some limits are set. In questions of discipline and incapacity the Group believes a clear distinction needs to be made between pastoral care and due process as laid down by the rules. The moderator should not be a key person in the due process, i.e. the one who initiates disciplinary

action. This formal role could be undertaken by others, leaving the moderator to minister to both aggrieved and accused parties without expressing a judgement. This process would be made easier if all investigation were to be carried out by people external to the synod concerned. The Church has already identified and trained people with the necessary expertise. Where there are internal quarrels within churches or the synod there should be a system which is independent of the moderator for resolving them. It should offer quick and arbitrary judgement in the proper sense of that word. The moderator is then able to press warring parties to resolve their differences themselves. Where they are unwilling to do so then they must submit to the judgement of others.

Principle 6:

Working together to change procedures

Change will come about even if Assembly were to adopt none of these principles or decide not to set about any reform of the procedures within the Church. The Group believes it would be better to take ownership of change as a whole Church. This would mean taking steps to put the principles into practice by the General Assembly of 2014. This time-scale allows the various ‘think tanks’, including the group behind this report, to join up their thinking. The synods are critical to this process because they provide a means of identifying the needs of local churches and, led by the moderator, addressing them. Some consultations of the sharing of services have already taken place in a positive atmosphere. It is important to build on this. Assembly will need to commission a small group, possibly the one which has produced this report, to carry this work forward with the synods. Some changes can be made without further reference to Assembly, either because they are within the present powers of synods or with the approval of Mission Council if it judges them consistent with the decision of Assembly on this report. Other matters, which require Assembly approval, could be brought to the 2014 Assembly for resolution, including any which prove contentious.

7 Why are changes in our procedures needed?

The Group is aware that in addressing the role of synod moderator it may appear to have exceeded its brief. It was plain early in consideration of the issues that the moderator is a kind of lightning rod for all that is wrong as well as all that is right in the denomination. Part of the overload of the synod moderator arises from attempts to be a large denomination. The Church divides work among synods only to make it more complex than is necessary. No one disputes that it is more efficient to pay stipends from a central office. It follows that other associated human resource issues should be treated in a similar way. Again, Assembly has adopted a policy of resource centres for learning in order to maximise an expensive provision for the benefit of the whole denomination; it follows that in financially tighter circumstances a new structure for national and regional training provision, working with the resource centres for learning, might be appropriate. Formalising the present informal relationships between trainers could improve this situation and deploy the gifts of trainers more effectively for the benefit of the Church and make the trainer’s task more rewarding. All this becomes relevant to the synod moderator’s role, by reducing the responsibility for managing and resourcing a synod structure and offering the opportunity to concentrate on supporting and encouraging the mission of local churches and ministers.

8 Ecumenical considerations

8.1 In reviewing the paper ‘The role of the Synod Moderator’ the Group considers the issues of work-load and clarity of purpose of most importance and needing urgent consideration. With this in mind it concentrated its ecumenical research to considering the pastoral structures of other denominations and their perceived effectiveness. The Group discovered no evidence that these were more or less effective than the URC’s. As there were proposals for changing Methodist Districts and for combining some Church of England dioceses it is not proposing changes in synod boundaries to achieve some form of alignment. A thorough study of authority and personal episcopate in the United Reformed Church was concluded five years ago and was much discussed at

Mission Council. The Group accepts the basic principles of the report of this work and has nothing to add to its understanding of authority within a Reformed Church. It is recognised that the term ‘moderator’ is more appropriate for the person presiding over a council of the church than for the continuous pastoral and leadership role within the synod, but the Group does not believe that now is the time to consider proposals for any change of the title ‘synod moderator’.

8.2 It would further advise that the synod moderator could be relieved of the demands of representing the United Reformed Church in a range of ecumenical situations by designating other people as alternatives. This would be particularly valuable where a synod overlaps multiple dioceses and Methodist Districts. It would be appropriate for the people currently given supplementary pastoral roles in some synods to be so designated.

9 Moderatorial teams and collaborative working

9.1 The Group is aware that some synods have assigned ministers in local pastorates extra responsibilities for pastoral care alongside the synod moderator. Other variations designate area ministries which are effectively subdivisions of the synod. In some synods there are joint areas with other denominations. The Group would encourage such developments where they conform with the principles set out above.

9.2 The Group has given consideration to a proposal to split our larger synods and create more full-time moderatorial posts, involving us in extra costs. On balance it prefers the existing ad hoc arrangements in different synods, so long as there are team meetings of the people involved and the focus of the team is pastoral in the sense of the principles outlined above. The title for such ‘deputy’ moderators should be consistent throughout the United Reformed Church.

10 The way forward

At the present time various review groups are envisioning the future and it is appreciated that Assembly and Mission Council needs time to review the proposals coming from all sources. This concern is addressed in Principle 6, where a process for developing and implementing both recommendations and those of others are proposed.

11 Initial proposals for a revised job description and person specification for the role of moderator:

The references to synod moderators in the Structure and Rules of Procedure of the Church would require little adjustment to comply with our recommendations. References to disciplinary processes in the Structure and to the age of retirement in the Rules would require attention. Apart from these official documents a model job description circulates among synods and is adapted by each to fit their requirements. Below is proposed job description for synod moderators which reflects the Group’s view of what needs to be done, but which may require adjustment when all the other factors have been taken into account. The role of synod moderator is widely defined in the Structure and it is the job descriptions which have grown over the years.

JOB TITLE:	Moderator of XX Synod of the United Reformed Church
RESPONSIBLE TO:	General Assembly through the General Secretary.
STIPEND:	Stipend authorised by the Plan for Partnership will apply.
ROLE OVERVIEW:	<p>To provide spiritual and pastoral care and leadership within the synod, giving confidence for the churches mission both locally and globally.</p> <p>To provide clear personal leadership within the Councils of the Church.</p>

Responsibilities and duties

Churches

1. To encourage and enable local churches and partnerships to engage in strategies leading to growth and renewal.
2. To recognise individual gifts in the churches and committees and foster them for the benefit of the whole synod.
3. To visit and lead worship at churches within the synod.
4. To suggest names of ministers and CRCWs to vacant pastorates in conjunction with Interim Moderators of local churches and to preside (except where a deputy is appointed) at all ordinations and/or inductions of ministers within the synod.

People

5. To offer pastoral care to ministers, CRCWs and their families both personally and through the establishment of collegial teams.
6. To encourage ministers in spiritual growth and development at all stages in their ministry.

Synod

7. To play a key role in developing and realising the synod's vision and strategy by having a clear awareness of priorities and facilitating open discussion within the synod to produce feasible and agreed objectives.
8. To develop a sense of community and coherence across the synod by clear communication and leadership to ministers, churches, officers and committees.
9. To work collaboratively with synod officers/committees to facilitate clarity about priorities and to encourage creativity and new ideas about being Church.
10. To develop productive networks around the synod in order to address areas of deficiency or potential.
11. To chair Synod Meetings.

Wider Councils

12. The Moderator is a member of the Moderator's Meeting; Mission Council and the General Assembly.
13. To be proactive in encouraging fruitful ecumenical activities at a regional level and where relevant represent the synod at ecumenical events.

Person specification

Standing

Ordained minister of Word and sacraments of the United Reformed Church.

Experience

Experience of pastoral ministry.

Experience of working with Church/voluntary organisations on strategic plans.

Experience of leading diverse groups of employees/volunteers in a medium size organisation.

Steering a complex organisation involved in change.

Skills/knowledge

Strong influencing and leadership skills which promote open and constructive relationships at all levels to combine clear personal leadership within a conciliar ecclesiology.

Delegation and team building skills.

Facilitation skills.

Project and change management techniques.

Competent IT skills in e-mail and document handling.

Essential behavioural competencies

Leadership – Takes ownership for delivering objectives by influencing and motivating others. Creates an empowering environment whilst providing clear direction by translating the “big picture” into detailed objectives and critical success factors.

Achieving objectives – by effective implementation.

Strategic perspective – has the ability to establish an overall strategy and translate it into realistic tactics based on a good assessment of priorities, facts, and risks priorities.

Team work and networking – creates united teams committed to success by recognising the contribution of each; invests time to establish rapport and common ground with groups in the synod; cultivates productive networks to enable an understanding of strengths and development needs within the synod.

Drive – focuses energy on the key activities that are important for URC and synod goals. Regularly reviews and monitors progress against objectives.

Planning and organising – knows how much time and resources are needed to complete plans and projects. Looks ahead to spot opportunities, anticipate problems and influence events.

Initiative – is a self-starter and actively seeks opportunities for new approaches to achieve synod objectives. The ability to see opportunities rather than problems. Initiates bold action in support of beliefs. Has the self confidence to allow others to take decisions and use their own expertise.

Communication – communicates effectively at all levels, promoting open communication and sharing of views. Adapts behaviour to suit the situation and anticipates responses and prepares for them.

Development of others – encourages ministers in their work. Identifies their development needs and encourages them to discuss ways of meeting them in a supportive fashion, involving them in tasks designed to develop them.

Relationship building – devotes time to sharing information across the synod. Takes time to understand the needs of others before making proposals or offering solutions. Actively listens and is able to empathise with the views of others.

Cultural and theological flexibility – the ability to understand a wide range of organisation and community cultures and to work effectively with them in a tolerant manner.

Desirable behavioural competencies

Creativity – tends to challenge assumptions and to generate imaginative, innovative and radical ideas.

Persuasiveness – convinces others to own point of view by careful listening and understanding of another's perspective.

Stress tolerance – the ability to make controlled responses in stressful situations such as when faced with hostility or rejection or excessive workload.

Decision making and judgement – considers the short and long term consequences when taking decisions. Knows when to take a calculated risk.

Appendix 5

Proposals for change to the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund

The following resolution was passed by Mission Council in May 2011, and this document was subsequently circulated to all members of the Pension Fund for their responses.

Mission Council supports the recommendations set out in the document *The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund, Proposals for Change* and asks the Pensions Executive and Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee to arrange a consultation with the members of the Fund, and a discussion within the councils of the church, in order that the General Assembly can make a decision on the matter in 2012.

The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund (URCMPF)

Proposals for change

In the light of the deficiency arising in recent valuations of the Fund the Pensions Executive has been considering whether any changes should be made to the benefit structure of the Fund, and if so what these should be. This paper summarises the conclusions of the Pensions Executive which are endorsed by (MoM/Ministries). It should be noted that these proposals are based on our current understanding of the funding position and if accepted would be incorporated into the next valuation of the Fund on 1 January 2012 with a view to amending the Rules at General Assembly in 2012. Should that valuation reveal an unfavourable result compared to our expectations then further changes may need to be brought to Assembly. It should further be noted that some of the proposals are subject to a further consultation with Fund members which could lead to additional revisions.

1 Introduction

The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund has fallen into deficit in recent years through a number of factors. The principal ones being an improvement in the life expectancy of our ministers, which whilst welcomed does represent a greater pension cost as pensions are paid longer, disappointing investment returns over recent years as the economic situation has deteriorated and the need for greater reserves to be held to satisfy a regulatory view of prudence.

We are not alone in facing these challenges and they are being addressed in different ways by all the major denominations in the UK, as they have been by many of the country's private sector employers and latterly by the government as an employer.

2 Over-riding context

In the light of General Assembly's recognition of the Church's responsibility towards its ministers and CRCWs and its continuing tangible expressions of support for ministers to be provided with stipends, pensions and housing at an adequate level we have assumed that this will continue to be the case.

3 Method of pension provision

In the private sector to meet the challenges of funding pension schemes many pension arrangements have now been established on a money-purchase basis. Whilst this limits the contributions to a known amount it transfers risk to individuals and so the deficiencies that we have faced as a Church by reference to improvements in longevity and stock-market fluctuations, are borne by the individual. This does not guarantee that an adequate pension can be provided. The Church's obligation is to care for its ministers unlike those private sector employers whose duty also includes improving the position of shareholders as well as their obligations to their employees. Whilst we have considered other models of pension provision we have concluded that the present approach of providing a final salary pension scheme remains the most equitable and cost effective way of providing adequate income to our ministers and their dependants at a time when they are unable to support themselves. *We, therefore, at this time recommend the retention of the current scheme.*

This means that a minister retiring after a full career in ministry (say 40 years) will receive a pension from the URCMPF of 50% of stipend together with a state pension comprising the basic state pension and the additional state pension. Allowing for housing we believe that this will aim to provide a total net retirement income after also allowing for tax, national insurance, pension contributions etc. of between 85% and 90% of pre-retirement disposable income. Whilst the Government at the time of writing has not clarified its intentions going forward it seems probable that changes will result in a reduction of the state element in the longer term by say 5%.

4 Cost issues

Notwithstanding the comments above the Church does face cost pressures. Much of the URCMPF liability is in respect of current pensioners for whom benefits cannot be changed unilaterally. Similarly no change in benefits can be made in respect of service already completed by current members. The only changes that can be made are to the provision of pensions for new entrants to ministry and the Fund and for the future accrual of benefits by current members. We have looked at a range of options having regard not only to the cost issues but also to the needs of the Church and those likely to have meaningful financial impact are discussed in the following sections.

5 Accrual rate

The pension entitlement currently accrues at the rate of 1.25% (one eightieth) of stipend for each year of membership, leading to a pension of 50% of stipend after 40 years of ministry. We have considered whether this should be reduced but have concluded that the income replacement ratios described in 3 above represent a fair interpretation of the Church's obligations to its ministers. Whilst this may need to be reviewed in the future depending upon the level of State benefit and/or the Church's financial capability we have concluded and hence *we recommend that no change should be made to the accrual rate at this time.*

6 Pension age

The concept of a set age of retirement has now largely disappeared as the government no longer permits (*current pension regulations before parliament*) the compulsory retirement of employees at a specific age. Nevertheless the availability of pension income will remain the main driver behind the individual's choice of a retirement age.

Both the state and non-state pensions have seen the effects of rising longevity. We have seen an increase in the life expectancy of ministers retiring at age 65 of perhaps 8 years over the existence of the URC. Not surprisingly this has proved to be a significant additional cost. The state retirement age is now due to increase for both sexes to 66 by 2020 and currently to 68 by 2046. It is our view that increase to age 68 will occur much earlier. It will certainly be at least that for younger entrants to ministry going forward.

In the past the Church has not slavishly followed the State in its Pension Age and there is no necessity to do so now. We have considered various possible pension ages for the URCMPF and have concluded that the most appropriate is age 68. This would only apply to future service and it would continue to be possible to retire at an earlier age e.g. 65 with a reduction being made in the future service element to reflect the fact that the pension will be payable for longer. This would have a minimal impact on the pension of ministers retiring in the next few years at the current age of 65.

It should be understood that the Pension Age is only the pivotal age at which benefits are calculated. As stated above there is nothing in these proposals which compels a minister to retire at that age. Under the rules a minister can retire either at an earlier age or at a later age with an appropriate adjustment to the pension payable.

For example, if we take the case of a minister who has 30 years membership at age 65 of which 5 years is after the date of change, then should the minister decides to retire at age 65 the pension calculation (using the current stipend of £ 23,232) would be

5 years at 80'ths	$5/80 \text{ times } £23,232 =$	£1,452
<i>This would be reduced by some 18% as it would be payable for three years longer to give:</i>		
	$£1,452 \text{ times } 82\% =$	£1,190
<i>plus</i>		
25 Years at 80'ths	$25/80 \text{ times } £23,232 =$	<u>£7,260</u>
	Total pension	£8,450 per annum

This may be compared with the current pension when no reduction is applied of £8,712 per annum.

Consequently we recommend that a Pension Age of 68 be adopted for the accrual of benefits in the future.

7 Ill-health early retirement

Currently the URCMPF provides a pension on ill-health based on full prospective service to Pension Age, so that, for example, an individual awarded an ill-health pension at age 40 with 10 years membership will receive a pension based on not just the ten years completed but also the 25 years that will not be served until age 65. The pension will similarly be payable for life.

Our current rules ensure that a minister is eligible for an ill-health pension if they are permanently unable to carry out the duties of a stipendiary URC minister or CRCW. There are provisions for the pension to be reduced or to cease if the member recovers. These eligibility rules are unfortunately difficult to follow and can be interpreted to the effect that in some rare cases ministers not in pastoral charge may not be eligible. We therefore propose to rewrite these eligibility rules for current members to make them clearer, there will be no change in their intent.

We do believe, however, that the eligibility rules should be tightened up in one respect. We believe that the URCMPF should not be required to pay an ill-health pension at the full level if the minister is able to carry out a different occupation. In practice we do not see this as materially different in intent from the present rule but will remove a perceived ambiguity. We propose this change should apply to future members only.

Whilst many ill-health retirements occur close to Pension Age a number occur within a relatively short time in ministry. We believe that it is in the interests of the Church that this particular benefit should reflect to a greater degree the experience of a stipendiary minister or CRCW within the URC.

We therefore propose that in the future this benefit shall only be calculated by reference to full prospective service once twenty years of service has been completed. Where less than ten years of service has been completed the pension would only be based on accrued service. For ill-health retirement at intermediate points a uniform sliding scale would apply, so that in the example above the ill health pension would be based on only the ten years served. If ill-health retirement occurred at age 45, i.e. with a further five years service, then a credit of half of the prospective future service would be given. In this case the pension would therefore be based on a service of 25 years being the 15 years completed and ten years being half of the future service. We also propose that in calculating the prospective service this will be not be changed but will continue to be calculated by reference to service to age 65.

This new formula will apply to existing members but they will also be provided with an underpin which will protect the accrued pension. The underpin will continue to be linked to stipend increases in the future and will be calculated as a proportion of the current full prospective pension. The proportion will be the ratio of service at the date the changes commence to the total service completed at the date an ill-health pension commences.

In relation to existing members at the date of change we also propose a further underpin that the ill-health pension will be subject to a minimum of the pension based on the current rules but with the stipend fixed at the level applying at the date of change. In this way there will be no diminution in the ill-health pension that would be payable to a minister retiring on account of ill-health on the day after the change. There would be a gradual reduction depending on service completed and the absence of future stipend increases applying to this underpin as time progresses.

Whilst this paper is primarily concerned with the Pension aspects of the Church's obligations, we note that there is a continuing obligation on the councils of the Church both locally and centrally to provide ongoing support and care to ministers to minimise the likelihood of needing to provide a pension on ill-health whilst also ensuring that in appropriate circumstances application for a pension is made.

We, therefore, recommend a modification to the rules covering eligibility for an ill-health retirement pension in respect of new members.

We further recommend a reduction in the amount of ill-health pension subject to an underpin for existing members.

8 Death benefits

In conjunction with the change of Pension Age to 68 there will be an improvement in benefit levels payable on death before age 68.

The Fund provides a lump sum on death in service before retirement of either two or three times stipend depending upon personal circumstances (three times if there are dependants). At present, therefore, a minister who remains in contributory service after age 65 continues to enjoy this benefit. This will continue to be the case.

The level of a spouse's pension payable on death in service is based on the prospective service of the minister to Pension Age. If the Pension Age increases then this pension will also increase.

We consider the levels of benefit currently payable as doing no more than meeting our obligation to ministers to care for their dependants should they die prematurely, hence we do not advocate a change in these benefit levels.

We note that the financial implications of the small improvement in benefits for an unfortunate few are equally small and that the improvements are a logical consequence of the move to a pension age of 68.

We therefore recommend no change in the calculation of death benefits, accepting the cost of the slight additional benefit to be provided on death.

9 Pension increase after retirement

Our current rules provide for pensions in payment to increase each year by reference to the previous year's increase in the Retail Prices Index subject to a 5% maximum. This is broadly in line with historic legislation.

The government has amended the provisions surrounding state pension increases to reflect not the Retail Prices Index (RPI) but the Consumer Prices Index (CPI). It is generally accepted that due to both the composition of this latter index and its method of calculation the result will be a lower level of increases applying to pensions going forward.

Legislation is being amended so that it will be lawful for any scheme to calculate increases by reference to CPI rather than RPI as at present.

Whilst the legislation is, therefore, permissive it is not over-riding. Each pension scheme must abide with its own constitution and rules. In our case the present rule came into force as part of a previous cost reduction exercise whereby each minister individually consented to the change and the provisions are hard-wired into our rules. Our legal advice is that we cannot change this for current members. In any event we consider it appropriate to seek to maintain an adequate pension throughout retirement and are therefore not of a view that we should seek to curtail this benefit.

10 Pensions increases between leaving the Fund and reaching retirement age (deferred pensions)

Similar to increases to pensions in payment the government has introduced legislation changing the increase we must provide over this period to retirement to be calculated by reference to CPI rather than as at present RPI.

In practice we have relatively few deferred pensioners, representing less than 3% of our liabilities. Should any deferred member return to active membership of the Fund there are provisions in our rules permitting previous periods of membership to be re-instated, as they invariably are.

Unlike the case of pensioner members our rules are hard-wired in the opposite direction so that if we do nothing we will need to use CPI going forward.

Considering the points above *we recommend that no action be taken in respect of Deferred Pensions, in consequence the new legislative minimum will apply.*

11 Contributions

Following each of the last two valuations the Church has asked active members to increase their contribution to the Fund. This has been to share the cost of the improving longevity which directly benefits members between the Church and serving ministers. A consequence of raising the pension age will be that such contributions are payable for a longer period. In view of the proposed increase in pension age we have considered whether a corresponding reduction should be made to the members' contribution rate.

We have concluded that since the financial effects of the proposed change in pension age will only gradually be reflected in members' benefits, and in view of the continuing financial pressures on the Church that it would be inappropriate to adjust members' contributions for this reason as part of this review.

Similarly we have considered whether it would be appropriate to recommend an increase in members' contributions to more adequately reflect the value of the pension and to share the cost to a greater extent with the Church. At present members contribute at the rate of 7.5% of stipend compared to almost 25% of stipend being contributed by the Church.

We have concluded that a further increase should not be recommended at this time but that this may need to be re-visited depending upon the results of the next actuarial valuation.

We therefore recommend no change be made to the members' contribution rate.

12 Membership

Following a previous review driven by financial pressures it was decided not to permit membership of the Fund to ministers over the age of 55 at the date of entry. This was done since it was perceived that pensions cost more the older one is. Instead of providing scheme membership a contribution of 10% of stipend has been made to personal pension arrangements in the few cases to which this applied. The government has now introduced legislation whereby we must provide a pension arrangement of a suitable standard for every minister over the age of 22. Our present arrangements for mature entrants will therefore need to change.

We believe it is appropriate to allow such late entrants into stipendiary ministry to enter the Fund in the normal way. In so doing we:

- meet our obligation set out in 2 above, which the present approach does not;
- reduce discrimination on the grounds of age;
- recognise the changes in work practice whereby a default set retirement age no longer applies;
- reduce the administrative burden (and associated cost) on the Church of running another pension arrangement.

We, therefore, recommend that the Fund admission policy be revised so that membership is available to all stipendiary ministers/CRCWs, regardless of age.

Existing ministers who have not been admitted because of age would be permitted to enter should they wish for their future service. No credit would be given for historic service covered by their personal arrangements.

13 Financial implications

As discussed above the proposals do not in any way affect benefits which have already accrued to serving ministers or pensioners. The Fund deficit is in respect of such accrued benefits and hence the proposals have a negligible effect on the deficit.

Financial savings arise from the reduction in benefits for future service primarily in respect of the proposed change in pension age.

We are advised by our actuary that the proposals above will lead to a reduction in the annual contribution made by the Church to the Pension Fund in the region of £300,000 – £350,000. This is a reduction of some 10% in the Church's annual contribution to the URCMPF.

14 Conclusion

Whilst we are aware that more radical proposals could have been made to the nature of the scheme, the retirement age or the accrual rate, we believe the above proposals are appropriate at the present time. In particular we believe that they provide a way to reduce the Church's contribution to the Fund whilst continuing to meet the Church's moral obligation to care for its ministers when they or their dependants are not in a position to care for themselves.

We accept that it may be necessary to carry out further reviews in the future but commend the results of this review to Mission Council for their further consideration.

Appendix 6

Care and disposal of church furnishings and contents

Action checklist

1.1 Make an inventory of church contents, including fixtures (such as stained glass, memorial plaques, panelling, screens, pulpit, font, pews, musical instruments), and portable objects (furniture, font, lectern, banners, embroideries, communion plate, musical instruments, books, archives). Include measurements and photographs. This should be filed with church records. It has several uses, including insurance claims, reporting thefts, information for scholars, local history researchers.

This could be a time-consuming project, especially for a large church, but it is also an opportunity to engage the whole congregation, especially in providing notes on the significance of some objects. It could also be an opportunity to involve a local history group in the church by asking for their help. The National Association of Decorative and Fine Art Societies (NADFAS) do volunteer work of this kind.

1.2 Check church records for information about gifts, purchases, commissions, loans (dates, source of funds, suppliers). This will also clarify legal ownership and whether any persons or organisations (stakeholders) would be affected if disposal were considered. Find out if any donations were given relating to acquisition of objects, e.g. stained glass.

1.3 Assess the historic significance of these objects, to the church, church families, the local community, and maybe wider significance, such as family history studies, local or national history. It would be worth discussing the care of church records with the local county record office.

1.4 Explore the significance of objects in relation to quality, makers, period of creation, rarity. A local museum or antique dealer could help, but discuss any fees first. The more important the object, the more essential to get a professional opinion and valuation. There may well be a fee for a valuation. Museums do not give valuations.

2.1 There is normally a presumption against disposal, but there may be particular circumstances when it is desirable.

2.2 If disposal is contemplated, have clear reasons for disposal, and clear plans for using the funds raised. The plans must be for long-term benefit to church and, where appropriate, public.

2.3 Determine a disposal plan and communications strategy.

2.4 Consult stakeholders (church members, donors, families connected with object) to see if there may be any problems or opportunities.

2.5 Take advice on how to dispose of the object, after collecting information, and list options. Make this public, at least to church members. Disposal could be through gift to another church, sale to a local museum, public sale or auction. This should be influenced by the importance of the object. The decision to dispose should be made by the Church Meeting.

2.6 Decisions on how to spend any income should be made by the Church Meeting.

2.7 All decisions should be minuted.

Appendix 7

Human Sexuality Task Group

Members:

John Bradbury, Lucy Brierley, Richard Church, Doreen Daley,
Claire Gouldthorp, Val Morrison, John Waller

1 Introduction

1.1 By the time of Assembly the task group will have been in existence for almost four years. It was set up by Mission Council in response to the Commitment on Human Sexuality that was agreed by the Assembly in 2007. Once the group had had time to get to grips with the subject, the immediate task was to address the eleven questions which the Assembly had raised as consequential to the Commitment. Its response to nine of them was included in the Mission Council report to Assembly 2010. The response to the remaining two will be reported later.

1.2 Also in this first phase of its life the task group did some work on the connection between unity and diversity in the life of the church. As a result, some ideas and some questions were also included in the report to Assembly and people were invited to respond. Sadly no response was received.

2 The second phase

2.1 In the period 2010-12 the task group has looked to moving the discussion forward and in the process has dealt with the two outstanding issues from 2007. It has placed particular emphasis on how people discuss human sexuality issues, suggesting that the sensitivity of the subject means that it is best discussed in smaller groups where people know and trust each other. In that connection the task group has promulgated the use of some guidelines on good conversation which were copied with permission from the Methodist Church in Norway. They have been put on the URC website.

2.2 The task group tested its own understanding of the subject by meeting, on separate occasions, representatives of the Group on Evangelism and Renewal and the URC Gay and Lesbian Caucus.

2.3 The task group has kept in touch with the ecumenical discussion of the subject, in particular by following discussions in the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. It has been a particular help that Val Morrison (a co-Moderator of Assembly and also a member of the task group) was present in both of those Assemblies.

2.4 However, the major concern of the group has been to use all the information, ideas and experience that has come its way to consider whether the 2007 Commitment can still be the basis for the United Reformed Church to continue its life in unity and to resolve current questions on human sexuality. With that in mind the task group got permission to set up a major consultation which was held at Westminster College, Cambridge, in September 2011.

3 The Westminster College consultation

In addition to the task group members and those asked to help in leadership roles, membership of the consultation was by invitation. Each synod was invited to nominate two people and an effort was made to ensure that all three of the positions defined in the Commitment were represented. FURY also sent a representative. A report on the

consultation was sent to every synod and was posted on the website: for that reason it is not repeated here. However, from reflections received from some of the participants as well as discussion in the task group itself, some conclusions can be suggested.

- (a) There is no evidence that anyone changed his or her mind as a result of the consultation. The most that was achieved was a better understanding and appreciation of others' convictions.
- (b) The consultation itself provided plenty of evidence that it is possible for Christian people with strong and diverse convictions on sensitive issues of human sexuality to talk together in an atmosphere of mutual respect and concern. However, that is sometimes very demanding.
- (c) Although the Commitment defines people as falling into one of three categories, in fact within each category there are significant varieties of emphasis. Some people feel sympathy with more than one category. Human sexuality is a very complex subject and attempts to simplify it are unlikely to be successful and may damage fellowship.
- (d) However intractable are our differences of conviction, the grace of God is able to overcome them all. The consultation ended around the Lord's Table where, under the Cross, all the participants shared the Peace and ate from the one loaf. Unity is hard but it is the demand of the Gospel.

4 The future of the 2007 Commitment

4.1 The task group is led to the conclusion that the Commitment remains the best basis for the United Reformed Church to order its life and continue its discussion of human sexuality issues. It would be possible to refine the text in some places but that would not change the essential value of the Commitment itself. The value lies in its honesty in admitting the differences of conviction that exist; in its commitment to journeying on together; and in its recognition of the total dependence of all of us on the grace that is given through Jesus Christ.

4.2 There seems no better basis than that with which the Commitment ends:

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.

5 Widening the discussion

The task group has found it difficult to promote any wider discussion of human sexuality issues. Many of the reasons why people are reluctant to enter such discussion have been rehearsed above. However the experience of the consultation has encouraged the task group to produce a booklet and a CD aimed to help people in local churches in their own way and at the right time to discuss issues of our identity and relationships as human beings. It may be difficult but it is also fundamental. The help of the Communications office at Church House and also the Revd Ernie Rea (former head of religious broadcasting at the BBC) in this project is gladly acknowledged.

6 Towards a theology of same-sex relationships

One of the outstanding requests of the 2007 Assembly was for the provision of a theology of same-sex relationships. The task group invited the Revd Dr John Bradbury to present such a theology at the Westminster College consultation and this was heard alongside a traditional exposition of the theology of sexual relationships presented by the Revd Paul Stokes. The task group subsequently discussed how these papers should be released to a wider audience and it was agreed that they should be issued together with the expectation that they would be read together. The papers were sent to all the synods towards the end of 2011 and were published on the website in January 2012. In both cases a paper from the Church of Scotland summarising the present state of medical science on these issues was appended.

7 Legal issues

This was the other area which the 2007 Assembly identified as needing further work. In the event the further thinking was focused around the Equality Act 2010 and its consequences in regard to the registration of Civil Partnerships on religious premises. The result of the work done on this in conjunction with the Law and Polity Advisory Group is presented as a separate paper. It will be seen that the resolution presented draws directly on what has been written above about the Assembly Commitment of 2007. The connection is of fundamental importance.

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Appendix 8

The registration of civil partnerships on religious premises

The text below only applies in England and Wales. It does not apply in Scotland, the Channel Isles and the Isle of Man where the law on civil partnership registration has not yet changed. The Scottish Government has initiated a separate consultation and the Synod of Scotland has made a submission in response.

1 How the situation has been changed by section 202 of the Equality Act 2010 The section repeals that part of the Civil Partnerships Act 2004 which specifically excluded religious premises as places where Civil Partnerships might be registered and as a result the Government has now brought in regulations that make it possible for Civil Partnerships to be registered in church buildings approved for the purpose and for that registration to take place in association with an act of worship, provided the actual registration is distinguished from any religious language or content. There is a requirement that the Registrar must officiate at the registration but s/he may or may not be present for the worship. However no local church can apply for approval unless the governing authority of the denomination (in our case the General Assembly) has agreed that it may do so.

2 The Church's attitude to Civil Partnerships to date

2.1 Following the passing of the Civil Partnerships Act 2004, which came into effect in December 2005, some local churches sought advice as to how they should respond to any request for a service of blessing of a Civil Partnership in church. Mission Council considered this request in the light of a paper that was presented to it and authorised the paper as a resource which could be offered to any local churches seeking advice in future. In essence the paper advised that the response to any request was the responsibility of the local church concerned, taking full account of all the circumstances in each case. This action was reported to General Assembly in 2006.

2.2 When the Assembly passed its Commitment on human sexuality in 2007, it asked a new task group, inter alia, to consider whether the paper needed updating. In 2009 the task group advised Mission Council that, apart from a few details, the only change needed was to base the advice on the Commitment so that it remained consistent with Assembly policy. The matter still remained the responsibility of the local church.

3 How should the Church respond to this new situation?

3.1 It is clear that many local churches will not want to take any action at all on this matter, that others will decide not to seek approval for registration, and that others will want to seek approval for their premises to be used for the registration of Civil Partnerships. Assembly will need to recognise that there is no common mind on this issue. However, there are some guiding precedents. Given that (a) the Assembly Commitment recognises that different convictions are held within the church on the matter of same-sex partnerships and that the difference should be respected, and (b) the Mission Council advice on blessing of Civil Partnerships was that this was a matter for each local church to decide, it seems logical to advise the Assembly in 2012 to pass an enabling resolution allowing each local church to reach its own decision on whether or not to seek approval for Civil Partnerships to be registered within its buildings.

3.2 It almost goes without saying that any local church contemplating considering a resolution to seek approval should only do so after careful preparation. The members need to be given due notice and to be made aware of the basis on which the resolution is brought. Particular note may need to be taken of the views and likely reaction of the minister(s), any minority opinion, other churches in the pastorate, and ecumenical partners. Where a meeting is initially divided, it may be wise to defer a decision in order to give time and prayer to consider the best way forward.

3.3 A possible Church Meeting resolution might be: “The Church Meeting directs the Trustee(s) of the church building to apply for approval of the building as a venue for the registration of Civil Partnerships”.

4 Some legal issues

4.1 The main pieces of legislation to be borne in mind are (a) the Civil Partnerships Act 2004 (as now amended by the Equality Act 2010 section 202), (b) the Marriage and Civil Partnerships (Approval of Premises) Regulations 2005 (as now amended by the Marriage and Civil Partnerships (Approval of Premises) (Amended Regulations 2011)), and (c) the trusts and powers applicable to church buildings under the United Reformed Church Act 1972 (or 1981 in the case of former Churches of Christ buildings), Schedule 1, Part 1.

4.2 Because the regulations governing the registration of Civil Partnerships on commercial premises do not easily apply to religious premises, the Government held a consultation process in 2011 with the churches and others with a view to replacing or amending the Marriage and Civil Partnerships (Approval of Premises) Regulations 2005. The United Reformed Church was able to contribute to that process through its Law and Polity Advisory Group, but inevitably not all its comments were acted on.

4.3 The process for a local church wishing its premises to be approved would be first a resolution of its Church Meeting, which would be forwarded to the trustees, who would then need to make the application to the local authority. In most cases this would be the responsibility of the synod trust body; in a few cases individual trustees would need to act. The advice given is that trustees appointed under the URC Acts would not have discretion to go against the wishes of a competent Church Meeting in this matter if the Assembly had passed an enabling resolution. Equally, trustees cannot act of their own volition without a Church Meeting direction.

4.4 Any Church Meeting contemplating considering such a resolution is strongly advised to get a copy of the necessary forms and a clear explanation of the regulations from its local authority in advance of the decision. In particular, note should be taken of the fact that (unlike marriage services) it will not be possible to incorporate the civil registration into the act of worship. The regulations require a clear separation between the two and there should be no religious element included in the civil registration.

Some other examples of the regulations are:

- a certified copy of the resolution passed by the General Assembly would need to accompany the trustees' application;
- the local authority must give public notice of the application and objections may be registered by anyone who believes the regulations have not been followed;
- it must be specified which part of the building will be used
- a fee must be paid;
- a responsible person, appointed by the trustees and notified to the authority, must be present in the building for an hour before the ceremony and must ensure compliance with the regulations (this role is not the same as that of an authorised person at marriages and it has no connection with the registration itself;)
- approval will be for a period defined by the authority (not less than 3 years), after which renewal must be sought and a further fee paid.

4.5 Concern that the new regulations, when read together with the Equality Act, could expose some churches to claims of unlawful discrimination, has received some publicity. The following advice deals with three easily imagined situations. (a) A church which regularly hosts marriages but which does not seek to be approved for Civil Partnerships to be registered is accused of discrimination against gay and lesbian people. This is not seen as a risk, since the owners of property (religious or otherwise) are not obliged to seek approval for the registration of marriages or Civil Partnerships. (b) A church building is approved and then the Church Meeting changes its mind and refuses all couples seeking registration of their Civil Partnerships. This has the potential to be a problem but it would be possible not to seek renewal at the end of the current term. (c) A church is approved for the registration of Civil Partnerships but wishes to reserve the right to consider each application on a case-by-case basis. Most churches operate such a policy in regard to marriages and there is no reason why they should not do so in regard to Civil Partnerships, provided the refusal is not on the grounds of a protected characteristic.

4.6 No minister or worship leader can be compelled to preside at a service if, on grounds of conscience, s/he feels unable to do so. A church which wishes such a service to take place must arrange for someone else to lead it.

4.7 The above is a summary of some of the legal issues involved. It does not claim to include all relevant legal issues.

5 Shared church buildings in joint use

There are an increasing number of places where a church building is shared with one or more other denominations. The regulations appear to be particularly restrictive in this case, whether the sharing is formal under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969 or the informal giving of hospitality to another congregation. If a building is in United Reformed Church ownership and the Church Meeting wishes to consider a resolution seeking approval for the registration of Civil Partnerships, it will need to provide evidence of consent by the governing authority of all other religious organisations using the building. If the building is in the ownership of another denomination, the initiative will need to come from that denomination anyway; and if a purpose-built shared church is held by trustees for the purpose of a sharing agreement, a URC proposal to seek approval would need to command general support before those trustees could act upon it.

This paper now goes on to look at some wider issues that may need clarifying for those coming new to the subject.

6 Concerning services of marriage and civil partnership

6.1 If the advice above is followed, and if a local church decides to seek to be approved for the registration of Civil Partnerships, both kinds of service would contain two distinct elements. On the one hand there is the civil element, in which certain statements and promises required by law are made and documents are signed. The other is the religious element in which the covenant between two people is surrounded by prayer and related to Scripture and in which God's blessing is sought.

6.2 In some countries it is not allowed for the two elements to take place at the same time and place. And indeed there are some people in this country who prefer first to be married in a registry office and then to come to church for a blessing.

6.3 The distinction is important because it makes clear what is involved in passing an enabling resolution in response to the Equality Act. First it enables local churches to allow the legal part of a Civil Partnership to be registered on their premises. Second, it enables local churches to decide that it is in order to complement the making of a Civil Partnership with prayer and Scripture in church. The approval would only enable such things to happen: it would leave each local church to decide on each occasion whether or not a particular Civil Partnership could be registered on its premises.

7 Inconsistency

7.1 There is a significant theological inconsistency in the advice accepted by Mission Council in 2006 and 2009, and now in this paper. The task group believes it should be named. The inconsistency lies in the fact that, while one church may believe that God blesses Civil Partnerships and another may believe the opposite, they cannot both be right. Reflection shows that theological inconsistency is not something new among us. One church may pray for God's blessing on a particular armed conflict while another will not because it believes that the conflict is contrary to God's purpose. One church will as a matter of policy welcome children to Holy Communion whilst another will feel that adult faith is required of those who receive the Sacraments. Of more obvious relevance, one church may allow a couple who have both previously been divorced to marry in church and so offer God's blessing, while another will refuse because it believes God does not bless such a union. Or again, one church may be happy to welcome a cohabiting couple into its fellowship while another will first seek a change of lifestyle. To remove all the inconsistencies would lead to the fragmentation of the church, but the task group believes it is healthy for them to be named, recognised and wrestled with – but not fought over. It is by the grace of God, not by human conflict, that the church finds its way through inconsistencies.

7.2 It is also undeniable that an enabling resolution would lead to inconsistency between one church and another. In some places Civil Partnerships would be complemented by worship while in others they would not. That is inevitable so long as the Assembly stands by a Commitment which recognises significant differences of conviction. The hard question has to be faced: which is better, inconsistency, or the sort of pain and sense of injustice which has accompanied previous attempts to find a common mind on same-sex relationships? A further question is, given the variety of human life and relationships, is it not inevitable that sometimes people have to accept things with which they do not agree for the sake of fellowship? That in turn can lead to inconsistency.

8 Common ground

The issue of same-sex relationships divides, not only the United Reformed Church, but the whole of Christendom. Yet this is not an absolute division. There is common ground between those on both sides (and in the middle) of the debate. All agree that at the heart of God's nature, the Trinity, there is relationship. All agree that within God's purpose human beings have a sexual identity. All agree that deep personal relationships can give immense value to human life. All agree that bad personal relationships can be very damaging to human life. All agree that the best relationships are based on love, trust and faithfulness. All agree that such relationships are the best basis for the family and for society. It is easy to follow these statements with the comment, yes, but we don't agree on same-sex relationships. True though that is, the common ground has a significance that cannot be ignored.

9 Is that it?

Yes, so long as we all recognise that adopting this resolution leaves us in exactly the same situation of differing convictions regarding same-sex relationships. Because we have those convictions, some will see this as a step too far, and others as a step not far enough. We can only continue to walk together so long as we trust each other to consider each decision before us in a prayerful and sensitive spirit. We will need to respect one another's integrity as disciples of Jesus.

Appendix 9

Westminster College

£7 Million Appeal

Background

1 In 2010 General Assembly authorised a £7 million appeal to finance the redevelopment of Westminster College, commended the appeal to synods, churches and members, and committed to it £1 million from central Church funds. We now report on the progress of the appeal and the prospects for success.

Thank you!

2 We have been overwhelmed and moved by the generosity of the people of the United Reformed Church, the Church we serve, and our report must begin with a very large and sincere 'thank you' to all those synods, churches and members who have already given. We have been glad to receive donations of all sizes, from across the Church, often bearing with them good wishes and prayers. It's been good to hear of churches digging deep into their resources or putting on fund-raising events – from sponsored hymn sings to cake sales. We are deeply grateful and we give you all our promise that we will use every penny as well as we can to make Westminster a resource for the Church for years to come.

What's the timescale?

3 The Governors plan to begin the main construction phase of the College's redevelopment in July 2013 and to finish it within about 15 months; given that timing, it is our endeavour to reach the appeal target by the autumn of this year. The final outcome will be much clearer by the time General Assembly meets, when we intend to report orally. Accordingly we ask readers, when interpreting the figures given in this report, to keep in mind that we expect the results of promotional work already carried out, and in progress, to become apparent during the intervening months.

Appeal activity

4.1 The campaign has been conducted from the outset by teams of volunteers reporting to a campaign executive which meets monthly. A small firm of fundraising consultants has been appointed to advise us and maintain momentum, and we have engaged a part-time campaign secretary. An expenses budget was approved (and is regularly monitored) by the Governors; the budget total is equivalent to 3.7% of the appeal target, which compares favourably with proportions typical in the industry of between 12% and 15%. Our consultants are not remunerated in relation to the money raised, but receive an agreed fee.

4.2 Based on preliminary research, we identified several distinct constituencies of potential donors, to each of which we assigned a team of volunteers, and so the planning phase began. We also began work on the promotional material with advice from the John Lewis Partnership and the appeal was launched in February 2011.

4.3 The College had already appropriated its free reserves to the appeal and personal gifts were made at the outset by governors, College committee-members and staff (collectively known as the Home Team). During the spring and summer we visited every synod moderator and appropriate synod committee and later attended synod meetings. Copies of our brochure and supporting DVD went out to every church in September. Meanwhile, an enthusiastic team led by a former student has conducted an effective campaign by mail amongst Westminster's alumni and friends.

4.4 In the late autumn we turned our attention to constituencies outside the denomination, principally to charitable trusts and foundations, followed in the new year by contacts with our academic neighbours and by the development of a business community team.

4.5 The campaign council, chaired by the Revd John Marsh, is an important element in the governance of the appeal. Its members are drawn from across the denomination and they have met regularly since early in the campaign to review, challenge, encourage and advise the campaign executive.

Achievement

5.1 The pledge of £1 million by General Assembly, together with the College's own contribution, constitute major gifts and will be supplemented, when sold, by the proceeds of certain valuable artefacts not required for the core work of the college. The Home Team has exceeded its target of £50,000, whilst alumni and friends are closing in on a similar target. These are comparatively small but strategically crucial building blocks in the campaign. Side by side with them, synods have committed £2,255,000, whilst churches and members have given a further £250,000.

5.2 As the following chart shows, at the time of writing the appeal has raised in cash and pledges a total of £4,500,000, leaving £2,500,000 still to be raised.

SOURCES OF FUNDING		
	£	£
Raised to date		
College:		
earmarked investments	880,048	
United Reformed Church:		
pledged from central funds	1,000,000	
pledged and given by synods	2,255,000	
pledged and given by churches and members	248,361	
Other:	119,523	4,502,932
To be raised		
College:		
realisable assets	1,200,000	
Unfunded balance:	1,297,068	2,497,068
		£ 7,000,000

Looking forward

6.1 We are now addressing the remaining unfunded balance of around £1.3m. Most synods have now made their decisions but we are continuing to receive a steady stream of gifts from churches: 190 (one in eight) have so far given but, understandably, many are taking time to consider their gifts, for some have projects of their own to think about. The most unresponsive constituency has been the links which both the College and the Church undoubtedly have with institutions and former students around the world: warm words have perhaps been tempered by the cool economic climate, for they have not yet been matched by donations on the scale we had hoped.

6.2 Taking all this into account, we aim to raise something over £1m from charitable trusts, our links with colleges and universities, and local businesses and individuals. Westminster is a listed building and so (having regard to General Assembly resolution 41 of 2007) we are also preparing an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Maintaining momentum

7.1 We have been greatly heartened by the encouraging remarks made by both synods and churches when sending their gifts and, with this in mind, we shall continue to keep both donors and potential donors in touch with the developing campaign by newsletter.

7.2 In July we shall also be holding a patrons' dinner at which the principal guest and speaker will be the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, who is one of our patrons. This will be an opportunity to reach people who, through their influence or personal circumstances, might be able to contribute substantially to the appeal. It will also enable us to thank some of those who have already helped us.

Conclusion

8.1 All of us working on the appeal have felt affirmed by the most generous response by synods and churches, and we are so very grateful. We believe that amongst the charities and other bodies to whom we are applying and through the patrons' dinner there are resources with the potential to enable us to reach our target. We have identified sources from which the sum yet required might come and, whilst the target is not yet secure, we expect the situation to become much clearer during the coming months.

8.2 We believe that we are responding to God's calling. Westminster's development plan is, we believe, a necessary and visionary investment in the future mission and ministry of our Church. At this critical stage of the appeal we invite your prayers for its completion and success. Westminster continues to serve the United Reformed Church, and our God, to whom be all praise.

Susan Durber
Principal

Brian Long
Appeal Convener

March 2012

Appendix 10

Vision4Life Final Report

1 Introduction

1.1 This report includes three main strands:
 Reflection on the results of the Vision4Life survey, conducted between August and September 2011;
 A commentary on responses from the synods;
 Reflections by the steering group at its final meeting in November 2011.

1.2 A spreadsheet of Vision4Life events is also available detailing events held under the Vision4Life banner over the three year period which included contributions from steering group members. A commentary on the website is also available. Prepared by Paul Snell, our webmaster, this gives the facts and figures about website use over the three year period.

2 The survey – a snap shot of life in the URC

2.1 The survey

2.1.1 590 invitations to take part in the Vision4Life survey were sent out. Some reflected feedback from more than one church where a single contact person had been named.

2.1.2 We received 139 replies of which 125 were completed surveys and 14 were incomplete. That represents a 23.5% return rate, which is a good percentage for a survey instrument of this kind and suggests that correspondents were motivated to complete the survey.

2.2 Pattern of sign ups

2.2.1 Around three quarters of the signups came before the Bible year started which suggests we had got our message out well. A further 25% signed up during the Bible year, with less than 1% of signups during the Prayer year or Evangelism year. This means that most churches (over three quarters) will have completed the three years of Vision4Life by November 2011 or soon after.

2.3 Materials used

2.3.1 91% of respondents used one or more Vision4Life booklets. 63% used material from the website at some stage, while 28% designed their own materials. 14% used named material from somewhere else.

2.3.2 The materials were used primarily in churches services (49%) and house groups (46%). One per cent used the materials with community groups. If not necessarily very creative, this suggests that the material was used by church groups large and small as the steering group had hoped.

2.3.3 Over 80% described the material as useful or very useful. Only 11% used the neutral category and none used a category below this to rate the material. Over 80% also said the material was accessible, with 12% using neutral or difficult to describe the accessibility. These figures suggest that we had hit the spot with the material.

2.4 Who helped?

The synod training and development officers were the main supporters of Vision4Life.

2.5 Events

Although 75% of correspondents had not attended a Vision4Life event outside the local church, half had organised Vision4Life events in their churches. These ranged from prayer vigils or other forms of prayer, evening discussion sessions and study groups, themed weeks and evangelistic events. A third of these churches had taken part in the 24/7 prayer event in Holy Week 2010. Vision4Life events were actively resourced by members of the steering group.

2.6 Transforming the Church

Most churches indicated that they could see changes resulting from their Bible study and prayer. Only 8% saw an impact from evangelistic activities, but the Evangelism year was not over when the survey went out and might indeed take longer to have an effect if churches were doing 'Thinking Ahead', which required forward planning. However, there were churches who when asked what had changed said: 'Alas not much'.

2.7 What the numbers do not say

2.7.1 We cannot say why the other 75% did not reply to the survey. However, a number of respondents said that their churches had not had time to implement Vision4Life more fully, and this is likely to be a factor in the non replies. Whilst understanding that 'not having time' for something can mean a multitude of things, I do wonder if as a denomination we are sometimes not focused enough. Vision4Life provided a focus, and some liked that. Others clearly did not. But for those who grasped it, results from the survey suggest something positive, with some proviso for the fact that transformation of the Church takes time and is not something humans can do alone.

2.7.2 The results confirm that the United Reformed Church is still a broad Church. There are as many who liked computers and web based initiatives as those who did not. There are those that are happy with material that comes from the centre and other who do not want further initiatives, at least not at the moment.

2.7.3 A typical Vision4Life church probably signed up before Bible year, relied upon the Vision4Life booklets, dipped into web resources from time to time, used the material in services and/or house groups, occasionally used it elsewhere, and had at least one Vision4Life focused event during the course of the process, probably on Bible or Prayer rather than Evangelism. It believes the issues are important and is thinking of what to do next.

3 A view from synods

3.1 Responses were also received from five synods that had signed up in their own right.

- 3.2 A range of strategies at synod level were credited for helping Vision4Life to work:
- having enough time to promote it properly. One synod appointed three advocates in place across the synod. All were kept busy;
 - one synod had offered workshops around each of the themes at synod meetings;
 - another offered substantial presentations at synod meetings, one each year. The advocate explained the rationale, introduced the materials, gave examples of how to produce materials and encouraged people to contribute these;
 - another ran a specific theme event each year aimed specifically at worship and fellowship group leaders;
 - the website had been found useful;
 - asking churches to sign up gave them a feeling of ownership.

3.3 Responses to Evangelism

There were indications that some local churches had found the Evangelism year more difficult than the other two. This is how that looked to the synods that responded:

- the Bible and Prayer themes were more user friendly than Evangelism. Evangelism suggests that we actually have to go out and do something

- or at least talk to people whereas prayer and Bible we could probably ‘get away’ with doing amongst ourselves;
- the ordinary person in the pew would like to compartmentalise evangelism and say, “We only have to do it now and then!”
- people found the final year less ‘useable’ and could not connect it to the changing face of the Zero Intolerance campaign;
- there was a positive response to *Thinking Ahead*. Otherwise, the Evangelism Year received much less enthusiasm. Synod events were not well attended;
- “I’m guessing that many people are scared of the E-word, though we tried to avoid using it, preferring to talk about communication; but they know!”
- “I went to one church who said ‘we don’t do evangelism’. Two hours later they were excited at who and what they were and wanted to let more people know.”

3.4 Responses of churches

Synods were asked about the sort of responses they had observed to Vision4Life from local churches.

- “In some places there has been enthusiasm and a commitment to following this through. In other places not. I suspect that a minister’s response to Vision4Life tends to determine the way in which it is advocated in a congregation (again nothing new!)”;
- people in churches started talking about the concepts of Bible, prayer and evangelism easily and openly;
- there were instances of different approaches to the material being shared amongst churches;
- the fact that this was coming from a broad theological base was the single biggest selling point. Synod advocates could go anywhere with it and be well received, unlike some other programmes.

3.5 Doing Vision4Life again

Synod feedback indicated that any repeat of Vision4Life should take into account the learning that had happened. Churches had moved on and would be starting from a different place. There was a suggestion that the three themes should be interwoven in future.

3.6 After Vision4Life

Synods also explained what they were planning to do next that was building on Vision4Life:

- we are exploring the ways this might be developed for our synod and are planning to provide material for Holy Week/Easter 2012;
- many of the materials/resources available have still to be discovered by many. The churches would benefit from high-profile reminders. The Bible is for life and not just for 2008-2009! Don’t shut down the Vision4Life website; promote it!
- Vision4Life reinvigorated at least a third of the churches in one synod to the extent that some had indicated that they would be using the themes on a rotating basis over the next three years as a continuing focus for their life and work.

3.7 Feedback to the Steering Group

The synods were asked if they had any feedback for the Vision4Life steering group. They said that Vision4Life achieved a good balance between work being ‘done at a distance’ as well as having local church participation and involvement.

4 Reflections by the Steering Group

4.1 At their final meeting on 16 November 2011 the steering group asked themselves, ‘What are the important things that happened as a result of Vision4Life?’

4.2 Beginnings

Overall, the Steering Group perceived the Vision4Life process to have been the result of a meeting of hearts, souls and faces across the church in which real people had real conversations about the same Jesus. When initially meeting together, before the process began, they might have seemed an unlikely group. But through listening to God and each other they found the common denominator and initial focus which was the Bible.

4.3 Leadership

4.3.1 This would not have been possible without some key leaders. David Cornick called the group together out of the *Catch the Vision* process that preceded it. John Campbell knitted together the initial meeting. He drove it for the first year. It was his vocation. We are grateful to the time, energy and creativity he gave to it.

4.3.2 Once the process got underway others took on roles that shaped it. Francis Brienen as secretary for mission had an oversight role on behalf of the Mission Committee. Paul Snell served as webmaster. Janet Lees became the coordinator, a role in which she was able to use her creative and research skills to good effect.

4.4 Volunteers

A wide network of contributors was vital to the energy and sustainability of the process.

4.5 The process

4.5.1 It has been very important for the Church to experience this as a process. Vision4Life was a movement of the Spirit. It didn't fit the usual structures. It challenged the church to fly! We moved easily into a different kind of working. Yet the question remains 'Would it work elsewhere?'

4.5.2 People who do things for the denomination are usually overcommitted. It was good, therefore, to have a part time coordinator.

4.6 Beyond the URC

4.6.1 The United Church of Canada expressed interest in Vision4Life. They were excited about the potential it offered for crossing the liberal – evangelical divide. In the UK the Congregational Federation developed its *Growing Disciples* programme after conversations that included John Campbell and Janet Lees.

4.6.2 However, some of our own LEP churches found it difficult to work with Vision4Life due to perceived competing demands from other partner denominations.

4.7 Its place in the Church

4.7.1 One steering group member who had been a synod training officer at the beginning of Vision4Life had found it difficult to grasp what it was about and what would be required from her. Vision4Life was instigated by 'the system' but had freedom from it. Later, it was integrated into 'the system', which gave it further energy.

4.7.2 A steering group member compared Vision4Life to 'manna spread out for us'. We collected it; but now what should we do with it? Vision4Life emphasised the common vision. We had to work at finding the highest common factor. But not all of the denomination relates together as 'We' people. Some were suspicious of central initiatives. The steering group recalled that the process did not begin with any expectations of what a typical church would do. They had hoped and prayed but tried not to impose, believing that local churches knew their situation best. More than half the churches signed up to Vision4Life in the first year. Some churches never signed up yet still used it.

4.7.3 The steering group was encouraged by the responses at synod level. They are also grateful to Susan Durber who linked the Prayer Handbook to the Vision4Life themes.

5 Summary and conclusions

5.1 Vision4Life happened because a group of people set aside quality time to dream dreams and see visions. We know some good local stories: Bible study groups were started as a result of Vision4Life, lay involvement has increased with elders taking prayers, groups and services. Vision4Life has provided a focus for churches in vacancy and people are keen to tell their stories as a direct result of the Vision4Life Evangelism year.

5.2 We have enjoyed working on Vision4Life. It has been a challenge and we give thanks to God for the support, encouragement and enthusiasm that we have found within the steering group and more widely. We commend this report to the General Assembly.

Janet Lees
Vision4Life coordinator
30.11.2011

Church 2012
United
Church 2012
Reformed
Church 2012
Church

Appendix 11

Zero Intolerance Final Report

Steering group members:

Lawrence Moore, Revd Roberta Rominger (co-chairs)
 Lucy Berry, Francis Brienen, Karen Campbell, Revd Martin Hazell, Gill Nichol,
 Revd Peter Noble, Simon Peters, Revd Fiona Thomas, Revd Mike Walsh

1 Introduction

1.1 Zero Intolerance was an initiative to proclaim the message of the welcome of God in Jesus Christ through advertising in the public media. It was founded on the conviction that “welcome” is God’s first word to us in Christ, calling us into that relationship by which we become “God’s people, transformed by the gospel, making a difference”. It invited churches to strive to embody that welcome and provided training materials to assist them.

1.2 When first proposed, the declared purpose of the initiative was to advertise the United Reformed Church, which everyone agreed was largely invisible within the British Church scene. The programme received Mission Council’s blessing and a Mission Support grant from the Council for World Mission on this basis.

2 The story 2010-2012

2.1 At the 2010 General Assembly the steering group reported that partnership negotiations with the United Church of Christ U.S.A. and its “God is still speaking” campaign had failed. The early months of 2010 were spent in explorations into the identity of the United Reformed Church to establish the message for a URC-specific campaign. We hosted online webinars to survey opinion among URC and ecumenical participants. Steering group members also invited themselves to places where URC people were gathering, including elders meetings, synod events and Mission Council, to request a discussion: “Tell us about a time when you felt most passionate or excited about something the URC has been or done or said.” These discussions were energising and inspiring and many themes emerged, particularly around the Church’s courage in following the Spirit. The theme of welcome emerged in every conversation with stories from people who had experienced rejection or disapproval elsewhere, whether for reasons of discrimination or belief, but had found warm acceptance in the URC.

2.2 An advertising brief was prepared and an advertising agency, This is Real Art, was instructed. The target audience was identified as those people who normally experience themselves as unwelcome in churches. At the time that Assembly met in 2010, steering group members had just seen the first sketches of the adverts that would become the Zero Intolerance materials.

2.3 Throughout the autumn of 2010 the Revd Fiona Thomas, secretary for education and learning, led a team of synod training officers, mission enablers and children’s and youth development workers in creating training materials for churches. They surveyed existing resources on welcome and, rather than reinvent the wheel, they commended some of these resources for use by churches in their stage of initial exploration. However, radical welcome offers an invitation to “the other”, bringing us face to face with our prejudices. It was vital that churches should do some work on prejudice before affiliating with Zero Intolerance. They also needed to be clear about their boundaries. The stranger is welcome but his/her behaviour might be inappropriate. Churches needed to be confident about the “no” they might have to say. They needed to explore some “what ifs”. Fiona and her training team created materials to enable these explorations and discussions.

2.4 Two consultations were held at the Windermere Centre in November/December 2010. Members of 30+ designated “research and development” churches were invited to see the posters which had been produced and to give a trial run to some of the new training materials. Synod moderators, clerks, training officers, mission enablers and CYDOs also participated. These consultations included time for theological exploration and Bible study and worship of the God who time and again has pressed his people to be more inclusive than they would otherwise be.

2.5 Following the consultations, a website called “Askit” was established for further discussion of the ZI initiative.

2.6 The consultations resulted in a refocusing of the campaign. The URC has strong ecumenical convictions and the idea of advertising our own denomination, as though it were somehow better than our partners, was uncomfortable from the start. The URC has no monopoly on the welcome of God in Christ. It was decided to drop the URC logo and embrace a new purpose, namely to create a campaign of radical welcome which could be freely offered to like-minded partners across the denominations and around the world. This was reported to CWM, the Mission Committee, the Communications & Editorial Committee and the Youth & Children’s Work Committee in January 2011.

2.7 Another outcome of the consultations was the concept of companionship. There was strong feeling that in order to take the challenge of the campaign seriously, churches would need the assistance of a skilled facilitator who could ask the difficult questions and support them in their discussions. Plans began immediately for the training of a cohort of companions.

2.8 Given the volume of work to be completed, an application was made to the URC Legacy Fund so that Lucy Berry could be engaged as a strategic consultant. Lucy took responsibility for asking the challenging questions and helping us answer them, liaising with the ad agency, overseeing communications both internal and external, and addressing issues raised by the churches. Denese Chikwendu continued in her role as coordinator overseeing the practical aspects of the production and distribution of materials, maintaining a database of local church involvement, and responding to enquiries.

2.9 In March 2011 Zero Intolerance was unveiled at the meetings of all 13 synods. A booklet with pictures of the adverts was produced and sent to every church as a tool for discussion in elders and church meetings. Steering group members made visits around the URC wherever there were groups of churches wanting to hear more.

2.10 Synod contact people were recruited as channels of communication. Each synod established a mechanism for recruiting and training companions and assigning them to churches.

2.11 In order to become a ZI church, a congregation needed to move through three stages. First, it would examine its welcome through use of a resource such as the Church of England’s “Everybody Welcome” pack. Then, if the church meeting agreed to go further, the church would opt into the campaign and would be assigned a companion. Finally, when the church and its companion agreed that the church was ready, it would enter into a covenant in an act of worship, committing itself to offer radical welcome. It would then be listed on the ZI website ready to receive newcomers.

3 Responses

3.1 Zero Intolerance provoked strong responses from the moment it was presented to the synod meetings. Some people saw it as one of the best things the United Reformed Church had ever done, praising its bravery and vision. Others loathed it, either because of its message or because they did not like the adverts. Some were uncertain whether it was appropriate to advertise the Church or the Christian faith.

3.2 A critical moment came in March 2011 when the question was asked, “Is it possible for a church that subscribes to the Evangelical Alliance statement on homosexuality to be affiliated with the campaign?” After long discussion, the steering group agreed a reply and posted it on the Askit website. Recognising the full spectrum of belief in the United Reformed Church, they said that congregations of every theological stance were welcome to join the campaign, provided they agreed to offer a genuine welcome to anyone who came through their doors. A position which insisted that a homosexual couple should sever their relationship and either remain celibate or seek reorientation towards heterosexuality was deemed to be inconsistent with radical welcome.

3.2 Mission Council met in May 2011 at the height of the controversy. A resolution was brought that the campaign should not proceed until it had been thoroughly reviewed and approved by the councils of the Church. A counter-resolution from the Mission Committee was ultimately amended and passed. This said that preparations for the campaign launch should continue while the campaign was thoroughly reviewed. A review group was appointed and given the authority of Mission Council to rule either that the campaign should go forward or that it should be terminated.

3.3 The review group worked through the summer consulting with churches and synods, interrogating the steering group on the full range of issues raised, and noting the changes which were being made to the advertising materials in response to comments from the churches. At the end of August they gave permission for the campaign to continue subject to the satisfaction of various criteria. They endorsed radical welcome as a legitimate expression of the gospel for our time and commended it to the churches.

3.4 One of these criteria was the establishment of a liaison group made up of members of the Mission Committee and the Communications & Editorial Committee. Their role was to be “critical friends” on behalf of the committees, holding the steering group to account, ensuring that the review group’s requirements were met and reporting to their committees.

3.5 The review group had also mandated a series of events in the synods. Called “Internal Launch +1”, the purpose of these events was to give new impetus to the campaign after the long period of questioning and review. Events were held in most of the synods and were a good opportunity to answer questions and clarify expectations.

3.6 In September 2011 the general secretary began visiting partner denominations, sharing the campaign with mission and communications staff. She visited twelve denominational offices and several agencies briefing the URC’s partners on what was intended to happen and exploring how their churches might become involved in a second, ecumenical phase of the campaign. Response was passionately enthusiastic in some quarters and lukewarm in others. One frequent response was, “You have shown me the Church that I personally long to belong to.”

4 The conclusion of the story

4.1 The stress of controversy and opposition took its toll on the steering group. Relationships became strained. In November 2011 Denese Chikwendu tendered her resignation. It was clear to the steering group that if there were to be a new staff post, it should be for a project manager rather than a coordinator. Precious momentum was lost. The steering group is grateful to Gill Nichol who took over the communications aspect of the campaign during the vacancy.

4.2 Take-up was slow in the churches. By early 2012 over 500 churches were exploring their welcome. However, the provision of companions for those wishing to opt in was proving difficult. With hindsight, the commitment to recruit and train 500 companions was enormously ambitious. We are grateful to all who came forward to offer themselves for training and we hope that their skills will be used in the future.

4.3 The launch date for the ad campaign had been postponed several times, and by the time Mission Council met in March 2012, it was clear that another postponement would be needed. Mission Council received a resolution from Mersey Synod that the campaign should be terminated. This resolution was withdrawn in favour of the following, which was offered by two synod moderators:

Mission Council strongly encourages all churches to continue to work on developing their radical welcome, recognising the synergy with *vision2020* outcomes, but discontinues the ZI Campaign with immediate effect.

This resolution was passed by agreement and the steering group was requested to arrange for the handover of responsibility for ongoing work on radical welcome to the appropriate committees. Mission Council thanked the steering group, noting that the focus on radical welcome had enriched the life of the Church.

4.4 The steering group and liaison group met for a final time on 29 March 2012. It was agreed that the introductory pack and companions' toolkit should be edited to remove all references to Zero Intolerance and that in this new form they should be available to the churches alongside other URC resources. The Mission Committee will be responsible for any further encouragement of the practice of radical welcome in the context of ongoing implementation of *vision2020*. The steering group strongly advocated the continuing provision of companions to churches wishing to take the challenge of radical welcome seriously, but it will lie with the synods to decide whether they wish to pursue this. It is important not to abandon the churches which have been deeply committed to the spiritual and practical journey of radical welcome.

4.5 There are many lessons to be learned from the Zero Intolerance experience. At key points ZI failed to deliver clear communications. The goalposts moved significantly several times, from a "God is still speaking" campaign, to a URC-specific marketing and identity campaign, to an ecumenical initiative. This amount of evolution might have been possible in a smaller, more centralised organisation but was not compatible with conciliar decision making or a dispersed family of congregations. Also, it was unfair to expect synods to deliver practical support without consulting them thoroughly and giving them warning well in advance.

4.6 All of these obstacles could have been overcome if the atmosphere had been one of, "We are committed to this – let's make it work!" But given the level of controversy surrounding ZI, that support was not universally forthcoming.

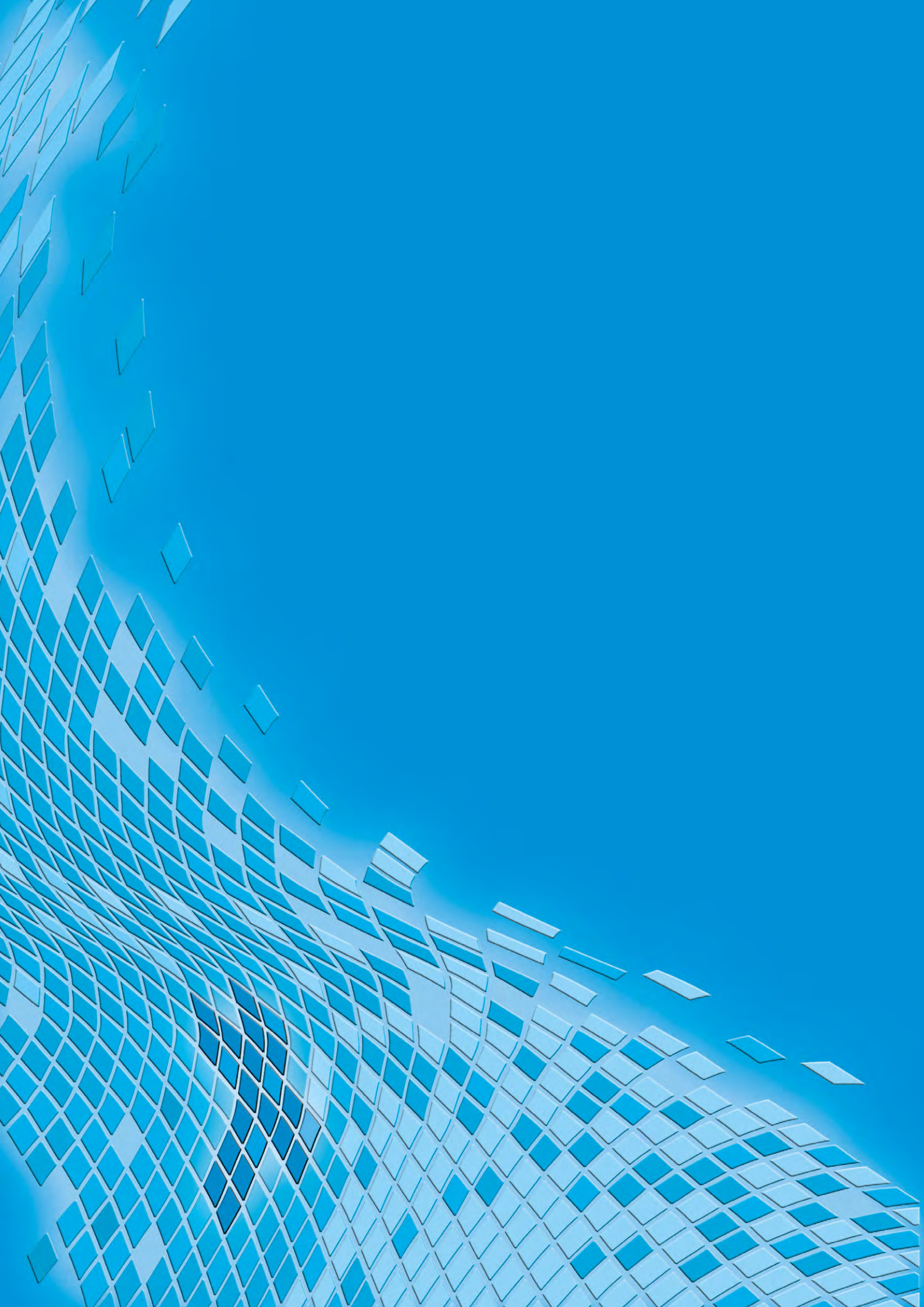
4.7 There are some intriguing questions as well.

- Is the United Reformed Church capable of creating and delivering a really major denominational mission initiative, given that the Mission Committee only meets three times a year and Mission Council twice a year, both with overflowing agendas?
- Collaboration between Assembly committees is clearly desirable. However, the more groups who feel they ought to have been consulted or involved, the heavier the process becomes and the more momentum is lost. Are we capable of a project with momentum?
- What does proper accountability look like in a conciliar Church? How is it exercised? Certainly it was never feasible that a council of the Church could agree the text and design of advertising materials. But people objected to the use of materials which did not have this sort of approval.

4.8 The last question is perhaps the most challenging. On hearing that ZI had been withdrawn, one minister expressed a particular kind of disappointment. "Our town is full of friendly, middle-of-the-road churches. This campaign expressed the distinctive purpose and contribution of our congregation within that wider Christian witness." It is absolutely clear now that no further central URC resources of time, energy or finance will go towards this campaign. But if there were the possibility of an ecumenical group elsewhere, independent funded, who wanted to adopt ZI and take it forward as an evangelism initiative for churches like the one described above, would the United Reformed Church be prepared to release the copyrighted advertising materials?

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Assembly Arrangements

Committee Members

Convener: David Robinson

Secretary: Ann Barton

Moderators, Moderators-elect, General Secretary, Clerk to Assembly, Convener of Local Arrangements Committee

1 Thanks

Putting in place the arrangements for Assembly is very much a team effort. Warm thanks are due in particular to Ann Barton and her team of volunteer helpers who make sure that our aspirations for Assembly come to fruition. We would also want to record our thanks to the local Assembly team who will contribute much to our enjoyment of and involvement in this year's meeting.

2 General Assembly 2014

2.1 As will be reported separately to Assembly, all Assembly Committees have been asked to consider the scope for making savings on their budgets for 2013. Assembly Arrangements currently works to a budget of £300k for each biennial Assembly, the costs being spread over two years. Assembly Committees were asked to consider the impact of either a 25% or 50% reduction in their budget. Assembly Arrangements believes that, if we assume General Assembly in future is primarily a business meeting, a reduction in costs of about one-third is achievable on the basis of, for example, reducing the number of ecumenical, overseas and other faith guests and the number of those attending Children's Assembly and the elimination of guests such as jubilee and newly ordained ministers.

2.2 Further savings could be achieved by re-timing the Assembly so that it convenes at noon on Day One and concludes mid-afternoon on Day Three, thus eliminating one night's accommodation and one dinner for participants. Technical provision could be reduced. And reductions could be made in sundry costs, e.g. some music and worship costs, signing for the hearing impaired and moderators' and ecumenical dinners. Alternative funding could be sought for some of these items.

2.3 Assembly Arrangements will be carefully monitoring the budget for Assembly 2014 and will give further thought to the savings which might be achieved under the above four headings.

2.4 A separate recommendation will be brought to Assembly concerning the timing of and venue for Assembly 2014.



Education and Learning

The Education and Learning Committee maintains strategic oversight of adult learning in the United Reformed Church. The Committee does this by keeping in close contact with relevant officers in synods, by supporting four resource centres for learning, by providing the Training for Learning and Serving (TLS) range of courses, and by maintaining positive relationships with ecumenical partners. Through careful combinations of finance and personnel, the Committee supports the initial and ongoing professional development of ministers of Word and sacraments, church related community workers, Assembly-accredited lay preachers, and other lay ministries including eldership.

1 Picking up the story

1.1 The General Assembly of 2005 determined that in United Reformed Church educational provision there shall be:

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

1.2 The training review accepted by the General Assembly of 2006 designated Westminster College, Northern College, and the Scottish College as resource centres for learning (RCLs) for the United Reformed Church. The Windermere Centre became the fourth resource centre for learning (RCL) in November 2008 through a resolution of Mission Council.

1.3 The General Assembly of 2010 adopted *vision2020* as the mission framework of the United Reformed Church, and this too is shaping the work of the Education and Learning Committee.

1.4 The glimpses of the future at the end of the Committee's report in 2010 form the basis of the next part of this report to the General Assembly of 2012:

- *vision2020* as a general framework for effective discipleship and mission;
- involvement in the training aspects of the campaign of radical welcome;
- new kinds of Assembly-accredited lay ministries;
- an emphasis on blended learning and a virtual learning environment;
- a theological research network to link with theology in the academy;
- developing relationships in the wider network of trainers, developers and educationalists whose vocation it is to serve God through the United Reformed Church.

2 Continuing the story

2.1 *vision2020* as a general framework for effective discipleship and mission. The 10 statements of *vision2020* were used as the basis of the third annual education and learning conference in December 2011. This conference, originating in what was known as the trainers network, brings together synod training officers, resource centre for learning tutors, mission enablers, children's and youth development officers and members of the Education and Learning Committee. Discussion of *vision2020* is

also now a regular part of both a residential weekend for new ministerial students before they start their Education for Ministry Phase 1 programmes and the annual “Welcome to the United Reformed Church” which is offered to ministers from other denominations working in the United Reformed Church at the Windermere Centre.

2.2 Involvement in the training aspects of the campaign of radical welcome.

In 2010 the United Reformed Church was discussing *God is Still Speaking*, which subsequently became *Zero Intolerance* before being terminated by Mission Council in March 2012. The underlying commitment to gospel hospitality and radical welcome has been a constant item on the agenda of the Education and Learning Committee, with time and resources committed from a range of constituencies to ensuring that companions and their trainers have been equipped for their respective roles. This commitment will continue, given Mission Council’s “no” to ZI but “yes” to radical welcome. The plan, at the time of writing this report, is to encourage churches on their journey of radical welcome through an amended companions scheme in conjunction with participating synods.

2.3 New kinds of Assembly-accredited lay ministries.

The Education and Learning Committee and the Ministries Committee hosted a joint session at the 2010 Assembly in which we offered living examples of learning for varied discipleship. The future seemed to suggest that lay ministries would be given greater attention, but as so often seems to be the case, continuing conversations in the past two years have tended to be about the role and function of ministers of Word and sacraments. Both committees are aware of the need to come to an early conclusion on this and to offer the fruit of these conversations to the wider Church. One outcome of collaboration between the RCLs is a suggested update of the 1991 benchmarks for ministers of Word and sacraments which is being used in various places as a work in progress before being brought to Mission Council or General Assembly for formal adoption. The Education and Learning Committee’s ability to focus on lay development has been strengthened in this period by the nomination to its membership of skilled and passionate practitioners of lay ministries, and the financial challenges of the 2013 budget have sharpened the questions that must be asked in these areas.

2.4 An emphasis on blended learning and a virtual learning environment.

Northern College and Luther King House have been working with *Moodle* as a distance learning platform and support within blended learning for some time now, with mixed results. Like many technological advances, the human elements of the process are as important as the electronic nuts and bolts, and it is important to have dedicated staff time to give to such projects – just as a library needs a librarian and a community centre needs a manager if they are to stay open and accessible on a sustained basis. *Moodle* is widely used in schools and universities, and is the platform for the United Reformed Church Learning Environment (URCLE) which has been developed gradually through consultation with the constituencies of the wider education and learning network since 2010. The intention is to make it public to the URC at the Assembly, with opportunities for participants at Scarborough to try it out. Adult educators within the Church are aware of the need to work across cultures formed by preferred communication styles, learning to offer resources virtually, digitally and in print. ‘*Gotomeeting*’ is beginning to be used for digital conferencing, and Windermere Online is offering a way of engaging in Bible study at a distance, whilst the need for printed materials continues.

2.5 A theological research network to link with theology in the academy.

Two years ago it seemed as if this project which had been part of the 2006 Training Review might be revisited. However, sweeping changes in higher education funding have forced us to focus our attention on Education for Ministry Phase 1 (EM1), amidst insecurity for the humanities in universities. Consequently there has been no progress on the question of a research network, with little likelihood of any change, particularly given the current state of funding facing all the mainstream denominations. At the same time, the Methodist Church *Fruitful Field* review, and research topics that have arisen through *Fresh Expressions*, suggest that many denominations see the need to develop research capabilities. On the funding of theological courses for ministry, the Church of England, who have the highest number of ordinands in England, are seeking to develop

Education and Learning

a new suite of awards, to be common to as many theological colleges and courses as possible, validated at a cost that can be afforded, and with a common curriculum. They have invited ecumenical partners (including the United Reformed Church, represented by the Revd John Proctor) to be involved in shaping the curriculum, and the tender is out for a university which might validate this envisaged suite of awards. The likelihood is that RCLs will continue to work to varying extents with their existing partner universities, but that together we may also be using whatever emerges from the consultation process about the new suite of awards. Discussions are, necessarily, complex and swift moving.

2.6 Developing relationships in the wider network of trainers, developers and educationalists whose vocation it is to serve God through the United Reformed Church. Three education and learning conferences have been held since 2009, and the next joint constituencies conference is scheduled for July 2013. Much goodwill has been expressed about working together, although at times it seems that the realities of disparate needs, varying objectives, and lines of thought which operate in parallel or divergent ways work against practical collaboration. Time and effort will need to be invested in developing a robust and coherent system which brings people together in shared work which concretely affects the church in its local settings.

2.7 Other continuing routine work. The 2010 report to General Assembly described at some length the work that is done in supporting people in Education for Ministry Phases 2 and 3 in appropriate ways, and this has continued. Quinquennial inspections of Westminster and Northern Colleges by the ecumenical Quality in Formation panel are not yet complete at the time of writing. Discussions about the 2013 budget have more recently been a major item on the committee's agenda.

2.8 Personalia. A special thanks is due to Professor Malcolm Johnson who served as convener of the Committee until July 2011. Other members who have completed their service since 2010 were:

Education and Learning Committee:

Revd Dr Robert Pope, Revd Jenny Snashall, Revd Dr James Coleman,
Mrs Fiona Weighton-Smith.

EM2/3 Sub-Committee:

Revd David Poulton, Revd Zam Walker, and Ms Sandra Wellington. Dr Ian Morrison helpfully extended his period as Convener until July 2012.

Finance Sub-Committee:

Mr Mike Downing, Convener

Windermere Management Committee:

Mr Nick Andrews

3 Future conversations along the way

3.1 As suggested above, it is likely that there will be continued conversations on the role of ministers of Word and sacraments, the possible need for a wider range of authorised lay ministries, increased attention to intentional integration of effort between the four RCLs, TLS and relevant people in the synods, and tackling budget changes whilst ensuring that the educational principles established in 2005 are renewed and maintained in the changed times that we're experiencing.

4 The story from Training for Learning and Serving

4.1 As TLS celebrates 25 years since it was founded as an initiative of the Church of Scotland, enrolment is not quite as strong as it was the last time we reported to Assembly (122 students then and 100 now) but it remains vibrant in recruiting significant numbers of new students each year, in the commitment of those students and as a source of equipping people for service in the Church and world. It was a particular delight last year

to see six TLS students offering and being accepted for training for ordained ministry but the main testimony to the strength of TLS is the many former students who are active in a variety of ministries within their local churches and communities.

4.2 One opportunity that has presented itself through the silver jubilee is to hear from one of the originators of TLS, Dr David Goodbourn, who reminded us of the philosophy behind its development as follows:

“In the minds of those of us launching the courseTLS was about the future of the Church. We believed that tomorrow’s Church would be far more a lay Church, breaking away from its over-dependence on the ordained ministry. It would be a Church which couldn’t afford to waste the gifts of its members, but had to develop them for ministry amongst Christians and within the world. It would be a Church where theology had to be set free from the specialists to become the work of the people.”

4.3 While the pace of change in some areas has been slower than perceived in that statement, looking at the past and present of TLS, we can with some confidence claim that TLS has effectively contributed to this vision of the Church. It continues to do so, as became evident from David’s presentation, in ways that correspond to the original but also in ways that are different. TLS is occasionally referred to as one of jewels of the United Reformed Church but actually jewels are too unchanging and inflexible to be an appropriate metaphor for TLS because it survives and prospers as it changes to meet the changing needs of the Church in a changing world.

5 TLS Classic courses

5.1 There are several changes currently on the horizon in these courses. Having established a new validation partnership with Chester University only in 2009, TLS now finds itself withdrawing from that partnership on a phased basis which will allow all existing Chester/TLS students to complete their course of study. The main reason for this decision is that the university required alterations to the operation of TLS which would have impacted the integrity of the programme. In consequence the decision has been made to operate for at least one year without a higher education pathway, to evaluate its impact upon enrolment and then to consider the pros and cons for seeking a new validation partner.

5.2 From the academic year 2012-13, the primary delivery mode for TLS materials will become electronic. While printed materials will still be available for those who have limited computer access or knowledge, electronic delivery by means of the TLS website and URCL will allow a much more dynamic approach to what is made available to students and staff and how it may be used. Coupled with this will be movement towards electronic submission of assignments and marking. This will not only reduce costs but allow a much more reliable and rapid processing of the assessment system.

5.3 From the academic year 2013-14, all courses on TLS will include three residential weekends rather than the current four. Additionally there will be introductory days for new students. In part this is finance driven but it also takes account of the different needs emerging among those who participate in the courses. It is believed that this change can be accomplished without significant reduction in the overall educational impact of the weekends and that it may even facilitate a more focussed approach to them.

5.4 Conversations are ongoing about the future of TLS. TLS must offer the means for course members to engage with learning, specifically the assessment elements of it, in ways not so reliant on the printed and written word. It must achieve a greater integration with further opportunities for study and training. It must continue to be open to the possibility of new courses. All these conversations have taken place however, within an awareness of the vastly changing scene of education, especially theological education, in this country. While TLS continues to embrace change and development therefore, as demonstrated above, it is not without elements of caution particularly in the development of the new courses which we are frequently encouraged to initiate.

Education and Learning

5.5 One of the disappointing features of TLS in recent years has been the lack of interest in the two new courses which were reported to Assembly last time. *Gateways into Evangelism* was created at the request of Assembly itself and *Developing Community Experiences* came out of an expressed need for help with engaging effectively in community work. Neither, however, has run since the initial pilot groups because of insufficient numbers enrolling.

5.6 While our partnership with Chester University is drawing to a close, it has benefited TLS in many ways. One of those is that the university required journal writing as part of TLS studies. Although few are privileged to read them (one example can be found on the TLS website – <http://www.tlsonline.co.uk>), these journals bear testimony to the continuing effectiveness of TLS as a means of personal spiritual development and equipping people for service. It is something we can celebrate in the church.

6 TLS Local Introductory Training Experiences (LITE)

Like the Classic expressions of TLS, LITE has not stood still. Work continues on revising materials and those responsible for LITE will eventually explore the benefits or otherwise of moving to electronic delivery. Usage in churches of the current six LITE courses continues at a steady although not spectacular rate and its positive impact is indicated by, among other things, occasional follow-through by LITE course members onto TLS classic courses.

7 The story from Northern College (United Reformed and Congregational), Luther King House, Manchester

7.1 In a year when we mark the 350th anniversary of the Great Ejection of 1662, Northern College has once again recognised the great debt it owes for its existence to the various dissenting academies that gave it foundation. Students training for ministry within the developing non-conformist churches, and forbidden to enter the universities of Oxford and Cambridge because they were not in membership of the Church of England, were educated to a remarkably high standard by those clergy who had left their livings. Thus our denomination has always valued a well-educated ministry and Northern College has always done its best to meet that expectation offering a variety of courses suitable to the capability of our students and ranging from diploma level to BA and MA and higher.

7.2 The college is one of five based at Luther King House. We have been there since 1985 and share initial ministerial education with Baptists, Methodists, Unitarians and locally-resident African students of various denominational backgrounds whose welcome presence opens up a wealth of experience from the World Church.

7.3 These last two years have seen significant changes in the foundational courses on offer. A little history may be of value to put these changes into context. In the mid 1990s, together with other Free Church denominations, we established an in-house ecumenical course validated by the University of Manchester and known as the *Faith-in-Living* course. This covered not only education for ordained ministry but included courses which were tailored for the training of church related community workers demanding both theological capability and community expertise and for which Northern College has responsibility. In 2007 a new course was established – *Learning for Mission and Ministry* (LMM). This widened our ecumenical scope since it was delivered in a number of centres, included both full-time and part-time pathways, and was developed in partnership with the Anglican dioceses of Chester, Liverpool and Manchester. This was in fulfilment of the decisions which had been made by both the Methodist Conference and the United Reformed Church's Assembly that such ministerial education should be developed through ecumenical 'regional training partnerships' (RTPs). This was an Anglican-inspired development and well used by those training for priesthood by part-time method within the Church of England. Courses were developed with this in mind and were validated by the University of Chester and shared by those of us involved in the Southern North West Training Partnership (SNWTP). Our experience as colleges within Luther King

House over the last five years is that the LMM course has not met our needs and consequently we have withdrawn from it. However, we are to retain links with SNWTP for wider educational provision. We are now engaged in the process of establishing a new degree, based on the foundation of our *Faith-in-Living* course and validated, like our MA and PhD degrees, by the University of Manchester with which we have had a very long relationship.

8 Continuing the Northern College story

8.1 When last we reported to Assembly two new members of staff were about to start. The Revd Dr Kathy White specialises in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible and is now well settled as a tutor. Kathy brings recent experience as the minister of a local church and this helps significantly in the preparation of our students for pastoral ministry. She has given much time to the preparation of new courses which she co-teaches with a colleague from the Baptist college. The Revd Dr Christine Jones lends her hand to a wide variety of disciplines from adult education to urban theology. She is a Methodist minister who previously worked at the Urban Theology Unit in Sheffield. She has spent hours preparing new courses for church related community work training and has been instrumental in establishing a burgeoning relationship with the Utbildningscentrum, Lidingö, Sweden – a college engaged in similar diaconal preparation. We are also indebted to the Revd Wendy White who has taken on the responsibility, in an already busy ministry, of acting as tutor to our distance learning students.

8.2 June 2011 saw the start of something new for the College, with a worship leaders' conference designed for lay preachers from the United Reformed Church and their counterparts in the denominations served by Luther King House. Participation and leadership of the sessions came from a wide ecumenical pool and the conference is likely to become a regular feature of the learning opportunities offered to the wider church.

8.3 At the end of the 2010-2011 academic year we bade farewell to the Revd Dr John Campbell who had served as principal of the college since 2004. John's unassuming leadership was greatly valued as was his remarkable insight into the nature and meaning of the Bible together with his ability to write, seemingly at the drop of a hat, apt hymns that summed up both context and scripture. Evidence of his involvement on behalf of the College with the wider United Reformed Church can be found in the initiation of *Vision4Life* and his encouragement of the annual Education and Learning conferences. He is to be succeeded by the Revd Dr Rosalind Selby, a former student of the college, now minister of Wanstead and Gants Hill United Reformed Churches. Her engagement with a major rebuilding project at Wanstead has meant that she cannot start in Manchester until the late summer of 2012. The Revd Dr John Parry has acted as Principal during this last academic year. John leaves Manchester after 20 years at Northern College and is grateful to both governors and staff, first for sponsoring his research and thereafter for the opportunity to develop courses in World Church studies and World Faiths which have widened the theological horizons of a few generations of ordinands. The staff and governors of Northern College wish to express their appreciation for the way John has served the college this year in his role as acting principal and for his considerable contribution to the life of the college during his long years of ministry there. A successor is being sought.

9 Future developments for Northern College

9.1 In all, the considerable change in personnel means that it is difficult to suggest future developments, but some themes will need to emerge. Given a church which is Reformed and always reforming, there must be a reconsideration of the nature of ministry, be it in terms of Word and sacraments or community work or that which is inherent in all members of the congregation. To this end we are challenged to consider the nature of being facilitators, particularly in terms of education for all who are involved in our congregations, so that we are engaged in enhancing adult learning and making theology accessible. This will involve closer cooperation with synods and their officers. In another area of concern, Northern College has had experience with various forms of distance learning and we acknowledge that this has not always been

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the success we would have hoped, but the change of degree course and a more robust network system should enable greater parity of educational opportunity between full and part-time provision.

9.2 Our prayers and good wishes go to those who will continue the work of Northern College and to those who, since the last meeting, have left, and are leaving, to take up various forms of ministry. May they find God's guidance and blessing.

10 The story from the Scottish United Reformed and Congregational College

10.1 Serving the whole United Reformed Church. Naturally, our principal orientation is towards serving the United Reformed Church in Scotland, where the College acts through its Principal in his role as synod training officer. The College brings together the full range of learning activities from continuing ministerial education to lay training and from developing spirituality to church organisational development. The programme for the coming academic year includes such varied topics as developing radical welcome in our churches, Haggadah, the Trinity, Bonhoeffer, meeting through Skype, the future of Scotland debate, diversity and difference, Nordic crime fiction, getting older and enlivened congregations.

10.2 Through the close partnership between College and synod, the College is to a significant degree embedded in the life of the synod. Constitutionally distinct, the College is present and participates in the broad range of synod life, from local church to synod committees and the different places in which United Reformed Church folk come together in Scotland. This serves us well in allowing us a deeper and fuller access to understanding the learning needs of the churches and of the synod. We are well placed, not simply to work in responding to individual learning needs, but to having a whole-synod focus on supporting the synod in becoming a learning organisation. This is important, not only in tailoring our educational provision, but also in contributing more broadly to the developmental agenda of the synod and encouraging a learning and development ethos within wider discussions. The learning and development staff employed or deployed by the Synod of Scotland (the field officer for local mission and development and the children and youth development officer) are associate academic staff in the College. The Principal works within the synod development team, contributing to coherence between the different education-related activities of both organisations and drawing on a range of expertise and perspectives.

10.3 Serving the United Reformed Church in Scotland is, of course, not an inconsiderable responsibility, particularly for a College with only a single full-time member of staff supported by part-time or shared colleagues. As a national synod, the Synod of Scotland embraces responsibilities that in England are handled at a General Assembly level but undertaken on behalf of the whole Church. This includes its educational work. The distinct ecumenical, church, institutional and cultural nature of Scotland involves us in national relationships and programmes.

10.4 Yet, as a resource centre for learning, we are alive to our relationship with the Church beyond the border of Scotland. We have a particular relationship with the neighbouring Northern Synod and contribute to the work of its ministries and training committee. We are very glad at present to have an EM1 student from Northern Synod. In the past year we have undertaken work within the areas of four other synods and welcome conversations about extending this aspect of our work. We were delighted that our refresher course in Orkney was very warmly received. We have a college tutor who also serves in a ministry with older people. Her expertise in that field and in interim ministry and pastoral relations has been drawn on by synods beyond Scotland. The synod field officer and the Principal both have professional backgrounds in organisational development and offer courses in this area.

11 Integration of learning

11.1 This approach lies at the heart of our work in different ways, not least in the integration of the College with the national synod in educational partnership.

11.2 While ordinands inevitably loosen their engagement with their home congregation, we encourage our ordinands nonetheless to be active across the life of the synod, participating in a range of activities including the synod ministers' conference in Scotland. Students are themselves seen as an educational resource for wider learning in the churches. Almost all of our learning provision for Education for Ministry 1 is open and courses attract continuing ministerial education, lay training and general adult education participants. Our conviction is that those who will share in the ministry of the whole church should wherever possible learn together and learn from one another. We look forward to using URCLC to offer learning on a more diverse and accessible basis, not least bearing in mind the extensive geographical distances across the Synod of Scotland.

11.3 For many years our initial ministerial education students have studied concurrently with the College and with a university faculty or department of divinity. Generally this has been in relationship with the ancient Scottish universities but this year we also have a student following a master-level programme at Durham. This pattern allows our students access to the very best in scholarship while allowing our own staff resources and expertise to be focused more on ministry and education. Most of our ordinands are already graduates, as is frequently the case in theology. The link enables us to seek the provision that is most appropriate to the prior learning and present needs of our candidates. University departments offer a helpful mix of learners – people preparing for ministry in other denominations including the Church of Scotland, ministers in continuing development and those intending other professional careers. The trend in university divinity departments to broaden into religious studies departments is apparent to a degree in Scotland, but their church-relatedness remains significant. We recognise, with our ecumenical partners, that these movements require monitoring and there are conversations around these issues.

11.4 The Scottish higher education sector, in its patterns and funding arrangements, is distinct from other parts of the United Kingdom but in its own way is subject to shifts in resourcing and prioritisation and we are alert to recognising that such changes may impact on our pattern of EM1 provision. Internally, the challenge is to encourage students' learning in different contexts – University, Church and College – to be cohesive with lively interaction. It is important too that the College provides the home community, spiritually and socially, for students whose tailored course provision takes them off into different settings. It can be challenging to encourage students to cross over from the intellectualised and sometimes combative space of university provision to the more church-related, mixed-population, experiential and dialogical space that is the College.

11.5 A further aspect of integration is our strong commitment to bring together the theological disciplines with learning across other fields, particularly in the arts, humanities and social sciences, reflecting our commitment to education that seeks to deepen Christian faith, equip people for service within and beyond the Church and help participants to be as fully human as they can be.

12 Ecumenical engagement in Scotland

12.1 Together with the Methodist Church in Scotland and the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Synod of Scotland through its College is engaged in an educational federation in the making. This grew out of the shared commitment of educational staff within the three denominations to collaborate and has received further impetus from the EMU ecumenical agreement in Scotland.

12.2 In initial ministerial education, we have a growing involvement with the Theological Institute of the Scottish Episcopal Church. One of our ordinands is, concurrently with College studies, taking TISEC's diploma in theology for ministry course. Our students and staff members participate in a shared summer school (this

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year on inter-faith studies). And we are looking to extend our teaching input with them. Conscious of significant differences, ecclesiastical, liturgical, theological and even cultural and educational, we believe that this collaboration can allow students to learn in an ecumenical context while being strongly rooted in the College and our denominational tradition and community.

12.3 Our staff, including our associate colleagues from the synod, are collaboratively engaged in the provision of training in youth work, fresh expressions and adult education.

12.4 Much of the informal adult education provision within our churches is not denominationally specific but addresses issues of shared concern and interest. There is therefore a wealth of learning opportunities to be pooled. As we become better at this sharing, we believe that we shall create more viable learning groups with a more varied provision. The challenge is primarily to market more effectively. With our Methodist colleagues, we share in the network of the Scottish Episcopal Church diocesan lay learning officers, a gathering place with much potential for the sharing of ideas, programmes and people resources. Shared provision of accredited training for recognised offices and roles is an area for further exploration, but we are conscious that there are significant differences in what might seem like comparable roles and denominational nervousness in this area of potential collaboration.

12.5 A welcome development for us has been that more and more our provision, particularly in ministry with older people and pastoral ministry, is being taken up ecumenically at a local level.

12.6 We watch with interest the UK-wide Methodist conversations around *Fruitful Field*, not least in the affirmation of a model of educational work that is not building-based but flexible and contextual.

12.7 We are conscious that changing patterns in higher education provision in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK are likely to lead to reforms in patterns of theological education in each of the three nations.

13 Continuing the story in challenging times

13.1 We are conscious that our United Reformed Church partners, whether at General Assembly, synod or local church levels, are going through challenging times. Experience from many fields suggests that many organisations are tempted in straitened circumstances to look to the 'soft' budgetary territory of training and development and have learned to their cost that this has simply weakened their capacity to respond effectively to new circumstances. We believe that our educational partnerships have enabled us to be a cost-effective provider of education. Our flexible working patterns and close connection to our partners help us to adapt quickly to changing learning needs. In challenging times, we believe, our focus on developing creativity and imagination alongside the traditional knowledge and skills are an important contribution to the life and work of our partners.

14 The story from Westminster College

14.1 Picking up the story since 2010. It's been an astonishing two years, with energy spent in making a new future for Westminster. We've been trying to respond to God's call in opening up new kinds of learning, prayer and hospitality for ministerial students, ministers, elders and lay preachers, and all the people. That means renewing programmes, buildings, working patterns and worship life. On every front it feels as though Westminster is changing fast and we are looking to the future.

14.2 In 2010 the General Assembly authorised an appeal to raise the £7 million needed to equip Westminster's building to be a resource centre for the whole Church. (See the separate report on the Westminster Appeal). The appeal has been a significant journey, taking us to many places and people in our Church and beyond. Conversations

and encounters have given us opportunities to listen to what people are saying they appreciate about a resource and place like Westminster. And we have been able to tell the Westminster story ourselves in ways which have sometimes surprised our hearers. The whole process has taken and given huge amounts of energy. We owe a great debt to Brian Long, our appeal convener, who has worked tirelessly over these two years.

14.3 Preparing for a development programme has also been a learning exercise! We are now at the end of the detailed design phase and early indications are that the cost of what we hope to do is not very far from the original estimate. We have made plans for well-equipped teaching and meeting rooms, modernised kitchens and en-suite rooms that we are convinced will meet the expectations of guests, visitors and students of all kinds for many years to come. Thanks are due to Nigel Appleton who is carrying a key role in coordinating the development.

14.4 Meanwhile, we continue, amongst other things, to prepare women and men for the ministry of Word and sacraments in today's church. We also offer a range of awards and programmes for church members and for serving ministers (only about half our core student body are ministerial students). We run an increasing number of conferences, celebrations (including a festival of preaching in 2011), day courses and events for church groups and gatherings. Our staff regularly speak at conferences, spring schools and church days all around the country, and indeed the world. We have growing numbers of people coming to Westminster for sabbaticals or study visits, and we are always glad to welcome them.

14.5 We are a Christian community of learning, prayer and hospitality, sustained by a core of people during term time, into which others can come and join in. We now have a simple office of prayer at lunchtime, in addition to morning prayers, reading continuously through a portion of Scripture each term and praying for the world using the World Council of Churches prayer cycle.

14.6 We have also entered a new phase with our historic treasures and archives, having appointed a new archivist, Helen Weller, who is working to great effect to open up our collections. She is busy with enquiries from around the URC and around the world.

14.7 Since the last Assembly, we have appointed new conveners to our board of studies (Kristin Ofstad) and our management committee (Nigel Appleton). They are both working hard on renewing and developing our educational programmes and facilities. We have a new honorary treasurer (Tony Williams) following a resolution at the 2010 Assembly and he is bringing invaluable help to our financial planning and analysis. Tony Bottoms convenes our governors' meeting, and is guiding and supporting Westminster, with grace and wisdom, through one of the most testing, challenging and exciting times in our history.

15 Continuing the Westminster story

15.1 Our story continues to be told within the wider story of the Cambridge Theological Federation, the very broad ecumenical partnership with its 11 partners to which we are proud to belong. Relationships here are developing all the time and it is possible that we shall soon be sharing our site not only with The Henry Martyn Centre (a centre for the study of world Christianity and mission), but also with another Federation partner. The Federation operates on several sites across a relatively small part of Cambridge, but the Westminster site is clearly going to continue to develop as one of the most significant.

15.2 With others, we are facing the challenge of the rise in fees for university degrees. We are proud to work with two universities, the University of Cambridge and Anglia Ruskin University. With these partners we can offer the people of the United Reformed Church access to a wide variety of awards with different emphases, teaching styles and curricula. From a Foundation degree which can be full or part time, to the Cambridge bachelor of theology degree, from an MA in pastoral theology to a professional doctorate, taught awards and research degrees, we are able to find the right course

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for almost all who would benefit from study here. We are committed to teaching and learning that is both rigorous and accessible, engaging with the secular world of universities and subject to good quality control. We are also absolutely committed to teaching and learning in an ecumenical context that engages United Reformed Church students in the broader field of the whole church, as well as providing space to inhabit our own tradition with faithfulness. And we are glad to be fully involved in the ecumenical discussions about a new national suite of awards for theological education for ministry.

15.3 We value and nurture a range of learning styles and patterns of life for the students and visitors of all kinds who are part of us or connected with us. In the details of everyday life at Westminster, we're constantly looking for the right course, the best placement, the international engagement with most potential, the kind of pastoral care or spiritual development that will work, that will be right for a particular person or group. More and more we recognise that, for everyone engaged in Christian discipleship and learning, it's about every part of you: head, heart, body. And we're glad when we can be a gateway to learning or the deepening of faith for people across the United Reformed Church and indeed the wider church, whether a ministerial student, a minister on sabbatical, a local church group, a conference gathering or a synod event. We are keen to deconstruct some of the old hierarchies once associated with learning, and to build new relationships with the people of our Church. We're glad, particularly, when we can do all this in partnership with others, in the United Reformed Church and with our ecumenical partners, and in response to the real needs of the Church. We're here for nothing less and nothing more than to serve the Church and the world that God has made.

16 Future conversations along the way

16.1 The next phase of our story will, we are confident, include the development. Living through a period of construction will be awkward, painful and messy, but we know that it will be worth it. We plan to begin the main part of the construction phase in the summer of 2013. The college site will effectively be given into the hands of the contractors for that summer period, but by the end of that time we hope to have done much of the core work in the centre of the college. The rest will be phased so as to enable us to work, from our own site, from the end of that summer.

16.2 We want to be part of fulfilling the aspiration of the 2006 Training Review for integrated learning across the whole United Reformed Church. We have been glad to work with synod training officers and we are regularly in conversation with them, responding to requests from them, sending invitations to them or seeking advice from them. We are ready to embrace a more coordinated way of working in the United Reformed Church and we welcome the willingness of the secretary for education and learning to help us in this. We know that we should be able to make more of the positive benefits of our smallness and our interconnectedness, to make the most of every opportunity.

16.3 For the future we hope to be running more events like last year's preaching festival and more gatherings to explore theological conversations about those things at the heart of our faith. We want to deepen conversations with the wider worlds of the Church, other faiths and the world. There are advantages for the United Reformed Church in being small but there are also disadvantages. This is no time for our vision to narrow or for our discipleship to become closed to the wisdom and the promise of the world that God has made. With partnerships open to us in Cambridge, with international relationships and friends, with communities both urban and rural throughout our nations, we know we have immense potential to open up conversations of all kinds, for the church we serve.

16.4 There is immense energy and life here and a sense of renewal and hope. We have a really awe-inspiring inheritance, and now there are plans for the development of our work (supported by the development of our building). Most of all we are blessed, by God's gracious provision, with governors who spur us on and encourage us, with

good teachers and engaged students, and a church which gives us plenty to do. And all of this has to be rooted in that ongoing and hope-filled conversation with God that is prayer, worship and discipleship.

17 The story from the Windermere Centre

17.1 Picking up the story. The last quarter of 2010 saw the implementation of the staff restructuring recommended by the 2008/9 Windermere Review. The most significant points to note are:

- the two posts of domestic manager and office manager were made redundant and replaced by a senior post, head of operational services (HOS) with responsibility for the running and management of the Centre's administrative and hospitality functions, and a housekeeper with supervisory responsibility for the domestic staff, reporting to the HOS;
- Mr Andrew Wood, a retired deputy head teacher and elder at Carver United Reformed Church, was appointed as head of operational services and took up post on 6 December 2010;
- Rebecca Gudgeon took up the post of PA to the director and marketing officer.

17.2 In addition to the staff restructuring, since the last General Assembly:

- the link building and conference centre facilities were completed and opened in October 2010;
- the Centre celebrated its 25th anniversary with a weekend of celebrations in August 2011;
- the director, Lawrence Moore, celebrated his 10th year as director on 1 April 2012.

18 Continuing the Windermere story

18.1 As one of the United Reformed Church's resource centres for learning (RCLs) the Windermere Centre aims to resource the Church for its life-in-mission. It takes as its overall theme the URC's *Catch the Vision* statement of its calling: to be 'God's people, transformed by the gospel, making a difference for Christ's sake'. This is given its programmatic statement in *vision2020*, which acts as the framework within which the Centre devises and delivers its programme. There are several strands to this:

- responding to and resourcing URC initiatives (e.g. *Vision4Life*, *Zero Intolerance*). There has been an emphasis during the period since General Assembly 2010 on prayer and evangelism, in line with *Vision4Life*;
- creating alliances to devise and deliver sustained programmes for the life of the Church (e.g. ageing and spirituality, the church in a digital age, adventures in faith, church leadership programme);
- delivering core content and/or hosting United Reformed Church courses commissioned predominantly by the Ministries Committee, Education and Learning Committee or synods including ministers' pre-retirement courses, ministers' refresher courses, Welcome to the United Reformed Church, TLS residential weekends, ministerial assessment training, EM1 summer school, synod spring/summer schools;
- promoting and resourcing an active web presence for local churches via iChurch (<http://ichurch.urc.org.uk>);
- hosting and running church weekends, with a focus on growing and being encouraged in faith and discipleship;
- resourcing specific groups within the Church with appropriate learning opportunities (e.g. lay preachers, Bible study leaders, church secretaries, church treasurers);
- hosting various church networks and committees.
- being a resource to wider church networks, committees and groups (e.g. the Iona Community executive, the Society of Friends in Japan, the International Ecumenical Forum);
- resourcing the social life of the Church in the context of faith development through courses such as various arts and crafts and walking.

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18.2 In programming terms, the greatest challenge remains finding the ideal formula for the mix of courses that includes cutting edge courses (which might not be large income-generators) and the sorts of courses that attract reliable income. With the Windermere Centre in an 'educational free market' situation (i.e. having to attract course participants in order to generate income), that focus becomes more acute as the effects of the recession and financial shortfalls within the URC are felt ever more keenly.

18.3 The Centre's response to the situation has been threefold: to concentrate efforts on more effective publicity; to make use of the opportunities afforded by the new conference facilities to run more than one course at a time; and to break into the last-minute bed and breakfast market via booking.com.

18.4 The website is becoming ever more central to the Centre's marketing and publicity strategy. The majority of our bookings are received from people downloading the information and booking forms from the site. Rebecca Gudgeon has revived the Windermere Contacts network, aiming for a dedicated contact in as many local churches as possible. She is also building up an email network of people who receive the regular e-letters from the Centre.

19 Future conversations along the way

19.1 In a climate in which the Church is having to look at trimming its budget and axing programmes, the Centre has the potential to be able to respond by developing new income streams as well as increasing current income. These include:

- Windermere Online: a new initiative within the Church in a Digital Age programme, making use of the opportunities for online learning afforded by information technology. A number of courses will be offered by 'webinar' for people to access some of the Windermere courses from within the comfort of their own home, starting with online Bible study;
- younger people: the half-price deal for teenagers has been extended to include 18 year olds (i.e. anyone who might still be a school pupil). The Centre is also exploring a food and pricing structure that will particularly meet the needs of FURY-aged young people and the immediate post-FURY generation;
- making use of the Lake District: course planning is being done while actively looking at how the best possible use can be made of the Lake District and potential local partnerships. The present theme of the ministers' refresher course, for example, is 'Touch the Earth Lightly', focusing on our relationship with our environment, 'green issues' and stewardship of creation;
- the Windermere Centre: it's your place. As well as concentrating on maximising the income from the Lake District tourist industry, the Centre is looking actively at ways of ensuring that United Reformed Church members are able to use the Centre as a holiday centre at special URC rates.

19.2 The Windermere Centre Prayer

[This prayer was used at the dedication of the Windermere Centre in 1986, by Graham Cook, the first Director of the Centre, and the hopes it expresses remain at the heart of our mission today.]

Lord God,
 heaven and earth cannot contain you,
 much less this place
 which our imagination has conceived and our money has built.
 But we come now to pray that you will use it
 to fulfil some part of your purposes.

You are the centre, Lord God,
the heart of all that exists.
It is your breath which gives life.
It is your love which gives meaning.

You are the centre, Lord God.
It is toward you that all seekers after truth walk,
no matter where they start from,
and in travelling toward you they move closer to each other.

You are the centre, Lord God.
You are the focal point of all history.
When you became human in Jesus
and suffered at the hands of powerful and holy people,
all who have ever been poor, or hungry, or hurt discover
that they share with you the pain of recreating the world.

We have dared to call this place a centre,
for here we long for your name to be known,
your Word to be discovered,
your truth acted upon:
'What is heaven to me with you
And where am I on earth if you are not there?
Far away from you life is not life.
To break faith with you is to be no-one.'

So let it be a centre,
a place to which all truth can come
and find itself at home;
a place where faith is fearless,
and finds itself constantly standing on new ground
and discovering it to be holy;
a place in which stories are told, laughter is heard, and tears are dried;
a place in which new directions are found,
fresh words are rolled around the tongue,
new ways of praying are tested and found to be satisfying.

Here let new community be created,
tools be tested for the creation of new life
for this nation and the world
and windows be opened into your Kingdom.
You are the centre of all things, Lord God,
and today we dedicate this place to you.
So let it be at the centre of all that matters,
not tip-toeing around the edges of controversy,
trying to build bridges over troubled waters,
but standing with you at the heart of the storm;
not standing on the edges of human life
looking for pretty and pious things
with which to decorate emptiness,
but with men and women and their communities
as they struggle to find new life, new purposes, and real joy.

Lord God,
behold the thing we have created.
Take it
and make it yours.
We ask it in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

Equal Opportunities

The Equal Opportunities Committee is responsible for reminding the United Reformed Church that equality is enshrined in its theology, life and work, and challenging the practice of the United Reformed Church where appropriate.

This includes:

- a) Taking action to assist in the development of equal opportunities throughout the United Reformed Church within the context of a diverse society,
- b) Monitoring of the equal opportunities policy and updating it when appropriate,
- c) Promoting training programmes in equality and diversity,
- d) Promoting, supporting and encouraging the United Reformed Church's contribution to equality in the wider life of our society.

Committee Members

Tom Arthur, Tina Ashitey, Tunde Biyi, Barbara Exley, Andrew Jack (Secretary), Michael Jagessar (Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry), Mary Jeremiah, Michelle Marcano (Staff Liaison and Head of Human Resources to December 2011), Elizabeth Nash (Convener), Gwyneth Tilley, General Secretary and Assembly Moderators.

1.1 Equal Opportunities is a committee without paid staff, although supported by Church House staff, so it depends on its members to do its work. It is, therefore, good to report that there were no changes in committee membership over the last two years, helping us to work more closely together. We thank Barbara Exley and Mary Jeremiah for their work as they leave the committee this summer and look forward to working with our new committee members. We are also glad that Mission Council agreed in December 2011 to an increase of two in our membership giving us more people to help with the work. The committee is very grateful to Michelle Marcano for all her work on the Equal Opportunities Committee.

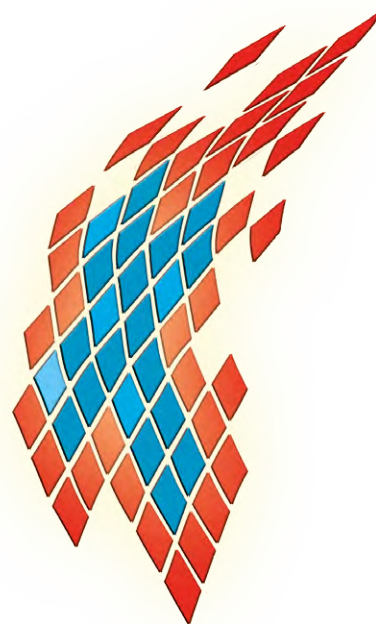
1.2 It is now four years since the General Assembly agreed the equal opportunities policy and we are glad to have been able to provide supportive papers for the policy: 'Equal Opportunities and Diversity Guidelines', 'Suggested Responses to some Challenging Statements from some Local Churches', as well as 'Discussion Questions on the Equal Opportunities Policy' and 'Training in Equal Opportunities to help Interim Moderators work with local churches in vacancy'. We have helped with the Radical Welcome programme by writing a paper on 'Welcoming People with All Abilities' (see session 6 in the Companions Toolkit). We are grateful to Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, for agreeing our new remit, which takes us from the provision of policy to challenging the United Reformed Church to deliver equality.

1.3 Equality is something which should be there at all times for everyone, but we recognise that unless we continue to work hard on it, it slips away. We cannot assume that we have equality; we must continue to work on it.

1.4 The Equal Opportunities committee has continued to build its relationship with other Assembly committees, especially with the Assembly Arrangements committee. It looks forward to being able to do more with its expanded committee membership because Equal Opportunities connects with all of our lives and work. With the General Secretary and other committees we have produced the United Reformed Church 'Guidelines for responding to allegations of bullying and harassment' (Appendix 14).

1.5 Other work of the committee has included checking our policies in the light of the Equality Act 2010, working with Joint Public Issues Team on welfare reform and its impact on people with disabilities as well as its urging that child benefit should be removed from the cap on benefits. We are currently considering how we might explore the view of some people that women, black minority ethnic ministers and gay ministers find it harder to receive a call to a new pastorate. We are also contributing to some work being done by the Baptist Union on gender and leadership.

- 1) Have you or your local church used the Equal Opportunities policy or any of the supporting papers? How did they help you?
- 2) If your church has been in vacancy in the last two years has your Interim Moderator given you a training session on Equal Opportunities? Was it helpful? If it did not happen, why not?
- 3) The United Reformed Church endeavours to 'build inclusive communities where all will be treated with dignity and respect and have equality of opportunity to contribute their gifts to the common life'. In what ways is your church like this?
- 4) What is your experience of equality? Are there issues or areas of work you would like the Equal Opportunities Committee to work on?



Finance

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, Andrew Mackenzie, Mary Martin, Angus Massie, Harry Potter, Edward Sanniez, David Walton

Part 1: Living with reality, courage and hope

Reality

1 Like most local churches, over the last two years the Finance Committee has had to live with some unwelcome financial realities. The macro-economic environment has been as unhelpful to the Ministers' Pension Fund as it could possibly be. Despite the hard work of the Investment Committee, the Church's investments have not been spared the impact of a depressed Stock Market. Several synods have been expressing concern about their ability to meet their financial commitments. Most crucially of all, since the last Assembly the total giving to the Ministry and Mission (M&M) Fund has developed a marked downward trend.

2 The central budget that Mission Council monitors on behalf of Assembly is around £22m. On the income side around £20m comes from M&M, which explains why this giving is always a critical factor. On the expenditure side, around £16.5m pays the stipends and related costs for ministers of Word and sacraments and church related community workers (CRCWs) in local pastorates and appointments. Another £2.5m supports the Church's authorised ministries through the costs of training, synod moderators and the Ministries Committee. The remaining £3m pays for the programmes requested by Assembly, e.g. Youth and Children's Work, and the infrastructural costs of being a denomination e.g. legal advice, finance, personnel, administration and governance.

3 Within this budget there has been tight constraint on costs. Excluding the money to support the direct costs of ministry, there has been no net increase in expenditure since the last Assembly. Given that inflation has been as high as 5%, this represents a significant reduction in the real resources being consumed centrally. The cost of Assembly itself, for example, is now subject to tight financial controls and cost over-runs are no longer permitted.

4 Unfortunately the challenge before the Church is now much more than can be addressed just by effective cost controls. Mission Council agreed a budget with a predicted deficit of £790,000 for 2011 and one with a deficit of £960,000 for 2012. Our reserves cannot sustain that pattern. The latter budget was agreed on the understanding that the 2013 budget would need to look significantly different.

5 The Finance Committee is certain that to ignore reality is never good stewardship. Some present trends plainly cannot continue. But the Committee has also noted that sometimes the need to face uncomfortable realities prompts a healthy fresh examination of priorities. It has sought to help Mission Council and others to articulate where God's mission most requires our resources to be directed.

Courage

6 The Committee has sought to provide means by which Mission Council can face courageously the challenges we face. Mission Council has wrestled hard and long with tough choices, always in the context of regular worship. Several proposed resolutions for this Assembly reflect that work.

7 The fundamental need to bring income and expenditure trends back into line results in two resolutions.

8 First, it is proposed to revise the Assembly policy on the number of stipendiary ministers to bring the costs into line with what the local churches feel able to give to M&M.

9 Second, to address the part of the budget which is not directly related to stipendiary ministry, it is proposed to ask the programme committees to reduce their expenditure as they prepare their bids for the 2013 budget. Areas to explore for potential further savings in the medium term have also been identified. These reductions are not simply efficiency savings to deliver the same work at lower cost: many of them need to be recognised as implying a reduction in the service that can be expected from the Assembly committees and the dedicated staff who support them.

10 Mission Council has also considered in both its May 2011 and March 2012 meetings proposals from the Finance Committee for a financial safety net to underpin, in extreme circumstances only, the essential expenditure of a synod with limited resources of its own. A proposed resolution outlines the final proposal.

11 The unfavourable economic climate has meant that the 2012 triennial valuation of the Ministers' Pension Fund does not show the improvement relative to the 2009 valuation that had been hoped. A large actuarial deficit still has to be met. The special support put in place for 2010-12 from the synods has been invaluable over this period but something more permanent now needs to be done. Resolutions therefore come to Assembly to adjust the benefits the scheme provides to reduce the future costs and to meet new legislative requirements in the most cost effective manner.

12 Underpinning all of this is the M&M giving from local churches. A resolution acknowledges the steady generosity on which we so heavily rely while also challenging us to think afresh about the financial dimension of Christian discipleship in response to the generosity of God to us and to all people.

Hope

13 Christians are called to be people of hope. None of our financial challenges are insurmountable. Meeting reality with courage does not mean we abandon hope. A Church that looks different need not be less effective. And over the last two years, the Finance Committee's life has not been all about unpopular choices and cutting back.

14 We have seen exciting hope, for example, in the Legacy Fund that Mission Council set up in 2008 to receive general legacies left to the Church. Several large legacies since the last Assembly have turned this fund from a footnote into a significant source of grants. It can now spend around £200,000 per year. It supports innovative mission projects, especially those that might represent risk-taking for the Kingdom and which would have no other source of funding within our structures.

15 In 2012, there is budget provision for the Legacy Fund to make grants that could include:

- £52,000 for projects under the *vision2020* framework;
- £14,000 for creative youth projects;
- £5,000 for the ecumenical *More than Gold* coalition that will coordinate a Christian presence at the Olympics and Paralympics;
- £5,000 for the Christian Muslim Forum;
- £4,000 for mission enablers;
- £2,000 supporting the URC contribution to the ecumenical Fresh Expressions organisation;
- £1,000 for *Hope Together*, encouraging churches to use the community opportunities of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations.

16 Applications to the fund can be made through synods and a guidance note on making applications can be obtained from the Finance Office.

Part 2:

Ministers' Pension Fund update

17 The 2010 Assembly had to address outstanding issues with the 2009 valuation of the Ministers' Pension Fund. These were eventually all settled reasonably satisfactorily with the Government's Pensions Regulator, whose understanding of Church finance is distinctly less than perfect.

18 As it became clear that the wider economic situation was unlikely to change in our favour, Mission Council agreed to recommend several changes to the benefits the scheme provides. These were put out to a formal consultation with members of the fund at the beginning of March 2012 and the consultation period will be complete in time for a report of the outcome to be brought to Assembly.

19 The 2012 triennial valuation is now virtually complete, although it is subject to change if the consultation leads to revised recommendations on future benefits. It is also subject to the agreement of the Regulator. The following figures assume that the existing benefits proposals are implemented.

20 The valuation shows a reduced deficit compared with 2009 of around £21m instead of £23m. It is proposed to pay this off over a period of just over 18 years rather than the 20 years agreed at the last valuation. It is not proposed to change the contribution of members to the Fund, which would therefore remain at 7.5% of stipend. On this basis the Church will need to contribute around £2.6m a year into the Fund to pay off the deficit and fund future benefits, compared with approximately £3m currently.

21 If these figures are confirmed by the time of Mission Council in October, the intention would be to reduce the contribution requested from synods from the £1m planned in 2012 to around £600,000 for 2013. This supplements the money taken from M&M giving to support the Pension Fund. Following the advice of the synod treasurers, the synod amount would be shared out among the synods on the basis of membership numbers. The largest synod would be asked to pay around £80,000 and the smallest around £25,000. The amounts requested in 2014 and 2015 would not be higher than this. Mission Council has resolved that we should seek to end these synod supplements for the Pension Fund by 2016.

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Church Church 2012

Ministries

The Committee is responsible for the ministry of Word and sacraments, church related community work, lay preaching and elders. 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 four sub-committees.

The **Accreditation Sub-Committee** maintains the roll of ministers, accrediting 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.

The **Church Related Community Work Programme Sub-Committee** 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.

The **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.

The **Retired Ministers Housing Sub-Committee** works in association with the United Reformed Church Retired Ministers Housing Society Ltd.

Committee Members

Convener: Ruth Whitehead

Secretary: Craig Bowman

Members: Yolande Burns, Andrew Buxton, John Cox, Brenda Jesse, Heather Pencavel, David Skitt, Kevin Watson, David Bedford (Convener of the Retired Ministers' Housing Sub-Committee), Graham Campling (Convener of the Assessment Board), 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), Judith Johnson (Leadership in Worship Advocate)

Leadership and Ministry

1 Pressures on leaders

As we are all aware, the United Reformed Church faces challenging times. Membership continues to decline, and finance with it, but the number of churches has remained fairly static. Synods are challenged to deploy stipendiary ministers in a way that doesn't just spread this resource more thinly. Previous reports to General Assembly have encouraged the Church to explore other models of leadership and reaffirmed our belief that ministry is not just for those ordained to the ministry of Word and sacraments or commissioned to church related community work, but is the calling of the whole people of God. Nevertheless ordained ministry is still one of the most significant ways in which the United Reformed Church seeks to provide leadership in the local setting. The expectations of congregations and the aspirations of ministers are not always met, and this can lead to frustration and dissatisfaction. Resilient ministry is best provided when there is an openness regarding expectations and limitations, not least at times of transition and review, and we encourage pastorates, ministers and synods to continue to make use of

the many tools that facilitate discussion. For example, it seems that those synods which are getting to grips with the arrangements for Local Ministry and Mission Review are already benefiting from it.

2 Eldership

Elders share with ministers in the pastoral oversight and leadership of the local church and leadership is rooted in the elders' meeting. The Ministries Committee takes seriously its responsibility to support the ministry of elders and to assist them to fulfil their calling effectively. To this end the Ministries Committee, in cooperation with others, is seeking to provide resources that will assist in building up an eldership which provides spiritual leadership and servanthood for every local church, believing that the role of elder is a vital one in our current situation and is one of the 'treasures' of the Reformed church.

3 Leadership in worship and lay preachers

3.1 Several years ago the Lay Preaching Support Sub-Committee was renamed the Leadership in Worship Sub-Committee in recognition that there are many people who are involved in the leading of worship in our churches alongside Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers and ordained ministers. The new sub-committee had a concern for the accreditation of Lay Preachers but also a remit to support others who lead worship. However, although it is relatively straightforward to link with those who are named on a centrally held list (Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers), the sub-committee was never able to establish a way of working with those who may only be known in their own local church or in a small number of churches in a particular locality. Conscious of the time and resources that were being spent by the sub-committee, and conscious that developments in communication and the distribution of resources have enabled other ways of sharing ideas and materials, the Ministries Committee agreed to disband the sub-committee and include its convener as a 'leadership in worship' advocate on the Ministries Committee. The responsibilities of the advocate include liaising between the Ministries Committee and synod lay preaching commissioners, encouraging networking and making information available for lay preachers and worship leaders.

3.2 Guidelines on conduct and behaviour for lay preachers

With the encouragement of those attending the lay preaching commissioners' consultation, guidelines on conduct and behaviour for lay preachers have now been produced and are available on the website. The production of these guidelines demonstrates that lay preachers are taken seriously by the church, both in what we expect of them and how they should be treated.

Supporting Ministry

4 The stipendiary principle

In the course of discharging its duty to consider the level of stipend and the remuneration of ministers, the Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee drew the attention of the Ministries Committee to some of the principles which underpin our understanding of stipendiary ministry. Three central principles are recorded in the report of the Ministries working party (Appendix 15). The Ministries Committee affirms that the stipendiary ministry is a resource for the whole Church, supported by the whole Church, that helps the United Reformed Church fulfil its mission.

5 Medical checks

In May 2011 Mission Council agreed a new procedure for medical checks for candidates for ministry and for supporting those finishing training and taking up their first pastorate or post. The new system ensures that there is consistency for all candidates and complies with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 in undertaking appropriate checks at the appropriate time. With the introduction of the pre-training health check there is less call on synod medical referees and we would like to make public our thanks to those who have played this important role in relation to ministerial candidates, in some cases for many years.

Ministries

6 Churches Ministerial Counselling Service

Ministry can bring its own stresses and ministers are not exempt from the problems of everyday life arising from family or personal circumstances. It is not always appropriate to seek support from a colleague or a senior person in the denomination so the United Reformed Church continues to be a partner in the Churches Ministerial Counselling Service (CMCS) which provides independent help on a confidential, short-term basis. The service offers non-directive counselling to ministers and adult members of their households. Information is sent out to ministers and their spouses periodically to remind them of this scheme.

Ministry and the margins

7 Chaplaincy conference

In February 2012 a one-day gathering was held at Carrs Lane Church, Birmingham, for those from the United Reformed Church involved in chaplaincy. This brought together volunteers as well as those who work in a paid capacity full-time or part-time in a wide variety of roles including retail, work-based, higher education, healthcare and military chaplaincies. Chaplains are not exercising ministry 'outside' the Church. They are part of the Church, engaging with people on the margins. In this, chaplains are a resource for the whole Church and many of them are keen not only to share their experience and insights with local churches but also to help in leading worship and supporting local mission. They feel they have a key role in helping 'the margins to talk to the main text and the main text informing the margins'. They engage regularly in debates around ethics and priorities, not least in the current considerations regarding healthcare provision and resources. The current perceived secularist agenda puts chaplains at the focal point of such debates.

8 United Board

The United Navy, Army and Air Force Board is the means by which United Reformed Church ministers, along with ministers from the Baptist Union GB and the Congregational Federation, can be commended to the armed forces for service as a commissioned or Territorial Army chaplains. This is a truly incarnational form of ministry since those who serve in this way go wherever our armed forces go. Three out of our eight full-time chaplains have served in Afghanistan in the last 18 months with another due to go this summer.

Resolutions

9 Retirement and pensionable age

General Assembly will be asked to approve changes to the United Reformed Church Ministers Pension Fund which would raise the pensionable age to 68. If these changes are agreed the Ministries Committee will ask General Assembly to raise the age at which full-time stipendiary service for ministers and church related community workers ceases. **(Resolution 25)**

10 Resourcing Ministry

10.1 Continuing to reflect on previous work undertaken by the Ministries Committee and presented to General Assembly (i.e. *Equipping the Saints 2004, Challenge to the Church 2008*), a working party was formed to consider how resources from the Mission and Ministry Fund might be made available to the synods to enable ministry alongside the established patterns of ministry of Word and sacraments and church related community work.

10.2 The report of the working party, *Resourcing Ministry*, presents a proposal for change. This is a complex issue and the changes will have consequences which will require careful monitoring. The report includes a timetable which allows for this monitoring to take place before further changes are suggested. **(Resolution 26)**

Accreditation Sub-Committee

Committee Members

Convener: Geoff Townsend

Secretary: Craig Bowman

Members: Richard Church, Helga Cornell, Malcolm Fife, Jim Murison, Tessa Henry-Robinson, Graham Campling (Convener of the National Assessment Board)

Certificates of eligibility

1 The Ministries Committee is responsible to General Assembly for oversight of the projected number of ministers for future years and for deciding each year, on the basis of these projections, whether certificates of eligibility for stipendiary service may be issued to ministers of other denominations. Such a certificate grants eligibility to receive a call to serve in a pastorate or post. 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. Should no call be made and accepted within three years the certificate lapses.

2 Four certificates of eligibility were granted in the second half of 2010 and a further 11 were made in 2011. Two of these were later withdrawn as the ministers concerned had accepted a post within their own denomination. Due to the projected minister numbers, no certificates of eligibility are likely to be granted in 2012.

3 We are looking to improve the induction process offered to ministers joining the denomination, particularly for those coming from overseas.

Certificates of limited service

4 These were formerly known as certificates of limited eligibility and, in contrast to certificates of eligibility, 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 denomination to serve in and be paid by the United Reformed Church in one specified post for a limited period of time.

5 Seven certificates of limited service were granted in 2010 and five in 2011.

Special Category Ministry Posts

6 Previous decisions of General Assembly set a maximum of 60 special category posts. This figure is never likely to be reached due to the costs to the synods in having to provide manses and other expenses. Creating these additional posts would also have the effect of reducing the number of stipendiary ministers available to fill vacant pastorates. On 1 March 2012 there were 37 posts with an additional four applications expected. As some of the posts are part-time, the 37 posts equated to 33.5 full-time equivalents. At present there is no restriction on the number of posts for each synod and they vary between one and six.

7 Since the last General Assembly several posts have ended including those at Brackley, Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal, Inner Manchester Mission Network and Ebbsfleet. New posts have been approved for Holy Island, Transitional Ministry, Ibex, Bristol Korean Church, Bristol Workplace Chaplaincy, Fresh Expressions in Mersey and Milton Keynes and Eco-Scotland.

8 One of the effects of the economic recession has been the pressure placed upon chaplaincies as external funding has become more difficult to obtain.

Ministries

9 Following discussions at a previous General Assembly, Mission Council agreed to set aside three special category ministry posts for evangelists and applications were approved from Northern, East Midlands and West Midlands Synods. However, these posts have proved difficult to fill.

10 The Committee is indebted to Mary Stacy who administers the special category ministry scheme.

Duty to consider

11 An existing procedure enables consideration to be given to requests that a stipendiary minister continue in post beyond the normal retirement age. Synods can agree an extension of up to six months and the Committee has the authority to grant applications for up to three years. Six applications were granted in the second half of 2010, two during 2011 and three in the first quarter of 2012.

The Roll of Ministers

12 Admissions to the roll of ministers (from 1st April 2010 to 31st March 2012)

12.1 By ordination and induction:

Mark Bates, Kate Baxter, Lucy Berry, Heather Cadoux, Helen Carr, James Church, Sue Cossey, Sue Fender, Bernard Fidler, Nicola Gilbert, Andrew Hall, Jeff Hughes, John Lee, Sue McCoan, Alan McGougan, Iain McLaren, Kim Plumpton, Mark Robinson, Paul Robinson, Julian Sanders, Peter Scott, Matthew Stone, James Taylor, Liz Thomson, Anthea Wickens.

12.2 By transfer from other churches:

Ulrike Bell (Lippesche Landeskirche), David Dean (United Church of Christ, USA), Ann Gobledale (United Church of Christ, USA), Ted Gobledale (United Church of Christ, USA), Geoff Hewitt (Methodist Church in Ireland), James Jang (Presbyterian Church of Korea), Robert Jordan (Reformed Churches in Argentina), George Kalu (Presbyterian Church of Nigeria), Martha McInnes (United Church of Christ, USA), Reggie Mudenda (Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa), Kevin Snyman (Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa).

12.3 By changes within the roll of ministers:

Ken Blanton (non-stipendiary to stipendiary service)

12.4 Deletions from the Roll of Ministers by resignation and/or transfer to another denomination:

David Joscelyne, Trevor Legge (Church of England), Elaine Sutherland (Church of England), Nigel Warner, Janet Webber, Ruth White (Church of England).

Church Related Community Workers

13 Admission to the roll of church related community workers (from 1st April 2010 to 31st March 2012)

by commissioning: Jennie Crane

Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers

14 The following have received Assembly accreditation between 1st April 2010 and 31st March 2012 as a result of having completed a United Reformed Church course of study or prior accreditation from another denomination.

Northern:	Daphne Clarke
North Western Synod:	Wendy Smith, Ken Snaith
Mersey:	David Caxton, Elizabeth Smyth
Yorkshire Synod:	Jill Fletcher, Denise Webster
East Midlands Synod:	Michael Gardner, Jeffrey Newall, Lindsay Williamson
West Midlands Synod:	Fiona Elvins, Julie Jefferies, Margaret Marshall
Eastern Synod:	Keith Cakebread, David Cumbers, Amanda Dolan-Harrison, Drina Hampson, Richard Stein

South Western Synod:	Eric Clifford, Mike Dennis, Caroline Phillips
Wessex:	Karen Tweed
Thames North Synod:	Mary Carpenter, Evodian Fonoyonga, Rebecca Plunkett
Southern Synod:	Ted Bellingham, Lisa-Maria Browning, Stuart Dew, Eileen Lawlor, Michael Pritchard, Linda Richards
Synod of Scotland:	Joanna Smith

15 Twenty five of these Lay Preachers qualified through Training for Learning and Serving.

Scarborough



Assessment Board

Committee Members

Convener: Graham Campling

Secretary: Craig Bowman

Members: Maureen Campbell, Paul Floe, Judith Garthwaite, Mark Hayes, Franziska Herring, James Horton, Margaret Jenkins, Sue Kirkbride, Jamie Kissack, Jan Maxwell, Gary McGowan, Rod Morrison, Lis Mullen, Mercy Nimako, Robin Pencavel, Adella Pritchard, Val Towler, Irene Wren, Bill Young

1 Commitment

The commitment of those who serve on the Board is much appreciated and grateful thanks are expressed to all, in particular those who have retired since 2010: Jan Adamson, Lesley Charlton, Sian Collins, David Jenkins, Irene John, Edward Sanniez and Wendy Smith. Greatly valued were the Chaplains at recent Conferences, John Waller, Elizabeth Welch, Graham Long and David Helyar.

2 The work

2.1 The entire Board meets annually in September and continually reviews the processes involved in the selection of candidates for training for the ministry of Word and sacraments and church related community work. In accordance with the resolutions accepted by General Assembly 2007, it is the Assessment Board which decides whether or not to forward a candidate for training, rather than the synod. This “new” process has worked reasonably well but some issues still need attention. The Board is refining the manner in which the decision, whether positive or negative, is conveyed to the candidate. This decision is communicated 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 continues to affirm that candidates for stipendiary service should demonstrate a willingness to serve the United Reformed Church without undue geographical constraints.

2.3 In September 2011 staff from the Resource Centres for Learning met with the Assessment Board members to share some of the challenges issues and problems that arise with students in training. Various actions were agreed. Where a person has previously candidated elsewhere or commenced training that would normally lead to ordination or commissioning, further information will be sought. This will require that all paperwork be submitted significantly earlier than in the past.

2.4 It was also agreed that it was good practice for all synods to conduct local interviews. Although decisions would not be taken, local interviewers can offer valuable advice and recommendations to the synod and the candidate.

2.5 The Board also agreed that if the retirement age of stipendiary ministers is raised to 68, the age at which an application must be made should rise to 53 and ordination should take place by age 58 for those offering stipendiary service. There would be no change for those offering for non-stipendiary service.

2.6 There are two assessment conferences each year. This means that some members of the Assessment Board have been needed infrequently, particularly as we balance the male and female, ordained and lay members at each Conference and take into account the synods from which candidates have come. It was therefore decided to reduce the total membership of the Assessment Board by inviting the Nominations Committee to provide three new Board members annually in place of the four retiring.

3 Number of candidates

36 candidates attended the 4 conferences between January 2010 and January 2012

22 candidates for stipendiary service (22 accepted for training)

9 candidates for non-stipendiary service (8 accepted for training)

1 candidate for CRCW (accepted for training)

4 for transfer from non-stipendiary to stipendiary service (4 accepted)

4 Windermere consultation

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 the synods.

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Church Related Community Work Programme Sub-Committee

Committee Members

Convener: Paul Whittle

CRCW Development Workers: Suzanne Adofo, Steve Summers

Members: Jacky Embrey (Convener-Elect), Graham Ghaleb, Sue Macbeth, John Mellor, Cristine Smalligan, Marie Trubic

1 Raising awareness

Church related community work offers exciting possibilities for ministry with a difference. Rightly, the edge is blurred between those ministers of Word and sacraments who are most engaged with community initiatives and those church related community workers who emphasise their role within the church. However, we believe that the distinctive nature of church related community work has something special to contribute to the overall life of the Church. Church related community workers believe in the process of community development as the most empowering and enabling way for the Church to express its beliefs in action, in ministry and mission. We are fascinated that we often see this being recognised by colleagues in partner denominations but that, despite its long history, many in the United Reformed Church lack awareness of what this ministry offers. We are committed to continuing to challenge this lack of awareness.

2 Numbers

There are currently 16 church related community workers deployed in a range of interesting ministries across the denomination. There are a further three accredited church-in-community projects in vacancy and a number of inquiries. Given present trends, retirements, and presuming that no existing CRCWs leave and no certificates of eligibility are granted, there will be a maximum of 13 deployed CRCWs by the end of 2014. Our current priority is therefore to look for those who may be receiving God's call to this ministry.

3 Effective engagement

We have made a number of changes over the past two years in order to support and engage with current and potential church related community workers and churches-in-community more effectively. These include developing localised roadshows as the means of engaging with projects, creating a closer link between a potential post's application form and the post profile, initiating a structured programme of visits to projects and revising the handbook. We are grateful to *REFORM* for increasing our profile with the engaging set of articles written by Alison Micklem.

Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee

Committee Members

Convener: Tony Haws

Secretary: Craig Bowman

Members: Margaret Atkinson, Maurice Dyson (Convener of Pensions Executive), Alison Hall, Andrew Martlew, Catey Morrison, Richard Turnbull, Ruth Whitehead (Convener of Ministries Committee)

1 Stipend increase

After much consideration and with regret, Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee (MoM) agreed to set the stipend increase for January 2012 at 2%. This was substantially lower than the figure of 3.7% produced by the formula which has been used in recent years, and well below the inflation measures which were running at about 5%, the level by which retired Ministers' pensions were raised. MoM recognised the constraints imposed by the Church's financial situation and that average levels for pay increases across all sectors were only slightly higher than 2%. On the other hand MoM recognised that this constraint on the stipend could impose significant financial burdens on Ministers with several dependants and long serving Ministers who were close to retirement.

2 Pension and retirements ages

2.1 It was agreed to recommend to General Assembly that pension and retirement ages for Stipendiary Ministers be raised to 68. Raising the pension age will help reduce the Pension Fund deficit, and it is both logical and equitable to keep pension and retirement ages synchronised. **(Resolutions 22 and 25)**

2.2 Changes to the terms for taking early retirement on the grounds of ill health are also recommended. These are seen as a means of achieving greater equity, encouraging loyalty and promoting the benefits of long service with the Church. **(Resolution 23)**

3 Auto Enrolment into the pension schemes

Auto Enrolment of all employees into a pension scheme will soon become a statutory requirement. The Church is well advanced with implementing Auto Enrolment. As a consequence of Auto Enrolment and to protect the Church's financial interests, MoM agreed that: 'The current practice of paying pension contributions to overseas pension funds, stakeholder and personal pension arrangements should cease from July 2012' for new ministers. **(Resolution 24)**

4 Long term sickness absence

4.1 The increase in the number of cases of long term sickness absence that was reported to last General Assembly has been reversed which is gratifying on both pastoral and financial grounds.

4.2 Following some problems experienced by the payroll office in obtaining medical certificates to support sickness absence, MoM agreed in principle that ministers be advised that their stipend payments could be suspended if they did not adhere to the long term sickness process.

Retired Ministers' Housing Sub-Committee

This Sub-Committee is 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.

Committee Members

Convener:	David Bedford
Members:	Anne Bedford, John Humphreys, Nanette Lewis-Head, Peter West
Secretary:	Tony Bayley
Deputy Secretary:	Mark Pullen

1 The immediate challenge

1.1 It is our privilege to care for and honour faithful servants of Christ and their spouses through the operation of the Society. This is made possible only through the continuing generosity of God's people for which we are very grateful: regular donations and legacies provide good income for us but the value of both is reducing as the years go on. From 2008 the synods have responded well to our Second Mile appeal, and since the number of Society properties sold has been similar to the number bought, we have been able to reduce our substantial borrowing from United Reformed Church general reserves.

1.2 In the immediate future, however, we are entering a period when the post-war 'baby bulge' generation is retiring, and we could be called upon to assist with the housing of 60 or more retiring ministers over the next three years. We would need to find some £8 million to do so. United Reformed Church general funds are under pressure, so it will be difficult to add to our borrowing. We ask you to do two things: pray for the right resources at the right time, and work hard in your corner of the vineyard to see this challenge surmounted.

2 Our ongoing work

2.1 During 2010 and 2011, 30 properties were acquired and 36 were sold, thus reducing the number of properties under management to 356 at the end of 2011.

2.2 Our residents will pay rent of between £126 and £209 per calendar month in 2012. Although this is heavily subsidised it is intended to cover maintenance costs.

2.3 During 2010 donations and legacies (including properties) totalling £992,000 were gratefully received while in 2011 these totalled £355,000.

2.4 During 2010 and 2011 visits were made by officers of the Society to around 300 applicants, residents and 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.

2.5 Retirement housing continues to figure prominently in the pre-retirement courses run at the Windermere Centre. Two courses are to take place this year and a further three are planned for 2013. The housing sessions are designed to be of benefit to all, regardless of whether financial assistance with housing will be needed. In addition, there is opportunity for private discussions on individual needs.

2.6 Anyone requiring more detailed information about the work of the Retired Ministers' Housing Society should contact the Secretary at Church House.

3 The Secretary

The Committee wishes to acknowledge the huge debt of gratitude the Church owes to Tony Bayley, who retires this summer after 11 years as Secretary to the Society. Countless ministers and spouses have benefited from his gracious and caring spirit during their transition into retirement. We wish him and Marion a very happy retirement.

Scarborough



Mission

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.

Committee Members

Convener: Tracey Lewis (Ed Cox until February 2012)

Deputy Convener: Peter Pay

Staff Secretaries: Francis Brienen, Michael Jagessar, Graham Jones, Frank Kantor, Linda Mead, Jane Rowell, David Tatem

Members: Lindsey Sanderson, Tessa Henry-Robinson, Mike Walsh, Andrew Willett, David Dean, Pat Poinen, Peter Hurter, Louise Franklin, Samantha White, John Macaulay, Martin Hayward, Nick Stanyon, Simon Loveitt (co-opted).

1 Introduction

1.1 Mission is the driving energy of the church. It is God’s mission and it entails all that God is doing to transform the world into the reign of God, where there is abundance and fullness of life for all. It is because of the call to participate in God’s mission that the Church exists. God calls for a Church proclaiming and enacting abundance and hope in a time of austerity, justice in the midst of growing inequality and conflict, hospitality and welcome in divided communities, and God’s love and forgiveness for all. This is the church-in-mission and recognisably the community of the followers of Jesus.

1.2 The Mission Committee has expressed this in the *vision2020* framework for mission and church growth which was adopted by the General Assembly in 2010. In the past two years the Committee and the Mission Team have worked in supporting the Church at local, synod and Assembly levels as they have engaged with prayer and spirituality, identity, ecumenical and community partnerships, hospitality and diversity, evangelism, church growth, justice and peace, global partnerships and integrity of creation. The team members have been involved in training, advocacy, networking, advice and consultancy, development of resources and facilitation of programmes across the whole of the United Reformed Church.

Photograph from left to right:

David Tatem, Frank Kantor, Wendy Cooper, Helen Garton, Jane Rowell, Graham Jones, Linda Mead, Francis Brienen, Tracey Hardingham, Michael Jagessar.





2 Engagement with *vision2020*

2.1 Since General Assembly 2010 the Mission Team has worked with local churches, synods and Assembly committees to facilitate engagement with *vision2020*.

2.2 The annual returns of 2010 suggest that about one third of the churches were able to state their *vision2020* priorities. Not only does this tell us what some of the current priorities might be, it also helps us to determine where the future challenges lie. The Mission Committee intends to strengthen its support for local churches in engaging with *vision2020* through equipping, funding and encouraging churches to share their stories. This will be an important focus for the years ahead.

2.3 A number of synods have engaged very actively with *vision2020*, encouraging churches to make local mission pledges and making links with their own strategic mission priorities. More detailed reports on how the synods have engaged with *vision2020* were brought to the November 2011 Mission Council. The Mission Team members have supported the synods in this and will continue to do so in the period ahead. Linking the Local Ministry and Mission Review (LMMR) process with *vision2020* will be particularly important.

2.4 Ongoing conversations with the Assembly staff team at Church House and with the Assembly committees have helped us to link our work to *vision2020*. The Mission Team members have also had opportunities to share *vision2020* through the college programmes, the new ministers' conference, the Welcome to the United Reformed Church course and synod ministers' conferences.

Mission

2.5 The Mission Team has shaped its work plan around *vision2020* and work has started on reshaping the 2013 budget in a similar way. *Vision2020* has also enabled greater team working and a direct result of this was a conference on evangelism in July 2011, bringing together the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry (RJMM) and Mission networks.

2.6 The Mission Committee has reshaped its grants into a *vision2020* grants fund, offering local churches and agencies one-off grants for special projects and three-year grants for ongoing work. The fund has supported the start of Messy Church, a community café and a project for work with older adults, to name some examples. In the current climate of cuts in services that will affect the most vulnerable in particular we are expecting an increase in applications from local churches and agencies. This presents the challenge to enlarge the fund in the future.

2.7 A report of activities in the past two years for each area of work is now given, written by the individual Mission Team members. This offers a detailed account of the remit and work of both the Committee and the Team, while demonstrating how each area of work contributes to *vision2020*.

3 Ecumenical relations

3.1 Ecumenical relations in three nations

3.1.1 Every member of the Mission Team fulfils an ecumenical role through working on particular issues from time to time with ecumenical partners – and often constantly, in groups such as the Joint Public Issues Team. In that way the ecumenical dimension of *vision2020* is not only through the statement on ecumenical partnerships but in relation to all of them. Thinking of our identity has to be in the context of the whole Christian family and increasingly, when we engage in new initiatives in evangelism or church growth, we do so with ecumenical partners. Many of the resources that enrich the life of the United Reformed Church benefit from ecumenical input, but we in our turn contribute much to those resources. The Secretary for Ecumenical Relations works closely with other Mission Team members, especially when the ecumenical dimension of work is at the forefront, and he has a primary role of encouraging ecumenical involvement at every level.

3.1.2 The Secretary's role is also representational on behalf of the United Reformed Church on various ecumenical bodies and at the meetings of other denominations. It is useful to remember that the engagement across the three nations is different in each case.



3.1.3 In England the URC continues to play a significant role in Churches Together in England (CTE). The high number of Local Ecumenical Partnerships of which we are a part means that we contribute especially to the work of the Group for Local Unity and we have benefited from the creation of the model constitution for single congregational LEPs which has made it easier for LEPs to register with the Charity Commission.

3.1.4 There has been no CTE Forum since the last Assembly, but there will be another in September of this year (2012) and it is hoped that people from local churches will be involved. The Secretary for Ecumenical Relations represents the United Reformed Church in the ongoing work of the CTE Enabling Group, the Theology and Unity Group, which is now under the convenership of Professor David Thompson, as well as in the Free Churches Group which has recently produced *The Cotswold Statement* reaffirming the importance of a united Free Church voice within the ecumenical scene.

3.1.5 A consultation that was held in 2011 as part of our review of ecumenical relations indicated the strong and continuing commitment that exists within the United Reformed Church to our founding motivation. The review was completed and presented to the Mission Committee in February this year and has suggested the consolidation of the network of denominational ecumenical officers who represent the United Reformed Church on the various intermediate or county bodies across England. One of the promising recent areas of development in this way has been the statement

of intent in Cumbria, where the URC's partnership with the Methodist Church and the Church of England was signed in November 2011. The intention there is to establish, as far as it is feasible, an ecumenical county. It is a place where United Reformed Church leadership has played a significant role in moving things forward and we are grateful to the Revd Rachel Poolman for the work she has put into this and which has been acknowledged and valued across all the denominations.



Westminster Abbey service

3.1.6 This year has seen a significant ecumenical event. The service of reconciliation with the Church of England in Westminster Abbey on 7th February, attended by about 800 members of the United Reformed Church, marked not an end point but a significant stage in the growth of our relationship with them. Plans are now being made for the next stage of our United Reformed Church/Church of England conversations.

3.1.7 New Methodist/United Reformed Church United Areas have come into existence and the work of the joint liaison group has continued in exploring the various issues that influence our co-operation. Much is gradually being learned from looking at the quite different ecclesiologies of Methodist connexionalism and United Reformed Church congregationalism. A second joint meeting of the United Reformed Church Mission Council and the Methodist Council is scheduled for October 2012.

3.1.8 For the last five years a small bilateral dialogue group has been meeting with representatives of the Bishops Conference of England and Wales of the Roman Catholic Church. This group has produced a report of the first phase of its work and is about to start a second phase. Part of the intention of the group is to develop resources for dialogue that can be useful at the local church level.

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3.1.9 In Wales too the ecumenical scene has developed. Since the time of the last Assembly there has been no designated Ecumenical Officer for Wales and much of the work has fallen on the shoulders of the Moderator. Early in 2012, however, the Revd Sally Thomas was appointed to the post. This is in good time for the gathering of the Commission of Covenanted Churches which is to take place in Aberystwyth in October and which it is hoped will mark a significant step forward in ecumenical relations in Wales where there is a unique set of partners. The disappointment following the failure of the proposals to create an ecumenical bishop has been turned round with a new energy and enthusiasm.

3.1.10 In Scotland the scene has been less progressive in the last two years. The EMU partnership that was established between the Episcopalians, Methodists and United Reformed



Christian Ecumenical Partnerships (3)

Church has remained rather static and the wider ecumenical scene has also suffered from the necessary closure of Scottish Churches House in Dunblane. Nevertheless the URC continues to play a significant ecumenical role, not least through the work of the Revd Lindsey Sanderson as the Assistant General Secretary of Action for Churches Together (ACTS). Our Ecumenical Officer in Scotland is the Revd Mitchell Bunting.

3.2 The European scene

3.2.1 Our engagement in the wider European scene has continued through our bilateral partnerships, the most active of which is our long standing covenant with the Church of the Palatinate. We continue to have a strong link with the French Reformed Church and a more recent development has been in our relationship with the Mission Covenanting Church in Sweden which is developing links between their deacons training programme and our church related community work training.

3.2.2 The United Reformed Church has also continued to be represented on the council of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) and will be involved in the Assembly of CPCE to be held in Florence in the autumn. The Faith and Order Reference Group has also responded on behalf of the United Reformed Church to a number of requests for papers on theological issues that CPCE will be finally agreeing at the Assembly.

3.3 Interfaith work

3.3.1 Ecumenical relations also encompasses the brief of interfaith relations where there is a fruitful area of overlap in that increasingly the engagement with interfaith issues is being made from an ecumenical base. One of the networks of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) is the Churches Interreligious Network (CIRN) which brings together representatives from various traditions to engage with issues concerning the wider Christian relationship with traditional interfaith partners and also with some newer faith groups. The Secretary meets with interfaith desk officers of our main ecumenical partners and from CTE and CTBI. Ecumenically too, the dynamic of Christian/Jewish relationships set against the backdrop of the political situation in Israel/Palestine is an increasing area of focus, requiring the most careful sensitivities and understanding. In that area, the United Reformed Church's Jewish Fund has assisted a number of ministers and others to undertake programmes of research and engagement in Christian/Jewish relations. The United Reformed Church has continued its own particular contribution to the resourcing of interfaith work through its involvement with the St Philips Centre in Leicester and the London Interfaith Centre.

3.3.2 United Reformed Church interfaith work is overseen by the joint interfaith reference group shared with the Methodist Church. The Revd Peter Brain comes to the end of his convenership of the group at Assembly and is replaced by the Revd Clare Downing. There is also a growing network of synod based interfaith advisers which now holds an annual meeting. Both the reference group and the advisers are ready to help local churches or synods to engage in an increasingly important area of work.



3.4 The ecumenical scene is constantly changing. For many, ‘old’ ecumenism is dead and the ‘new’ ecumenism is about sharing together in mission. To a large degree this is true and with initiatives such as HOPE and Street Pastors traditional partners are increasingly working with new partners. We have learned much from the ecumenical journey over the years and from that have many treasures and insights to bring to these new initiatives in mission.

4 Mission

4.1 Facilitating evangelism

4.1.1 In addition to facilitating *vision2020* and coordinating the Mission Team, the Secretary for Mission focuses in particular on evangelism and church growth. She supports a number of existing and new processes and programmes that equip local churches for engagement with mission, evangelism and church growth.

4.1.2 In the past two years *Vision4Life* has continued to inspire and engage many churches in mission. By the start of the Evangelism Year, the final year of *Vision4Life*, close to 700 churches had registered to participate. Booklets were developed, as were materials for the website. The Revd Janet Lees continued to support the process as coordinator, but in the final year focused on an evaluation of the process. A full evaluation report of *Vision4Life* can be found elsewhere in this report (see Appendix 10). The Secretary for Mission facilitated the production of materials, convened Steering Group meetings and led a number of *Vision4Life* events.

4.1.3 *Vision4Life* formally came to an end in late November 2011 and the Steering Group met for the last time to receive the evaluation report and plan a final set of website materials. The website will remain available for at least another year (www.vision4life.org.uk).



Evangelism (6)

Mission

4.1.4 The Mission Committee would like to thank the Revd Janet Lees for her work as Vision4Life coordinator, the Revd Paul Snell for his work on the website and all steering group members for their time and commitment to the process.

4.1.5 The past two years have seen much further development in the campaign for radical welcome. A brief for the ad agency was written enabling them to develop a series of posters and introductory packs for churches were prepared. Companions training was developed and delivered and contact was made with ecumenical partners to present and discuss the campaign. An internal launch at the Spring synods of 2011 resulted in strong responses in both directions.

4.1.6 Following the strong reactions to the campaign Mission Council agreed that the campaign be reviewed. The review took place over the summer of 2011 and its report was brought to the Mission Committee in October. The Mission Committee endorsed the decision of the review group that with an agreed list of actions for the management and communication of the campaign, concerns had been addressed and the campaign should continue. Mission Council accepted this decision and a small liaison group was appointed to continue working with the steering group on the development of the campaign.

4.1.7 However, at the Mission Council meeting in March 2012, the decision was taken to terminate the ZI campaign with immediate effect, due to the lack of covenanted churches and trained companions. Mission Council expressed the wish that the work on radical welcome with the churches continue and asked the steering group at its last meeting to explore how this could be done.

4.1.8 We have learned a lot through what has been a turbulent journey with this mission initiative within the United Reformed Church. The nature of our church and its approaches to mission and evangelism has been exposed to challenging debate. Our vision and purpose have been stretched and the project, while not proceeding to completion as planned, has contributed to the development of our identity and revealed the challenges of the missional context in the 21st century. The challenge now is to keep the momentum for development that the campaign initiated as the church continues to explore its mission through radical welcome.

4.1.9 In 2010 the General Assembly agreed a resolution to encourage churches to engage with the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and the Queen's Jubilee. In September 2010 the Communications and Mission departments hosted a day at the Olympic Park for synod representatives to explore the opportunities for witness and service that the Games provide. This resulted in a network of synod contacts to disseminate information and support churches in the development of activities around the 2012 Games.

4.1.10 In the course of 2011 the United Reformed Church joined as a formal partner in More Than Gold, an agency established to help churches make the most of the 2012 Games through programmes of outreach, hospitality and service. More Than Gold has organised several tours around the UK to equip churches for their involvement and has produced a host of resources for churches to use. More Than Gold is also responsible



Evangelism booklet



Hospitality and diversity (5)

for the Athletes' Family Homestay Programme and the Revd Ashley Evans represents the United Reformed Church on the planning group. The Secretary for Mission and the Press Officer are members of the More Than Gold Executive Committee and Communications Team respectively.

4.1.11 In the course of 2011 the United Reformed Church became a partner in HOPE. HOPE arose out of HOPE08 and offers a banner for a more joined-up approach to local mission. Its purpose is to support and facilitate mission through word and action, especially around the major Christian festivals. Many local United Reformed churches participate in HOPE initiatives in their communities. In 2012 HOPE's focus will also include the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the 2012 Games. The Revd Andrew Willett, a Mission Committee member, represents the United Reformed Church on the HOPE Forum.

4.2 Church growth

4.2.1 The United Reformed Church joined the *Fresh Expressions* initiative as a formal partner in June 2009. Though funded by the Mission budget the work was supported by both the Secretaries for Mission and for Education and Learning. In the course of 2010 it became apparent that a more strategic approach was needed and Mission Committee agreed that its financial contribution to *Fresh Expressions* be used to appoint a half-time coordinator for Fresh Expressions in the United Reformed Church. The new coordinator, Ms Linda Rayner, started work in September 2011.

4.2.2 Linda Rayner has spent the first six months in post on mapping the many innovative and creative ways in which churches share the gospel with their communities. The purpose of the exercise is to gather information to inform strategic support for and development of fresh expressions of church. The coordinator is also a member of the Fresh Expressions Core Team and ensures that the United Reformed Church voice is heard alongside our ecumenical colleagues and in Fresh Expressions Area Strategy Teams (FEASTs). She has provided training and has visited synods to talk about the work of Fresh Expressions. As more synods are getting involved in pioneer ministry, networking and supporting pioneer ministers will be high on the agenda in the future.

Evangelism conference



Mission

4.2.3 The Secretary for Mission continues the fresh expressions work by attending the Fresh Expressions Forum (a meeting of all partners every 6 months) and Core Team meetings (twice a year) and supporting the coordinator.



4.2.4 Back to Church Sunday (BTCS) originated in the Manchester Diocese of the Church of England in 2004 and became a UK-wide initiative in 2008. Its purpose is to encourage church members to invite a friend, relative or neighbour to come to church with them on Back to Church Sunday. In 2011 77,000 new people came to church. Though various synods had been participants in Back to Church Sunday, the United Reformed Church as a denomination was not a partner. This meant that only local churches in registered synods could participate. Following conversations with the synod moderators and the network of mission enablers the Mission Committee agreed that the United Reformed Church join in BTCS, enabling all local churches to participate. There is now a BTCS champion or contact in each synod and several training events are being organised. Back to Church Sunday 2012 will be on 30 September. For more information visit: www.backtochurch.co.uk

4.2.5 The Secretary for Mission co-operated with the Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry in organising a *vision2020* conference on evangelism in July 2011. The Secretary for Mission will take the lead in organising the next *vision2020* conference, which will be on church growth. The conference will be held in July 2013 and will involve 40-45 local practitioners/church leaders.

4.3 Mission enablers

4.3.1 The Secretary for Mission continues to support the mission enablers network by hosting three meetings per year for sharing of information and good practice, capacity building and mutual support. The group continues to grow and now includes mission enablers from nearly all the synods. Next year will see a joint network meeting, bringing together mission enablers, training and development officers, and children's and youth development officers.

5 Rural mission

5.1.1 One in four local United Reformed Churches are in rural communities. The rural context is distinctive and diverse, dynamic and demanding. The church in rural communities faces huge challenges and yet continues to 'punch above its weight' in many situations. The wider rural agenda is complex and changing, with implications for



all people in all communities. The Rural Officer gives focus to the church's response to these challenges and helps equip local churches to engage with *vision2020* and share in God's mission in the countryside.

5.1.2 During 2010 a review of rural mission was conducted and its recommendations were accepted at the joint meeting of the United Reformed Mission Council and the Methodist Council (October 2010). These included the continuation of the United Reformed/Methodist Rural Officer post, based at the Arthur Rank Centre (ARC) in Warwickshire, for a further five years until the summer of 2016. The ARC is the churches' ecumenical resource unit for work in rural communities, celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2012. The post is a creative ecumenical partnership which provides added value to the mission of both denominations.

5.2 Empowering people

5.2.1 The Rural Officer supports a number of initiatives to equip and empower people for rural ministry. These include:

- 5.2.1.1 offering and facilitating training in rural mission and ministry in a wide variety of contexts. The ARC offers a three day rural ministry course for those new or returning to rural ministry. Training and placements are offered to those training for ministry and local church training and consultancy is provided across the churches. The ARC's research into *Resourcing and Training for the Rural Church* has been widely disseminated;
- 5.2.1.2 convening an ecumenical steering group which oversees a local collaborative ministry (LCM) project. LCM is a radical approach to ministry and mission which seeks to liberate and empower the whole people of God. The project attracted nearly £4,000 funding from the Sir Halley Stewart Trust which has supported training in East Anglia and Yorkshire for over 50 rural practitioners;
- 5.2.1.3 developing the Rural Church Entrepreneurs project: a partnership between the ARC and the Churches' Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber. This is an 18 month leadership development programme which aims to release the entrepreneurial skills within leaders in the rural church. The amount of £19,000 has been attracted from the Bishop Radford Trust and others and the second phase is now being planned;
- 5.2.1.4 developing a diploma and MA programme in *Rural Ministry and Mission* with the York Institute for Community Theology and York St John University. This two-year programme will equip those with a long-term commitment to rural ministry and mission;
- 5.2.1.5 supporting and resourcing the synod moderators and the vital network of synod rural officers, and initiating a rural network on URCL (the United Reformed Church Learning Environment) to further strengthen the ecumenical rural networks.



Community partnerships (4)

5.2.2 The primary focus of *vision2020* is the local church and the people who make up the communities of faith in local contexts. In rural communities these can be small in number, often feeling fragile and marginalised. All of the above is aimed at supporting and resourcing these people, encouraging them to be church in ways that are appropriate to their size and capacity.

5.3 Developing assets and resources

5.3.1 With the Plunkett Foundation and the Church of England the Rural Officer has helped to produce guidelines for churches wishing to host post offices and community shops and subsequently, with the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB), for churches wishing to host a CAB on their premises. A similar collaboration has drawn up a research proposal looking at how extended use of places of worship can



Post office in church

make them more sustainable. Phase One of this research has attracted £10,000 funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and will be completed in June 2012.

5.3.2 Representing the United Reformed Church on the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' Rural Community Buildings' Network and on the Historic Religious Buildings at the Heritage Alliance steering group is another aspect of the work. Both groups seek to develop the creative use of church buildings as part of the church's mission.

5.3.3 With ecumenical colleagues the Rural Officer has published the workbook *Making Connections*, encouraging churches to engage with their communities in positive and creative ways. He also sits on the editorial group of *Country Way* magazine, published by the Arthur Rank Centre, which is full of good news stories and creative ideas from the rural church. In the past two years a range of worship materials has been produced – for the ARC website, ARC Sunday, the CTBI website and Hope for Harvest. Being a member of the Fresh Expressions' rural roundtable which meets twice a year provides a regular opportunity to 'rural proof' the *Fresh Expressions* agenda.



Spirituality and prayer (1)

5.3.4 In rural communities church buildings can be a hugely valuable asset in supporting God's mission. The Rural Officer therefore encourages churches to work in partnership with others to develop this asset to the uttermost. The need for sacred space, worship and the opportunity to tell the Christian story remains of vital importance.

5.4 Engagement and representation

5.4.1 The Rural Officer facilitates the church's engagement with rural social justice issues, liaising when appropriate with the Joint Public Issues Team. Both he and the ARC respond to relevant Government consultations and seek to articulate the church's voice on rural matters and policy.

5.4.2 He is a trustee of Farm Crisis Network (a charity supporting farming families through difficult times) and continues to work as chaplain to the Rural Stress Helpline, a confidential listening service based at the ARC.



Justice and peace (9)

5.4.3 The Rural Officer attended the International Rural Churches Association conference in Germany in 2010, drawing together rural practitioners from around the world. He was also invited to deliver a paper at a rural ministry conference in eastern

Germany. The ARC has welcomed visitors from the church in eastern Germany and New Zealand seeking to learn from the experience of the ARC. The Rural Officer is encouraging participation in the International Rural Churches Association (Europe) conference in June 2012.

5.4.4 The Rural Officer has helped develop the Rural Strategy Group to oversee his work and rural mission within the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church. He also represents the United Reformed Church on the Churches' Rural Group, a CTE coordinating group.

6 Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry

6.1 We are a multicultural church! This 2005 declaration is given intentional content through Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry (RJMM) which continues to be an integral part and key dimension of the *whole vision2020* strategy. Over the last two years, the work has taken on a variety of shapes, made strategic shifts, and continues to create excitement and passion. It has also generated a number of collaborative pieces of work across the wider United Reformed Church.

6.2 One of the strengths of RJMM is its investment in people through the breadth of networks in delivering its work locally and ecumenically. These networks include: racial justice advocates (over 65 members) and synod coordinators (13), a gathering of ethnic minority lay and ordained leadership (EMLOMA), Black and Asian minority ethnic ministers/CRCWs, Black and Asian women's group (Cascades of Grace), and ethno-cultural networks with a specific focus, especially newer established Christian communities (Korean, Pakistani and Ghanaian).

6.2.1 The racial justice advocates network continues to be a beacon in the life of RJMM. Each synod has a coordinator and there is a good spread of advocates across the life of the whole church. Our yearly consultations provide opportunities to reconsider, for instance, the shifting nature of racism in the UK, sharing good practices, in-depth



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exploration towards joined up advocacy across the United Reformed Church, preparing Racial Justice Sunday materials for CTBI, racism training strategies and methods, and starting sacred conversations on racism in a congregation. Because of the varying contexts and needs across synods, coordinators and advocates are often at different starting points in the ways they engage synods and local congregations.



Racial justice advocates

6.2.2 The ethnic minority lay and ordained ministers network is an important space for Black and minority ethnic (BME) leadership and support, as well as for those colleagues who are not BME members, but minister in congregations with a predominantly BME membership.

The group meets twice yearly. Linked to this network are two gatherings which have evolved over the last two years. This is the Black and Asian minority ethnic (BAME) ministers/CRCW gathering (once yearly) which offers a training space and support for ministers (especially newer ones). A more recent and significant group to evolve is the Black and Asian minority ethnic women's group known as *Cascades of Grace*. The development of this is related to a much needed intra-diversity conversation among the BME networks which is part of the intercultural shift.

6.2.2.1 These networks and groups enable greater participation and belonging in the life of the United Reformed Church; create constructive spaces for the many BME ordinands, elders and lay leaders, as well as for those keen to explore vocation for ministry; and help to develop opportunities for BME resource persons to participate in the councils and life of the Church.



Spirituality and prayer (1)

6.2.3 The ethno-cultural network is specially geared to enable gatherings for specific BME ethnic groups (Pakistani, Ghanaian and Korean) to enable a sense of cultural community building and the rebuilding of social capital for newer “migrant” communities. The significant developments here include a new Korean network and the transition of what used to be a Ghanaian chaplaincy into an ecumenical project operated by Ghanaians from various ecclesial traditions in the UK. Two pieces of significant work should be noted: an online survey of United Reformed congregations hosting newer Christian/migrant communities and an updated user friendly handbook on *Receiving Newer Migrant Churches in the United Reformed Church*.



6.2.3.1 The RJMM office has been particularly helpful in advising and working with Ministries, synod moderators and Resource Centres for Learning on matters related to culture-specific needs and developing cross-cultural competences. We are delighted that two mission projects (Heston Asian Christian United Reformed Church and Bournemouth International Church) recognised at the 2010 General Assembly will be received as congregations of the United Reformed Church at General Assembly 2012. In the context of a changing Christian landscape and reverse mission in the UK, our work with ethno-cultural communities is a mission opportunity we are yet to explore and develop fully.

6.3 Our multicultural congregation story award which started in 2009 continues to receive submissions from across the Church. The energy, commitment and care that congregations put into making these submissions about their multi- and intercultural journey underscore the need for more opportunities to tell such stories from across the United Reformed Church. These submissions also highlight a variety of ways and tools that local congregations use to share their faith and engage in mission. The 2011 submissions can be found in the RJMM section of the URC website.

6.4 One new initiative which we have launched at the beginning of 2012 is a short article competition (details on the website) aimed at young people (11-25 years) and entitled “Away with Discrimination and Hatred”. This is a collaborative effort between RJMM and FURY. We plan to run the competition for three years.



Art award at multicultural celebration

Mission

6.5 A high point in celebrating our diversity has been our most recent multicultural celebration which was held at Carrs Lane United Reformed Church, Birmingham on 24 September 2011. Over 450 people from across the whole church met around the theme of “Feast! Celebrating our Life Together“. They participated in workshops, music, singing, dancing, a variety of cultural presentations, worship, sharing a meal together and listening to keynote speakers. Besides announcing the winners of the multicultural congregational story award, this event saw the launch of an art competition that received a wide range of excellent submissions. The success and generous response to this biennial gathering is a positive and energising influence on the work of RJMM. The positive feedback included enthusiasm from the young people who attended and participated. The multicultural celebration offers a different narrative to that of depletion and scarcity in the life of our Church.



6.6 A key contribution and developing piece of work from RJMM is related to the conversations we started around interculturality. A series of conferences, seminars and conversations which started in 2009 and continued in 2010 resulted in a major presentation to Mission Council in May 2011 on “multicultural church, intercultural habit”, signalling a necessary and constructive shift within our *vision2020* strategy. Hence, at General Assembly 2012, RJMM and the Mission Committee will ask General Assembly to agree to reframe the vision to affirm the reality of our multicultural context while calling on us intentionally to grow and deepen intercultural habits that will ask all to subscribe to a larger view than that of one’s own view or group.



Hospitality and diversity (5)

6.7 At the heart of RJMM work is collaboration across the areas of work in the Mission Team. One significant area of co-operation with the Secretary for Mission has been an evangelism conference (“Faithfulness and Fruitfulness”, July 2011) which brought together a diverse range of participants from across the United Reformed Church. From this venture, a church growth conference is planned for 2013. This collaborative model is also across departments, synods, committees and Resource Centres for Learning. During 2010-2012, the Secretary for RJMM has prepared and delivered short intensive courses for Northern and Westminster Colleges, participated in synod presentations, led workshops and Bible studies for various United Reformed Church and ecumenical gatherings, delivered a training and awareness day for the staff



of the Cambridge Federation and worked with those new to ministry in multicultural contexts. RJMM is also working very closely with Education and Learning, Ministries and the Equal Opportunities and Nominations Committees. Some of RJMM's resources have been used in the toolkit for the radical welcome campaign.

6.7.1 These collaborative efforts are significant in a number of ways. They enable greater joined up thinking and a more pro-active approach to intercultural ministry. They model a way of sharing our resources across the Church and offer a more strategic way into raising awareness that enables us to grow in our including habits and work more intentionally on building intercultural habits.



Evangelism (6)

6.8 A significant tool for our resourcing work is the RJMM webpage in which we have invested much and which we will continue to improve as a result of the new United Reformed Church website. The page is loaded with good information and we hope that will help to increase the number of people who use it.

7 Church and Society

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 The primary role of the Church and Society programme is to help the United Reformed Church to discern the 'signs of the times' by analysing social policy and cultural trends that impact on Church and society and to develop appropriate responses to enable the voice of the Church to be heard in the public square. We do this in collaboration with our Baptist and Methodist colleagues as members of a Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) which is tasked with developing briefings and resources for our churches to engage in strategic campaigns to give expression to our convictions regarding social justice, peace making and the integrity of creation. The Free Churches have a distinctive and important contribution to make to debates on public policy in the UK, from our dissenting and Reformed theological perspectives as well as our strategic location in local communities across England, Scotland and Wales.



Justice and peace (9)

7.1.2 From this strategic position we have responded to key social policy issues such as welfare reform and the Big Society, assessing their impact on the most vulnerable members of our society – children, the elderly, people with disabilities, asylum seekers and the poor. This engagement has enhanced the social witness of our churches at a time of rapid social change. Ecumenical collaboration has served both to enrich and extend the reach of this witness.

7.2 Integrated approach

7.2.1 One of our key achievements over the past two years has been to integrate the work of Church and Society within the Mission and Joint Public Issues Teams more effectively and to be more intentional about identifying the mission and discipleship imperatives of our public witness. *vision2020* has provided a helpful framework for this task.

7.2.2 The practice of engaging with justice is formative for us as disciples. Many of JPIT's campaign themes include opportunities for prayer, bible study and small group work; for example we produce resources for the annual Peacemaking Sunday which is marked in churches across all three denominations. Increasingly our campaigns include integral opportunities to pray and reflect.

Roberta Rominger at the March for the Alternative



Mission

7.2.3 There is a global dimension to much of our work, be it in campaigning issues such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty conference, or issues of immediate global impact, such as climate change. JPIT hopes to develop further work on climate change in partnership with Commitment for Life.

7.2.4 Ecumenical partnership is a cornerstone of our work, through JPIT and with other denominations through the Radar group, and we are witnessing (and supporting) an emerging desire for local adaptation of the JPIT model in the Midlands, Leeds and Scotland.

7.2.5 There is clearly a link between campaigning about an issue and getting involved on a practical, community-based level. Supporting homeless people, working with young unemployed people, or helping the lonely elderly should lead us to ask the question “why?” This leads to involvement in the structural questions, the root causes of social injustice. Conversely, if we are concerned about an issue from a political standpoint, engaging with our local communities prevents those affected being faceless victims. JPIT supports and learns from those who are engaged in community partnerships and encourages them to make the links between acts of justice and acts of compassion.



Community partnerships (4)

7.2.6 JPIT’s role in building a prophetic voice across three nations has contributed to an increased awareness of our denominations’ identities. Since JPIT was formed we have released the majority of our media statements on social and political issues jointly – and have received far greater media coverage as a result. The story that “three of Britain’s main churches” have said something together proves time and again to be a bigger story than when we have said things separately.

7.2.7 The profile which JPIT provides should help to increase the attractiveness of our churches. The identification of our churches with a bold, prophetic, thoughtful and authentically Christian approach to our society will enhance our proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ. A church which is outward facing and confident will be more likely to grow, as will one which is active, equipping and rooted in strong values.



Church growth (7)

7.3 Key work themes and achievements

7.3.1 The key themes of our work over the past two years have been:

- poverty and inequality – to enable churches to speak authoritatively and distinctively on poverty and inequality and to help local churches to take action to influence national policy and change their local communities for good;
- climate justice – to enable churches to take action to drive down their own carbon footprint whilst campaigning for climate justice as part of the wider campaigns of partner organisations such as Christian Aid and the World Development Movement;
- peacemaking – to work for measures which will increase the chances for peace in our world and to help local churches act and pray for peace.

7.3.2 In the course of our work we have produced policy briefings and responded to Government consultations on issues including the Localism Bill, the Welfare Reform Bill, alcohol pricing, and the renewal of Trident. Active campaigns have been run on a number of these issues and resources developed for use by local churches. Working ecumenically on public issues has been hugely significant and all our resources are soon to be migrated to our new website which can be accessed at: www.jointpublicissues.org.uk



7.3.3 Within these work themes, the Secretary for Church and Society has assumed responsibility for the following outcomes:



The integrity of creation (10)

- Robin Hood Tax Campaign – as the faith coordinator on the steering group of this campaign, the Secretary facilitated the engagement of the United Reformed Church, Methodists, Quakers, and Unitarians, and contributed indirectly to the Archbishop of Canterbury’s endorsement of this campaign;
- Living the Future project – the secretary was responsible for the coordination of the pilot project the United Reformed Church launched in response to the *Hope in God’s Future* report to encourage our churches to commit to living more simply and sustainably in solidarity with those suffering the impacts of climate change;
- Nestlé resolution – monitoring developments in terms of General Assembly’s resolution on Nestlé on behalf of the Mission Committee and implementing the rescinding of the URC’s 19-year product boycott following the company’s listing on the FTSE4Good Index;
- United Reformed Church presence at political party conferences – facilitating and briefing United Reformed Church representatives to the autumn party conferences and arranging fringe meetings with specific MPs and Government ministers to enable engagement on issues of mutual interest to church and society;
- Mission Council reports – submitting reports and resolutions to facilitate discussion and debate on critical issues confronting UK and global society.

7.3.4 It is gratifying to report that the West Midlands synod moderator has initiated a discussion with his Methodist and Baptist colleagues to explore the feasibility of starting a regional Joint Public Issues action team in the West Midlands which has received strong endorsement and is in the process of being established.

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8 World Church relations

8.1.1 Building and developing active partnerships with Churches around the world is the primary purpose of the world Church relations department and a key part of *vision2020*. Through these partnerships we can learn about ourselves, our Church and God's mission, and we can be transformed in our thinking and understanding of the world. True partnership means both giving and receiving and moving beyond the sightseeing stage to a deep, supportive and often challenging relationship.

8.1.2 The past two years have been exciting and busy! We have helped organise over 100 visits. These include visits to our partner Churches through the synod global partners programme, participation in global or European ecumenical conferences, ministerial experience enlargement visits and study trips, solidarity visits, student placements and local church trips.

**8.2 Synod global partners programme**

8.2.1 Every synod now has or is in the process of forming a partnership with a Church overseas. This is the achievement of a committed group of synod coordinators who work hard to develop and maintain the relationships and encourage local churches to get involved.

8.2.2 The synod global partnership coordinators gather once a year to be updated on the work of Belonging to the World Church, to learn from each other and to share good practice.

8.2.3 Some global partnerships have been in place for many years and are successful. They have clear aims and involve people from across the synod (especially young people and lay people). Others have been re-established or revitalised since General Assembly last met. The National Synod of Wales' partnership with the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar was beginning to struggle due to a military coup in Madagascar which stopped any visits. In October 2011 a group from Wales travelled to Madagascar to meet with the leadership of the church and discuss how we might work together.

8.2.4 Other successful partnerships include that of Wessex Synod with the United Church of Zambia. This is an ecumenical partnership with the Methodist Church. It is also a three-way partnership between the



Global partnerships (8)

United Kingdom, Zambia and France. They work together on building relationships and in recent years the focus has been on young people with very successful visits to Zambia and France.

8.2.5 We are working hard to raise the profile of synod global partners with local congregations. One way we have done this is to encourage local congregations who have no relationships overseas to consider twinning with a congregation in their partner Church. This is beginning to happen in the East Midlands Synod's partnership with the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, Botswana Synod. During a recent visit five local United Reformed Churches expressed an interest in twinning with local congregations in Botswana.

Women ministers visit to the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar



8.2.6 However, not every visit runs smoothly. In September 2010 a group of young adults from Northern Synod were visiting the Presbyterian Church of Mozambique when violence erupted in the country. This was related to the price of food which had dramatically risen overnight. The United Reformed Church's crisis management team at Church House came together and, having established that the group was safe but trapped in the church compound, took a decision to ask our security company, RED24 to rescue them. A RED24 security team travelled overland from South Africa and successfully and safely got the group to Johannesburg. We are grateful to RED24 and to the leaders of that group for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the young people.

8.2.7 Issues with obtaining visas continue to hamper our work. In 2011 three trips had to be cancelled or postponed due to the refusal of visas. This is an on-going issue which we are working with JPIT and the UK Border Agency to resolve.

8.3 Experience enlargement

8.3.1 We continue to be enthused by the number of people seeking experience enlargement visits. These visits can change an individual's outlook on life and faith and have a significant impact on local churches' mission.

8.3.2 In 2010 a group of church related community workers visited the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba. We visited church-led community projects and the CRCWs

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were able to learn how community work is done in that particular culture – an experience we hope has had an impact on their work in the United Reformed Church.

8.3.3 Ministers and CRCWs continue to use their study leave and sabbaticals to travel overseas and engage with the world church. This has included ministerial exchanges to New Zealand and Australia. Visits such as these make a real impression on both the ministers and the churches they serve.

8.3.4 Ministerial students are offered opportunities to learn from world Church partners. In 2010 and again in 2012 the United Reformed Church has two students attending the Global Institute of Theology organised by the World Communion of Reformed Churches. We have also had students travelling to Botswana, New Zealand and the USA.

8.3.5 Local church visits are also on the increase. One such visit was made by Murrayfield Churches Together (which includes Saughtonhall United Reformed Church) to ECUDARE in Kenya, a project they support ecumenically which provides help to women living with HIV/AIDS and their families.

8.3.6 Our moderators of General Assembly are encouraged to participate in a visit to a partner church. During 2010-2012 both moderators have made such visits. The Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe joined the CRCWs on their visit to Cuba and Mrs Val Morrison joined the Synod of Wales on their visit to Madagascar.

8.4 Young people



Victoria Paulding, FURY Moderator 2011, in Mwenzo

8.4.1 Both the world Church relations and youth and children's work offices encourage young people to be involved in the world Church. We offer a number of opportunities for young people to travel, ranging from synod trips and international summer camps to visiting mission partners in Zambia.

8.4.2 In 2011 two young people took part in the 'I love Taiwan' mission camp at the invitation of the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan. This annual camp encourages young

people to be involved in local mission and the two young people who travelled used their experience to lead a workshop at this year's Youth Assembly.



Spirituality and prayer (1)

8.4.3 The Council for World Mission European region sponsors a gap year programme at the Mission House in Amsterdam. In 2010-2011 Tom Hackett joined the team and this year Simon Peters is in Amsterdam working at the Mission House. They live in community with other young people and work in local projects ranging from centres for the homeless to drugs projects, children's clubs, and a local hospice. The Mission House also hosts a taster weekend for those interested in joining the house or interested in learning more about mission.

8.5 International ecumenical work

8.5.1 World Church relations strives to work ecumenically. Ecumenical relations with the Church of Scotland have helped strengthen our own networks across the world and several meetings with its world mission department have resulted in closer co-operation where our work overlaps. We had a joint visit of women ministers to the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar and are also beginning to think about a joint ministerial education programme with the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan.



Christian Ecumenical Partnerships (3)

8.5.2 The United Reformed Church continues to be involved in global and European ecumenical organisations. The Revd Lindsey Sanderson is a member of the World Council of Churches' central committee and Revd Dr Susan Durber is the United Reformed Church representative on the WCC Commission on Faith and Order. We are also actively involved in the World Communion of Reformed Churches who offer us advice and help on many issues.

8.5.3 We continue to play our part in the Council for World Mission both globally and in the European region. Many of our churches were involved in campaigning to help the Council for World Mission obtain a visa for their general secretary, Revd Dr Collin Cowan. The Council for World Mission is grateful for this support. The CWM trustees took a decision to relocate the CWM offices from London to Singapore. This was thought to be the right move for CWM on the next stage of its journey. The CWM Assembly will take place in Pago Pago, American Samoa in June.

8.5.4 Through the Council for World Mission we support our mission partners, Ms Alison Gibbs, who is serving as head teacher of Mwenzo Girls' school in Northern Zambia, and Revd Shou-Hui Chung, who is serving as chaplain to Taiwanese and Mandarin speaking students in Manchester and who comes to us from the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan.

8.6 The Work of the World Church Relations will undergo a thorough review in the next year.

9 Commitment for Life

9.1 Twenty years ago, at its General Assembly in York, the United Reformed Church took the prophetic step of passing a resolution to support Commitment for Life as a programme of the Church. The programme came into being as 'a response to faith following the example and command of Christ himself.' As we celebrate the churches' contributions in our 20th anniversary year we give thanks for the programme. Growing out of the 1% appeal, where people gave 1% of their disposable income for world development issues, Commitment for Life has enabled contributing churches to see how the money they give is being used to further God's kingdom here on earth. It has had an enormous impact, both in the contributing churches and in the countries supported.

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9.2 Commitment for Life's reference group, convened by Helen Lidgett, carried out a mini review of the work as we approached this 20 year anniversary. A new aim, vision and mission statement, together with a three year plan, were tangible outcomes from this exercise.

9.2.1 Vision statement

To see the United Reformed Church play a full part in working for justice in the world, recognising that change starts with each of us.

9.2.2 Mission statement

Commitment for Life exists to encourage all United Reformed churches and local ecumenical partnerships to take action and pray for people across the world so that we can make a difference in the lives of some of the world's poorest people.

9.2.3 Aim

Over the next three years our aim is to deepen the response of congregations through education, worship and action for long term development.

9.3 A special service was written for Commitment for Life's anniversary year. Traidcraft provided a recipe and leaflet for a celebration cake. To be thriving and raising over half a million pounds each year is an achievement to be celebrated. On behalf of all those who have been given hope and a way out of poverty, thank you.

9.4 Churches which have not previously been part of the scheme are asked to consider joining this year. In a world where every 3.6 seconds someone dies of hunger and 1 in 7 people will go to bed hungry, it is imperative that we continue to stand up and be counted, holding up that vision of 20 years ago.

Deborah Doane, director, World Development Movement:

As global inequality deepens, the need to campaign is just as relevant today as it was when campaigners were inspired to halt the slave trade or fight for women's right to vote. But we can only achieve as much as we do by working together with partner organisations such as the Commitment for Life programme.

Christian Aid director, Loretta Minghella:

Christian Aid is immensely grateful for the generous support we have received through Commitment for Life. This partnership has helped to fund our critical work and make a profound difference to the lives of many thousands of people living in poverty.





Commitment for Life Advocate, Anne Parker, meets her MP, Hillary Benn, during the Climate Justice lobby, October 2011

9.5 We continue our yearly cycle of mailings, thanking churches for contributions, updating our database, providing useful educational and worship resources, organising Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory days, our annual advocates' days and much more. Monthly emails continue to be a great source of information for local churches. 'Stories for Change' deals with stories on issues in Bangladesh, Jamaica and Zimbabwe whilst 'Moving Stories' has a wider remit looking at the situation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory.



Global partnerships (8)

9.6 We endeavour to keep our website section up to date as far possible and have in the last two years advertised such campaign actions as the Climate Change Lobby (October 2010), where the main speaker was the Revd Jesse Jackson, and the Bearing Witness event (October 2011). More recently we have highlighted the World Development Movement's campaign on food speculation and Christian Aid's joint campaign on climate and tax justice. All these campaigns have the potential to make a huge difference to people in poverty.

9.7 As part of the planning group a successful Ecumenical World Development Conference was held February 2011. The next conference looking at 'Food' will happen in October this year. This brings together supporters from across the denominations, non-governmental organisations and charities to engage and be inspired on development issues. Other ecumenical work has included producing a leaflet for the World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel, arranged with the World Council of Churches.



Justice and peace (9)

9.8 The trip to Bangladesh in November 2011 gave six supporters the chance to experience the work of Christian Aid partners firsthand. It was a busy but extremely fulfilling time with stories of great hardship but also of hope. Since returning, the trip participants have been out and about giving inspiring talks on their time with the

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partners. The majority of stories collected show how changes in climate are affecting the people of South West Bangladesh, in particular with flooding.



9.9 Slow progress has been made in getting a ‘green apostle’ in each synod. With media attention concentrating on the economic crisis it has been difficult to energise people on the issue of climate change, except in certain areas where there is an enthusiastic advocate.



The integrity of creation (10)

9.10 Charis Unsworth, our Christian Aid/ Commitment for Life/ FURY intern has been with us since August 2011 and finishes in June 2012, when we hope to work with another intern. This innovative scheme has enabled Commitment for Life to work more closely with younger people in churches and at synod events. The aim eventually is to have a group of younger active campaigners who can inspire others to take action on injustice working with our network of hardworking advocates, many of whom have been supporting the work since the beginning.

9.11 Although the partnership with Christian Aid is well known, less so is the partnership with the World Development Movement (WDM). Whilst Christian Aid receives 75% of the money raised WDM receives 10%. They are a UK-based anti-poverty campaigning organisation and have a worldwide reputation for tackling hard-hitting, controversial issues. They lobby decision-makers and organise public campaigning to win change for the world’s poorest people. They do not give aid or run projects but work alongside activists in the global South to research and promote positive solutions to poverty. For the first time in 2012, a joint Commitment for Life/ WDM poster has been produced.

9.12 Commitment for Life has been very fortunate in the last two years to receive a legacy from a woman who worshipped in Harrogate. The small seed that was sown in 1994, when the will was written, has allowed us to increase our contributions to Christian Aid and WDM and better resource ourselves for the next few years. Is this



Charis and Akima in Bangladesh

something you have considered? We do not know what or who motivated this woman to make this fantastic gift, but we thank God for what it has been able to achieve.

9.13 Our prayer for this celebration year is that all churches in the United Reformed Church grasp the vision of a world without poverty and injustice. That they follow the example of Jesus, who came that everyone should have life in all its fullness. That they demonstrate their faith practically by praying, campaigning and contributing, so that our vision can be fulfilled.

10 Conclusion

10.1 This wide ranging report reflects the broad theology of mission embraced by the United Reformed Church in its *vision2020* framework. The Mission Committee and Team, having worked hard to integrate the various areas and expertise, are convinced that this breadth in our work is vital in ensuring our ability to resource mission in the diverse and challenging contexts of the United Reformed Church in the 21st century. The recent challenge to all central committees to review and reduce their budgets for 2013 has called upon the Mission Committee to take a radical and creative look at what we do and how we do it. Cutting the budget will inevitably mean changes in the projects and programmes we are able to undertake; a re-evaluation of the networks, partnerships and ecumenical bodies we are able to participate in; cuts in well established and adventurous pieces of work; and the need to look for other ways of funding the support of mission at all levels including in the local church. Budget cutting has its most keenly felt implications for staff and their expertise and throughout the process the Mission Committee has wanted to affirm the principle that people are our greatest resource.

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10.2 There is no doubt that sharp and fundamental questions about resourcing the Church for mission have to be asked. What sort of Church do we want to be/can we be? Whilst reducing the budget for mission we must find ways of investing in the development and practice of mission throughout the Church. It is vital that the URC maintain that gospel imperative to be generous in times of scarcity and trust the God whose gifts are abundantly given.

10.3 It has been four years since the restructuring of the United Reformed Church brought the Mission Committee into being and established the Mission Team for the support and resourcing of mission throughout the URC and beyond. Drawing together the diverse agendas for mission into a vibrant and 'joined up' picture has been a huge task. One of the visible achievements of that process is the *vision2020* framework for mission now established and providing stimulus for mission throughout the URC. There have been many other reviews, processes, initiatives and shifts in practice within the department which, while being largely invisible, are providing more collaborative and productive ways of working.

10.4 We would like to thank all those who have been part of this process, the Mission Team and those serving on the Mission Committee. The insightful and proactive leadership of the Revd Ed Cox, the retiring convener of the Mission Committee, has served the mission department and the agenda of the church for mission well. Ed's attention to process and detail, ability to analyse and assimilate data and encourage energetic, creative thinking around how what we do serves our vision and bears fruit for the gospel, has been a gift to the church in a time of change. We are grateful for his leadership and service.

Marie Trubic in Burma with the children of a baby home

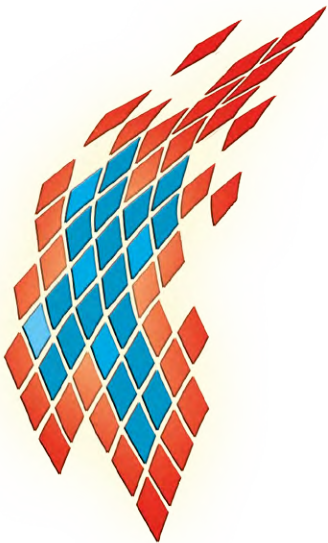




Signing the Operation Noah Ash Wednesday declaration on climate change



Harvest service at Pitney



Vine United Reformed Church

Nominations

This Committee nominates to Assembly the names of people to serve as conveners and secretaries of all Assembly committees, and as members of those committees. It also suggests names of United Reformed Church representatives on other bodies. It recommends the people to make up appointment groups for moderators of synods and Assembly appointed staff.

Committee Members

Convener: John Durell

Secretary: Sarah Dodds

Secretary elect: Carol Rogers

Synod representatives:

I Val Towler

II Martin Smith

III John Oldershaw

IV Chris Reed

V Duncan Smith

VI Margaret Marshall

VII Paul Whittle

VIII David Grosch-Miller

IX Peter Pay

X Simon Fairnington

XI Derrick Sena Dzandu-Hedidor

XII Jean Silvan Evans

XIII Myra Rose

with a representative of the Assembly Moderators' Group and the General Secretary

1 Current work

1.1 Our 2010 report noted a number of significant issues relating to the new biennial pattern of General Assembly meetings. While we were dealing with these we were also making renewed efforts to maintain a full and up-to-date list not only of committee membership, but also of everyone who represents the Church on outside bodies. These past two years have been much more a time of consolidation, during which we have usually been able to find a sufficient number of nominees to approach for each forthcoming vacancy, ensuring that handovers have been smooth and trouble-free.

1.2 Members of the Committee, who include a representative from each synod, are provided with a list of Assembly committees and other appointments which is updated at each of our meetings. Not every appointment is made through our Committee, but when others are made elsewhere we are grateful to be told of them and so ensure that they are added to the list. In this way we can avoid approaching individuals who are already bearing more than a fair share of responsibility.

1.3 The normal pattern of four years membership of committees, and of four year convenerships with an extra year as convener elect, demands quite a turnover of personnel. We are aware that some have questioned whether the norm should not be longer, to allow individuals to put more of their own stamp on a committee's work. However, our own committee feels that so long as we are able to find able and willing members ready to undertake this work we should continue with the present pattern.

2 Monitoring

2.1 The Committee takes seriously the Church's concern for balance in all our committees and working groups and continues to monitor responses of those who are invited to serve and to share this information with the Equal Opportunities Committee. We have been greatly assisted in the invitation process by the presence of the secretary for racial justice and multicultural ministry in our meetings. However, the warning given in our 2010 report should still be heeded, that it may be misleading to read too much into trends detected in so small a sample –

and inevitably reports need to be prepared at a time of the year when it is difficult to compare like with like.

- 2.2 But with those qualifications, we are able to report:
- an increase in the number of invitations declined, especially among women. Of the 43 invitations sent out this year to women 19 were declined, compared with 35 invitations of which 10 were declined last year. This year 53 invitations were sent out to men, of which 13 were declined; and last year 8 out of 24 were declined. It will be understood that this may have an unsought effect on the gender balance of a number of our committees;
 - a worryingly high average age of those who receive and accept invitations. Leaving aside those who did not complete monitoring forms, we know of only 23 people under 55 who received invitations, of whom 12 accepted.
 - we are aware of 10 invitations being to BME (black and minority ethnic) members this year, 8 of whom accepted.

3 Committee membership

3.1 The work of the Committee is heavily dependent on its members being able to supply lists of strong and likely candidates for each post that arises – and their ability to do that in turn depends on good communications within each synod. The note above on BME nominees indicates the way in which an individual member can add to the success of the Committee's work through their own networking and personal knowledge.

3.2 Above all, we have relied heavily over the past three years on our indefatigable secretary, Sarah Dodds, who issues each and every invitation, chases up reluctant correspondents, and keeps all our lists up to date. We are grateful to her, and wish her well when she stands down next year; and we will look forward to welcoming Carol Rogers as her successor.

4 Thanks to all who serve

The Church continues to receive richly from its many willing members who are part of its committee structure, or who represent it on outside bodies. The formal acceptance of this report and its long list of names will surely include a real sense of gratitude for all who serve us in this way.

5 Assembly committees and other appointments

Notes

1. The moderators, the moderators elect, the immediate past moderators and the general secretary are members *ex officio* of every standing committee.
2. Symbols have been used as follows:
 - ** 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 2013;
 - / 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.

Nominations

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 July.

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, the chair of the United Reformed Church Trust and three FURY members, including the FURY moderator.

(Synods appoint and decide terms for their representatives)

Northern Synod	Revd Ann Jackson, Mr Robert Jones, Vacancy
North Western Synod	Revd Geoffrey Clarke, Miss Judith Haughton, Revd Sarah Moore
Mersey Synod	Mr Arthur Swift, Miss Emma Pugh, Revd A Gordon Smith
Yorkshire Synod	Mr Chris Reed, Mrs Jenny Poulter, Revd Sue Macbeth
East Midlands Synod	Mr Duncan Smith, Revd Jenny Mills, Mrs Jill Turner
West Midlands Synod	Revd Jackie Embrey, Mrs Margaret Marshall, Mrs Val Phillips
Eastern Synod	Revd Dr Catherine Ball, Mrs Linda Harrison, Mr Clifford Patten
South Western Synod	Mr George Faris, Revd Dougie Burnett, Mrs Sarah Lane Cawte
Wessex Synod	Mr Peter Pay, Revd Michael Hopkins, Revd Mary Thomas
Thames North Synod	Mr Simon Fairnington, Ms Elizabeth Lawson, Revd Edward Sanniez
Southern Synod	Revd Derrick Sena Dzandu-Hedidor, Revd John Gordon, Mr Alistair Wilson
National Synod of Wales	Revd Shelagh Pollard, Mrs Ruth Henriksen, Revd Gethin Rhys
National Synod of Scotland	Revd Connie Bonner, Revd Stephen Brown, Mrs Barbara Bruce

[In attendance: Minute Secretary: Mrs Irene Wren† [2015]

Consensus Adviser: Revd Pauline Barnes [2014]

together with staff secretaries, moderators' chaplains and others as appropriate]

1.1 Mission Council Advisory Group

Convenor: Moderators of General Assembly

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary

Revd Derrick Sena Dzandu-Hedidor [2014] Revd Elizabeth Nash [2015]

Revd Nicola Furley-Smith [2016]

Moderators elect and immediate past moderators of General Assembly

[ex officio: General Secretary Honorary Treasurer]

1.2 Staffing Advisory Group

Convenor: Revd Rowena Francis

Secretary: General Secretary

Mrs Sally Abbott Revd Ann Jack

Mr Peter Pay

Mr Keith Webster

Head of Human Resources

1.3 Law and Polity Advisory Group

Convenor: Revd Prof David Thompson [2014]

Secretary: Dr Augur Pearce [2016]

Mr David Eldridge [2014]

Ms Morag McLintock [2016]

Mr Duncan Smith [2016] (Synod Clerk)

Mrs Kath Fowler (PLATO)

[ex officio: Clerk to General Assembly

Legal Adviser]

1.4 Listed Buildings Advisory Group

Convener: Mr Peter West [2015]

Secretary: Mr David Figures

Correspondent for each synod (apart from the Synod of Scotland)

1.5 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]

1.6 MIND (Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline) Advisory Group

Convener: Revd Peter Poulter [2016]

Secretary: Revd Hugh Graham [2014]

Convener of the Assembly Commission: Mrs Kathleen Cross

Secretary of the Assembly Commission: Mrs Gwen Jennings**

Convener of the Review Commission of the Incapacity Procedure: Mr Donald Swift

Secretary of the Review Commission of the Incapacity Procedure: Revd Ray Adams

Consultant for Ministers and CRCWs: Revd David Skitt

Consultant for Mandated Groups: Revd Alison Davis

Training Coordinator: Mr Keith Webster Coopted: Mr Hartley Oldham

General Secretary Clerk to Assembly Secretary for Ministries Legal Adviser

1.7 Resource Sharing Task Group

Convener: Revd David Grosch-Miller

Secretary: Mr John Rea

Treasurer: Revd Dick Gray

Miss Margaret Atkinson

Mr Mike Gould

Mrs Rachel Wakeman

[*ex officio*: Honorary Treasurer]

1.8 Human Sexuality Task Group (2008)

Revised membership to be agreed by MCAG.

2 MISSION DEPARTMENT**2.1 Mission Committee**

Convener: Revd Tracey Lewis [2016]

Secretary: Secretary for Mission

Mrs Pat Poinen (1) [2015]

Vacancy (2)

Revd Andrew Willett (3) [2014]

Mrs Tessa Henry-Robinson (4) [2015]

Revd David Dean (5) [2015]

Revd Louise Franklin (6) [2014]

Revd Sam White (7) [2015]

Revd Janet Sutton Webb** (8) [2016]

Revd Peter Hurter (9) [2014]

Revd John Macaulay (10) [2015]

Mr Martin Hayward (11) [2015]

Revd Nick Stanyon (12) [2014]

Revd Lindsey Sanderson (13) [2015]

2.1.1 International Exchange Reference Group

Convener: Mr Chris Wright [2015]

Secretary: Secretary for World Church Relations

Members: Revd Dr Andrew Prasad (Synod Moderator) [2014]

Mrs Judith North** (5) [2016]

2.1.2 Commitment for Life Reference Group

Convener: Mr John Griffith** [2016]

2.1.3 Methodist/United Reformed Church Interfaith Reference Group

(Members normally serve for six years – in parallel with Methodist terms)

Co-Convener: Revd Peter Brain [2013]

Co-Convener elect: #Revd Claire Downing** [2019]

Mr David Jonathan (10) [2014]

Revd Bill Burgess (3) [2015]

Revd Tim Clarke (10) [2015]

- 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)
- Retiring 2016 Mrs Adella Pritchard (6), Revd Franziska Herring (6), Revd Sue Kirkbride (13)
- Retiring 2017 Ms Alex Bediako** (10), Mr Bill Gould** (3), Revd Peter Henderson** (8),
Revd Shahbaz Javed** (10)

3.2 Education and Learning Committee

Convener: Revd John Smith [2015]

Secretary: Secretary for Education and Learning

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]

Mrs Liz Bird (7) [2015]

Mr Mal Breeze** (12) [2016]

Mrs Julie Jeffries** (6) [2016]

Revd Dr Irene John** (13) [2016]

Coopted: Revd David Salisbury (Synod Development Officer)

3.2.1 Windermere Management Committee

Convener: Revd Howard Sharp [2014]

Minute Secretary: Mrs Jenny Poulter (4) [2013]

Mr Graham Law (6) [2013] Dr Peter Clarke (1) [2015] Mr Peter Farrand (2) [2015]

Mrs Joan Stocker (representative of Carver Memorial United Reformed Church)

Secretary for Education and Learning

3.2.2 Education for Ministry Phase 2 and 3 (EM2/3) Sub-committee

Convener: Revd Dr Robert Pope

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

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]

Convener elect: #Revd Tim Meachin** [2017]

Secretary: Children's Work Development Officer

Mr Phillip Timson (5) [2013]

Revd Shirley Knibbs (4) [2013]

Revd Meg Robb (1) [2013]

Miss Tamara Oates (5) [2013]

Ms Angela Such (10) [2014]

Revd Tim Lowe (6) [2015]

Revd Sue McKenzie (10) [2015]

Ms Alison Hadley (5) [2015]

Mr Mick Smerdon** (13) [2016]

Ms Helen Wheelhouse** (4) [2016]

FURY moderator

FURY moderator elect

3.3.1 Pilots Management Sub-committee

Convener: Mrs Soo Webster [2015]

Member: Mrs Tric Legge [2014]

(Other members of the Sub-committee are appointed by the Youth and Children's Work Committee. The Congregational Federation also has two representatives.)

Nominations

4 ADMINISTRATION AND RESOURCES DEPARTMENT**4.1 Assembly Arrangements Committee**

Convener: Dr David Robinson [2014]
 Convener elect: #Revd Michael Hopkins** [2020]
 Secretary: Facilities Manager
 Assembly Moderators Moderators elect
 General Secretary
 Clerk to General Assembly
 Convener, Local Arrangements Committee

4.2 Communications and Editorial Committee

Convener: Revd John Humphreys [2015]
 Secretary: Director of Communications
 Revd Peter Lyth (3) [2013] Mr Peter Ranscombe (13) [2013]
 Mr Orin Stephens (10) [2013] Mrs Helen Jones (6) [2013]
 Revd Heather Whyte (8) [2015] Revd Ian Fosten** (7) [2015]
 Mr Steve Beney** (8) [2016] Mr George Mwaura** (7) [2016]
 Mrs Andrea Varnavides** (4) [2016]

4.3 Equal Opportunities Committee

Convener: Revd Elizabeth Nash [2014]
 Secretary: Mr Andrew Jack (10) [2013]
 Secretary elect: Revd Adrian Bulley** [2017]
 Mrs Gwynneth Tilley (7) [2013] Mrs Tina Ashitey (10) [2013]
 Revd Tom Arthur (12) [2013] Mr Tunde Biyi (7) [2014]
 Mrs Adella Pritchard** (6) [2016] Mrs Margaret Telfer** (9) [2016]
 Revd Helen Mee** (13) [2016] Revd Iain McDonald** (8) [2016]

4.4 Faith and Order Reference Group

(Members normally serve for six years.)

Convener: Revd Elizabeth Welch [2017]
 Secretary: Secretary for Ecumenical Relations
 Revd Dr Michael Jagessar [2014] Revd Dr Sarah Hall [2014]
 Revd Dr Neil Messer [2014] Revd Dr Malachie Muneyeza** (6) [2018]
 Revd Tim Meadows** (3) [2018] Dr Augur Pearce** (7) [2018]

4.5 Finance Committee

Convener: Honorary Treasurer
 Chief Finance Officer
 Dr Harry Potter (3) [2013] Mr Richard Dewar (9) [2013]
 Revd David Aplin (10) [2013] Revd Edward Sanniez (10) [2014]
 Ms Mary Martin (6) [2015] Mr Andrew Mackenzie (7) [2015]
 Mrs Elsie Gilliland** (2) [2016] Mr Richard Pryor** (7) [2016]
 Chair of the Trustees

4.5.1 Stewardship Sub-committee

Convener: Mrs Faith Paulding [2013]
 Convener elect: #Mr Keith Berry** [2017]
 Revd Dick Gray (8) [2013] Revd Leslie Morrison (13) [2014]
 Mr Jim Crawford** (3) [2016] Mrs Rosie Buxton** (12) [2016]

4.6 Nominations Committee

(Synods appoint and decide terms for their representative.)

Convener: Revd John Durell [2014]
 Secretary: Miss Sarah Dodds [2013]
 Secretary elect: Mrs Carol Rogers** [2017]
 Synod Representatives:
 Revd Val Towler (1) Revd Martin Smith (2) Revd John Oldershaw (3)
 Mr Chris Reed (4) Mr Duncan Smith (5) Mrs Margaret Marshall (6)
 Revd Paul Whittle (7) Revd David Grosch-Miller (8) Mr Peter Pay (9)

Mr Simon Fairnington (10) Revd Derrick Sena Dzandu-Hedidor (11)
 Dr Jean Silvan-Evans (12) Miss Myra Rose (13)
 Representative of the Moderators' Group
 General Secretary

4.6.1 Panel for General Assembly appointments

(Members normally serve for five years as training is required.)

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)
 Retiring 2016 Mrs Joan Turner (7), Mr Peter Pay (9), Revd Pauline Barnes (5),
 Revd Alison Termie (4), Ms Angela Quinn (13), Mr Phil Knott (2)
 Retiring 2017 Revd Stuart Brock** (1), Revd Dr Jim Coleman** (4), Revd Linda Elliott** (12),
 Revd Derrick Sena Dzandu-Hedidor** (11), Dr Tony Jeans** (6)
 Mrs Hilary Miles** (11), Revd Peter Rand** (1), Mr David Clarkson** (12)

4.7 Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee

Convener: Revd Sheila Maxey [2015]
 Secretary: Deputy General Secretary
 Dr Paul Ashitey (10) [2013]
 Mrs Irene Wren (5) [2105]
 Revd Howard Sharp (Synod Moderator) [2015]
 Mrs Gabrielle Pagan** (7) [2016]
 [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.)

Convener: Miss Kathleen Cross [2014]
 Deputy Convener: Dr Jim Merrilees [2014]
 Secretary: Mrs Gwen Jennings** [2017]
 Members:
 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 (2),
 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)
 Retiring 2016 Mr Geoffrey Milnes (5), Revd David Pattie (8), Mr Neil Robinson (4),
 Revd Yvonne Stone (6), Ms Nneoma Chyima (10), Revd Wendy White (2)
 Retiring 2017 Revd Nick Adlem† (8) Miss Judith Haughton† (2), Revd Colin Offor† (1),
 Revd Carolyn Smyth† (13), Mr Donald Swift** (3), Mr Douglas Hay** (13),
 Revd Craig Muir** (6),
 Mr Alistair Forsyth** (4), Mr David Rice** (13), Revd John Bremner** (13),
 Revd Jane Campbell** (5), Mr Keith Webster** (10), Vacancy

Nominations

4.9 Standing Panel for the Incapacity Procedure

(This panel is normally convened by the member with legal experience.)

Secretary: Revd Ray Adams [2017]

Revd Rowena Francis (Synod Moderator) [2013]

Revd John Marsh** (Past Moderator of General Assembly) [2017]

Mr Donald Swift (Legal experience) [2013] Dr Gillian Patterson (GP) [2013]

Commission Officer for the Incapacity Procedure: Dr David Westwood [2016]

4.10 Criminal Records Bureau (Churches' Agency for Safeguarding) Advisory Group

Revd Paul Whittle (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

(Members normally serve for six years. The directors of the Trust appoint new directors from those appointed as members. The members of the Trust elect the chair from among their own number and appoint a secretary and deputy secretary.)

Chair: To be elected

Secretary: Ms Sandi Hallam-Jones

Deputy Secretary: Mr Tony Bayley

Members:

Synods Group 1

Dr David Robinson (4) [2014]

Mr Andrew Atkinson (1) [2016]

Mr Alastair Forsyth** (4) [2016]

Mr Neil Mackenzie** (3) [2016]

Synods Group 2

Mrs Rachel Wakeman (6) [2014]

Revd Dick Gray (8) [2016]

Synods Group 3

Revd Prof David Thompson† (7) [2014]

Mr John Woodman (7) [2014]

Revd Michael Davies (11) [2014]

Mission Council nominated members:

Mrs Claudette Binns [2014]

Mr Andy Littlejohns (FURY) [2016]

Coopted members:

Miss Joyce Bain [2014]

Mr Brian Woodhall [2014]

[ex officio: Moderators 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 Legarda (Methodist HR)

Mr William McVey (United Reformed Church elder)

Mrs Mary Steele (Church House Staff representative)

Honorary Treasurer

Chief Finance Officer

4.12 The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd

(Members normally serve for six years. Terms run until the AGM in September. The directors of the Trust appoint new directors from those appointed as members. 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: Revd Dr John Dyce [2014] Revd Rowena Francis [2014]
 Revd Roger Woodall [2016] Miss Margaret Atkinson** [2017]
 Members of Fund: Revd David Bedford [2013] Revd Duncan Wilson [2014]
 Revd Jacky Embrey [2014] Revd Kate Gartside [2015]
 [ex officio: Honorary Treasurer Convener, Maintenance of Ministry Sub-Committee
 Convener, Pensions Executive In attendance: Convener, Investment Committee]

4.13 Pensions Executive

Convener: Revd Roger Woodall [2016]
 Secretary: Mrs Judy Stockings
 Members: Mrs Liz Tadd (12) [2015] Mr Steven Manders** (13) [2016]
 [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 [2014]
 Secretary: Ms Sandi Hallam-Jones
 Members: Mr Andrew Perkins [2013] Mr Brian Hosier [2015]
 Revd Dick Gray** [2016] Revd Julian Macro** [2016]
 [ex officio: Honorary Treasurer Convener, Pensions Executive
 Chair of United Reformed Church Trust or another Director
 Chair of United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Trust or another Director
 Treasurer, Westminster College In attendance: Chief Finance Officer]

5 REPRESENTATIVES TO MEETINGS OF SISTER CHURCHES

5.1	Presbyterian Church in Ireland	Revd Dr Michael Jagessar [2013] Vacancy [2013]
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]	Revd Dr Michael Jagessar [2013] Vacancy [2013] Revd John Humphreys [2013]
5.6	United Free Church of Scotland [note 7]	Vacancy
5.7	Scottish Assembly of the Congregational Federation [note 7]	Vacancy
5.8	Scottish Episcopal Church [note 7]	Vacancy
5.9	Methodist Church in Scotland [note 7]	Vacancy
5.10	Baptist Union of Scotland [note 7]	Vacancy
5.11	Presbyterian Church of Wales [note 7]	2 vacancies
5.12	Union of Welsh Independents [note 7]	2 vacancies
5.13	Church in Wales Governing Board [note 7]	2 vacancies
5.14	Provincial Synod of the Moravian Church	To be decided

6 REPRESENTATIVES ON ECUMENICAL CHURCH BODIES

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

6.1 Council for World Mission (CWM)

Revd Dr John Parry, Revd David Coleman, Mrs Zandie Orr, Mr Philip Timson,
 Secretary for World Church Relations

Nominations

6.1.1 CWM European Region Meeting

Revd David Coleman, Mrs Zandie Orr, Mr Philip Timson,
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 The Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council

Revd Rowena Francis, Revd Professor David Thompson,
Secretary for World Church Relations

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

General Secretary

6.7.1 CTBI Senior Representatives' Forum

General Secretary, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

6.7.2 CTBI Environmental Issues Network

Revd David Coaker, Revd Dr David Pickering

6.7.3 CTBI Church and Public Issues Network

Ms Marie Trubic**, Secretary for Church and Society

6.7.4 CTBI Churches' Criminal Justice Forum

Mrs Wilma Frew

6.7.5 CTBI Stewardship Network

Mrs Faith Paulding

6.7.6 CTBI Churches' International Students' Network

Ms Eleri Evans [2014]

6.7.7 CTBI Consultative Group on Ministry amongst Children (CGMC)

Mrs Karen Bulley-Morrison, Ms Jo Williams

6.7.8 CTBI Inter-Religious Network

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

6.7.9 CTBI Racial Justice Network

Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry

6.7.10 CTBI Churches' Network for Mission

Secretary for Mission

6.7.11 CTBI China Forum

Revd Dr Walter Houston

6.8 Churches Together in England (CTE)

6.8.1 CTE – Enabling Group

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

- 6.8.2 CTE – Coordinating Group for Local Unity**
Revd Kevin Watson, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations
- 6.8.3 CTE – Churches Together for Healing**
Revd Deborah McVey, Revd Vivien Henderson [2014]
- 6.8.4 CTE – Churches’ Joint Education Policy Committee**
Mr Graham Handscomb
- 6.8.5 CTE Churches’ Theology and Unity Group**
Secretary for Ecumenical Relations
- 6.8.6 CTE – Group for Evangelisation**
Secretary for Mission
- 6.8.7 CTE – Spirituality Coordinating Group**
Revd Sue Henderson
- 6.8.8 CTE – Churches’ Rural Group**
Revd David Herbert
- 6.8.9 CTE – Minority Ethnic Affairs Group**
Revd John Danso, Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry
- 6.8.10 CTE Youth Work Matters Group**
Secretary for Youth Work
- 6.9 Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) Members Meeting**
[see note 7]
Revd John Humphreys, Revd Mitchell Bunting/Revd Sue Kirkbride
- 6.10 National Sponsoring Body for Scotland** [see note 7]
Revd John Humphreys, Revd Mitchell Bunting
- 6.11 Churches Together in Wales (CYTUN)** [see note 7]
2 vacancies
- 6.12 Commission of Covenanted Churches** [see note 7]
2 vacancies
- 6.13 Joint Liturgical Group**
Secretary for Mission
- 6.14 Free Church Education Committee**
Mr Graham Handscomb, Mrs Gillian Kingston
- 6.15 European Churches’ Environmental Network**
Revd David Coaker
- 6.16 Churches’ Refugee Network**
Mr Geoff Duncan, Revd Fleur Houston
- 6.17 Churches’ Committee on Funerals and Crematoria**
Revd Sally Thomas, Revd Kate Hackett [2014]
- 6.18 Churches’ Agency for Safeguarding**
Secretary for Youth Work
- 6.19 Churches’ Forum for Safeguarding**
Secretary for Youth Work

Nominations

6.20 Churches' Network for Non-Violence

Secretary for Youth Work

6.21 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 Kevin Watson (Synod Moderator)
 Miss Emma Pugh, 3 vacancies, Revd Peter Rand (co-opted)
 Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

7.2 Roman Catholic – United Reformed Church Bilateral Dialogue in England and Wales

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 Nicola Furley-Smith, 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, Vacancy

8 UNITED REFORMED CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES ON GOVERNING BODIES OF THEOLOGICAL COLLEGES, ETC**8.1 Northern College**

Revd David Jenkins [2013]	Mr Steve Wood [2013]
Miss Margaret Atkinson [2015]	Revd Dr Robert Pope [2015]
Mr Mark Williams [2015]	

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 † [2016]
 Honorary College Treasurer: Mr Anthony Williams [2016]
 Members: Dr Jean Stevenson [2013] Revd Craig Muir [2015]
 Revd Nigel Appleton [2015] Mr Brian Long MBE [2016]
 Revd Kristin Ofstad [2016]
 Revd Canon Andrew Norman** [2018] (Cambridge Theological Federation)
 Secretary for Education and Learning
(together with other Governors appointed by other bodies)

8.2.1 Cheshunt Foundation

Mr Guy Morfett [2013] Revd Craig Muir [2014]

8.2.2 Cambridge Theological Federation

Convener, Westminster College Governors

9 GOVERNORS OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS WITH WHICH THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH IS ASSOCIATED

- 9.1 Caterham School** Revd Nicola Furley-Smith [2015]
- 9.2 Eltham College** Revd Terry Sparks [2015]
- 9.3 Walthamstow Hall** Mrs Isabel Heald [2015]
- 9.4 Milton Mount Foundation**
 Ms Hilary Miles [2013] Revd David Cuckson [2013]
 Revd Val Towler [2014] Revd Derek Lindfield [2014] Vacancy
- 9.5 Silcoates School**
 Dr Peter Clarke [2013] Dr Moira Gallagher [2013]
 Revd Dr Janet Lees [2013] Revd Steven Knapton [2014]
 Mrs Sue Lee [2015] Mrs Tessa Henry-Robinson [2015]
- 9.6 Taunton School**
 Revd David Grosch-Miller (Moderator, South Western Synod)
- 9.7 Bishops Stortford College**
 Mr Anthony Trigg [2015]

10 MISCELLANEOUS

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

- 10.1 Arthur Rank Centre**
 Revd Elizabeth Caswell [2013]
- 10.2 Churches Legislation Advisory Service**
 Mrs Sheila Duncan/General Secretary/Deputy General Secretary
- 10.3 Congregational Fund Board**
 Mrs Jackie Haws [2013] Mr Anthony Bayley [2014]
 Revd Geoffrey Roper [2014] Revd Eric Allen† [2015]
 Revd Kate Hackett** [2015]
- 10.4 Congregational Memorial Hall Trust**
 Revd Derek Wales [2013] Mrs Margaret Thompson [2014]
 Mr Hartley Oldham [2015] Mr Graham Stacy [2015]
 Dr John Thompson † [2016] Dr Brian Woodhall† [2016]
- 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 Peter West (Convener of the Listed Buildings Advisory Group)
- 10.7 Lord Wharton's Charity**
 Dr John Thompson [2013]
- 10.8 Methodist Faith and Order Committee**
 Revd Anne Sardeson [2014]

Nominations

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 Scout Association – URC Faith Adviser

Revd David Marshall-Jones

10.12 United Reformed Church History Society Council

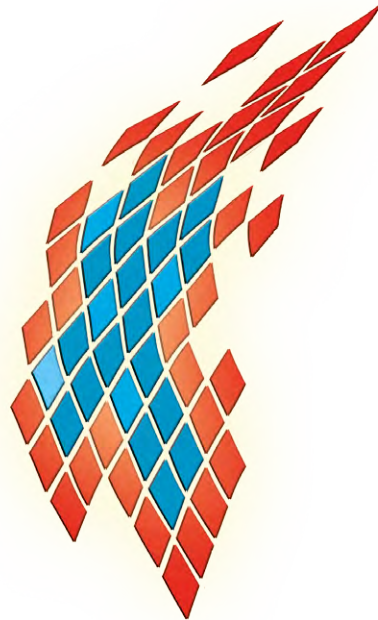
Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe [2013] Revd Prof David Thompson [2014]
 Revd Fleur Houston [2014] Dr David Robinson [2015]

10.13 United Reformed Church Guide and Scout Active Support Unit

Revd David Marshall-Jones

10.14 Westhill Endowment Fund

Mr Howard Bridge, Revd Dr Stephen Orchard, Revd Elizabeth Welch (co-opted)



Pastoral Reference and Welfare

The Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee considers the cases of ministers of Word and sacraments and church related community workers which are referred to it on account of perceived pastoral need. Such response may be needed when there is a perceived breakdown in relationship between the minister and the wider United Reformed Church; when synod officers feel the need for wider help; when the continuation of a minister's service within the existing pastoral charge, or the URC itself, is in question; or when financial assistance is sought from welfare funds.

Committee Members

Convener: Sheila Maxey

Members: Paul Ashitey, Birgit Ewald, Howard Sharp, Irene Wren

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:

- a) when synod moderators or pastoral committees seek assistance in their pastoral care of ministers, CRCWs and congregations;
- b) when there is a breakdown in relationship between the minister and congregation or the wider Church which, for whatever reason, does not fall within the pastoral care of the synod moderator or the pastoral committee;
- c) when the continuation of a minister's or CRCW's service within the United Reformed Church is in question;
- d) when financial assistance is sought from welfare funds.

2 Pastoral Reference work

2.1 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. Since Assembly 2010 the cost of this service to the United Reformed Church has been £13,160.02.

2.2 We have responded to the various individual cases of the past two years in a variety of ways depending on the nature of the case and the issues involved, sometimes drawing on the wisdom and experience of others, sometimes using committee members. Although the committee only meets three times a year, members have been called upon, on occasion, to make home visits. This aspect of our work is the most time-consuming and intensive.

2.3 The committee has a key role to play in the newly instituted Incapacity Procedure and so has been represented at two training days in preparation for that role.

2.4 We receive an annual report from the Pastoral Response Team set up by the Sexual Ethics Advisory Group.

2.5 We are working with the Ministries Committee on plans for a 2013 conference on 'Resilience in Ministry'.

Pastoral Reference and Welfare

2.6 The relationship between the committee's pastoral work and that of the synod moderators is very important and so the presence of one of the synod moderators on the committee is vital.

3 Welfare grants

A letter explaining the nature of these funds is sent annually to all ministers and CRCWs with their payslip. New ministers and CRCWs receive that letter with their first payslip. There are dedicated educational and welfare funds from which we make disbursements totalling in the region of £100,000 per annum. Both funds have benefited from the winding up of will trusts but the welfare fund will continue to require a subvention of around £20,000 from the Ministry and Mission Fund.



Youth and Children's Work

Committee Members

Convener: Robert Weston

Members: Jo Williams (children's work development officer), Karen Bulley-Morrison (Pilots work development officer), John Brown (youth work development officer), Alison Hadley, Shirley Knibbs, Gary and Jane Leighton (FURY Moderators 2012), Tim Lowe, Sue McKenzie, Tamara Oates, Stuart Radcliffe, Meg Robb, Memona Shahbaz, Angela Such, Phillip Timson, Soo Webster (convener of Pilots Management sub-committee)

In 1990 General Assembly adopted the Children's Charter; the statements of that charter remain the underlying principles behind all our work with children and young people.

In 2008 General Assembly adopted a vision for youth and children's work which has guided the strategy of our area of ministry for the past four years. The statements of that vision document fit neatly within the *Vision2020* framework. We present this report under those five headings, with a brief overview of progress made and the things that are still a work in progress. In our fast changing world, we have had to adapt and respond to the rapidly changing world of electronic communications – a challenge that the whole church faces.

1 We will support churches in worship that inspires and nurtures **all** on their faith journey.

1.1 Progress so far...

- children in Holy Communion continues to be an issue for some congregations, in 2010 we published a booklet to help churches explore the theological issues involved;
- Radical Welcome, in 2012 we wrote material for the toolkit to help churches to explore Radical Welcome with children and young people;
- Pilots worship pack was given as a worship resource in 2011 to all churches for use with all children and young people;
- the last two annual Pilots Worship packs were called *The Trinity* and *Hearing is Believing*.

1.2 We're working on...

- a prayer book, which is to be produced and published by the Fellowship of United Reformed Youth (FURY);
- resources for the exploration of baptism;
- resources to help churches engage in the needs of the over 20's in worship.

2 We will enable and encourage **all** to talk about God.

2.1 Progress so far...

- to encourage theological reflection we have produced four discussion booklets – each covering a different topic. The booklets are entitled

Youth and Children's Work

Valuing Children, Children and Holy Communion, Evangelism among Children, and Children and Film. All are available free to local churches and can be downloaded from the URC website;

- Children's Assembly is a valuable opportunity for children to engage with issues faced by the whole church, in an appropriate manner, and to feed into the decision making processes of General Assembly;
 - Pilots – the Voyager and Navigator Pilots (V&N) events continue to offer young people (aged 11-18) an opportunity to explore their faith, in an exciting and accessible manner on their residential retreats;
 - FURY Assembly has been replaced by the URC Youth Assembly where faith issues are explored and disciples are nurtured;
 - FURY Forum takes the format of small group activities to explore theology together.
- 2.2 We're working on...
- two more theological reflection booklets: *Children and Play* to be published in Autumn 2012, *Children and Belonging* to be published in Spring 2013;
 - finding ways to support the Resource Centres for Learning in the delivery of EM1 and EM2 training, to include modules on effective engagement with youth and children's work for the 21st Century.
- 3 We will encourage growth numerically and in quality.
- 3.1 Progress so far...
- the number of Pilots Companies grew by 10% in 2011;
 - the first URC Youth Assembly had an attendance of 130 young people;
 - the number of congregations awarded the Child Friendly Church Award has continued to increase;
 - the number of synods with active youth and children's work committees and youth executives has grown;
 - the Pilots Developing Leadership Skills for 15–19 year olds is now in its third year and is a great success, developing leaders for the future;
 - The Pilots 75th Anniversary was a great time of celebration across the country. We discovered that over 700 URC churches have had Pilots in their church at some point.
- 3.2 We're working on...
- training of children's workers and Pilots Officers using the CORE materials published by the Consultative Group for Ministry among Children;
 - increasing the participation of young people in Youth Assembly;
 - training and developing leaders within Pilots;
 - increasing further the number of Pilots companies across the United Kingdom.
- 4 We will communicate effectively.
- 4.1 Progress so far...
- we have sent out two mailings a year to every local church since 2009;
 - we have produced four theological discussion booklets;
 - we have uploaded some information to the URC website;
 - we have established a 'Focus Synod' initiative to ensure greater links.
- 4.2 We're working on...
- developing further the resources to be available on the URC website;
 - using social networking media appropriately and developing guidelines;
 - using podcasts as appropriate;
 - continuing to develop a range of printed and electronic resources.

5 We will enable and encourage the church to reach out to local and world communities.

5.1 Progress so far...

- we have encouraged churches to use Pilots to reach out to their local communities;
- we have supported groups and individuals to have world church experiences;
- we have supported young people serving with Mission House in Amsterdam;
- we have established a URC intern programme with Christian Aid supporting the Commitment for Life programme;
- each year, we have helped Pilots companies explore different countries of the world, engaging with culture, faith and demography discovering what life is like for children and young people in those countries.

5.2 We're working on...

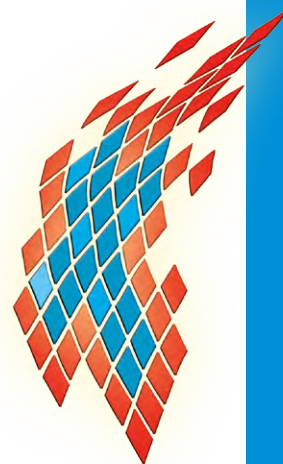
- articles about community engagement which can be shared across the URC;
- greater links with the Free Churches Education Committee, in order to support churches with their engagement with local schools;
- closer co-operation with the Church Related Community Work programme;
- multifaith Pilots companies, two have already been established.

6 The summary above represents a fraction of the work undertaken by our dedicated team, all of whom the Youth and Children's Committee would wish to thank formally. In addition to all of the above, the youth and children's work staff are frequently called upon to support local churches and synods concerning 'Good Practice' and safeguarding issues.

See Appendix 19, page 223, Affirmation of Pilots in the United Reformed Church and Appendix 20, page 224-6, Participation of those aged 20 to 40 in the United Reformed Church. Resolutions 31, 32 and 33 on pages 262 -3.

Synod Moderators' report

Wilderness ways and transitional tremors



1.1 The way it is

The United Reformed Church is a diverse family; in congregations from Orkney to Jersey and from Pembroke to Lowestoft women, men and children respond to the call to be the faithful people of God in this generation. Synod Moderators have the privilege of experiencing innovation and risk taking across the Church in the three nations that make up the United Reformed Church. There is excitement about the new things that God is doing, as well as some anxiety about where we, the people of God, travel next. As old certainties disappear it would be easy to lose hope and to conclude that the Church we have all loved is in terminal decline. Shrinking budgets and perceived shortages lower expectation at the very time when we all need encouragement and renewed enthusiasm for the task ahead. For many members of the United Reformed Church it is a matter of some perplexity that church attendance has shifted from being a ritual shared by many of our friends and neighbours, to the preserve of the few. We can feel isolated and vulnerable and these are not emotions that build confidence and trust. The culture that we live in is not appreciative of the Church and, to our surprise, looks for spiritual succour elsewhere. For many members of the United Reformed Church this is the reality that shapes their experience of Church. There is a very real danger that as a family of Churches we make the mistake of either ignoring the decline, or kidding ourselves that the existing model of Church can be patched up and made to work better, or losing hope altogether. But it doesn't have to be like this; the story of the United Reformed Church is changing not ending. We have choices to make about what kind of Church we believe that God is calling us to be. There will be other reports to General Assembly that challenge us to think about our relationships with one another and with ecumenical colleagues. In this report the synod moderators want to draw attention to some of the issues that occupy our agendas and which we believe deserve the consideration of the whole Church.

1.2 The generation gap

As synod moderators, as well as celebrating the innovative, we often witness at first hand the tensions that inhibit local congregations in their desire to be the faithful people of God. A central part of our role is to be involved with congregations in conversations about the part that a minister of Word and sacraments might play in the life of a local congregation. There is often disappointment at the availability of ministers and anxiety at how they are deployed. We observe a gradual widening of the gap between ministers and congregations in their expectations of each other. Many of us can remember a time when the role of the minister was to be pastor to the flock, but the language and the reality is changing. The biblical image is of the shepherd who leads the people from the front, through often dangerous and arid territory, to discover new sources of refreshment. In too many instances this biblical model has been replaced by the shepherd as one whose duty does not extend beyond the confines of the church. The age profile of congregations has changed to the extent that visiting at times of illness and infirmity could occupy an increasing percentage of a minister's time. The needy and the vulnerable, often shunned by contemporary culture, make demands that stretch even the most caring soul. The administrative burden on ministers of Word and sacraments has increased, in part because of multiple church pastorates

and, in part, because contemporary culture and the denomination demand increased reporting. These extra demands come at a time when there is a need for innovation and risk taking by the whole Church. Ministers are often of a different generation to the majority of the members of their congregations and this creates the necessity for ministers to have clear boundaries between work and leisure. It is good if the church can be a place where the different generations meet, but deadly if the social calendar is always determined by the over 70s, however young at heart they might think they are. These are but a few of the factors which begin to drive a wedge between the agenda of minister and congregations. Add to these contemporary social and political changes where the individual is encouraged to know what they want, at times at the expense of the community; the depletion of the volunteer pool through changing family life patterns; and the educational revolution of the last thirty years, which has led to a dominant group of people in the church who grew up in an era when people were told what to believe and the majority outside of the church who want to discover for themselves what to trust and believe. The church has often struggled to adapt from being the custodian of belief to being the place where, in the words of the Iona community, people let go of the God they no longer believe in that they might be grasped by the God who believes in them. It is little wonder that ministers often feel that they are caught between a rock and a hard place.

2.1 Ministry is of the whole people of God

When minister and congregation begin to feel that they are operating from different understandings of a shared vocation to continue the ministry of Jesus, then stress, frustration, disappointment, mistrust and even anger will occur. There is a real danger that congregations are offered the choice of supporting the minister's vision or that of the collective memory. For those congregations where there is no ordained minister of Word and sacraments, either temporarily or more permanently, the impression can be given that ministry does not happen. Ministry, as the Basis of Union makes clear, is of the whole people of God, not one part of it. It is a part of our unique character that elders and minister together share the privilege and responsibility of leadership and pastoral care. The vision must be shared and owned by the whole people. It is not enough for an inspired minister to impose a vision on a congregation willing to indulge her or his hopes and dreams. Nor can elders step aside from their part in the shared calling to the work of continuing the ministry of Jesus. The United Reformed Church is not defined by our ability to appoint ministers but by our shared calling to be the people of God. As a denomination the United Reformed Church has long valued, and indeed we have prided ourselves on having, a well educated professional ministry. In the twentieth century this has at times combined with an historical/critical and academic approach to Bible study which has allowed congregations to see the minister as the expert. In emphasizing the academic approach to the study of the Bible we have at times given less attention to the need of ministers to model discipleship and to stand alongside people in their pilgrimage of faith. Unless an individual has the ability and commitment to love the people they are called to serve then s/he will never lead them.

2.2 Professional but not separate

A consequence of seeing the minister as the expert on the Bible is to create a gap between minister and congregation. While ministers may bring a particular expertise to bear on reading scripture it is the insights of all that are necessary if we are to navigate our way into God's future. The role of the teacher, or rabbi, is to equip others and not to take responsibility from them. In common with other mainline denominations we have encouraged a professional understanding of the work of ministry. In so doing we have taken it away from the whole people of God and entrusted it to one small part that we have increasingly called ministers. Professional standards of competence and discipline have never been properly established as with the medical and other professions. Recent attempts to alter this have met with resistance, for instance in the need to clarify job descriptions. We are together the people of God and not two different groups – ministers and others. This is an integral part of what it means to be the United Reformed Church. It is not enough to apply this to membership of the councils of the Church: but see it as integral in shaping who we are. The separation of minister and people is an

Synod Moderators' report

open wound in the Body of Christ and is compounded by a shift towards congregations becoming the clients of ministers where the ordained provide the services and pastoral care expected of them. The growth of consumerism simply exacerbates the situation and the shadow of this is the myth of the omniscient minister.¹ The adoption of a 'professional' ministry has led to an emphasis upon what the professional does, so that we replace ministers with others and continue to insist on doing things the same way with fewer resources instead of asking if this can be done differently. For example we equip lay preachers to conduct worship in the same way that we expect of ministers instead of asking if there is a different way of worshipping that will use the resources of all. An over dependence upon ministers is as killing to the church as their absence.

2.3 In this together

For the health of the whole Church, ministry must be recovered as a shared endeavour. The Basis of Union states that:

'The Lord Jesus Christ continues his ministry in and through the Church, the whole people of God called and committed to his service and equipped by him for it.'

We need to express this fundamental aspect of our denominational heritage with fresh enthusiasm. We, the people of God, all of us, ministers, elders and members, are called to the task of ministry. To this calling ministers of Word and sacraments will bring their particular gifts, but these gifts must include the ability to support, complement, encourage and develop the gifts of others.

Ministers will have a particular role in asking the questions that shape the vision and they will be the ones who remind the whole body of the higher calling when difficulties are encountered. Ministers do not act alone, but alongside and on behalf of others. Together we are the people of God, incomplete without each other. It is the commitment, the enthusiasm, the energy of the whole people of God that will see us through the transition to God's future, not the grand schemes of minister, synod or Assembly no matter how well intended. We are in this together and that must be apparent in all that we do and say.

*We are in this together
and that must be apparent in
all that we do and say*

3.1 Signs of the Kingdom

David Bosch, in what has become the standard text book on mission, wrote:

*'Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the Church is viewed as an instrument for that mission. There is Church because there is mission not vice versa. To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God's love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love.'*²

It is this work of God that finds expression in what is called, in the gospel of Mark, the kingdom of God and which must be the focus of our energies. That cannot mean that we abandon the traditional church which has nurtured us and which continues to fund and maintain the only expression of Church that we know. Rather we begin to look at our life in community and measure it against what we understand of the kingdom of God. We might not have the full details, but we know the signposts: inclusive grace, love, justice, shalom, self sacrifice, right relations, Christ-centred being. And what matters is not that we abandon everything that is familiar and loved, but that we begin to test them against the kingdom that we long for, rather than against the Church that has long since vanished and which was never as perfect as we remember.

3.2 Pastoral care and leadership

There is a pressing need to look at every aspect of the ministry of the whole people of God and seriously determine which aspects are essential and which ones we need to let go. When ministers and elders are put under pressure it is often pastoral visiting that gets squeezed out. One of the frequent criticisms of churches and of ministers is

1 See a wider discussion in: Heywood, David, *Reimagining Ministry* SCM Press, 2011, and Russell, Anthony, *The Clerical Profession*, SPCK 1980.

2 Bosch, David, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Orbis Books, 1991. p390.

the erosion of pastoral visits. What is less apparent is whether there has been an honest conversation about what is the purpose of a pastoral visit. The visited should expect to be challenged and guided in their faith journey and ministers and elders should see the pastoral visit as an essential tool in building relationships of trust and teaching the practice of prayer. This does not mean that every visit has to be undertaken by a minister. When elders and minister share the responsibility to give pastoral care and spiritual leadership to the congregation the space for innovation and risk taking is created. It is unrealistic to expect ministers to lead us in new ways if all of their time is taken up maintaining the old. Where churches get the balance right then new and exciting things happen, those who already belong feel loved and respected, the stranger finds a home and energy is released for mission. Where there is a refusal to engage in dialogue about the place of pastoral care then individuals feel abandoned, others become frustrated and pine for a lost age and ministers are left anxious and misunderstood.

Where churches get the balance right then new and exciting things happen

3.3 Respect is mutual

Ministers are called and set apart to help the whole Church in the call to continue the ministry of Jesus. We are all to play our part in living as those who trust in God, believe in the resurrection and live our lives within and outwith the Church as if the kingdom is among us. We are to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ in the confusing and often complex world that we inhabit, a confusion compounded by both the strengths and the flaws of our own humanity. It may not be fashionable to talk about sin, but somehow we have to recognise, accept and deal with the mistakes, the failings and the self-centered reality of the human condition. As synod moderators we are concerned that, because of anxiety about the future, congregations can be inward looking and over-critical of individuals. We ought not to expect perfection in one another; we must continually forgive one another and act with grace when we are hurt or disappointed. Such pains are the birth pangs of the kingdom we proclaim.

4.1 Leadership in a conciliar Church

We are a conciliar Church and at our best we are able to bring the experience of the whole body to the task of building the kingdom of God. Leadership in a conciliar Church is a particular gift and one that requires patience, humility and a deep love for the people of God. To love a congregation is to walk with people when their fears and anxieties immobilise them; love demands that we recognise the spark of the divine in every situation. To love a congregation is to speak and to hear the hard word when it is necessary, but also to know when to sit silently and allow the other person to express their deepest needs. Love is all those things that Paul speaks of in the passage from Corinthians as he seeks to build up the community in its mutual care and consideration of one another. Those called to be ministers of Word and sacraments must have compassion for those they serve and compassion for themselves but love is not a one way act. It is not enough for church meetings to call women and men to be ministers and then leave the work of ministry to them. Those who call also accept a responsibility to support and encourage, love and appreciate those that they have called. Ministers are not called to answer the wishes of congregations, but to lead us in the ways of Christ, even when that makes us uncomfortable. There are no easy options and more than ever the body of Christ will be held together by grace and not by law.

4.2 Leadership is uncomfortable

One of the most frequent attributes that congregations say that they want in a minister is that of leadership and one of the greatest frustrations among ministers is congregations that doggedly refuse to try anything new. It might help if we were clear about the nature of leadership in general and with the style that might be needed for the Church in the place of transition. Any organisation requires from its core leadership both stability and innovation. Leadership and management offer contrasting things, yet both are necessary. Gil Rendle of the Alban Institute in Washington DC expresses it this way:

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*'All living systems need management and leadership in a continuous and complementary relationship in order to maintain balance and health while also negotiating change and development. While complementary it is important also to note that management and leadership address distinctly different needs of an organisation. One manages the present, the other defines the future. One provides stability, the other change. One provides smoothness and efficiency, the other disruption. One provides comfort, the other anxiety.'*³

Ministers might be comforted to know that if they have increased anxiety in their congregations then they are probably doing a good job of leadership. They will have made themselves vulnerable to rejection and may attract unwelcome criticism. Simply telling the congregation to behave better in response won't help the minister's popularity. People need to know they have been heard and helped towards a place where a new vision can be planted. The whole body has to own the reality that in a time of transition there will be pain. Identifying a scapegoat will offer only temporary relief to the pain and do nothing for the long term health of the Church.

4.3 Becoming who we are

In putting emphasis upon the nature of leadership and affirming it as one of the key responsibilities that the whole body expects of ministers, we should be aware that not every minister will understand this as their gift. The gift of leadership is only one of many mentioned by Paul in his letter to the Romans and is to be exercised alongside others. Much has been written on the topic of vocation and the nature of call in the United Reformed Church. Parker J Palmer, in his book *Let your Life speak*, talks of the need to 'grow into our own authentic self-hood'⁴. Palmer quotes Frederick Buechner who defines vocation as 'the place where your deep gladness meets the world's deep needs'⁵. If ministry is of the whole people of God then we the people of God have a vocation to be true to our selves and seek wholeness. But this vocation is for all within the Church and not the ministers alone. The question is, what kind of Church is God calling us to be, what do we need to fulfill that call, what are the gifts that we have and need to encourage, and what are the roles we should support through stipend and housing? We are together the people of God, we are all important to the work of ministry.

5.1 Living in the world

We are all disciples of the one whom history knows as Jesus of Nazareth, each of us called to live as citizens of the kingdom of God now. If the defining narrative of the present is one of decline then it needs to change and quickly. The most important issue that is presenting itself to the Church at the moment is not same sex marriage, or the ZI campaign, or the Westminster Appeal, or *vision2020*; not biblical authority or doctrine or even – whisper it quietly – the Basis of Union, or how we fund M&M, or buildings or finance, or any one of the multitude of concerns that crowd our agendas. What matters is our vocation to be disciples of Jesus. What is critical to that is how we experience the presence of God and give expression to that experience in the way that we live our lives, as individuals and as church communities. What is it that says to the world, this is what the kingdom of God looks like? We can have the most brilliant and successful 'campaign of radical welcome' but unless we know what we are welcoming people to, then the lasting effect will be minimal. We have allowed our church agendas to become crowded by the things that matter to us and failed to give attention to the things that matter to people beyond the Church, those to whom we are called to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God.

*What matters is our vocation
to be disciples of Jesus*

3 Rendle, Gil, *Leadership under Constraints*, Herndon VA, Alban Institute 2006.

4 Palmer, Parker J, *Let your life speak – listening for the voice of vocation*, Jossey-Bass San Francisco 2000. p16.

5 Buechner, Frederick, *Wishful Thinking: A Seekers ABC*, Harper San Francisco 1993. p119.

5.2 Church is a verb not a noun

The United Reformed Church has the opportunity to be a place where God is experienced in local communities that are supportive and safe for diverse people. Local communities that can be their own expressions of the kingdom, yet part of a greater whole where purpose and insights can be tested and shared. We can learn again the strength and power of covenant relationships as we rediscover what it means to be a movement rather than an organisation. We are aware that our companions in the Methodist Church are expressing a similar conviction and this gives the opportunity for new expressions of ecumenical commitment. The Church is to be a foretaste of the kingdom of God. When we invite people into the life of the church we are inviting them to participate in what "is and not yet". The invitation is to journey: all doctrine is temporary, awaiting a fuller revelation, and all human understanding is limited and flawed. What we offer is the experience of living in the kingdom of God now, of receiving the seed of hope that changes the world, and of coming to the fullness of selfhood that God created us to be.

The United Methodist Church in the USA summed it up in their 2009 advertising campaign 'Rethink Church' by challenging people to grasp that Church is a verb and not a noun. We do not seek to attract people to a building, but to a community and a way of life that makes a difference.

*We do not seek to attract
people to a building,
but to a community and a way of life
that makes a difference*

6.1 Changing the story

When we sense that things are not working as we would like them to, the human response is either to work harder or find someone to blame. Synod moderators see examples of both in the life of the United Reformed Church. As moderators we are sceptical of grand schemes that ignore the reality of local church life. One size does not fit all and for congregations it is often easier to blame the failings of the scheme than to accept the responsibility of wrestling out the nature of discipleship in their own setting. The sense of isolation and vulnerability that marks many of our congregations shapes the life of those congregations. This needs to change and to be replaced with the hope that underpins all Christian life and witness. When disciples are uncertain of the future then we trust God the more, not less. When the reality of the wilderness presses in on us, we do not ignore the reality of our situation but we look for new ways of living out the promise that the kingdom of God is among us: a kingdom made up of right relationships and established on principles of justice that bend towards shalom. As synod moderators we would encourage congregations to find ways of asking questions of each other that build upon the positive aspects of their shared life. It is by asking questions that we all change and when those questions involve stories about strength, success, values, hopes and dreams, then transformation follows. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is an approach to congregational life that is based on the assumption that the questions that are asked will tend to focus our attention in a particular direction. Appreciative Inquiry starts with the belief that every organisation, and every person in that organisation, has positive aspects that can be built upon. It asks questions like "What's working?", "What's good about what you are currently doing?" The approach argues that when all members of an organization are motivated to understand and value the most favourable features of its culture, it can make rapid improvements. The purpose is to dwell on the positive and not the negative.

6.2 Where does the stranger experience God?

The kingdom (or if you prefer the kin-dom) of God is about how disciples live now as opposed to how we might live in some utopian future. This requires that we set aside the negative, put an end to criticism that simply absolves us of responsibility and begin to look for signs of the presence of God among us. The culture in which we are called to live the kingdom is not interested in our internal struggles, but with the right invitation might be attracted by the prospect of experiencing the presence of God. Where do we, let alone the stranger, experience God in our life together? How do we allow that experience to shape our decision making and our structures? How does our experience

Synod Moderators' report

of God give us the confidence and trust to be the Church that God is calling us to be? These are the urgent questions that cannot be deferred and which must shape the narrative of the whole United Reformed Church in these wilderness years. The story of the United Reformed Church is changing; the imperative of organic Church union is not what it was at our beginning. In 1972 and at subsequent unions we knew our part in a wider story that looked to the day when the Church was one in fact and not only in word. The story is changing, and that is disturbing, but it is not ending. As we listen with greater intensity to where God is calling us we, the whole people of God, minister, elder, member, adult, child must know our part in the story that is unfolding. It is as together we write the story of what the United Reformed Church is that we will claim the future with confidence. We are a diverse family but that is our strength and not our weakness. We were courageous when we left behind the familiarity of our separate histories; we can be so again. The future does not require us to abandon the past, nor to craft a story that we do not know, but to live out the story of who we are with integrity and in depth. It is not enough to say we are followers of Jesus, rather it must be seen in our life. We are part of God's story and that should put purpose in our planning, joy in our gathering and fill us with enthusiasm for the future.

7.1 Endings and beginnings

Since our last report to General Assembly the synod moderators have bidden a fond farewell to Terry Oakley on his retirement and to Adrian Bulley, Peter Noble and Nigel Uden who have returned to local ministry. We are grateful for their wise counsel and friendship and pray God's blessing on their futures. We have welcomed Clare Downing, Nicola Furley-Smith and Peter Meek to the moderators' meeting and look forward to welcoming Simon Walkling. As a group we benefit from the contributions of all as we continue to serve the Church as best we are able.

For further reflection...

- 1) If we have to make choices about what kind of Church God wants us to be how would you describe these choices?
- 2) What is it about your church that particularly speaks to you of the kingdom of God?
- 3) Think about the occasions when you have been particularly aware of the presence of God. What were the common factors?

David Grosch-Miller for the synod moderators

Church 2012
United
 Church **Reformed**
Church Church 2012

Church changes

Aylesbeare United Reformed Church

South Western Synod

By 1870 Congregationalists were meeting in Aylesbeare, 9 miles east of Exeter. The chapel was founded in 1893 with encouragement and support from Southernhay and White Castle Street congregations in Exeter. The building was purchased in the name of the Devon Congregational Union in October 1908. Over a century of faithful and distinctive witness enriched the life of the village, including a thanksgiving service on 3 December 1937 for the restoration work done to the building.

Aylesbeare, a farming community, had a lively close knit fellowship and a large thriving Sunday school for many years that drew others from surrounding villages. The church was located next to the Parish church's lych-gate and this led to some rivalry and some very close cooperation. Many village fetes, exhibitions and events were enlivened by the distinct fellowships. Ecumenical conversations and services developed but slowly declined, affected by age and ministerial deployment.

As society has changed and young people moved away, the number of members diminished over the years until there were only three active members. After prayer and heartfelt consideration the decision was taken that the church should seek to close. On 8 May 2011 the chapel was packed for the final service, thanking God for the years of mission, ministry and witness to the village.

Trinity Church (Methodist and United Reformed), Burton-on-Trent

West Midlands Synod

After much thought and prayer, the Methodist and United Reformed Church in George Street, Burton on Trent decided to close in June 2010. The Church Council vote was 90% in favour, endorsed by the Methodist Circuit meeting (this was a Methodist building) in September 2010.

The Church people had been struggling for some time and had not found it possible to keep a very large church (600 seater) and ancillary building going, not least because of finance. The sharing agreement which came into being in July 1979 terminated in June 2011.

Clyro with Hay-on-Wye

Synod of Wales

In 1890 a mission hall was opened in Clyro under the care of a minister from Hay. Locally, the story is that it started because a wealthy spinster went to church in Clyro one morning to find that someone was sitting in her seat. The wardens refused to ask them to move so the redoubtable spinster left and started an independent cause! She gave the land, covered the building costs and left an endowment to cover the cost of ministry and caretaking. In so doing she made a number of stipulations, some of which were somewhat curious.

The chapel's attendance fluctuated considerably over the years and services were suspended at several points in its history. Attempts were made to reinvigorate the cause on various occasions. However, its hidden-away location and a lack of basic

Church changes

facilities did little to encourage the people. Some of the clauses in the fore-mentioned lease also made it impossible for anything other than actual worship services legally to be held there. In recent years, membership fell and services were suspended. At a Church Meeting in June 2009 the members decided that the time had come to close.

Clyro was latterly a part of the Brecon Beacons pastorate and money given by the Church Meeting to other chapels in the pastorate has enabled a number of very positive things to happen. This has been of some comfort to Clyro's members. The final service was a Harvest Festival service in September 2009.

Trinity Church, Cottam Hall, Preston

North Western Synod

Trinity was set up as a local ecumenical partnership by the United Reformed Church, the Methodist Church and the Church of England in 2005. Cottam Hall is a new housing development on the edge of Preston with many young professional people and families.

Trinity is a success story which has been well documented in the pages of *REFORM* and through celebrations in the North Western Synod and General Assembly.

The URC special category ministry came to an end in July 2009. Reviews were undertaken to ask what future pattern of ministry might be appropriate. The main outcomes of this process were to recognise that the church had a clear future and that ministry should continue to be deployed. Having supplied full time ministry for five years, the United Reformed Church looked to the partner churches for a successor.

Trinity Church discerned that its home lay within the Free Church traditions rather than the Church of England. The Methodist circuit was best able to supply ministry in the long term. Late in 2010 the church decided that the most faithful way forward for them would be to cease being a local ecumenical partnership and to become a congregation of the Methodist Church. This has now taken place. We celebrate the URC's contribution to a thriving congregation and mission in an exciting context.

Galashiels United Reformed Church

Synod of Scotland

In October 2010, a final celebratory service was held in the church building in Union Street. Those present reflected on the rich history of the church.

In June 1844, 38 men left the Congregational Church in Melrose and formed a church in Galashiels. That October the church began meeting in the Bridge Inn. It was the first church in southeast Scotland to be founded in connection with the Evangelical Union, formed the previous year by Revd James Morison of Kilmarnock and others. The liberal views which these men advocated soon spread to many parts of the country. The first minister was Revd James Robertson, one of nine students expelled from the Glasgow Theological Academy for their sympathy for the "new views".

A "new chapel" in Union Street was opened in 1846. In 1872, a church building was superimposed on the former chapel. Galashiels had strong links with the Temperance Movement and the church was let to the Total Abstinence Society. In the 1950s, sweeping alterations were carried out in the upstairs sanctuary.

The Galashiels Women's Guild faithfully and enthusiastically served the church and supported mission projects. In the 1970s, the church boasted a very large Sunday School and Youth Club. Latterly a successful weekly lunchtime cafe was held.

In July 2011, it was agreed that the Galashiels members would worship at Selkirk URC. A service to mark the coming together of the two congregations will be held on 6 May 2012.

Garn United Reformed Church, Abercarn

Synod of Wales

A service for the life and witness of the Garn United Reformed Church, Abercarn was held in April 2011 at St Luke's Church (Welsh Church) Abercarn.

During the service the Revd Shem Morgan outlined the church's history from its founding in 1841 when the "Independents" in Abercarn decided to meet on their own. The venture was so successful that a chapel was built and opened in 1847. The church grew rapidly and a new chapel was built in the late 1880s with a schoolroom added in 1906. However by 1991 the buildings had become unsafe and had to be demolished. Subsequently the fellowship met in the local Rechabite Hall but with a diminishing congregation it was decided to close at the beginning of 2011.

The closing service was a celebration of over 170 years of mission and gave thanks for the involvements, enthusiasm and loyal service of ministers, elders, leaders and members. Their contribution to mission will endure through countless unrecorded influences within the community, through members who were called to ministry and, not least, through former ministers who went on to serve as moderators of synods and General Assembly and principal at Paton Congregational College.

Gnoll United Reformed Church, Neath

Synod of Wales

English Congregationalism in Neath took root in 1842, when a chapel was opened in Wind Street. Five years later the first minister arrived in the person of Ebenezer S Hart, MA, a Scotsman, one assumes, a graduate of Aberdeen University and of the theological college there.

Eventually the church realised that its premises in Wind Street were too small and in the wrong place. A new building, described as "early Gothic", was erected in Gnoll Road. In 1985 dry rot was discovered in the timbers and worship moved to Pendyre for three years and then to a local doctors' surgery.

The members have happy memories of children's anniversaries and the Whit-walks, the choir and the organ, but, most of all, of the atmosphere of warm fellowship.

Participating in council of churches' events, the members always said, "We must ensure the Reformed witness is there." They expressed this not only in meetings but in displays at flower festivals in the parish church and collecting for Christian Aid Week. The three remaining young people on the church roll did house to house as usual in this last Christian Aid Week.

High Easter United Reformed Church, Essex

Eastern Synod

In the winter of 1842 a 19 year old man, Manning Prentice from Stowmarket, lost his way in a snowstorm and happened to come through High Easter on his way to Ongar, where he was studying theology. Mr Prentice returned to the village and preached to about 250 people. Continuing to lead worship, he started a Sunday school at the end of that year with 51 pupils. The following year the slaughter house and granary were hired to become the chapel and Sunday school with 83 children. In 1846 he opened the first school with 104 pupils, maintained at his own expense for 23 years. He was also mainly responsible for the building of the large Congregational Chapel built in 1847.

In 1974 worship moved to a local school building. At one time there was a Sunday school and the children took part in the services, especially at Christmastime, but in

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later years the adults were encouraged to take part. From fun days with balloons flying on the railings, stalls and side shows to carols by candlelight, art exhibitions and the famous harvest suppers, the church echoed with warmth and welcome.

Through death and members moving away the membership decreased significantly. An agreement to join the Church of England for worship never developed with any enthusiasm. The hard decision to close was taken and a service of celebration was held in September 2010.

Trinity United Reformed Church, Ifield, Crawley

Southern Synod

In 1856 a small group of people started regular worship in hired premises in Crawley, at that time a small town of 2,000 inhabitants. Two years later a church was erected on a site in Robinson Road, and in 1863 Crawley Congregational Church was formed.

In 1947 Crawley was designated a New Town and to accommodate town development the church relocated to a new building in Ifield, opening in May 1963.

It became increasingly clear in the early years of the 21st century that Trinity was not having the impact in Ifield and surrounding area that it had enjoyed previously and, despite all efforts by the minister and leaders – plus financial support from Southern Synod to assist the church in holding a ‘Back to Church Sunday’ celebration in 2008 – Trinity failed to grow.

The congregation acknowledged that it was time to recognise that Trinity’s mission was complete. Talks began with Christ Church, Crawley. Eventually the decision was made to close worship at Trinity and form a new church using the Christ Church premises in Pound Hill.

The final service at Trinity was held on Sunday 28 November 2010 and the new church, named Crawley United Reformed Church, held its first service in December 2010.

Christ Church, Johnstown, Wrexham

Synod of Wales

This church was founded as an English Congregational Church in 1881 to serve a predominantly mining community. In 1939 there were 100 members and over 100 children in the Sunday School.

With changing circumstances and the gradual closure of the mines in North Wales the congregation declined. In 1991 the large premises were proving very costly to maintain and the church, with a membership of 14, accepted an invitation to share the much smaller premises of the Jerusalem Welsh Methodist Church, holding their worship in English on a Sunday afternoon while the Methodists continued to worship in Welsh in the morning. In 1999 the two congregations decided to combine and to worship together on Sunday mornings, some services being conducted in Welsh, some in English.

Recently, however, the number of Christ Church members had reduced to one and it was decided to transfer her membership to the Methodist Church and to bring the life of Christ Church to a formal conclusion. The United Reformed Church in the Wrexham area honours the history of this church and intends to continue to relate to the Methodist congregation, not least by sharing in the leadership of worship on a regular basis.

Kimberworth Road United Reformed Church, Rotherham

Yorkshire Synod

In July 1892 work was started on a new church for the united congregations of Kimberworth Village and Wilton Gardens Mission and despite hard frosts and gales during the winter the church was ready for the first of three opening services in April 1893.

In April 1913 foundation stones were laid for the new Kimberworth Road Church. Both the official programme and the newspaper reports stress that this extension had been forced upon the church by the growth of its work in a populous and growing neighbourhood. In February 1914 the new building was complete and was formally opened by the Mayor of Rotherham. The new building was described as providing for a congregation of 600 adults and a choir of 47.

In the past there was a Women's Guild, Young Wives, Men's Fellowship, Pilots, Dramatic Society, Choir, almost continuous Youth Clubs and Craft Club and each year a new Sunday School Queen was appointed and would take part in the Whit Monday parade.

But faced with a dwindling membership and the spiraling costs of trying to maintain a number of large and old buildings, the church made the difficult decision to close and the final service giving thanks to God for the life and worship of the church over more than 100 years was held in October 2010.

Linthorpe United Reformed Church, Middlesbrough

Northern Synod *No account of this church's history has been provided.*

St John's Local Ecumenical Partnership, Grove Green, Maidstone

Southern Synod *No account of this church's history has been provided.*

Marlborough United Reformed Church

South Western Synod

The United Reformed Church congregation in Marlborough has a long history, formerly as a Congregational Church, dating from 1817, which included the facilities of church and manse with a church hall being added in 1861. Into the 1960s it was still very vibrant and forward looking, running various uniformed organisations including Boys Brigade and Girl Guides. Teaching was done on Sundays and midweek Bible study groups were also formed. The hymn writer Brian Wren's family worshipped here. The congregation joined the United Reformed Church in 1972.

The last full-time Minister of the church was the Revd Donald Woffenden. Thereafter the congregation was served by visiting clergy and lay preachers and in 1979 formed an alliance with the Methodists in the town, at first worshiping in alternate churches on alternate Sundays and eventually joining with the Methodist Church on 21 October 1984 to become known as Christchurch using the Methodist buildings. A joint membership roll was set up and any new members were deemed to belong to Christchurch.

In 2010 it was decided to cut the historic ties with the United Reformed Church and Christchurch became Methodist in September 2011.

Church changes

Christ Church Painswick (Baptist and United Reformed Church)

West Midlands Synod

This church is one of the historic nonconformist meeting houses in Gloucestershire and was founded in the turbulent mid-17th century. There has been a church on this site since 1656. It has been served by a number of well-respected and influential ministers over the years at different churches on the site.

Painswick cannot claim to be a nonconformist stronghold but the members of this church made their witness and gave service to the community according to the inheritance into which they entered.

Formerly a Congregational Church, the congregation entered the United Reformed Church union in October 1972. At a local level, a significant step was taken in the history of the church in September 1983 when Painswick Baptist Church and the Cornelius Winter Memorial United Reformed Church united to form Christ Church Painswick. The congregation played a full part in the activities of Churches Together Around Painswick.

The decision to close was made by Church meeting (May 2010), with the final service following in September.

Trinity United Reformed Church, Pembroke Dock

Synod of Wales

The original congregational church was built in 1867. Called Albion Square, it was later demolished as it was thought to be in direct line of firing from the dockyard. The sole purpose of the creation of Pembroke Dock was to build ships for the Royal Navy: warships, four royal barges and the flying boats. At one time, it was the only truly industrial community in Pembrokeshire. It is now long gone.

With the inception of the dockyard and the rapid growth of the new town, churches and chapels sprang up to satisfy the growing demands of the people. Tradesmen from all over Britain flocked to the dockyard and all the churches and chapels were built using volunteer shipbuilder skills of carpentry and joinery with the masonry and plastering left to paid specialists. The chapels were the religious, social, educational and musical entertainment centres of the community. Townspeople and benefactors provided for the building of the Albion church and later moved to the new church, Trinity.

Worshipping with the Methodist Church since 1988, after the closing of a number of Methodist churches, the congregation maintained a Christian presence in the town. Sadly, they dwindled to a very few who have now found fellowship elsewhere.

Slough United Reformed Asian Christian Church

Thames North Synod

The congregation was originally founded in the mid 1990s by the late Mr Salim Fazil Din, son of a highly respected minister of the Presbyterian Church of Pakistan, and resident in Slough with his family until his death in 2003. This Urdu speaking Asian Christian Fellowship was received as a Local Church of the United Reformed Church in 2000.

In September 2011, on the recommendation of the local Area Committee, the Thames North Synod decided that Slough United Reformed Asian Christian Church be formally closed.

South Cave United Reformed Church

Yorkshire Synod

The congregation at South Cave went back to 1662 when the Revd James Baycock, a Presbyterian, was ejected from the vicarage of South Cave under the Act of Uniformity, for refusing Episcopal ordination. Records show that 349 years of continuous worship followed on the same ground or within the area. In 1662 it was Nonconformist, in 1773 Congregational and finally in 1972 it became the United Reformed Church.

The Revd James Baycock had many sympathisers in the parish to whom he continued to minister in a building that had previously been used as a tithe barn. A purpose built church must have been raised before 1873 as records show that the Congregational Chapel was built on the site of the old church. The cost of building the new church in Romanesque style was £790.

In the 1970s and 80s, South Cave URC had a thriving Sunday school with 30 to 40 children attending regularly. However, in March 2011 the church meeting recognised with deep regret that the church had reached a stage in its life when it must close. The final service bearing witness to the faith over many years of the various congregations that had worshipped on the site was held on Pentecost Sunday, June 2011.

Church of Reconciliation, Westcliff, Scunthorpe

East Midlands Synod

Westcliff grew up in the 1960s as an area of new housing. The first meetings were held in the local pub – Desert Rat – then in the council house assigned to the Anglican curate.

In 1968 four or five Anglicans were meeting for Sunday worship in the temporary wooden community centre and were served by the curate of St Hugh's. Home groups were formed and neighbours visited for coffee.

By early 1974 Canon Dutfield of St Hugh's realised the potential in Westcliff, a population of 8,000 to 10,000 with no churches apart from the Mormon Church. His curate worked full time in Westcliff to develop ecumenical links together with the Methodist minister from the neighbouring Riddings estate. The church committee was formed, a monthly newsletter produced and a United Reformed Church minister joined the team.

In June 1976 an inaugural service was held in the old community centre and a statement of intent was signed for the three parent churches by the Bishop of Lincoln, the Methodist Chairman and the United Reformed Church Moderator. The membership continued to grow and ground was acquired for the building of a new church which was opened in 1981.

It was with feelings of sadness and some relief after months of uncertainty that members and friends met for the last time on Westcliff for the closing service in November 2008. This was led by the Archdeacon and attended by friends from the neighbouring churches.

Wethersfield United Reformed Church

Eastern Synod

Nonconformity began in Wethersfield before 1662 with the Puritan lecturers attached to the parish church. In 1672 with the passing of the Act of Indulgence John Cole, a Presbyterian, licensed his house in the village as a Presbyterian Meeting House.

Samuel Perry was the minister from 1765-1795, during which time the Chapel became Congregational. The Chapel was greatly extended in 1822.

Church changes

During the ministry of Revd Barnes Wilkes Saunders (1868-1916), described as a good preacher with an abundance of mother wit and sunny temperament, the “Schoolroom”, later known as the hall, was built. This hall was used for youth groups in recent years following the initiative to appoint a part-time development worker.

Despite many schemes by the ministers, elders and congregation to attract new members and with the chapel’s portfolio of property demanding considerable attention, after much discussion, thought and prayer, the Church Meeting resolved unanimously to close.

In September 2010 a service of celebration, including hymns, prayers and poetry chosen by those associated with the church, was very well attended by those from the local area and the synod.

Whixall United Reformed Church, Stanley Green, Whitchurch

West Midlands Synod

The first Congregational chapel in Whixall was built on the present site at Stanley Green and opened in October 1805. The Revd R Eversall was the first pastor. He was ordained at Swan Hall, Shrewsbury in 1802 for work at Whixall, Clive and Hadnall.

In 1826 the Revd Samuel Minshall undertook the pastorate of Whixall. Mr Minshall was pastor for 40 years and during his lifetime the chapel was known as Minshall’s Chapel.

A new chapel opened in December 1870. The old chapel became the school room and a manse was also erected. In 1896 the Revd W E Holt was invited to accept a full pastorate and after nearly a century of being a joint pastorate with Prees, Whixall had its own pastor. In 1908 a pipe organ was installed and in 1931, some 35 years before electricity was available throughout Whixall, the chapel was fortunate to be in close proximity to an electric cable belonging to the North Wales Electricity Board which ran from Whitchurch to Wem and electric power came to the chapel.

Wootton Trinity Christian Centre (Methodist and United Reformed), Northampton

East Midlands Synod

This church continues as a Methodist church following the withdrawal of the United Reformed Church from the local ecumenical partnership.

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Appendix 12

Education for Ministry

Phase 1 students

(information as of March 2012, listed under home synods)

01 Northern

Stipendiary

Elaine Colechin
Grant Wilson

Westminster College
Scottish Congregational & United Reformed College

02 North Western

Stipendiary

Samantha Aspinall
Ruth Watson
Linda Rayner
Kaze Yemtsa
Dorothee Buurma
James Williams

Westminster College
Northern College
Northern College
Northern College
Northern College
Northern College

03 Mersey

Non-Stipendiary

Allison Claxton

Northern College

Stipendiary

Alison Micklem
Lorraine Aizlewood-Threlfall
Nigel Adkinson
David Amvam

Northern College
Northern College
Northern College
Northern College

04 Yorkshire

Non-Stipendiary

Angela Lawson

Northern College

Stipendiary

Claire Hodgson
Christopher Kemshell

Northern College
Westminster College

05 East Midlands

Non-Stipendiary

Heather-Ann Adlem

Westminster College

Stipendiary

John Agbodjan
Henriette Wentink

Westminster College
Westminster College

06 West Midlands**CRCW**

Kirsty Mabbott	Northern College
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Non-Stipendiary

Chris Burgham	Northern College
Peter Kimberley	Northern College

Stipendiary

Mhari Mclintock	Northern College
Zaidie Orr	Northern College
Elaine Hutchinson	Northern College

07 Eastern**Stipendiary**

Melanie Smith	Westminster College
George Mwaura	Westminster College

08 South Western**Non-Stipendiary**

Meryl White	Northern College
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Stipendiary

Janine Atkinson	Westminster College
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09 Wessex**Non-Stipendiary**

Kay Blackwell	Westminster College
Graham Dadd	Northern College

Stipendiary

Kay Blackwell	Westminster College
Joshua Norris	Westminster College
Richard Stein	Westminster College
Ruth Wilson	Westminster College

10 Thames North**Stipendiary**

Catherine McFie	Westminster College
Matthew Prevett	Westminster College
Trevor Hahn	Westminster College
Anne Lewitt	Westminster College
Chris Lawrence	Westminster College

11 Southern**Non-Stipendiary**

Tim Reith	Westminster College
Lisa-Maria Browning	Westminster College
Martin Ferris	Westminster College

Stipendiary

Helen Warmington	Westminster College
Phil Wall	Westminster College

12 Wales

Stipendiary

Branwen Rees

Westminster College

13 Scotland

Non-Stipendiary

Penelope Smirthwaite

Scottish Congregational & United Reformed College

Stipendiary

William Young

Nick Brindley

Jake Tatton

Scottish Congregational & United Reformed College

Scottish Congregational & United Reformed College

Scottish Congregational & United Reformed College



Appendix 13

Statistics of Students in Education for Ministry Phase 1

	Students in Training			Anticipated entry into URC Service			
	Mar 2010	Mar 2011	Mar 2012	2012	2013	2014	2015
STIPENDIARY							
Full-Time Courses							
Northern College (RCL)	8	10	10	1	4	3	2
Queen's Foundation	1						
SURCC (RCL)	2	4	4	2	1	1	
Westminster College (RCL)	18	19	20	3	5	6	6
Part-time Courses							
Northern College (RCL)	2	1	3		1	2	
Subtotal	31	34	37	6	11	12	8
CRCW							
Northern College (RCL)	2	2	1				1
NON-STIPENDIARY							
Full-Time Courses							
Westminster College (RCL)	2	2	2		2		
Northern College (RCL)		1	6	2	2	1	1
Part-Time Courses							
Northern College (RCL)	5	4					
SURCC (RCL)	1	1	1		1		
STETS	4	1					
Westminster College (RCL)	3	2	3			1	2
Subtotal	15	11	12	2	5	1	2
GRAND TOTAL	48	47	50	10	16	13	11

SURCC Scottish United Reformed & Congregational College
 STETS Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme
 (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 at an RCL.

Appendix 14

Guidelines for responding to allegations of bullying or harassment

Introduction

This document is offered to local churches and all people with ministries or holding office in the United Reformed Church, including those exercising the ministry of Word and sacraments and the ministry of church related community work (hereafter, both referred to as ministers), and those who have responsibility for caring for them.

The United Reformed Church acknowledges that bullying and harassment do occur within local churches and the wider councils. It is important that people should know where to find help if they believe themselves to have been bullied, and that those responsible for pastoral care should be vigilant for signs that bullying may be occurring. These guidelines are offered to enable the parties concerned to respond appropriately.

Conflict is a reality in every human organisation. It can be positive when it presses us to confront difficult issues and disagreements that we might prefer to avoid. It can be creative. However, abuse against individuals or groups within the church is unacceptable.

This paper relies upon two more comprehensive booklets which are highly recommended:

Dignity at Work: Working together to reduce incidents of bullying and harassment, Church of England 2008, available online at: www.churchofengland.org
Dignity at Work: Unacceptable Behaviour, Bullying and Harassment, a comprehensive guide for Workplace Representatives in the 'Not for Profit' Sector of Unite the Union, 2007, available to order from Unite, Hayes Court, West Common Rd, Hayes, Bromley BR2 7AU, 020 8462 7744.

Harassment is also addressed in the United Reformed Church 'policy and procedure in response to alleged incidents of sexual harassment and abuse against adults'.

Definitions

"Any behaviour, always involving a misuse of power, which an individual or group knows, or ought reasonably to know, could have the potential effect of offending, humiliating, intimidating or isolating an individual or group should be regarded as unacceptable ... 'Unacceptable behaviour' changes its label to 'bullying' or 'harassing behaviour' when it causes actual harm or distress to the target(s), normally, but not exclusively, after a series of incidents over a prolonged period of time. Lack of intent does not diminish, excuse or negate the impact on the target or the distress caused. The degree of intent is only relevant in terms of how the behaviour should be challenged and the issues subsequently resolved." [Fergus Roseburgh, Unite].

It is not always easy to distinguish between harassment and bullying and it is not necessarily important to do so. Harassment attacks people because of their social identity, such as being female, black or gay, and is intended to disturb or upset. Aggression that is personal is bullying.

Bullying is persistent. It exploits imbalances of power, as between stronger and weaker children on a playground – or between a church treasurer and a minister claiming expenses. It is sometimes intentional but may also be unconscious. Sometimes it

comes as a great shock to be accused of bullying, but being made aware of how others perceive particular behaviour can help self-reflection. Individual incidents may seem trivial while the cumulative effect is what causes the damage. It includes online and text/telephone bullying. Both of the reports mentioned above contain long lists of behaviours which can legitimately be regarded as bullying, and these may be helpful to an individual seeking confirmation that the treatment s/he has been receiving does indeed constitute bullying.

Ministers are sometimes the targets of bullying. They can also be bullies themselves. Elders have a duty of care to both ministers and church members.

Churches may unwittingly bully a minister or member. There may be a situation where one person is singled out for public criticism, as in the case of a fabric committee convener, organist or youth leader being “reviewed” by an elders or church meeting. Individuals may find themselves isolated because they have expressed an unpopular opinion. Where a church is in pain it will sometimes look for a scapegoat and bullying becomes the oppressive tool.

Churches can also be the victims of a bully. It is not uncommon for someone with an aggressive personality to intimidate an entire congregation.

In the context of the United Reformed Church there is accountability and mutual responsibility for leadership especially in the Elders Meeting. This means that Ministers and church officers should expect healthy debate and sometimes correction about the way they function. Bullying only starts when that proper discussion gets seriously out of hand.

Examples of bullying behaviour from Dignity at Work produced by the Church of England

This list of behaviours is not exhaustive but gives a clear indication of the sorts of actions that constitute bullying or harassment:

- removing areas of responsibility without discussion or notice;
- isolating someone or deliberately ignoring or excluding them from activities;
- consistently attacking someone’s professional or personal standing;
- setting out to make someone appear incompetent;
- persistently picking on someone in front of others;
- deliberate sabotage of work or actions;
- deliberately withholding information or providing incorrect information;
- overloading with work/reducing deadlines without paying attention to any protest;
- displays of offensive material;
- use of e-mails to reprimand, insult or otherwise inform someone of their apparent failing, either to the individual or to third parties;
- Cyber bullying including on social media such as Facebook;
- repeatedly shouting or swearing in public or in private;
- spreading malicious rumours to third parties;
- public humiliation by constant innuendo, belittling and ‘putting down’;
- personal insults and name-calling;
- aggressive gestures, verbal threats and intimidation;
- persistent threats about security;
- making false accusations;
- aggressive bodily posture or physical contact;
- talking/shouting directly into someone’s face;
- direct physical intimidation, violence or assault.

Theological reflection

Every person is made in the image of God and reverence should undergird all our relationships. This is an easy thing to say but a lifelong challenge to live. The very fact of our diversity puts us at odds with one another: this has been the human experience from Cain and Abel to the present day.

The domination of the weak by the strong is a dynamic built into the natural world of which we are a part. But Christians believe that we are called to a better way. In Christ we see a God for whom no one is expendable. Indeed, it is precisely in “the least of these” that we are invited to encounter Christ in our own lives. To follow Christ is to treat each person with respect and to negotiate disagreements honourably.

This challenge is not merely a matter of individual discipleship. It is also the basis for a calling which rests upon the Church as a community seeking to follow Jesus’ command “Love one another as I have loved you”. The church must constantly strive to reflect the highest standards in personal and corporate behaviour.

Consequences of harassment and bullying

A person who is harassed or bullied may experience any number of stress responses: tears, anxiety, low morale, vulnerability, lack of confidence, anger, shame or depression. S/he may want to withdraw in self-protection. S/he may also find it impossible to pray, with a resulting crisis of faith. Destructive behaviours may develop: a victim-like refusal to engage, a loss of sensitivity to others, aggressiveness, self-harming or alcohol or drug misuse, to name a few. There may be physical symptoms such as asthma, hypertension, sleeping or eating disorders, sexual dysfunction or migraine.

Congregations that are bullied may develop a bullying culture with “no-go areas” to avoid discussion of painful issues. They may allow destructive behaviour to continue because they do not have the strength to confront it. A minister or member may find him/herself continually rushing around soothing ruffled feathers and persuading others not to resign in the face of behaviour which goes unchallenged. Where such dynamics operate, church meetings cannot do their work and worship may begin to feel hollow. The church may also acquire a negative reputation in the community.

These effects may be serious and long-lasting. It is essential that cries for help be taken seriously. It is also important to recognise that a person who is the victim of bullying may be reluctant to seek help, either because his/her confidence has been undermined, because s/he feels ashamed or responsible, or because s/he believes that objecting to inappropriate behaviour will cause unacceptable disruption to important relationships. In such cases it may fall to a third party, whether an elder, another minister, a friend, etc. to call the attention of the wider Church to what is happening.

In the United Reformed Church there are distinctions between those who are subject to grievance and disciplinary procedures and those who are not and this has consequences in dealing with bullying.

Prevention

Identifying bullying is not always easy, but the best prevention is the Church’s determination not to tolerate unacceptable behaviour. While all of us have bad days and say or do things that we later regret, a healthy community will be a place where apologies are offered and forgiveness is expressed. However these are difficult issues and apologies may not bring peace to either party, without support to discuss the pain experienced and space to work through the conflict constructively.

The United Reformed Church has structures in place which offer the foundation for good relationships and mutual understanding:

- Separate guidelines on conduct and behaviour for ministers of Word and sacraments, church related community workers and elders (General Assembly 2010);

Role descriptions for ministers and other leaders through LMMR – the Local Mission and Ministry Review – so that expectations are clear;
 Terms of settlement for ministers, which should be explicit on such matters as holiday entitlement, working hours and claimable expenses;

Given that money and conflicting role expectations, as well as power and position, can be frequent triggers for bullying behaviour, clarity on these matters provides a framework for good relationships. Not everyone is covered by these guidelines so it is helpful to remind everybody that treating others with respect and dignity is an essential part of life in the Church.

Ministers should take responsibility to ensure that they have the pastoral support they need. It is not realistic for the synod moderator to be the sole provider of support. Ministry is demanding, particularly in a time of change and uncertainty, and it is inevitable that ministers will sometimes find themselves at the receiving end of someone's distress or strong disagreement. While intimidating behaviour is always undesirable, a one-off loss of control can be forgiven in the context of a relationship of trust. It is important that every minister has people to turn to in times of stress and difficulty both for personal and pastoral support and also for technical support to help them change the environment by working through the processes available.

Taking action on bullying and harassment

Making an allegation

Someone who believes that s/he has been the target of harassment or bullying, or a third party witnessing such behaviour, should not hesitate to seek help. The sooner this is done the better, even if they are not certain that it is bullying, but they feel that someone's conduct displays unwanted behaviour. Such request for help should always be treated seriously. In a local church, the minister, church secretary or chair of the local CRCW committee, would normally be the first port of call. Where that is inappropriate, the synod moderator may be contacted. An allegation against a synod moderator should be directed to the General Secretary.

The following steps will assist others in addressing the problem, and support should always be provided so that an adequate disclosure can be made:

- assemble the facts. Keep a log with the date of each incident and a description of what happened. Keep a record of emails and letters, as well as notes of conversations and telephone calls;
- where possible, note the names of witnesses;
- provide a copy of whatever role description may exist if the bullying or harassment has been about the performance of duties;
- record consequences as well as actions, including any impact on health, emotional well-being, role performance and/or other relationships;
- if other people have been affected, note this too. Consult them as to whether they would be prepared to disclose their experiences as well;
- make sure that you have the personal support you need. Put this in place yourself if it is not adequately forthcoming from the church.

Intervening on behalf of someone else

Where bullying is suspected to be occurring, it is important not to remain silent. In the first instance a witness should speak privately with the person(s) perceived to be the victims of bullying. Several questions should be explored:

- is the behaviour untypical and associated with a contained situation of conflict or is it part of an ongoing pattern? (Remember that each separate incident may appear trivial. The bullying may lie in the persistent nature of the harassment.);
- what action, if any, has the recipient taken to challenge the aggressive behaviour?
- if no action has been taken, what is the reason for this?
- if action has been taken, what effect has it had?

Following such exploration there will be a judgment to be made. If the person on the receiving end of aggressive behaviour sees it as an isolated incident or otherwise feels in control, it is possible that the situation should simply be monitored over an agreed period to determine whether further action is needed. However, a witness should not hesitate to report the situation to the synod moderator, pastoral committee convener or General Secretary (if the moderator is perceived to be the bully) as an act of intervention if s/he believes that persistent bullying is occurring and that the person being bullied is unable or unwilling to act in his/her own defence. This decision must be taken with sensitivity as it could be experienced as compounding the bullying. However, the United Reformed Church can only act if those who witness harassing behaviour do not conceal or deny it.

Responding to an allegation of harassment or bullying

Whenever an allegation is made, the person receiving it should take it seriously. Such accusations are often hard to make, but care needs to be taken that the accusation is not malicious. Steps should be taken to ensure that pastoral support is made available to the complainant, the alleged perpetrator (as appropriate), and any others who may be affected, such as the family of the complainant or other people involved in the situation.

Confidentiality should be carefully maintained for the protection of all concerned: the complainant, the alleged perpetrator, innocent bystanders, and the church itself. Where there is any danger of reputational damage to the Church, particularly if there is the possibility of media interest, the URC media office, Gill Nichol, is available to offer guidance (020 7916 9865, media@urc.org.uk).

The following strategies are recommended as good practice.

An exploration of whether there is anything to investigate further. It is not always easy to tell where the fault lies. It might be with an alleged perpetrator or with a malicious complainant.

Informal approach. Sometimes a complainant may want support in an honest discussion with the other person involved about what has happened with the expectation that the person who has acted inappropriately will be prepared to hear and apologise. (See Matthew 18:15-17, which indicates that when one person has been unable to make an offender take notice, two people should then go.)

Mediation. After an informal approach and if both parties want to find reconciliation and healing of the relationship, a trained mediator can lead them through a process of listening, extending and accepting apologies, and identifying solutions for the future. Mediation is future-oriented: it is not concerned with past grievances as much as future well-being. This mediation should be exercised by someone other than the synod moderator so that they remain available for oversight of the broader picture and care for all concerned. It may be appropriate to use a mediator from another synod and it is always important that the mediator is well trained and experienced.

A complainant should never be pressured to confront an alleged perpetrator.
Formal procedure.

In the case of an allegation against a minister, the caution stage of the Ministerial Disciplinary Process offers a suitable procedure (see The Manual, Section O, section AA). Very serious cases might warrant the bypassing of the caution stage and reference to the commission stage of the Disciplinary Process itself.

In the case of an allegation by a minister against a church member or members, a local church/post, a ministerial colleague, the synod moderator or synod officers, the grievance procedure pertains.

The right of appeal exists in these procedures.

It is always essential that those using the procedures should be well trained in using them.

Outcomes. Where bullying or harassment has taken place, successful resolution of the situation includes an acknowledgement on the part of the perpetrator, identification of any underlying causes with strategies for addressing them where

possible, the offering and receiving of apologies, and the willingness of the perpetrator to accept help in changing his/her behaviour. A formal mechanism to review the situation in an appropriate time frame should be agreed.

Legal action. Where there has been physical violence or serious psychological or sexual abuse, it is a police matter. The church should encourage and support contacting the police in this situation.

False allegations. Where investigation reveals that an accusation has been made maliciously, this is a disciplinary offence. There may be issues of mental illness or other mitigating circumstances to take into account. However, given the damage to the reputation of the person accused, some form of public exoneration may be appropriate.

Evaluation. There will always be lessons to be learned from intervention in a situation of bullying or harassment. Time should be set aside for serious consideration of what has been learned and how new insights might be shared, including the suggestion of amendments to URC guidelines and procedures.

If accused of bullying or harassment

- Take the matter seriously. Consider your behaviour and do not be too quick to dismiss an accusation as a sign that the other person has a problem.
- Where apologies are due, offer them. But recognise that an apology might not be enough to restore right relations.
- Allegations must be proven and there is no automatic assumption that you are guilty. However, denials will not be taken at face value. Bullying and harassment are serious matters and require investigation.
- Do not hesitate to seek help and support from the wider Church where you fear that local church processes are not strong enough to address serious accusations. Trained mediators are available to advise and assist: these may be recruited from outside the synod if necessary.
- If formal procedures are instigated, give them your full cooperation.
- Make sure that you have the personal support you need. Put this in place yourself if it is not adequately forthcoming from the Church.

Equal Opportunities Committee

28 March 2012

Appendix 15

Resourcing Ministry

The report of a Ministries Committee working party 2011-12

The United Reformed Church

1 The unions of 1972, 1981 and 2000 have created a Church which is not merely c. 1500 local churches in a union but a wider gathering of the body of Christ which is grounded in 1500 local communities. It is the tension between whether we regard ourselves primarily as a local church or a denomination which can lead to misunderstanding, disillusionment and frustration with how we relate to one another and express our interconnectedness.

2 The Ministry and Mission Fund (M&M) reveals something significant about who we believe ourselves to be and how we relate to each other. The object of M&M is to provide in partnership with local churches and synods, the financial resources needed to train, equip and remunerate ministry, to support centralised services, and the world-wide work of the Church. Congregations share in the financial cost of the programmes agreed by the General Assembly by making an annual commitment to the fund. Underlying the fund is the belief that the whole ministry of the URC is to be made available to the whole of the Church and the financial responsibility for this ministry is to be shared throughout the whole of the Church. The ministers of Word and sacraments and church related community workers (CRCWs) of the Church are deployed by synods in ways that respond to the many different mission opportunities in different places unconstrained by the availability of local finance.¹ For this to happen local churches contribute to the costs of the whole Church's ministry according to the congregation's means. Put simply, we all put into the central pot out of our riches and the resources of that pot are used to support ministry and mission where opportunities are identified.

3 This is a very different model to that of the world around us where society largely operates on a contracted service model – you get what you pay for – and where the dominant voices talk about rights and entitlements, rather than the way of giving and serving.

4 It is challenging to live in this way if we do not recognise that all we have, whether as individuals, local churches or a denomination, is a gift from God, and get caught up in the secular understanding of buying a service. Furthermore, if we are seduced by the latter understanding it is not difficult to understand the complaints of those churches that are contributing vast sums to M&M and sharing an ordained minister with one or more other congregations.

5 Our model for living is defined by Grace, Abundance and Mission.

We are who we are because of God;
We have what we have because of God;
We do what we do because of God.

Stipendiary service

6 In recent months the Ministries Committee have considered the United Reformed Church's practice of paying ministers a stipend rather than a salary,

¹ For the sake of coherence ministers of Word and sacraments will be referred to as Ministers, church related community workers as CRCWs, and minister or ministers shall refer to those exercising either ministry throughout this document.

and that the level of that stipend is the same regardless of age or time in ministry. The committee accepted three principles presented to it by the Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee:

- a. Parity of status
There is one order of ministry of Word and sacraments without any ranking, grading or distinction between the value of work done by different ministers.
- b. Reimbursement to all ministers
All ministers should be fully reimbursed for expenses incurred in the work of ministry.
- c. The stipendiary principle
Whole-time stipendiary ministers devote their working lives to a calling dependent on the support of the Church. They are to be enabled to maintain a reasonable standard of life by the provision of regular stipend income which is intended to free them from depending on other earnings, fees, stipend supplements, compensation payments or remuneration for their ministry from any other sources.

7 In the light of this we underline the United Reformed Church's practice of providing ministers who are supported by the whole church and who are enabled to go where the church, through its councils, recognises ministry is needed.

8 However ministry is not merely, or even primarily, about ordained or commissioned ministers offering themselves in stipendiary service. The United Reformed Church is truly blessed by those who serve in ministry in a non-stipendiary capacity. There are currently almost 100 ministers who operate in this way, not to mention the many ministers who although 'retired' continue in an active capacity to serve the church and its mission.

Ministry of the whole people of God

9 Even as we recognise this we are in danger of missing the fact that we sincerely believe that all God's people are engaged in ministry and that the community of the Church has a role in encouraging individuals to exercise their ministry whilst supporting and resourcing that ministry.

10 Previous Ministries Committee reports to General Assembly² have encouraged synods and local pastorates to consider alternative ministries alongside Ministers and CRCWs. Although progress has been made with regard to this there is a recognition that the potential for this is limited in many places by the lack of resources.

11 Whilst some individual churches or group pastorates may have the financial resources to pay for alternative ministry and leadership on a part-time, or even full-time, basis (such as youth or children's worker or pastoral visitor) this is beyond the means of most churches, for whom the first call on their financial resources rightly remains the M&M fund. In some places lay people can be identified to exercise such ministries in a voluntary capacity but very often the lack of available volunteers thwarts such enterprises.

12 Some synods have been able to provide funding to support local ministry and leadership. This money has come from investments, legacies or through a synod levy on local churches in addition to their contributions to the M&M fund pledge, but it should be recognised that not all synods have been in a position to provide such funding.

13 It is believed that providing synods with funds that can be used to support lay ministries will enable such ministry to happen in settings that would otherwise be impossible and would encourage the development of multi-skill teams as envisaged in Challenge to the Church and Equipping the Saints.

2 Patterns of Ministry (1995), Equipping the Saints (2004), Challenge to the Church (2008)

14 The Ministries Committee also recognises that there is currently an imbalance in the apportioning of Special Category Ministry (SCM) and CRCW posts, and in the distribution of higher education chaplaincy and workplace ministry grants. In the case of SCM and CRCW posts the current system does appear to favour those synods with additional resources available to fund manse and meet local expenses. The situation with regard to grants seems arbitrary with the need to have access to other funding, whether synod or ecumenical, as well as someone locally being aware that such grants may be available from the United Reformed Church through the Ministries Committee.

15 Recognising that there is no extra money within the United Reformed Church budget available to resource this the Ministries Committee is convinced of the need to change the way the money used to fund stipends and associated costs is allocated across the church if resources are to be released.

How could it change?

16 In March 2011 the Ministries Committee considered three scenarios for apportioning the funding available.

17 The first proposed no change to the current arrangements whereby there is a total number of stipends payable out of a central pot which are shared out among the 13 synods to be used for ministers of Word and sacraments, and used to support up to CRCW posts and SCM posts. Synods and local churches are free to employ other workers but the full cost of this must be met by the synod or local church.

18.1 The second suggested a ‘mixed economy’ whereby each synod would be given a number of stipends to be deployed which would be less than the current deployment target. These posts would still only be open to those on the roll of United Reformed Church Ministers, holders of a Certificate of Eligibility or a Certificate of Limited Service. The SCM scheme would continue to run as now with an agreed maximum number for the scheme with the possibility of an agreed maximum per synod. The CRCW scheme would continue with the maximum number of 26. In all these cases the stipends would be met out of the central funds of the URC, but the provision of a manse and the local expenses would be borne by the pastorate, project, synod or other local body (e.g. a chaplaincy) or a combination of more than one of these.

18.2 In addition to this the synod would be given a grant from central funds which it could use to spend on further ministry. The level of this grant will be determined by the agreed reduction in the deployment quota. The synod could choose to use this to fund further stipendiary URC ministry or use some or all of this money to pay for lay ministry as it saw appropriate, either through synod appointments or by making a grant to a local church, pastorate or project in order that they can make such an appointment.

19.1 The third option would be for M&M pledges from the synods to still be collected centrally but then a block grant would be made to each synod to be used to fund ministry (meaning people serving in ministry) in the way they chose.

19.2 This money could be used to pay the stipends of ministers serving in ‘traditional’ pastorates, chaplaincies, synod roles or other areas of work that the synod deems important. This would do away with the denominational SCM scheme and place responsibility for deciding on this type of work within each synod.

19.3 The funding could also be used to pay for others offering ministry in a variety of roles either listed by the General Assembly or at the discretion of the synods. These roles could include evangelist, youth worker, schools worker, elderly support worker, lay chaplain, local leader, community worker.

19.4 The provision of housing and the meeting of local costs would continue to be the responsibility of the pastorate, synod or other local arrangement and denominational funds would still be used to meet church pension fund contributions, provide in-service training and pay loans and grants agreed under the Plan for Partnership for URC accredited ministers.

Working Party

20 After exploring the possibilities the Ministries Committee agreed to set up a small working party with the following terms of reference:

- a) to outline what an alternative scheme for resourcing ministry in the 13 synods of the United Reformed Church might look like (as suggested by Scenario 3 of Paper B1b considered at the Ministries Committee meeting 28th Feb – 1st Mar 2011);
- b) to consider in detail the implications of such a scheme on United Reformed Church identity, ministerial accountability and movement, ecumenical engagement and any other areas of the church's life that would be affected by such a change;
- c) to recommend to the Ministries Committee whether such a scheme should be presented to the General Assembly for adoption or not.

21 The working party comprising Revd Ruth Whitehead, Revd Adrian Bulley, Ms Catherine Lewis-Smith and Revd Craig Bowman first met on 27 September 2011 and on three subsequent occasions.

22 As part of the working party's consideration of the matter the original paper outlining the three scenarios was shared with Mission Council in November 2011 and the council members invited to comment on what they found to be a positive in each of the scenarios, what was a negative and what was 'interesting'. In this they were undertaking the same exercise that the Ministries Committee had carried out in early 2011.

23 Reflecting on the responses and having heard the strong feelings expressed at that first Ministries Committee meeting the working party are convinced that a shift from a scheme which gives a total number of deployed posts to each synod to one that deploys financial resources to each synod which can be used for the ministry identified by that synod, is a move that would be widely welcomed.

Observations

24 In support of this we believe such a system has the following advantages.

25 It promotes flexibility:

- pastorates can articulate specific ministry needs to be met within their scoping, e.g. 15% youth worker, 50% minister of Word and sacraments or 20% elderly peoples' worker, 30% minister of Word and sacraments;
- where synods identify a role that does not specifically call for the gifts and skills of a Minister or CRCW they will be able to resource someone other than a minister to do it;
- synods would not need to mould work into work for an ordained minister if it really wasn't, thereby promoting honesty;
- the formation of self-sustaining Fresh Expressions often requires a nurturing of lay leadership. Deployment of sessional lay workers may be appropriate in some such contexts;
- the ability to create posts which meet mission and need and which may not resemble traditional patterns of ministry may release more fully the talents and creativity of some ministers of Word and sacraments.

26 It encourages accountability:

- synods would be given greater responsibility in relation to Special Category Ministry projects since they would need to consider the value of that work compared with the other priorities of the synod. Current arrangements have a neutral effect on the rest of synod's mission which can unduly favour those synods with access to other resources;
- the Ministries Committee would cease to have a grant-making responsibility and transfer the responsibility to synods who will have to weigh the value of such work against other mission priorities. The current arrangements can encourage the perception that there is a large pot of other money to be tapped into;

- moving accountability for the use of all resources to the synod means all decisions regarding the use of those resources are made closer to the location of mission (i.e. local churches). This should encourage more active participation in the decision making processes at synod level rather than it being viewed, at least in part, as others remote from the local context funding their pet projects. The principal of mission decisions being made as close as reasonably possible to their context is one we would want to encourage;
- if there was greater flexibility as to where and when synods fund ministry then churches would expect greater clarity as to what the criteria are being used for making these decisions so promoting fairness;
- unused resources in one synod (for example from having no SCM posts) would still be available for use in that area.

Constraints

27 As stated above we believe the intention should be to move to a system where the decisions regarding the support of ministry should be made at synod level. However the more we explored how to release resources for other ministry we continually found ourselves confronted by other large consequential issues which tended to fall into three areas.

28 Ministers

Whilst we understand the primary purpose of the United Reformed Church is not to look after ministers but to be active in mission, we cannot ignore the effect such changes may have on our ministers.

- What if a significant number of synods decide CRCW is not a priority for them, or even the Ministry of Word and sacraments?
- What do we do with those competent ministers who can't be used due to lack of posts or those who are stuck in an area where there are no suitable posts?
- What happens when a minister cannot find 'employment'?
- Will this require planned redundancy spending each year and transitional support?
- Does the URC have a moral commitment to those who have responded to the call to stipendiary service but who are now not offered 'employment'?
- Ministers not exercising ministry cannot be contributing members of the URC Ministers Pension Fund.
- If there are more part-time ministers does this mean more manses will be needed?
- What are the tax implications for part-time ministers serving less than 50% and living in a manse?
- The likelihood that such changes will increase fear and disillusionment in ministers.

30 Ecumenical

- Many Local Ecumenical Partnerships have an alternating ministry. What will this mean if in the URC's turn it feels alternative ministry (not Ministry of Word and sacraments) is more appropriate?
- Churches together groupings can find it difficult to relate to a Church that doesn't have ordained leadership and an increase in such models may complicate local relationships.

31 The synod

- A move to a more devolved pattern will mean more responsibility for the synod and the need for people to operate such a system in the synods. There is a real concern that the smaller synods (with less people and resources) may not have the capacity to run such a system.

- Will moving to such a pattern lead to a further imbalance as those synods with less resources and people find they need to pay people out of this devolved funding to enable the system to work?
- Where are these decisions going to be made in a synod?
- Who has the imagination/strategic vision?
- Is there a need for a denominational guidance or scheme or do we need to trust the synods?
- This could strengthen the perception that we do things in 13 different ways – reducing mobility amongst ministers as people stick with what they know.

32 In changing to a block grant system the practical question arises of why not simply move to a system where each synod retains the money it raises for the M&M apart from sending a proportion on to Church House to meet the non-ministry central costs?

33 Here we return to the point we made at the beginning. The Ministry and Mission Fund is not simply a means of the local church buying ministry (whether ordained, commissioned or lay) but a sharing of the riches God has given to us, as individuals and congregations, to support the work of the Church. Committing our resources into a central pot that is then shared out in response to the demands of mission, rather than resourcing mission out of our own local pots, affirms that we are a people in covenant with one another, offering out of the riches we have been given for the work of the body of Christ of which we are a part.

Proposal

34 The Ministries Committee wants to explore the possibilities of the block grant arrangement but, in light of concerns regarding the effect on the movement of ministers, ecumenical engagement, synod capacity, ministerial morale and other matters recorded above, believes this needs to be a two stage process.

35 General Assembly 2012 will be asked to agree the allocation to the synods of the resources used to support the Special Category Ministry programme and to end the practice of grants being available to support higher education chaplaincy or workplace ministry from the Ministries Committee.

36 A period of monitoring will follow at the end of which the Ministries Committee will consider whether it is now practical and desirable to move to a complete block grant scheme, and advise Mission Council accordingly, in order that a proposal for change could be brought to General Assembly when it meets in 2016.

- 37 The following timetable is planned.
- March 2012 The outline of the scheme is presented to Mission Council.
 - July 2012 General Assembly is asked to support the changes identified above.
 - January 2013 Implementation begins of the change of responsibility for SCM posts and the availability of funding for other ministry.
 - January 2015 Ministries Committee reviews the progress so far made.
 - November 2015 Mission Council discusses moving to a total block grant system.
 - July 2016 General Assembly considers any proposal from the Ministries Committee and Mission Council.

38 There is the question of how this funding would be allocated to the synods. Would it be divided equally between the 13 synods or rationed out according to the number of members, the number of churches and the population as is used to determine deployment targets? We believe that in this first stage it should be a universal allocation to each synod, not pro-rata. To do otherwise would mean that the potential ministerial numbers for the smaller synods is effectively reduced immediately.

39 There remains the crucial question of how much funding would be available through this change. That is a matter where further discussion is needed with the

Finance Committee, not least in the light of the proposal agreed at Mission Council in November 2011 to produce a scheme which ties ministerial numbers to the cost of ministry, not merely to the changing membership of the United Reformed Church. However it seems to us that considering the current number of SCM posts a sensible level of funding to make available in this way would be the central church costs of 2.5 SCM posts.

Transitional arrangements

40 Naturally such a change could have an effect on existing SCM posts. If the 2.5 figure is accepted then any synod that has more than that number of posts will not be eligible for extra funding until they have dropped below that level. A deadline needs to be agreed at which point any SCM posts above the 2.5 figure will be considered to be coming out of a synod's deployment figure. (This may lead to an increase in some synod's already 'over deployment'.) Setting this deadline at 2 years after implementation seems reasonable.

41 Discussions will need to take place with the Accreditation Sub-Committee and with those synods where there is currently approval for more than 2.5 SCM posts to determine how many of those posts are already planned to end during the transitional period. Currently 8 synods could be affected by this but only 2 synods actually have more than 2.5 SCM posts filled.

42 In this matter the 3 SCM evangelist posts would be regarded in the same way as any other SCM post.

Monitoring

43 In order to ascertain the value of this process and to consider more fully the effect a change to a full block grant may have the two years from January 2013 would be seen as a monitoring period.

44 Besides the evidence that will naturally be gathered through the processes of the Ministries Committee and office (e.g. any increase in the number of requests for Certificates of Limited Service) specific information will be requested from synods, including:

- of the amount of money available how much has been used to support local pastorate ministry, synod ministry, special ministries, chaplaincy, lay ministry, etc?
- has this process enabled resources to be used to meet the focus of Equipping the Saints and Challenge to the Church?
- have local churches felt closer to decision making through this process?
- how have synods managed the process? (Helping to identify capacity and organisational issues.)
- how prepared does each synod feel for the move to the extension of the scheme and what help would they need to move forward?
- of those synods that are still over deployed at that stage what plans are being made for change as the scheme is extended?
- what impact has been noted that would have implications for the extension of the scheme?

Appendix 16

multicultural church, intercultural habit

We are all cultural beings. Cultural influences largely shape everything we do. By culture we mean all that shapes the whole of our life. Our understanding and experiences of God and our faith are shaped by the interweaving and dynamic nature of culture(s). We respond to the invitation of God in Christ as people situated in context(s). Hence, our view will always be partial and limited by our cultural influences. Together, however, we are better placed to catch a larger and generous view of God and God's purpose for us.

This is why it is imperative that we work towards creating intercultural spaces and model *intercultural habits* to deepen our life together. The story of God taking on human form in a Palestinian Jewish cultural being/context through Jesus, that then moves outwards through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit into a variety of neighbouring cultural contexts, affirms both cultural diversity and the calling to an intercultural habit, as a way to live out "fullness of life" as an ecclesial community of the Spirit.

A multicultural church on the way...

1. "We are a multicultural church". Declaring ourselves a multicultural church in 2005 did not happen in a vacuum. The stories of our isles tell of the movement of peoples to and from these shores for centuries. The movement continues to this day, though our multicultural reality as a 'given' has only become more prominent over recent decades. We now speak of our diverse landscape with descriptors such as, multi-cultural, multi-religious, newer migrant communities, diversity, and ethnicities etc becoming operative in our discourse in our social, political and ecclesial contexts.

2. Our declaration in 2005 is located in the context of a New Labour government (from 1997) that sought to emphasize the plural and dynamic character of British society, wider political, related societal developments and conversations, and other shifting realities. Furthermore, we did so in the midst of critical voices from left-wing radicals, newer voices from the centre-left and from some erstwhile supporters including anti-racist supporters.

Distinguishing between the reality that we are a diverse and multicultural society and multiculturalism as a policy is important. As a policy, multiculturalism evolved from both central and local government as a conscious attempt to answer racial inequality (and especially the resistances to it after the 'riots' of 1981 and 1985) with cultural solutions.

3. From 2001 one can discern a turning point for the idea of multiculturalism in Britain: it became common to read titles such as: "is multiculturalism dead?" "is multiculturalism over?" and "beyond Multiculturalism". While the joys of multiculturalism were and are being celebrated, the challenges and limitations continue to be evident. The challenges and limitations are often tied up with the wider conversations in our society. Critical views on multiculturalism such as: "different ethnic communities living parallel lives" (Ted Cantele); "sleepwalking our way to segregation" (Trevor Phillips), "multiculturalism has run its course and it is time to move on" (Jonathan Sacks who also argues for "the dignity of difference"), multiculturalism enabling groups to "self-segregate" (David Blunkett), "the weakening of our collective identity" (David Cameron) and the call for "muscular liberalism" (Angela Merkel) have opened up an ongoing and necessary scrutiny of multiculturalism.

4. Religious leaders also joined in the critique that Britishness is being challenged by cultural separatism, self imposed segregation of Muslim communities, and politically

correct multiculturalism. It can be argued that the secular discourse on multiculturalism has been guilty of over-racialising human relations, and in the process has placed overwhelming emphasis on separate rather than common needs/vision which may have also contributed to further marginalization of minorities (for instance the internalizing of victimhood). Notwithstanding the critical voices on ‘multiculturalism’ and the very fluid nature of the conversations, the term still functions to describe the reality of our landscape. Moreover, as a policy agenda the notion of “multiculturalism”, continues to serve to redress the unequal treatment of cultural and minority groups.

A few references to the biblical/theological groundings:

It is God’s intention and God’s promise from the beginning that diversity, not homogeneity is good. After creating a diverse world, God affirmed its goodness. Diversity is created, “of every kind” (Genesis 1). Inclusion, not dissolution is the word from Jeremiah (Jeremiah 29:4-8) who noted the need for balance between giving and receiving culture for in God’s sight we are no longer strangers or aliens but faithful sojourners.

Jesus-Christ, descendent of the lineage of Ruth (the Moabite who chose to become a stranger in the land of Israel) carried out a ministry of inclusion, giving value to diverse peoples. He strongly challenged laws and traditions of the dominant culture of his time and countered exclusionary theology. His ministry was geared towards an inclusive community: breaking geographical, cultural and religious boundaries. The writer of the book of Acts noted humanity’s one source of origin (Acts 17:26), implying that people of all nations, no matter the shade of their skin or the language they speak are equally included in the God’s blessing and will be equally accountable for their response to this blessing.

“Acts” is full of stories of breaking boundaries and inclusion (such as Acts 10:34-36). While Isaiah (56:6-8) visions “a house of prayer for all peoples”, John on Patmos sees an uncountable multicultural multitude (Rev 7:9) that makes the Pentecost gathering (Acts 2:5-13), looking like a small scale multicultural assembly. The world of Acts of the Apostles may have been small, but it was a complex multiethnic, multilingual, and multicultural one (see Acts 15 – 1st ecumenical council).

5. The United Reformed Church’s

adventurous and timely declaration (2005) evolved from its own story of formation in 1972. While we have given the declaration biblical and theological content, *our uniting, reforming, conciliar, non-conforming and marginal* characteristics were also crucial to willingness to make the declaration of our multicultural intent.

6. Our declaration mirrors who we are. *The Manual* states that the United Reformed Church is “catholic” as “Christ calls into it all people” and because “it proclaims the fullness of Christ’s Gospel to the whole world” (A3). Mindful that human ambiguities and failures are also part and parcel of the Church, *The Manual* goes on to note that the generosity and grace of God in Christ “has taught the Church that its life must ever be renewed and reformed according to the Scriptures, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.” (A6) The emphasis on renewing and reforming through promptings of the Holy Spirit is further reflected in its faith statement as the URC affirms its right “to make new declarations of its faith...as may from time to time be required by obedience to the same Spirit” (A18). It is this obedience that led us to the above declaration and to commit ourselves to intentionally live out this calling through lives of faith and faithfulness. And it is this same obedience that propels *Catch the Vision, Vision4Life, vision2020* etc and the initiating of a new conversation on “intercultural habit”.

7. Our initial understanding of a multicultural vision for the church was more than a proactive working towards valuing cultural diversity in all dimensions of our ecclesial (church) life. Our motivation was and is premised firstly on the heart of the Good News: that Jesus’ offer of abundant life is for all people and nations. Herein is located the joy, urgency and hope of the Christian faith.

8. Over the years we learnt that living out the declaration in an intentional way is demanding and costly. For starters, a multicultural vision of church means living a paradox or tension: on the one hand there is the unity of the church characterised by an open welcome to all and on the other hand there is the need to create spaces (cultural, ethnic, national) for multiplicity or diversity within that unity to work assiduously to make it real. And while we have come a long way in growing deeper into modelling multicultural shapes to our life together, we have more work to do to enable and give agency to the multiplicity within that oneness of our “we are one in Christ” mantra. This remains a challenge for the issue is not about belonging. It is about **how to re-negotiate belonging together** – how to adjust the fact of *belonging* for all.

9. Thus, we have employed terms such as “multicultural church” and “multicultural ministry” to express our search to be God’s diverse people. Mindful of the limited and various understandings of “multicultural”, largely influenced by secular conversations and a restrictive view of cultural, we have, from September 2008 attempted to explore and expand our understanding of “multicultural” in terms of what it means to be a welcoming and inclusive Church, opting for a broadened and dynamic understanding of culture. Yet, the challenges, misconceptions and limitations remain as we operate in culturally default modes.

10. Our concern is that our declaration of being a multicultural church runs the risk of remaining stuck to a mere recognition of the presence of a multiplicity of cultures with little or no interaction beyond one’s own group. This in turn can reinforce stereotypes and prejudices and lead to ignorance about, and indifferences to, the concerns and sensitivities of all who make up the body of Christ.

11. The affirmation of ethnic diversity gives a sense of belonging: yet, if ethnicity becomes a primary criterion of defining identity, we risk marginalising ethnic minorities. At the same time marginal groups can remain locked in a “marginalised” mentality – impoverishing them from seeing the whole of which they are also a part. In effect we all end up with a diminished sense of our common vocation *together* around the table of Christ.

12. Hence, the view that our use of multicultural not only affirms the presence of a multiplicity of cultures as our given reality. It must envision some form of engagement given this presence. To be more intentionally inter/cross cultural points to a deeper, active and critical interaction and mutually reciprocal relationships among and between diverse groups (entering the threshold of the other). Such a process has to involve a movement beyond mere dialogical or parallel relationships, towards transformation in our life together as members of the body of Christ and the United Reformed Church.

The breadth of our working towards growing “deep and wide” as a multicultural church is reflected in the gatherings, conferences, seminars, mission projects, networks, celebratory moments and resources etc we have produced and most of which can be found on the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry webpage. In the United Reformed Church we can locate three broad models that shape our multicultural life. A Solidarity Model: is ethno-culturally specific to enable/ create space for ethno-cultural congregations, worshipping separately and focusing on the needs and reflecting the values of its specific group within the ethos of the United Reformed Church. An Ecumenical Model: congregations that are multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-national and which seek to intentionally include people of more than one ethnic or cultural group within a single congregation. The more recent model the Intercultural Model builds on the ecumenical model but is more intentional in its engagement in which a dialogue of culture sees creative accommodation, interaction and hybridity in the reshaping of what it means to be church together.

Aspiring beyond good intentions: multicultural church, intercultural habit

This movement and process we wish to name as an intercultural habit for a multicultural church. An intercultural way of being and living is premised on the abundant generosity of God made real through Jesus Christ. Within the framework of *vision2020*, we commend the multicultural church, intercultural charter.

In modelling a habit of generous lives we

1. will be open, trusting and joyful to the leading of God's Spirit
 - [Vision Statement 1 *Spirituality and Prayer*] [Acts 2:5-11; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18]
2. commit ourselves to deepening our discerning and re-reading of our biblical and theological bases for our intercultural life together
 - [Vision Statement 1 *Spirituality and Prayer*; Statement 2 *Identity*; Statement 6 *Evangelism*] [Isaiah 56:6-8; Isaiah 65:17-25; Revelation 21:1-7; Ruth; Matthew 1:1-17; Acts 10]
3. will affirm new and different experiences, recognizing a variety of expressions of the one faith
 - [Vision Statement 5 *Hospitality and Diversity*; Statement 3 *Christian Ecumenical Partnerships*] [Genesis 1:26; Psalm 133:1; Matthew 28:19; John 17:11,23; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Galatians 3:27-29]
4. will journey beyond our cultural comfort zones and boundaries
 - [Statement 8 *Global Partnerships* and Statement 4 *Community Partnerships*] [Jonah; Matthew 15:21-28; 28:19-20; Mark 7:24-30; Genesis 28:10-19; Acts 8:26-40]
5. will seek to become an enlarged, inclusive, welcoming, and justice-seeking community
 - [Vision Statement 2 *Identity*; Statement 9 *Justice and Peace* and Statement 10 *Integrity of Creation*] [Psalm 148; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 4:3-5; Revelation 7:9; Micah 6:8]
6. will engage in transformation of heart, mind, structure and policy, seeking habits that redress power imbalances, challenge systemic injustice, generously cultivate diverse leadership, and seek full participation of all
 - [Vision Statement 7 *Church Growth* and Statement 9 *Justice and Peace*] [Luke 19:1-10; John 10:10; Acts 10:34; Romans 12:1-2; Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 8:27-33; Luke 1:46-55; Luke 4:16-30; Romans 16:1-16]
7. will work intentionally towards mutuality in giving and sharing for all of us are in need and all must be mutually inconvenienced for the sake of the other and the gospel.
 - [Vision Statement 1 *Spirituality and Prayer*, Statement 5 *Hospitality and Diversity* and Statement 9 *Justice and Peace*] [Luke 7:18-23; Luke 10:25-37; John 4:1-39]
8. commit ourselves to the constant habit of self-examination, life-long learning, and reflection through on-going education, training, monitoring and evaluation of our intercultural engagement.
 - [Vision Statement 1 *Spirituality and Prayer*; Statement 2 *Identity*; Statement 7 *Church Growth* and Statement 9 *Justice and Peace*] [1 Corinthians 9:1-33; 2 Corinthians 5:16-20; Philippians 3:12-16]

Appendix 17

Social impact of poverty and inequality in the UK – a challenge to the Church¹

1 Introduction

The joint URC Mission Council/Methodist Council of November 2010 expressed concern over the effect of the changing financial climate on the levels of poverty and inequality in the UK in general as well as a very particular concern that changes in public spending would impact badly on the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable in society.

Mission Council also adopted two resolutions at its meeting in May 2011 expressing concern about the impact of cuts to legal aid on asylum seekers and the reforms to the disability living allowance on people with disabilities.

Most recently, a copy of this report was received and endorsed by Mission Council at its meeting in March 2012 and it was commended to General Assembly for further discussion and debate.

In 2020 the average family's standard of living is predicted to halt its current decline. For those in poverty the decline is expected to continue until 2022. The standard of living of those in the top 10% of earners has not declined post recession nor is it predicted to.

Almost one in four of the UK population, 13.5 million people, currently live in poverty². One in three of the UK's children – 3.8 million – live in poverty. The economic and political climate means that all predictions are that these numbers will increase. The Church's mission over the next decade will be against a background of increasing poverty and increasing inequality.

The vision2020 Statement 9 makes clear that the URC continues to view justice to the poor as a core part of Christian mission. It is clear from the experience of churches working in deprived communities that, while poverty is often hidden and misunderstood, it continues to prevent many from fulfilling the potential that God has given them. As Christians we are called to stand beside those in poverty as well as challenge the structures which allow poverty to persist.

This paper analyses these concerns in the light of current social policy reforms with a particular focus on the impact of these reforms on the most vulnerable members of our society. It provides an in-depth analysis of poverty and inequality issues in the UK, some theological reflection on justice, and proposes further actions to enthuse and equip congregations to continue the vision of being a church that “keeps faith with the poor and challenges injustice”.

¹ Report updated and adapted for the URC from the report entitled ‘Of Equal Value: Poverty and Inequality in the United Kingdom’ adopted by Methodist Conference last year – see <http://www.methodistconference.org.uk/media/41199/11-poverty-and-inequality-0511.pdf> for details.

² The figures given in this paper for numbers living in poverty use the international standard definition of poverty which is “a household income that is 60% or less of the average (median) societal (in this case British) household income”. See www.poverty.org.uk for further details of poverty measurements.

2 Experiences of living in poverty in the UK

The “Glasgow Poverty Truth Commission” reported in 2011 and is a ground breaking piece of work instigated by the Church of Scotland. It sought to provide a forum where decision makers met with people who were living in poverty. They met as equals and the format of the meetings ensured even though people came from very different backgrounds sufficient opportunity was given for everyone to be listened to and understood in an atmosphere of respect. The finding can be studied on the website povertytruthcommission.blogspot.com but much of the thinking can be summed up in their phrase “Nothing about us without us is for us.”

Church Action on Poverty has for a number of years worked in disadvantaged communities and held hearings and other projects designed to allow the voices of the poorest to be heard. Below are a sample of statements and quotations which they have collected during this work.

Poverty is:

- going without a winter coat so you can afford them for your children;
- having to decide whether to eat a meal or heat your house;
- never being able to go on holiday or get away from home for even a day;
- not being able to buy a cup of tea in a cafe, or catch a bus to visit family;
- paying £800 or more to a legal loan shark, for a washing machine that would have cost a wealthier person just £100;
- waiting ten years for your house to be repaired, then being told there’s no money to do it (in 2011 this happened to a whole community in Collyhurst, Manchester);
- having no say in decisions that affect your community, but seeing ‘regeneration’ imposed from outside by companies and councils;
- not just experiencing these things once in a while, but facing them every single day.

Statements from people about their own experiences of poverty:

- “It is embarrassing being in poverty. To be poor is to be written off.”
- “Poverty is... wondering if you can take the night bus... having no music... carrying heavy bags with food in to save fares... being unable to afford magazines, books, a camera, film... living with badly designed equipment... waiting for any of the reduced items in Sainsbury’s... being given endless bowls of soup and cups of tea when what you want is a proper meal.”
- “Poverty is a 17-year-old who can never afford to go to a disco.”
- “Poverty means having no choice. If you’re lucky you can afford the cheapest things.”
- “Poverty is not only about shortage of money. It is about rights and relationships; about how people are treated and how they regard themselves; about powerlessness; exclusion and loss of equity.”

One of the most troubling aspects in debates about issues relating to poverty is the absence of the voice of the people who experience poverty. It would be unthinkable to reform the banking industry without banking experts and representatives of the industry being involved at every stage and in every part of the public debate, yet in debates and policy making around poverty, those with real experience are kept very much in the periphery.

The current economic climate means that the spending on welfare and public services is being scrutinised to a degree not seen in a generation. The Church has a role in ensuring that the voice of the marginalised is heard and in challenging half truths and ill informed speculation. It is a role we have long performed, but if a just settlement is to be achieved it is one that has renewed importance.

3 The economic climate

The consequences of the recession following the banking crisis of 2007 continue to dominate the political and economic climate. By the end of the recession period in 2009, the economy had contracted by ~7.5%, and Government tax income fell rapidly. As the Government's income fell so its borrowing increased; to levels much higher than before the crisis.

All major political parties wish to reduce the amount borrowed each year to a much lower level. However, controversy exists as to how quickly this should be achieved and what balance of taxation and spending cuts should be used. The Coalition Government's stated aim is to reduce the "structural deficit"³ to zero and the mechanism it has chosen to achieve this is one fifth tax rises and four fifths spending cuts.

The position of the URC and other major denominations has been that these judgements are party political matters, properly made by elected representatives, whose decisions are informed by both evidence and political ideology. The Church has spoken out, however, where changes to government policy disproportionately affect the poorest or most vulnerable. The reduction of borrowing should not be achieved by increasing poverty and inequality or by targeting services relied upon by the poorest. It is also important to resist attempts to misrepresent and stigmatise the poorest and least powerful in order to justify decreasing the assistance given to them.

This year the Government's annual borrowing remains at much higher than pre-2007 levels – approximately £150 billion per year. The Office of National Statistics estimates the total national debt as of January 2011 to be approximately £1000 billion excluding the banking sector interventions, or £2,200 billion including banking sector interventions. Assuming the nationalised banks can be sold at a later date the £1000bn figure is the most relevant. Although it is a huge number, it is not exceptional relative to the size of the economy when compared either historically or internationally; but it is high by recent UK standards.

There is a very wide debate around the future of the national and global economies. There is a view that the financial structures that were in place prior to 2007 require change to encourage stability and to lessen the obvious injustices. People of faith all over the world continue to encourage and add to this debate, but the urgency of immediate financial problems has tended to take precedence in the agendas of policy makers. It is important that churches nationally and locally continue push these seemingly less urgent, but ultimately more important questions.

4 Post-recession trends in poverty and inequality

The effects of recession took time to reach ordinary people. The temporary reduction in VAT to 15% alongside reduced interest rates initially meant higher standards of living for many with middle incomes. This was not the case for the poorest. Those whose income comes from investments, including many pensioners, saw their disposable incomes reduced. The other group who quickly found themselves in difficulty were those with unsecured debt, as the interest they paid on their loans increased sharply. However the effects of the recession began to effect family budgets much more widely in 2010/11. Outlined below are a number of factors within the UK economy post recession which are having the effect of increasing the levels of poverty and inequality.

a. Direct effects of tax and benefit changes

There have been a number of independent analyses of changes in government taxation and benefit spending since the recession. The common theme is that as a proportion of

3 "Structural deficit" is an elusive concept and involves an estimate of what tax revenue would have been if there had been no recession. The treasury estimates around two-thirds of this year's deficit to be "structural" and the other £50bn as non-structural.

income the poorest will lose out most⁴. Chart 1 shows an analysis of the impact of these changes broken down by income group. The trend of higher impacts on the poorest sections of society continued in the March 2012 Budget but at the time of writing was not available in to be included in the graph below.

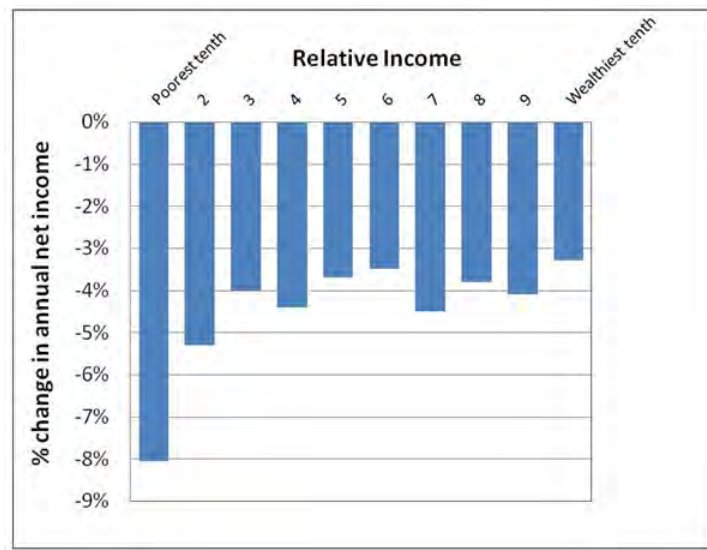


Chart 1: Direct effects of changes in tax and benefits on different sections of society

Chart 1: The UK population are divided into deciles by income, the poorest tenth, the second poorest tenth and so on until the wealthiest tenth. The direct benefit, tax credit and taxation effects are applied to each group and the percentage change in net income are plotted. The effects of the Nov 2011 pre-budget report are not included. *Data from Institute from Financial Studies (IFS).*

b. Effect of the reductions in spending on Government services

Analysis of the provision of public services and their impacts on different sections of society are much more difficult than analysis of the distribution of money. Treasury and IFS data consistently estimate services, such as transport, health care, child care etc, received by the poorest to be valued at over twice the amount these groups receive in cash benefits. It is therefore expected that reductions to public services will have a greater impact on the poorest. The one comprehensive study performed so far was conducted by Landman Economics on behalf of the TUC. It concluded that on average it would cost the poorest tenth of people ~30% of their income to replace the services lost to them. This contrasts with an average loss of ~10%, and a loss of just under 2% for the richest tenth of the population.

Most of these services are provided by Local Government either directly or by grant funding other providers. Overall Local Government is facing cuts of 27% to current expenditure much higher than most government departments. The formulas to determine the money going to each council are labyrinthine, and the jargon used by the Department of Communities and Local Government is exceptionally confusing, but it appears from Church Urban Fund Research amongst others that local authorities serving the poorest communities faced the most stringent cut⁵. Joseph Rowntree Foundation Research published January 2012 has made it clear that despite the efforts of many local authorities it is the most disadvantaged areas in each local authority that are facing the greatest difficulties⁶.

4 The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) report is the most respected and is the basis for most subsequent analyses. See BBC coverage for summary of reports: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-11583746>

5 <http://www.cuf.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/PDFs/At-the-Cutting-Edge-Final-Report.pdf> accessed Jan 2012

6 <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/serving-deprived-communities-recession>

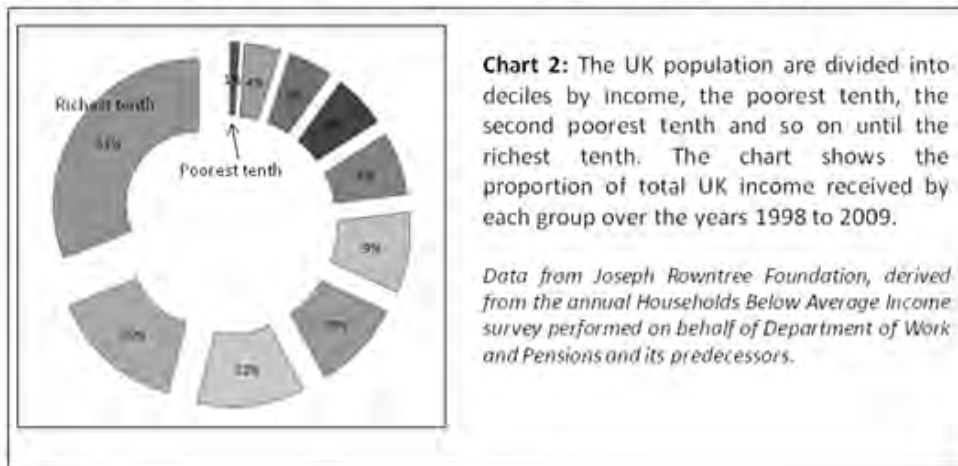
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Many projects run by churches and associated charities have relied on funding from local government, some have already closed and for many of the remaining April 2012 is an important date as this marks the time when local government funding runs out.

c. Effects of changes to incomes

The level of income inequality in the UK is at a record high. During the boom years pre-recession the rise of income and wealth inequality sped up substantially. Incredibly during the years 1997-2007 taking into account inflation the wealthiest tenth of earners got £365 a week better off while the poorest tenth actually got poorer by £7 a week.

Chart 2: Income distribution amongst different sections of society. (1998 – 2009).



Post recession the trend of increasing wage inequalities has continued. The significant change is that pre-2010 the average family's income increased faster than inflation today and up until 2020 the average family's income will be below the level of inflation. For those in poverty the decline is steeper and is not expected to end until 2022. The standard of living of those in the top 10% of earners has remained and is expected to remain above the level of inflation.

d. Rising unemployment

The number of people claiming unemployment related benefits has risen from 810,000 in mid-2008 to 1.5 million in January 2011. Much of this increase was due to those in temporary or casual employment being made redundant as businesses shed the part of their workforce that could be lost most cheaply. By January 2012 there were 2.64 million unemployed – 8.1% of the working population. There is a clear trend that those made unemployed and especially those who lose work and stay unemployed for a long period were previously in very low-paid work. Higher income groups have so far been relatively insulated from job losses, although there is evidence that this is now changing.

As the jobs market has become tighter and recruitment has slowed down young people have been squeezed out. As of January 2012 1.04 million 16-24 year-olds are unemployed 22.3%. Again this is focused on young people from low-income families.

Underemployment – where people are working part-time despite looking for full time work is also increasing with ~2.5million in this position. Again young people are over represented in this group.

e. Other factors present before the recession

Poverty was present in the UK prior to the recession. Despite 15 years of economic growth and a rise in median income of some 80% – the polarised distribution of that wealth meant that numbers of people in poverty, especially severe poverty remained relatively stable. Church Action on Poverty have produced a booklet in co-operation with major Churches in the UK to outline some of the causes of this. The booklet published February 2012 is free and available at www.church-poverty.org.uk and

provides a rationale for the Close the Gap campaign which encourages churches and church members in actions that challenge the rising levels of Poverty and inequality in the UK. Key issues include:

Taxation in the UK is highly *regressive* i.e. a greater proportion of the income of the poorest is taken in taxes than of the richest. Data from the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) in 2010 shows that the poorest tenth pay 46% of their income in tax while the highest income tenth of the population pay around 34% in tax. The effect of the subsequent government changes has increased this differential. Even in the hypothetical situation where every individual and company pays their taxes according to the letter and the spirit of the law it would still be regressive.⁷ Because although the most commonly talked about tax, income tax, is progressive most other taxes, such as VAT or Council Tax disproportionately affect the poorest.

Low-pay / no-pay cycle: is a key factor in keeping many in poverty. At the low-paid end of the employment market casualisation and commodification of labour has led to many workers to cycle between short-term and agency work and no work at all. The majority of people living in poverty are in households with work. The work is however poorly paid and unstable, and although working usually improves the family income it often has no effect on the individuals future life chances and even more worryingly that of their children.

In dockyards a hundred years ago men would line up in the morning to be chosen or rejected by foremen; if they were unsuccessful they went home unpaid. The advent of the phone has done away with humiliating line-ups – it is however extremely common for people to wait for the phone to ring on a daily or weekly basis, to see if they have any work or income. People in this position have very few rights and are ripe for exploitation. Their source of income can be arbitrarily removed, or their hours of work can be changed at little or no notice.

Benefit levels: It is extremely difficult to make ends meet if a family is solely dependent on benefits. When welfare is discussed this simple fact is often forgotten. Welfare benefits have consistently risen much more slowly than earning meaning that claimants have become increasingly financially distant from the rest of society.

Single childless people receive around a third of the minimum income standard. The Labour government focussed benefits on pensioners and families with children. This government has made changes aimed at cutting benefit spending by £18 billion per year. Pensioners who receive over half of all benefits have been protected, which means that benefits for children and the working aged are being reduced by around a quarter. The group most affected by the new rules appear to be single parent families.⁸ In the March 2012 Budget the Chancellor announced an aspiration to cut a further £10 billion from working age welfare payments over the next 3 years.

Higher prices paid by the worse off: goods and services such as phones, utilities, and even food cost more to the poorest. Save the Children estimates that this costs Britain's low-income families around £1,280 per year each. The most obvious penalty comes in the money lending markets where 7-8% is the current price paid for a loan by someone with a regular average income; those in poverty can borrow less money at rates that can rocket into the 1000s of percent.

5 Effects of living in poverty in the UK

Poverty has measurable and marked effects on individuals' and communities' ability to thrive and flourish. There is now a huge literature available detailing the relationship between poverty and poor outcomes in terms of health, education and wellbeing. There are many measures which can be used to demonstrate this:

7 Office of National Statistics, 2006/7, "*The Effect of Taxes and Benefits on Household Income*".

8 <http://www.familyandparenting.org> [accessed January 2012]

Chart 3: Relationship between poverty and the life expectancy of Scottish men 2001-2005

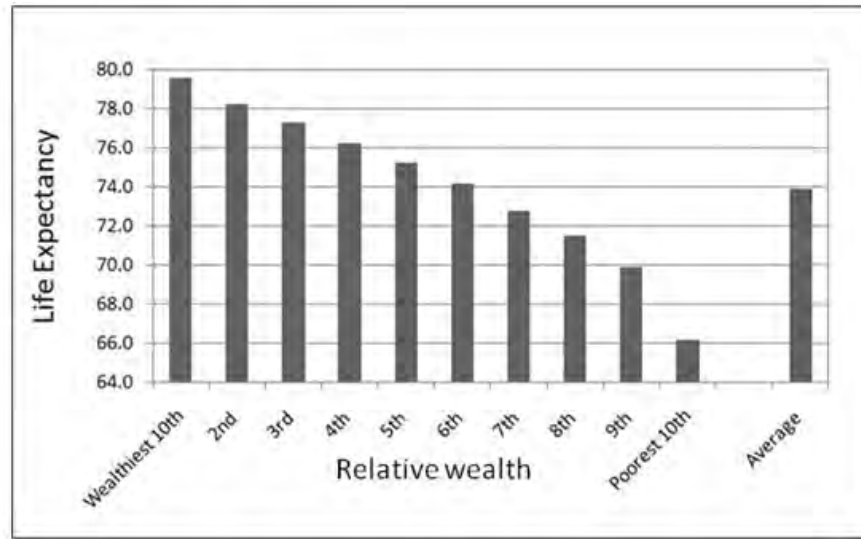


Chart 3: The adult Scottish male population are divided into deciles by income, the poorest tenth, the second poorest tenth and so on until the wealthiest tenth. The life expectancy at birth is plotted for each group for the years 2001-2005.

One of the most striking influences of poverty is the effect it has on life expectancy. Chart 3 above is derived from the most recent comprehensive analysis of poverty and life expectancy in the UK. It is for Scottish males 2001-2005 but the trends are found in both genders and all parts of the UK.

The life expectancy for the poorest was 13 years and 4 months lower on average than the life expectancy for the richest. This data also showed that the poorest could expect more of their life to be “not in good health” – 11.3 years as opposed to 4 years for the wealthiest. Most worryingly the trend over the years 1994 to 2005 is for poverty to have an increasing effect on health and life expectancy. In the group above the poorest tenth’s life expectancy grew by only 2 months, while the richest tenth’s grew by over 31 months.

Life expectancy is the crudest of health measures, but it is clear that poverty is linked with this and a number of other health measures. Poverty is also linked to poor mental health. Anti-depressant use is considerably higher in areas of high deprivation. A study in Glasgow found that 1 in 4 15 years-olds in deprived areas had taken antidepressants in the previous year more than double the rate of the average 15 year old, and 6 times the rate of 15 year-olds from the most affluent areas.

The links with mental health and emotional wellbeing are becoming of increasing interest to researchers and policy makers. These are viewed as one key hindrance to progression after a period of living in poverty; people who may be physically able to seek work and seek to improve their financial position also need to have hope, drive and resilience when seeking to move forward in the jobs market.

One of the most profound effects of living in poverty is further poverty for the individual and their family. It is clear that poverty, especially severe poverty, is “sticky and hereditary” – once you find yourself in poverty it is difficult to get yourself or your children out. This is part of a larger phenomenon in the UK where it is unlikely for a person to move out of the social or economic group that they were born into. The OECD judges the UK to be the least socially mobile country of its member states⁹, with movement down the socio-economic scale just as improbable as movement up it. This data demonstrate that life chances are increasingly dominated by accident of birth.

⁹ “Going for Growth” OECD publication 2010.

6 Perceptions of wealth and poverty

Jesus values individuals irrespective of their wealth and status and that was and is, radical and counter cultural. To include the poor as a neighbour who should be loved as one's self is radical and countercultural. Jesus presents us with a morality that is at odds with the prevalent ideas of individual worth and individual wealth being linked. Society has moved on but attitude surveys and opinion polls repeatedly show that the poor are viewed by many as the architects of their own fate – with words like lazy, feckless and work-shy being used.

The confusion between the value of the individual, of their efforts, achievements and potential with their wealth is still prevalent and it is still challenged by Jesus' example. Moreover it is difficult to square the evidence of recent trends in poverty and inequality detailed above, especially the indicators that poverty is largely hereditary, with the view that poverty is the fault of the poor.

A present day incarnation of this prejudice is the section of the UK media which continues to portray those on benefits as scroungers who are exploiting the generosity of the ordinary taxpayer. It is important to realise the examples of fraudulent benefit claims or of people who are claiming benefit and appear to be enjoying an above average lifestyle are prominently displayed. The Government estimates benefit fraud to be £1.6bn per year while it estimates underpayment to those who qualify but do not claim to be £16.8bn. The Government has chosen to emphasise benefit fraud, which, although clearly a crime, makes up only 0.6% of the welfare budget. In the Chancellor's speech announcing the Comprehensive Spending Review and in a ministerial foreword to a Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) official document¹⁰ the level of fraud was exaggerated three-fold by combining figures for government and claimant error with fraud, and labelling it all as fraud. Churches wrote to the Prime Minister asking for these errors to be corrected¹¹ and the DWP publication has subsequently been corrected, though not other ministerial statements. This is to be regretted as it pollutes the debate over welfare reform.

As discussed above the voice of people who have genuinely experienced poverty is rarely heard. When it is heard the gate keepers to the public debate, politicians, journalists and editors are increasingly from sections of society which have not seen or experienced poverty. Their filter even with good intent often does disservice to the poorest.

Biases against the poor: research highlights two major psychological influences as to why we have a tendency to believe the worst of people living in poverty. There is a psychological effect known as the "just-world phenomenon". This is the observed tendency for people to make the assumption that current circumstances have come to pass because of just reasons. Many studies show that when individuals are asked to describe people based on no information other than clues about their wealth, they make assumptions to justify the perceived level of wealth, suggesting the poor are lazy and unintelligent while the rich are hard-working and clever. The view can be challenged by personal knowledge but when making judgements about public policy or new people this prejudice is often encountered. The recurrent view of the poor as deserving of their own fate can be partially explained by this observation. The statistics which demonstrate that poverty is largely hereditary, along with other data about health, education and future job prospects being distributed inequitably between rich and poor show the just-world prejudice to be utterly untrue.

Another factor leading to the misperception of the poor is that people's perception of their own wealth is usually inaccurate. Multiple studies have shown that people consistently believe themselves to be poorer than they actually are. They therefore underestimate what the real effects of living in poverty are likely to be. This is especially prevalent in the very wealthiest sections of society. In the most recent such research

¹⁰ "Tackling fraud and error in the benefit and tax credits systems" DWP 2010

¹¹ <http://www.methodist.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=opentogod.newsDetailandnewsid=473>

only 2% of the UK population believed themselves to be in top 20% of earners, while 88% of people believed themselves to be middle income or lower. This lack of understanding is thought to be due to income groups living increasingly separate lives and very few relationships being formed which span income groups. There is evidence to show this inaccurate understanding is more common in societies with greater levels of inequality, and therefore it is expected to increase as inequality increases.

7 Some theological considerations about poverty and inequality

A clear link is made between poverty and inequality, and injustice in the Old and New Testaments. This is seen most distinctly in the way in which the Old Testament writers connect justice with the treatment of widows, orphans, resident aliens and the poor – the so-called vulnerable quartet. In Deuteronomy 24:7, for example, Moses enjoins the people, “You shall not deprive a resident alien or an orphan of justice; you shall not take a widow’s garment in pledge” and Isaiah says: “Seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow” (Isaiah 1:17). Isaiah also makes the link between the exploitation of the vulnerable and oppressive laws and social policy when he berates those “who make iniquitous decrees, who write oppressive statutes to turn the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right that widows may be your spoil and that you may make the orphans your prey” (Isaiah 10:1-2).

The Leviticus legislation on the ‘year of jubilee’ on the other hand, is clearly a corrective to unregulated market economics characterised by growing inequality between those who own the means of producing wealth – land in the case of an agrarian economy – and those who for whatever reason, do not. Writing in this theme, Hans Ucko states the following:

‘The Jubilee legislation was designed to counter the natural acquisitive instincts of humans, reminding them the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof. What is the meaning of this reprieve and freedom? “The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants” (Lev 25:23). All sales of land, all bids to concentrate the means of production in the hands of one individual or one class are to be erased in the time it takes to blow the shofar. The jubilee restores each person to a state of pristine economic independence: “you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family” (v.10). The jubilee legislation requires society to recognise a basic right of entitlement as part of being human. Everybody deserves to have a place to be from, a place to return to. The meaning of jubilee is that each person has his or her place, each culture its place; the selling of the world is undone and globalising presumptions are toppled.’¹²

The pervasive theme of justice in social and economic relationships in Old Testament writings leads Nicholas Wolterstorff to the conclusion that the prophets and psalmist assume that alleviating the plight of the lowly is required by justice and therefore focus on urging their readers to *practice* justice to the quartet of the vulnerable lowly ones. This, in turn, leads him to a revealing statement about the treatment of the poor and vulnerable in American society (which is equally applicable to British society in light of the current social policy reforms):

‘It seems safe that they (the Hebrew prophets) did not have to deal with the contentionthat it is the fault of the poor themselves that they are poor and that, accordingly, they have no right to aid. Apparently, they did not have to deal with the contention that such aid as comes their way is charity, not justice, for which the poor ought to be grateful. Israel’s writers sometimes describe help for the lowly as mercy; but the idea was not abroad that it is *only* a matter of mercy, not a matter of justice.’¹³

Wolterstorff identifies two main reasons for the Old Testament writers injunction to render justice to those who are vulnerable – the ‘low ones’ – as he calls them. Firstly,

12 Ucko, H (Ed), *The Jubilee Challenge – Utopia or Possibility*, WCC Publications, Geneva, 1997, p. 2

13 Wolterstorff, N., *Justice, Rights and Wrongs*, Princeton University Press, 2008 p. 76

those vested with social power are to render justice to the vulnerable bottom ones *as a public remembrance, as a memorial*, of Yahweh's deliverance of the children of Israel from their oppression as slaves in Egypt, Secondly, it is because Yahweh loves justice.¹⁴ Yahweh's pursuit of justice and Yahweh's injunction to practice justice are grounded in Yahweh's love. This leads Wolterstorff to comment on the critical link between Yahweh's love and justice:

'Of course it is not the abstract entity *justice as such* that God loves. What God loves is the *presence* of justice in society. And God loves the presence of justice in society not because it makes for a society whose excellence God admires, but because God loves the members of society.... God desires that each and every human being shall flourish, that each and every person shall experience what the Old Testament writers call *shalom*. Injustice is perforce the impairment of *shalom*. That is why God loves justice. God desires the flourishing of each and every one of God's human creatures; justice is indispensable to that. Love and justice are not pitted against each other but intertwined.'¹⁵

The New Testament narrative continues and expands the theme of God's love and justice. This is uniquely and decisively revealed in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ who inaugurates God's reign of justice and peace. He is the Spirit-anointed servant whose vocation is to proclaim to the poor, the blind, the captives, and the oppressed the good news of the inauguration of the 'year of the Lord's favour' when justice-in-shalom will reign. He is among human beings 'that they might have life, and have it abundantly' (John 10:10). His teaching and table fellowship inverts the social order and expands the scope of God's love informed justice to include all those excluded from full participation in Jewish society – prisoners, the lame, the deaf, the blind, the malformed, tax collectors and sinners (as well as the vulnerable quartet of widows, orphans, aliens and the poor).

Jesus describes assistance to the neediest, the sick, the naked, and the imprisoned as service to the Son of Man (Mt. 25:31-46). He proclaims woe to the rich and sated after blessing the poor and hungry (Lk. 6:20-26). The first community of believers in Jerusalem understood Jesus' teaching to include a just distribution of public goods which resulted in a voluntary sharing of their possessions so that there was no needy person among them (Acts 4:34).

Based on this brief overview of justice in the Old and New Testaments we can conclude that biblical economic values demand nothing less than the economic well-being for all, and especially for the vulnerable and marginalised in our society. Based on this understanding, we need to reaffirm as Christians of the Reformed tradition that the management of our lives through any economy is always part of our response to God's *oikonomia* – God's own work of creation, redemption, and reconciliation. Economic systems are not laws unto themselves free of religious and moral constraints. We therefore evaluate any economic system (including the current economic policies of the Coalition Government) not simply on the basis of the material goods and services it provides, but especially on the basis of its *human consequences*: what it is doing to, with and for people, *particularly the most vulnerable among us*.

For this reason the church must speak to the present economic crisis, to the devastation that it has brought, and to the hope to which we bear witness: that in Christ a more just order is arising.

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14 'Yahweh's pursuit of justice and Yahweh's injunction to practice justice are grounded in Yahweh's love' *Ibid* p. 82

15 *Ibid.* p. 82

Appendix 18

Drones: ethical dilemmas in the application of military force

A INTRODUCTION

1 Armed unmanned air systems – present and future

It has been suggested that the forthcoming Joint Strike Fighter will be the last manned jet fighter as in the future all UK air power could be delivered by unmanned aircraft. Armed Unmanned Air Systems (AUAS) – see note on terminology below – offer the UK the opportunity to employ air power more easily and cheaply. But the use of AUAS by the CIA in northern Pakistan demonstrates only too clearly that the proliferation of this technology will present new ethical challenges.

Piloted by operators located in bases that may be on the opposite side of the world, the aircraft can be flown across international frontiers to gather intelligence or deliver missiles and laser guided bombs with greater ease and precision and at less cost than manned aircraft. The technology offers new possibilities in delivery of lethal force, reducing the risks as well as the political and financial costs of military intervention. The future will see increasing levels of automation with more decision-making power being devolved from the human operators to the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV)'s computer systems.

2 The use of AUAS by the UK and its allies.

The RAF's armed UAV is the Reaper. A fleet of five aircraft (to be expanded to ten) is currently deployed in Afghanistan. The RAF personnel controlling the aircraft currently share the US Air Force's facility outside Las Vegas but relocation to RAF Waddington is planned in 2012/2013 bringing direct real-time involvement in war-fighting from within our own sovereign territory. RAF Reapers have flown over 30,000 hours since their introduction in October 2007 and fired 200 missiles as of September 2011. David Cameron is reported to have disclosed that as of December 2010, 124 insurgents had been killed by strikes from RAF operated AUAS.

The Ministry of Defence does not routinely disclose information on the nature of AUAS attacks in Afghanistan but we can surmise that they are used as air support for operations led by ground troops and as well as independently striking at targets (possibly tracking named individuals) as a part of a wider counter-insurgency strategy.

American AUAS operations in both Afghanistan and Pakistan are on a much larger scale and are known to regularly result in civilian deaths. It is likely that in Pakistan alone, a country that is officially a US ally, many dozens and perhaps many hundreds of civilians have been killed by CIA-operated Reapers. AUAS have enabled US armed intervention in Yemen and Somalia against targeted individuals. Elsewhere, Israeli armed UAVs operate in the skies over Gaza providing an almost continuous surveillance picture and striking against targets.

The global market for UAV's is booming. As many as 50 countries are thought to have some form of UAV technology. China, France, India, Iran, Russia and Turkey are thought to be seeking the ability to fire missiles from UAVs and there are likely to be many others in their wake.

While the bare facts of these uses of AUAS can be set out in a few words, the ethical implications are wide ranging and complex, prompting a number of questions. Some concern the broad context of warfare, such as:

- Will the capacity to deliver lethal force with less risk to our own troops make armed intervention more likely?
- What are the psychological implications of placing soldiers or pilots in locations so remote from the field of battle?
- Can targeted killings of named individuals be justified either legally or ethically?
- Ultimately how do AUAS serve the cause of justice and peace?

These wider contextual questions are the subject of our analysis in Section B. In Section C we explore further questions that relate more specifically to the nature of the technology its operation such as:-

- Do the systems provide a capability for precise targeting and, consequently, greater protection of civilians in war?
- Does the physical remoteness from the conflict protect AUAS operators from the awfulness and horror of war?
- What are the likelihood and the implications of armed robots operating autonomously in the future?

The nature of war has become more complex than ever with recent conflicts demonstrating a blurring between the lines of war and politics, peace and conflict, soldier and civilian, battlefield and safety. The just war tradition, which has provided the most extensively used framework for moral analysis of conflict, appears to be creaking under the strain of new realities. In recent years in Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan, the use of lethal force directed at identified individuals on a list has, by most accounts, been effective in the disruption of terrorist networks and armed insurgency groups. This raises the prospect that AUAS could become a weapon of choice in counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations, presenting ethical challenges. In framing a response, our premise is that by digging deep into the roots of the classic just war tradition and affirming its emphasis on seeking after justice we might be better positioned to address the variety of questions that face us today.

B THE CONTEXT

3 Seeking after justice and peace

We recognize that the challenges presented by insurgent conflict, terrorism and asymmetric warfare give rise to a widespread and growing concern as to whether the just war tradition will continue to provide an authoritative ethical framework for state conduct in armed conflict. This report does not seek to develop a new perspective on just war for our churches but rather draws on existing teachings and documents including the Methodist/United Reformed Church report “Peacemaking: A Christian Vocation”. The broad testimony of Christian tradition that can be traced back to Augustine through Isidore of Seville, Thomas Aquinas, Francisco de Vitoria, Francisco Suárez, and more, has helped provide the working group with some context for this study. We do not accept that traditional resources of moral reasoning as represented by the just war tradition are exhausted and take some time here to reaffirm aspects of the tradition that might help us today. We note that broadly speaking, the overall effect of classic just war reasoning has been to place limits on military action undertaken by the state, although not necessarily its prohibition. At its best, the judicially-minded just war tradition has refused to normalize political violence. It has recognized the moral involvement of every citizen in political decisions about war and political violence, and has at its heart judgment on wrong-doing, seeking after healing and the restoration of peace.

There is no golden age of the just war tradition that would meet all present-day needs if only it could be recovered. Deep ambiguity is present from the very outset of this tradition to the present-day. Even the saintly Ambrose (d. c397 CE) who taught

Augustine about preserving justice in dealings with enemies merged the interests of the Catholic Church in combating heresy with the military successes of the empire. We must accept that facing the challenge of peacemaking today requires Christian people to learn as much from the failings of the Church as from less problematic aspects of its witness to Christ's lordship. Killing was not seen as integral to the role of the state, but as demanded only in the darkest days.

At its heart, the classic just war tradition held to the principle that armed conflict, if it does occur, must be conceived as an 'extraordinary extension' of 'ordinary acts of judgment'. A theft on the high-street calls for police action, judgment by a magistrate, and the requisite punishment. The same judicial mindset is required in response to aggressive invasions into another nation's territory or terrorist attacks upon the innocent. There must be an attempt to establish whether wrong has been committed, what is necessary for the punishment and restitution of this wrong, and what the requirements of future peace might be.

Today, we suggest that this judicial understanding of just war as an 'extraordinary' response to wrong-doing requires a default position in favour of adherence to international law. The real urgency is peace, and working out how best to develop and apply the broad framework of international law and human rights instruments for countering terrorism and building peace. Only in exceptional and limited circumstances is the use of force justified, and only having said this clearly and loudly can we then place in context the capabilities offered by AUAS.

4 Terrorism and international law

Terrorists function outside the law. It is vitally important that the UK and its allies do not do so too. Terrorism is a deplorable crime and inherently illegal as a means of armed conflict. The attacks of 11 September 2001, the Bali bombings in 2002, the Mumbai bombings in 2003, Madrid train bombings in 2004, London transport bombings in 2005, the many subsequent terrorist bombings in Pakistan and Yemen, as well as other examples, violate both international laws of war and internationally accepted human rights norms, and should be denounced as both immoral and illegal. Terrorism breaches the Geneva Conventions because of the deliberate targeting of non-combatants and threatens the dignity and security of human beings everywhere.

Peacemaking: A Christian Vocation made clear that wars cannot be fought against 'terror'. The terminology 'war on terror' slips unhappily between metaphorical 'wars' such as the war on drugs or homelessness and formal wars conducted under international law. When considering terrorism in the context of international law three points are important:

- there is a sound basis in customary international law for dealing with terrorists who like 'outlaws' flaunt the law that should protect us all;
- the international community faces the particular challenge of bringing law to bear on terrorists who have migrated to jurisdictions that are incapable of (or unwilling to cooperate in) law enforcement;
- those prosecuting terrorism under national and international law are equally subject to that law as terrorists.

In the wake of the 9/11 atrocity the US government passed legislation enabling the President to use military force to pursue those responsible. It is on this basis that the CIA has operated AUAS in a persistent campaign of targeted killings in northern Pakistan. Accurate figures for those killed are difficult to obtain but estimates suggest between 1,717 and 2,680 since 2004. It is even more difficult to determine what proportion of those persons killed were militants, terrorists or civilians. Terrorists are not warriors and those suspected to be guilty of, or to be plotting, even the most dreadful of crimes need to be dealt with using an accountable judicial process.

Two US presidents have defended the policy of the use of missiles against individuals suspected of engaging in terrorism. The present administration states that the US applies international humanitarian law and the laws of armed conflict although it is

human rights law that must apply outside of the context of armed conflict. The US administration admits that the laws of war require “translation” in order to be applied in the context of counter-terrorism. However, no government possesses the freedom to unilaterally re-interpret customary international law. To do so in this manner risks undermining international order, potentially allowing any regime that might be inclined to act militarily beyond their jurisdiction to claim to be doing so under the guise of international humanitarian law.

We urgently require universal agreement on the application of international law to counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations. Meanwhile acting with restraint and in conformity with universally agreed legal principles, is a far surer path to security, and more likely to stem anger and resentment than acting without legal justification.

5 Could remotely operated systems make war more likely?

A UK Ministry of Defence Joint Doctrine Note on Unmanned Aircraft Systems asks whether by removing the horror of war, or at least keeping it at a distance, we risk losing some of our humanity and make war more likely. War is as old as humanity itself and the Old Testament bears witness to its evils. The essence of war from that time until the present remains unchanged: the desire of one state, tribe or group to impose its political will on another. AUAS present political and military leaderships with the seductive ability to kill enemies at no risk to one’s own air crew. The Ministry of Defence Joint Doctrine Note speculates that the recent extensive use of unmanned aircraft over Pakistan and Yemen may already herald a new era. Without the new capability offered by such weapons systems it is unlikely that these interventions would have been undertaken at all. The use of conventional manned aircraft would have entailed greater risk and amplified the call for more specific national and international sanction for military intervention.

An illustration of the political calculus involved in the authorization of military action can be seen in President Obama’s decision not to seek Congressional approval of the Libya intervention at the requisite 60 days into the conflict, contrary to the advice of the Justice Department, Office of Legal Counsel. This is not the first time that a US President has skirted around the War Powers Act nor is it likely to be the last. What is notable on this occasion is the reasoning behind his decision. US air assets were crucial to the suppression of Libyan Air defences in the early stages of the conflict. Sixty days into the conflict the US continued to employ Predator attack UAVs as a part of the ‘unique’ contribution that the US offers to NATO allies. Nevertheless President Obama reasoned that the US operations were distinct from the kind of hostilities envisaged by the War Powers Act as they did not ‘involve sustained fighting or active exchanges of fire with hostile forces, nor do they involve the presence of U.S. ground troops, U.S. casualties or a serious threat thereof’. This re-interprets the War Powers Act in a new and novel fashion implying that it need not be invoked in the cases of US support for a UN sanctioned intervention that uses military force, however deadly, by remote means only.

In assessing a possible military response to crisis we expect our democratically elected leaders to prioritise the requirements of justice while they are also presented with all manner of national and political incentives that cannot lay claim to the pursuit of justice or ‘right intention’. A reduction in the risks associated with the military option is likely to skew the political calculus.

Furthermore in an increasingly risk averse political culture the urge to adopt a mode of intervention that avoids risk of allied casualties will strengthen. Such thinking may escalate the risk to ‘enemy’ civilians if the option of intervention by conventional forces, such as the use of ground troops, is taken off the table.

C CONSIDERATIONS SPECIFIC TO ARMED UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEMS

6 Discrimination and civilian casualties

We turn now to questions more closely associated with this relatively new and rapidly developing technology. There is an obligation on parties engaged in war to take all feasible precautions to avoid civilian casualties. Is the UAV a precise and discriminatory weapon?

It is likely that in Pakistan, a country that is officially a US ally, many dozens and perhaps many hundreds of people who were not intended targets have been killed by CIA-operated Predator UAVs. The disturbing number of civilian casualties in Pakistan results from an aggressive policy, opaque and apparently permissive rules of engagement on the part of the CIA and, deliberately, little public accountability.

In Afghanistan the civilian death toll from both airstrikes and night raids by troops inflame anti-Western sentiment and add to the political difficulties of the government of President Karzai. It is important to state clearly at this point that the rules of engagement and behaviour of International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) with respect to the use of air power in Afghanistan is markedly different to that of the CIA operation in northern Pakistan. The repeated witness that members of the working group have received from military personnel would indicate that in the course of standard combat operations UK forces go to great lengths to avoid civilian casualties, at times risking mission failure as a result. Nevertheless in 2011 United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) recorded 187 civilian deaths and 116 civilian injuries resulting from ISAF air strikes carried out by fast jets, helicopters or AUAS. This represents 53% of all civilian deaths resulting from action by pro-government forces.

The imagery available to the crews of Reapers and other UAVs is of relatively good quality (although this is dependent on weather and other factors). The number of available visual inputs through multiple screens provides a level of detail not available to a crew travelling in a fast-jet at high speed. The perspective presents challenges and like all aerial imagery requires skilled analysis which relies on good situational awareness and reliable intelligence data. The accuracy of the Hellfire missile combined with a relatively small blast radius enables the operator to predict its impact to a high degree. It could justifiably be argued that this does not make the weapon any more valuable from the perspective of ethics – only more usable.

There have been a number of tragic events when civilians have been mistaken for combatants and targeted. It would appear that poor situational awareness and faulty intelligence were key factors. The US Air Force has also acknowledged that operators have on occasions placed an undue confidence in the technology and consequently failed to ask crucial questions.

There is a legal obligation for military forces to report on civilian deaths. ISAF investigation teams do not make public the reports of investigations into incidents of civilian deaths. UNAMA suggest that prompt and public release of investigation findings would promote transparency, accountability and better relations with affected Afghan civilians and communities.

7 The AUAS pilot

It has been suggested that those charged with the control of AUAS might develop an unhealthy familiarity with killing by remote control. A former UK fast jet pilot who now ‘pilots’ a Reaper UAV denies that because he is 12,000 miles from the battlefield he will be detached from impact of his actions.

“We have the capability to see (unlike in a fast-jet) the effect of our weapon strikes in relatively close-up detail. Also, if the troops on the ground take photos of the strike effects they often send them to us as feedback. No matter how explicit these photos are

I personally look at them all. Not because of some voyeuristic tendency but because I believe that if you cannot face the reality of what you do in killing a human being then you should not be part of that process.”

RAF operators of AUAS serve at Creech Air Force Base in Nevada initially for three years and are expected to live a strange double life. Whereas, their colleagues in manned aircraft are assigned to a tour of duty and then return home for a period of recuperation, the AUAS operator will each day combine the horror of war with everyday family life. A British UAV pilot was interviewed by Stephen Sackur for a BBC Radio 4 programme titled “Drone Wars”. He acknowledged the strangeness of being involved in killing and then going home to the family at the end of the day. He was asked whether he can ‘let it go’ even if it has been one of those days when he knows he has killed people.

“You’ve got to. Yeah, OK, it’s going to weigh on your mind. It does. I don’t think that you would be human if it didn’t. But ... I’ve got to be there for my family. So I deal with it Yeah I might be a little bit off, maybe in a bit of a strange mood for a day or so.”

These testimonies provoke questions for our Churches as we seek to exercise a pastoral concern for those serving in the armed forces. While studies have been and are being undertaken to examine physical, emotional and psychological factors involved in the operation of AUAS, only the passing of time will reveal how many of their crews will develop symptoms associated with combat stress or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

It would be useful to explore further how, in the longer term, the experience of constant engagement in conflict might impact on those at the most critical point in the ‘kill-chain’. Whether the need to ‘deal with it’ for the sake of a normal family life might encourage a learned response whereby operators over time protect themselves from the emotional stress of killing and, if so, what impact such psychological conditioning might have on the propensity of the individual to critique the system within which they perform such a crucial role.

8 Increasing automation

We can expect to see increasing automation built into UAVs. Some forms of autonomous operation, particularly in target identification and the firing of weapons, would cause us to face unprecedented ethical challenges. In the near future UAVs will be able to take-off, navigate to a destination, return and land without operator intervention. This should improve reliability by reducing the impact of a disruption to radio signals between the UAV and control centre. Technology is advancing so fast that some possibilities in the not too distant future sound more like science fiction. The UAVs of the future will come in all shapes and sizes, the smallest possibly resembling a dragonfly or large insect. Within 30 years we could see swarms of mini-UAVs communicating with each other, performing complementary roles and reconfiguring roles if individual units are taken out of operation, capable of target identification and autonomous weapons delivery and responding to and interpreting mission objectives rather than simple instructions.

A crucial question concerns the circumstances under which we might trust a machine to identify a target and fire a weapon without human intervention. There is a great deal of research and ethical discussion on this point. It can be argued that un-distracted by emotions of vengeance or fear and capable of processing information faster than humans, future robot weapons systems could display more consistent ethical behaviour than their human counterparts. In a very different age Augustine (reported by Aquinas) acknowledged the dangers of such human failings, “the passion for inflicting harm, the cruel thirst for vengeance, an unpacific and relentless spirit, the fever of revolt, the lust of power, and suchlike things, all these are rightly condemned in war”. But while the robots of the future might be able to demonstrate discretion, the capacity to show empathy or mercy is different altogether and maybe for this reason as much as any other the autonomous operation of weapons systems is a red line that should not be crossed. On a more immediate and practical level we acknowledge the very difficult

balance of risks and ethical judgements that we expect our forces to make and the skill and expertise brought to this task, sometimes under the most trying circumstances. Thus there is a broad consensus that for the foreseeable future authority to fire a weapon must involve human interaction – the so-called ‘human in the loop’.

As systems become more automated the crucial question is how the human in the loop perceives and executes their role. With an increasing amount of data available might the operators become swamped? If data gathering becomes more systematised with more people involved in the ‘kill-chain’ does the scope for individual questioning, for example concerning the evidence that a person or object is a legitimate military target, reduce? These are questions that at this stage we raise as matters for further study, aware that they are also being asked elsewhere.

D CONCLUSION

9 Some key considerations

Our approach has been to engage with the reality that AUAS are here to stay while remaining committed to biblical teaching that ‘Peacemaking is at the heart of the teaching of Jesus, not an optional extra’. The tension that this creates is not easily overcome. The conclusions recorded here are by no means a final destination – much more could be said. But for now we highlight the following aspects.

The seductive attraction of AUAS – the ease at which AUAS can be deployed gives rise to real ethical concern. We must constantly project our minds forward a decade or two to a point when the technology and precision weaponry are likely to have proliferated with many more States as well as non-State actors gaining access. Our nervousness in this respect is not helped by apparent uncertainties over how to apply national and international legal frameworks that have served hitherto to delineate and limit the use of lethal force by the State. There exists a danger that the political ease with which these systems can be deployed, and their future potential to deliver even more precise effect, might encourage the normalization of the use of violence in response to crisis and conflict. We might begin to address this by paying critical attention now to the use of AUAS in the context of insurgency noting that their persistent use in civilian areas tends to inflame sentiment and undermine support for government.

Given the potential for global expansion of the AUAS market it is vital that churches and their members are informed and involved in debate of these issues.

International law and targeted killings – the UK’s position on terrorism (and indeed that of almost all states members of the UN) is that the rules of armed conflict cannot be invoked against terrorists outside of a situation of armed conflict. Our government is placed in a deeply ambiguous position with respect to the US AUAS attacks in northern Pakistan and Yemen. We work closely with the United States in the operation of AUAS. The US and UK are the two largest contributors to ISAF forces in Afghanistan and cooperate closely in intelligence operations in northern Pakistan. There is evidence that the US operations in northern Pakistan encourage extremism and result in increased recruitment to terrorist groups.

It is clearly in the interest of justice that those suspected of carrying out or organising terrorism are brought to account. Nevertheless international law has normative content that remains important in safeguarding the international community from descent into arbitrariness and the uncontrolled use of brute force. The targeted killing of named individuals outside the context of an armed conflict is a form of lawlessness that imperils us all. It is in our national security interests to uphold the basic accepted norms in international law and to work to ensure cohesion in approach among our international partners.

Accountability under law – greater openness and accountability on the part of military forces would help to clear some of the fog that surrounds the systems and their use. We have noted the recommendation that prompt and public release of ISAF investigations into incidents involving civilian casualties from all air strikes (by manned or unmanned aircraft) would improve relations with affected Afghan civilians and communities. Greater transparency would also help to resource public understanding and debate. Without public trust and accountability fears may increase that rather than being masters of technology, the technology may come to master us.

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Appendix 19

Affirmation of Pilots in the United Reformed Church

1 Introduction

1.1 Pilots is a Christian organisation for all children and young people aged 5 to 18 years old. It is an integral part of the United Reformed Church and is offered to, and operates within, other denominations. Pilots companies exist in a variety of denominations and in situations of ecumenical cooperation.

1.2 Pilots has been a part of the life of the Church as an organisation for children and young people since 1936, and as a consequence has nurtured strong Christians leaders in the Church. There have been many changes over the years which have kept the organisation relevant to those involved, but its core belief in the value of each Pilot and the respect for individual nurture and growth has remained fundamental to the development of the organisation throughout its history.

2 Pilots mission statement

Pilots believes that children and young people matter which, in today's climate of declining congregations, has much to contribute to the conversations surrounding Church life in the future. Pilots gives local churches the chance to share the love of God in the ongoing life of Jesus Christ by inviting children and young people on an exciting journey and in return the children and young people have the potential to lead the way in connecting local churches within our progressive society.

3 Celebrating 75 years

Synods, churches and Pilots companies celebrated the 75th Anniversary in many different ways during 2011. There were parties, special services, time capsules were buried, regional days were arranged, cakes were eaten and memories were shared about life through the decades, as time lines were created.

4 Why is Pilots a success?

In a report written for General Assembly in 2005 many factors were identified as contributing factors to the success of Pilots, here are just a few:

- a willingness to be bold in response to opportunities God created
- a willingness to celebrate God's blessings
- a willingness to prune old ways of working and seek new possibilities
- a willingness to prioritise the quality of support materials for Pilots' leaders
- a regional structure that really works
- a real sense of grassroots participation
- Something good to be part of – Pilots is great fun
- a commitment to publicity and advocacy
- a commitment to affiliation, belonging together is important
- an approach that is flexible with materials that are locally adaptable
- training that is valued and is well-resourced
- new resources are created collaboratively
- a commitment to be truly ecumenical

Therefore, the Youth and Children's Work Committee recommends Resolutions 31 and 32.

Appendix 20

Participation of those aged 20 to 40 in the United Reformed Church

1 Introduction

1.1 Over the last few years it has become increasingly apparent to members of the Fellowship of United Reformed Youth (FURY) Executive that there is an issue within the United Reformed Church when people reach the age of 26 and leave FURY. Some people find little support in their local church and many drift away from any engagement in the United Reformed Church. In addition, requests have been received from people aged 25-26 to continue attending FURY events; this highlights a particular need in their lives.

1.2 FURY Executive spent a lot of time discussing this during 2011/12 and feel that the whole United Reformed Church needs to recognise this issue and to take appropriate action to address it.

2 United Reformed Church Youth Assembly resolution

The following resolution was passed by consensus at the URC Youth Assembly held in January 2012:

The URC Youth Assembly recognises that there is an issue within the United Reformed Church when people reach the age of 26 and leave FURY. The URC Youth Assembly would like to see a support programme put into place for the over 26s in order to successfully utilise the skills that young people have learned within FURY and allow them to draw on their experiences both for their own development and that of the Church.

To achieve this FURY will bring a motion to General Assembly that challenges the United Reformed Church to explore what provision is already in place for those turning 26, what the needs of these people are and how the United Reformed Church can better support them.

3 The context

3.1 Since its beginning 39 years ago, FURY has provided young people aged 11-25 within the United Reformed Church the opportunity to become involved in the Church, to meet other young Christians and to represent themselves and other young people to the wider Church. FURY enables young people to develop their spirituality and also provides a safe space in which people can develop their skills including those vital for further involvement in the working of the Church as a whole. These are all important provisions to aid the development of young people, but even more important is the way in which FURY enables young people to remain engaged with the Church, at a time in their lives when this may not be happening to such an extent in their local congregation.

3.2 Many people say that FURY has become their church, whilst some go as far as admitting that without FURY, they would no longer be a Christian. This is possibly due to the fact that, unlike in “traditional church”, in FURY people don’t feel they have to behave in a particular manner; they can be themselves.

4 Issues to be considered

4.1 We recognise that one of the serious challenges faced by the United Reformed Church is the lack of young people aged 20 to 40 within our congregations. Many of the young people present in local churches are isolated individuals within much older congregations. Whilst we rejoice in the wide age spread within the denomination we have real concerns about the integration of young people aged 20 to 40 during the transition period after leaving FURY. To address this issue, young people themselves must be encouraged to become more actively involved in their local church, but the churches themselves should also be forthcoming to work towards this integration. This is important to avoid leaving a gap in the lives of these young people and to further support their personal and spiritual development after FURY.

4.2 In some congregations (not just large ones) there are serving elders who are aged under 30 and are well integrated and their skills are well utilised by the church. But the experience of some young adults is that they are not given responsibility or fully valued within their local church. We need to support those aged 20 to 40 to be properly a part of Church, other than just on a Sunday morning. This includes ensuring these people are part of the decision making processes at every level. Research commissioned by other denominations¹ has found that Fresh Expressions may be useful in tackling this issue and that educating local churches and working ecumenically should be considered.

4.3 This leads us to consider several questions:

Is there a need for an organisation like FURY for the over 26's?

How do we mark the transition from 'Youth' to 'not Youth'?

How do we integrate those over 26 into the life of the URC?

What is the best way to welcome more people aged 20 to 40 years into the URC?

What support is required by local churches from Children's and Youth Development Officers?

What support is required by local churches from Training and Development Officers?

Is there the opportunity to work with other denominations in combating this issue?

5 *vision2020* framework for mission and growth

5.1 There are several statements within the *vision2020* framework which are of relevance to this issue:

Statement 4: we will be a church that is more active in the life of local neighbourhoods

Statement 5: we will be a diverse church that does more to welcome and include all people equally

Statement 6: 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.

5.2 If we are to be a Church more engaged with our local communities then we have to engage with all age groups, including those aged 20 to 40. This group faces a number of significant life changes: for some it is a time of entering into employment for the first time, or leaving home to undertake several years of study, or of parenthood.

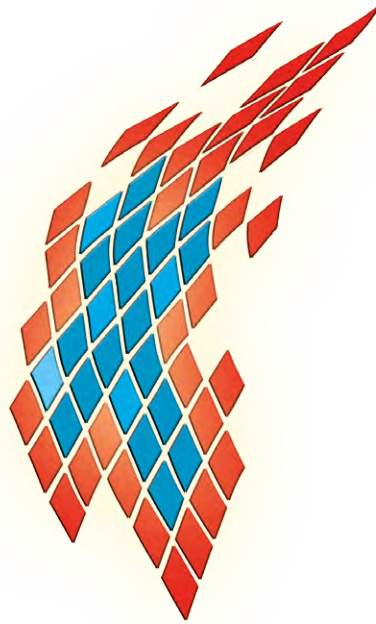
5.3 If we are to be a diverse Church, that includes welcoming and nurturing children, youth and adults. We have many churches with no children in worship (estimated at 20% of congregations) and we see this as a major challenge to the Church, requiring significant investment of time and energy. Welcoming people of all ages will require a deeper level of understanding of the current barriers which exclude some from the life of our Church.

5.4 If we are to gain confidence in engaging in appropriate forms of evangelism with the 20 to 40s then we need to engage in theological reflection and provide appropriate support for ministers, elders and church members.

¹ The Methodist Church produced a significant report in 2011 entitled 'Missing Generation'

6 Conclusion and recommendations

Recognising that there are a number of significant issues to be addressed and recognising that there may not be simple solutions, we present resolution 33 to General Assembly 2012.



Appendix 21

Information papers

United Reformed Church History Society

1 The core activity of the URC History Society, as always, has been to fulfil its objects of encouraging interest in and study of the history of the United Reformed Church and its antecedent traditions and related movements. The Council cooperates with other similar societies through the Religious Archives Group and the Association of Denominational Historical Societies and Cognate Libraries in order to raise general public awareness of the minority Christian traditions in England and Wales.

2 A study weekend held in 2011 at Launde Abbey, the retreat house for the Dioceses of Leicester and Peterborough. Members and friends enjoyed a feast of good things, covering missionary family history, the impact of the Great War, sermon rhetoric, the anniversary of the Authorized Version and an introduction to books published recently by Ken Sears and Michael Hopkins. The Saturday excursion included a visit to Oakham and to Freeby Chapel, near Melton, where Isaac Watts preached when he acted as tutor in the household of a local landowner, Sir John Hartopp.

3 Revd Professor Stephen Orchard gave the annual lecture on 'James Gawthorn: a quintessential Congregationalist', the fruits of his continuing interest in Derbyshire Dissent. Gawthorn's ministry from 1800 to 1857 was illustrated in word and image, and was a reminder of issues of concern both of an internal nature, such as county association, or in the national arena, such as Anglican Church rates or the voluntary principle in education.

4 The annual general meeting heard that a question raised in 2010 concerning the records of closed churches where there had been a union with another denomination had been addressed to synod offices. Policies varied but there was awareness that consultation with partners was required, that the place of deposit should be the local County Record Office, and that normally the responsibility for deposit should rest with the partner in the sharing agreement which was trustee for the property.

5 The Marquis Fund, to further the study and publication of Nonconformist history, is administered by the Society and representatives of Westminster College, Cambridge. Grants may be made to scholars of any denominational affiliation or none if the criteria are satisfied.

6 Issues of the Journal included articles from almost every century where Dissent has had a voice, one of the more unusual topics focussing on the interest amongst Manchester-based chapel goers in Egyptology. The review sections, in the capable hands of Dr Robert Pope, provided plenty of tasters for the discerning reader.

7 Margaret Thompson acted as archival administrator for much of the year. The Revd Dr George Hood, whose career has included missionary service in China and Malaysia, has deposited his personal papers also. Contact details for the new archivist Mrs Helen Weller are available from Church House). It is a matter of regret to report the death of Richard Potts who did so much to assist in an earlier move of the Society's holdings from London to Cambridge.

8 Ms Jenny Delves completed the transfer of the national records of the United Reformed Church to the Congregational Library at Dr Williams's Library, 14 Gordon Square, London. She continues in post as records manager.

Musician's Guild

1.1 The Guild's Southern and Wessex and South-west Branches have continued to organise interesting and enjoyable meetings for members and friends at locations as far apart as Canterbury and Dawlish. Subjects of interest have included hand bell ringing and a theatre tour, along with the ever-popular choral workshops and demonstrations of pipe organs.

1.2 Music is essential to the human spirit and we vary greatly in the type of music we appreciate. Who could say that music has never touched them in some way or another? Where words fail to help us express our deepest of feelings, whether of sympathy or joy, music will often provide that vital emotional chord. Music is a powerful vehicle of communication between people and it is this undeniable force that continues to bring us together, whether as instrumentalists, choral singers, hymn writers or composers. And we should not forget those who do not sing, write or play: those are the people whose souls will also soar when they hear the music that appeals to their spirits.

1.3 Every individual fellowship in our broad Church will 'do' music of some sort, mostly on Sundays during worship but also occasionally at other times including at specially planned concerts, recitals and praise events. Our Church enjoys a diverse range of styles of music but we are one Church and need to encompass all varieties in order to deepen our understanding and appreciation of the value and importance of music as part of worship. Belonging to the Musicians' Guild can help churches come together to do this.

1.4 The Musicians' Guild also provides an Advisory Service for both pipe organs and, in some circumstances, electronic ones. Advice can include finding a tuner, a condition survey, guidance on asbestos, relocation of an organ within a church, restoration of an historic instrument and even disposal of a redundant organ.

1.5 In addition to maintaining our website www.urcmusic.org.uk the Guild produces a newsletter twice a year and can supply a pack of guidance leaflets on a variety of musical subjects. Generally in October, an annual meeting is arranged. In 2012, the Guild celebrates its 40th Anniversary by kind invitation of Carrs Lane URC in Birmingham on Saturday 6th October and it is certain that a wonderful day of music, worship and praise will be on offer to all those who wish to join us.

1.6 For further information, please contact the Honorary General Secretary, Mrs Chris James, via the website.

Schools relating to the URC

1 Since the last report in 2010 there have been a number of changes in the administration of the group of Heads, Chaplains and Trustees that meet as the Schools Related to the URC Committee. Professor Clyde Binfield retired as convener of this group after many years and the Revd Nigel Uden stepped down as coordinator. Our thanks go to both of them for their service.

2 The group which comprises the schools related to the URC now consists of eight schools – Bishop Stortford College; Bournemouth Collegiate School; Caterham School; Eltham College; Mill Hill School; Silcoates School; Taunton School and Walthamstow Hall. The URC's relationship with these schools is at different levels with only some having URC chaplains, who may also teach at the school, but most with URC governors who bring the URC's ethos and support into the life of the school.

3 With the departure of both Professor Binfield and Mr Uden the group met to consider its future. It was agreed that this continued to be an important forum for information sharing and mutual support and, after much discussion, it was agreed that the school heads and the URC trustees should meet bi-annually convened by the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith whilst the chaplains would meet annually. The Revd Richard Warden (Mill Hill School) will coordinate the chaplains' meetings.

4 The last two years have been exciting for many of the schools and they have included photographs with their reports to give you a flavour of some of the special events which have taken place. We would ask that you hold all these schools, staff and pupils in your prayers as they continue to give faithful witness to God in an increasingly secular society.

Caterham School

1.1 Caterham School celebrated its bicentenary during the academic year 2011/2012. Founded by the Revd John Townsend in October 1811, it enrolled its first students in early 1812. To mark this historic milestone, the school embarked on a wide ranging programme of celebration and commemoration. The highlight, without question, saw 2000 members of the



school community converging on Westminster Abbey to take part in a wonderful service of thanksgiving with over 150 students actively participating as singers, dancers, readers or actors. Other memorable events have included the hosting of a concert at the prestigious St John's, Smith Square, a visit by HRH the Duke of Kent to open our refurbished pavilion, a fascinating lecture series featuring prominent former members of the school, a magnificent Proms in the Park on Home Field and a highly entertaining staff pantomime! Alongside these events a series of reunions were organised to welcome back former debaters, scientists, politicians, sports men and women and CCF cadets. It has been a year that few people will forget and the publication of the school's history entitled *Independent Spirit* will mean that the eventful history of the school will be appreciated by new generations of Caterhamians.

1.2 Amid the festivities, academic standards continue to flourish. We were delighted to be identified by the Financial Times as the Best 11-18 Co-Educational School for A level results in 2011 – an astonishing accolade for the school. Added to that, 13 students were accepted to study at Oxbridge and biology and physics were ranked as amongst the outstanding science departments in the country. The school was short-listed for a number of national awards and won the Education Initiative of the Year at the Independent Schools Awards whilst also being recognised as one of the top five co-ed schools nationally by the Best Schools website.

1.3 The sporting season got off to a flying start with an ambitious bicentenary world tour with matches in Hong Kong, New Zealand and Los Angeles. Pupils have since gained county and regional honours in rugby, hockey, netball and lacrosse and one 15 year old pupil has been selected to play for the England U19s lacrosse team. Caterham's co-curricular programme is booming with more students than ever joining clubs and societies and a record number of students gained the Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award. The range of activities on offer continues to grow with the setting up of a new dance troupe called Urbanised, gymnastics growing in popularity and the Karting club beating all comers.

1.4 The school works hard to expand the international horizons of its students and the opportunities for travel have been impressive. Geographers trekked across Iceland, CCF cadets trained in Gibraltar, linguists crossed the channel and biologists braved the cold of West Wales. Equally, the school is very proud of the links it has abroad and now helps to support and sponsor schools in Tanzania, Ukraine and India. Sixth form students visit these schools each year to teach and to befriend and these partnerships have proved hugely rewarding in many different ways.

1.5 Overall then, the school is in very good shape and is looking forward to the next 200 years with a good deal of confidence.

Julian Thomas, Headmaster



HRH Duke of Kent, meeting Head Boy and Head Girl

Eltham College

1.1 It is hard to forget that Eltham College was originally founded as the School for the Sons of Missionaries: our crest includes the Missionary staves, the letters SSM can be found in the Central Hall, and the Boards remembering the boys who went on to become missionaries themselves, and the countries they went to, line the main staircase outside my study. While there are fewer missionaries around the world than before, this fact should not prevent us from remembering our past. Therefore when I was approached by a member of staff, Mrs Christine Head-Rapson, about supporting a Secondary School in Tanzania, I took very little time to decide that this was the type of thing Eltham College should be doing in the 21st Century – it seemed to chime with our heritage and would provide an opportunity to open the eyes of our current pupils to life beyond the boundaries of Mottingham.

1.2 Working in tandem with Azar, a Charity based in Sidcup, a group of 12 sixth-formers led by Mrs Head-Rapson travelled to Dodoma the new capital of Tanzania; my wife and I joined the trip for a week over half-term. In a suburb called Kisasa we spent time teaching lessons, conducting debates, performing plays and generally spending time with the children of the Secondary School. We had raised a good sum of money during the previous year in anticipation of this trip and we were able to buy a large number of text books for Geography and Civics when we arrived. In the second week, our pupils spent time cleaning and redecorating a classroom block before taking part in a sports day with the local children. The whole experience was most stimulating, and we all returned feeling that we might have helped some of the children in very simple terms.

1.3 However, on returning to Eltham my reflections focused on how we might make more of a difference in the longer term. The biggest difficulty the school faced was that the Headmaster could only really afford to recruit six full-time teachers, and he made up the rest of the teaching staff with unqualified students who had recently left the school. This meant that the class sizes were mainly 90 per class, and very few other than the front rows took part in the lessons. Mrs Head-Rapson and I taught the year groups in smaller groups to show the teachers how much more could be done by involving all the pupils. While it would be wonderful to raise the money to provide the school with electricity and running water, as well as even more text books, the most effective way to make a real difference was to provide more teachers, who could speak English (80% of the curriculum is in English), and reduce the class sizes in the first instance. I was delighted when Mrs Elaine Galloway agreed to go out to Kisasa to work teaching Science for two years, and subsequently I have been contacted by recent OE leavers who wish to go out to help Mrs Galloway for a shorter period of time. We have raised more money this year by asking our pupils to pay the £1 a month the Kisasa children should pay to attend the school, and we hope that this can be used to help improve the school's resources when the time is right. Another trip of our Sixth Formers visited Kisasa in October 2011, and two former pupils and two existing staff have arranged to spend time working in Kisasa in 2012. We have helped finance the completion of a new teaching block which now means that those teachers who come from Eltham to Kisasa will be able to help reduce class sizes and improve the educational experience of the children there. I hope that this partnership with the school will become a regular feature of life at Eltham College for some time to come.

P J Henderson, Headmaster

Silcoates School

1.1 For the last two years our website – www.silcoates.org.uk – has been expanding into an exciting record of the events and activities of the school, as well as a place of information for students, parents and others. With hundreds of news items covering activities such as chapel events and services, sports matches, concerts and drama, as well as achievements of individuals and groups locally, nationally and beyond, it really is well worth a visit.

1.2 This year has seen the launch of our Goa Project, aiming to refurbish a school in India, where the kitchen, classrooms and dormitories all need substantial work. A party of 28 students and staff will travel to Goa at Easter 2012 to carry out this work. This means a huge fundraising effort by the rest of the school. So far we have had dressing up days, own clothes days and a race night, with plenty of other events planned. Our target is £10,000 in the first instance but we plan to build up a partnership with this project over the next ten years, visiting regularly and contributing in whatever ways we can, giving the students the opportunity to see the long-term development of the project.

1.3 Four of our students took part in the Yorkshire Synod Women's Anglo-German Gathering in Northumberland in August 2011. The theme was 'In the footsteps of the saints' and included a visit to Holy Island.

1.4 The appointment of our new chaplain, Revd Dr Janet Lees, will we hope bring improved links with the Yorkshire Synod of the United Reformed Church. Dr Lees previously served as the URC's Vision4Life Coordinator and has a reputation for using the Bible in different ways – and giving out a lot of biscuits!

1.5 One of the chaplain's main pastoral responsibilities is to oversee our developing peer mentoring scheme. Our sixth form peer mentors are kept busy providing support and encouragement to younger students as necessary. We also have a thriving paired reading scheme and a growing voluntary service group. In each of the last two years we have raised over £20,000 for charity and we are well on target to do so again.

Darryl Wideman, Headmaster



The Taunton School Greenpower Team competed at the Bedford Autodrome for the Eastern regional heat. They finished in seventh place out of 26 competitors, with an average speed of 21mph, not including pit stops. More importantly, they were awarded the 2011 Siemens award for innovation, where the overall car was judged as demonstrating the best use of materials, construction and overall design in its F24 class.



The newly formed girls' AVE choir from Taunton School, performed a 45 minute concert on the foyer stage of the Wales Millennium Centre

Taunton School

1 In the Government's 2011 exam league tables, Taunton School was placed second in Somerset for A-levels and third for GCSEs. The tables showed students achieved 874.7 A-level points – slightly behind the top county score – and 399.8 GCSE points – only one point off Somerset's top spot. To do so well regionally at both GCSE and A-level/IB is testimony to the hard work of pupils and also demonstrates the commitment and ambition of teaching staff.

2 In January 2012 the school received a glowing inspectors' report which praised its provision in a range of areas including pastoral care, extra-curricular provision and the knowledge and skills across all subjects and activities. While there were a few minor matters to adjust, affirmation was huge.

3 The school community officially welcomed the Revd Christabel Ager as its new chaplain in January 2012. The appointment was celebrated with a service of induction in the Chapel and reinforced the central place the Christian message has in the life of Taunton School.

4 January 2012 also saw three of the school's indoor hockey teams – U16 girls and U16 and U18 boys – reach the national finals. They were unfortunate not to leave with a title after considerable commitment and effort from both pupils and staff.

5 In the Spring Term, the 1st XI boys' hockey team completed a remarkable unbeaten season – the best in 75 years of competitive hockey at Taunton School. The squad have re-written the school record books, a tremendous effort by all the players who were led superbly by captain Tom Abell.

6 In March, 2012, Taunton School officially opened a new girls' boarding house bearing the name 'Woodyer'. The house – located in the heart of the school campus – provides excellent modern facilities for some 50 girls, aged 13 to 18. This comes just months after the opening of a second indoor pool while the school is also looking ahead to 2013 with plans set in motion for the provision of a second Astro pitch.

7 Taunton School goes from strength to strength and, as a result, is ideally placed to support and develop children from ministers' families for the challenges of life in the 21st century.

Walthamstow Hall

1.1 The 2010/2011 academic year has been another busy and fulfilling one at Walthamstow Hall.

1.2 Our 2011 examination grades were once again outstanding. 81% of A levels, 89% of pre-u and 98% of GCSEs and IGCSEs were awarded at grades A* – B. These results put the school firmly into *The Sunday Times* list of Top 100 Independent Secondary Schools in the UK. We were delighted when Bishop James, Bishop of Rochester, came into school in October to congratulate students personally on their exceptional GCSE Religious Studies results: 90% of the girls attained an A* grade, 8% an A grade and 2% a B grade, all the more impressive as the girls sat this exam one year early in Lower Fifth (Year 10).

1.3 Walthamstow Hall girls are also excelling outside the classroom, both in the arts and sport. Music has a very special place at the heart of the school. The new Wally Singers is open to anyone who wants to sing and gives monthly informal concerts. In the new Wally Pop concert the girls choose the programme. In drama, we can't imagine how we ever coped without the new Elwes Drama Studio (2010). It has proved to be an invaluable teaching and rehearsal space. The last year has seen breathtaking performances of *Fiddler on the Roof*, *The Crucible*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Mary Stuart* and most recently *Nicholas Nickleby*.

1.4 On the sports field girls have been performing at an equally high level. Twenty five students are currently playing at county or national level in a huge variety of sports from athletics to curling, lacrosse, netball and softball.

1.5 Premises developments have continued with the 2010 opening of the new Design Technology Room and Downton Music Room. At the time of writing building work on a new student entrance, meeting and gallery space, which has included the refurbishment of the Main School Hall, is nearing completion. When finished later this term the new entrance will give the school campus a light, spacious and versatile central hub.

1.6 The girls continue to give a lot of time, energy and ideas to charity work. Three notable additions to the existing charities programme have been; Kusasa, which educates underprivileged children in South Africa; 'LoavesNFishes', which distributes food to twenty local families in need and 'Strictly Wally', a dazzling charity dancing event organised by a team of talented and tireless sixth formers.



1.7 We have also developed a very strong link with St John's, our local primary school which serves a more deprived area of Sevenoaks. Nearly all of our lower sixth volunteer at the school each week and St John's uses our swimming pool, science labs and theatre.

1.8 Two of the girls are 'clergy daughters'. Hannah Thom belongs to the United Reformed Church and her father serves as a governor. Susanna Walter attends the Church of England.

With best wishes from Walthamstow Hall.

Mrs Jill Milner, MA (Oxon), Headmistress

Women's World Day of Prayer

2011

1.1 *How many loaves have you?* was the challenging theme chosen by Christian women in Chile for the Women's World Day of Prayer (WWDP) annual service on the 4th March. It was an appropriate theme, for bread is eaten at every meal and is very much part of everyday life. The women of Chile offered what it meant to them and challenged us to consider our gifts and how we could share them, bringing God's love and care to others and especially to those in need.

1.2 Prior to the service many branches of WWDP around England, Wales and Northern Ireland will have held preparation days and Bible studies on the Bible readings in the order of service. The widow of Zarephath, a poor, under-privileged, nameless woman shares what little food she has with Elijah, who brings her God's promise that the oil and flour will not run out. In Mark's story of the feeding of the 5,000 we learn that it is not enough to be aware of other's needs Jesus asks us to meet those needs with what we have. No matter how little, it will be enough if we are willing to share.

1.3 At the heart of every service lie the prayers. Prayers for a united community where faith will be demonstrated in practical action. Prayers for faith to live with joy, to trust in God and to recognise in God those who need him most. We also remembered in prayer the recent events in Chile in 2010: the earthquake and the mining disaster and subsequent miraculous rescue operation.

1.4 The colourful picture on the front cover of the Order of Service is an embroidery by Chilean Norma Ulloa. Thinking of Christ while she sewed she felt deep emotion and joy whilst focussing her ideas on prayer and bread. Sadly Norma died of heart failure shortly after the earthquake, which struck the area around her home with great force.



2012

2.1 When the annual Women’s World Day of Prayer dawns on the first Friday in March a great wave of prayer sweeps the world. This year there was a slight difference as the International Date Line had changed. Instead of the Queen Salote Girls’ School in Tonga holding the first service of the day, now the first service takes place in Western Samoa and the last in American Samoa. Nevertheless over 3 million people in 170 countries worldwide will have celebrated the Day and more than 5,000 services will have been held in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

2.2 *Let justice prevail* was the challenging theme for this year’s central act of worship, prepared by Christian women in Malaysia. Bible verses from Habakkuk helped us grapple with the theme. Greatly troubled by the desperate conditions around him, Habakkuk complained bitterly to God because justice was not prevailing and corruption was rife. God’s answer was the assurance that something astonishing would happen. The parable of the widow and the unfair judge echoes Habakkuk as Jesus urges his disciples to “pray and not to lose heart”. The story teaches the need for faithful prayer and persistent action.

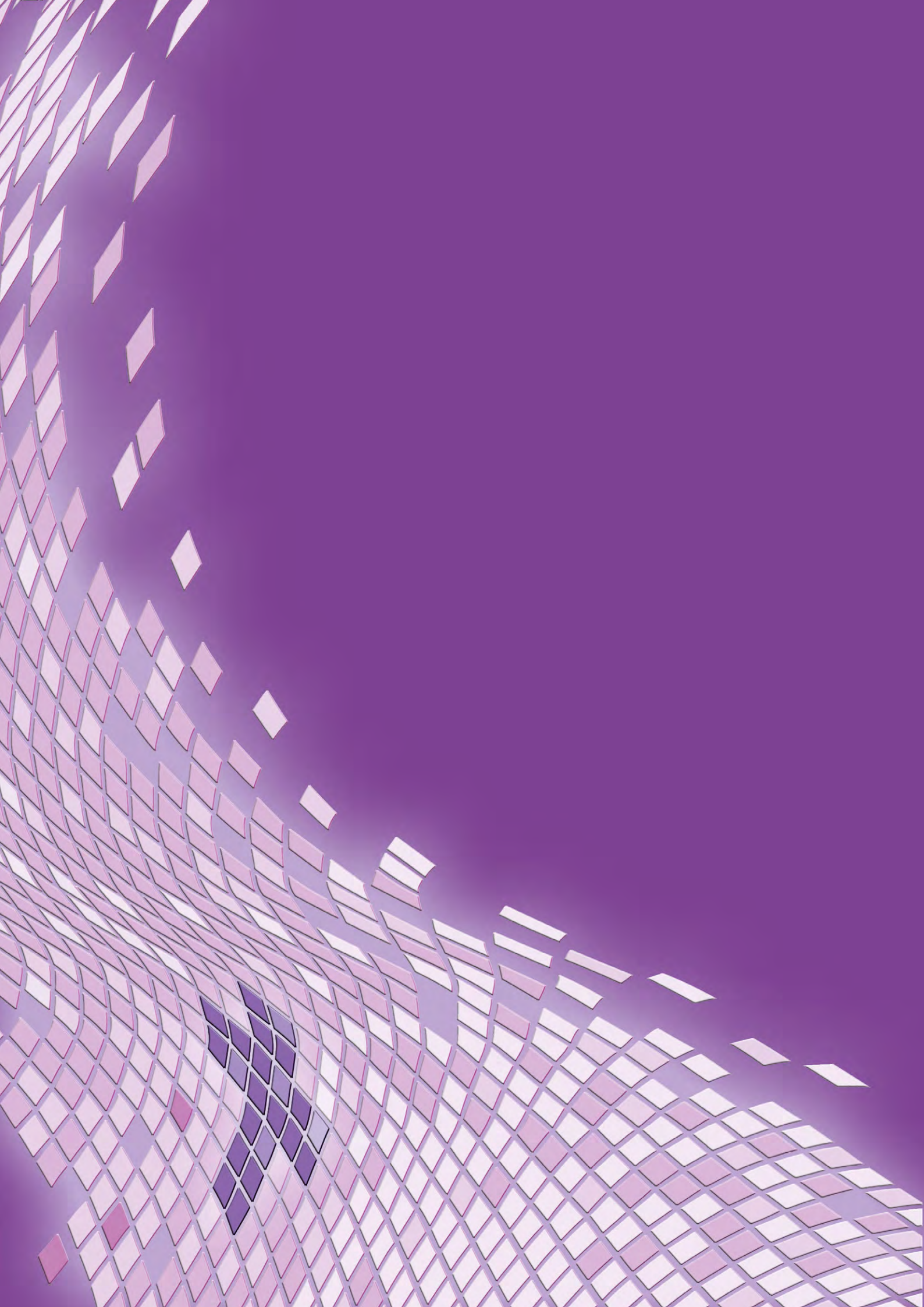
2.3 The painting on the cover of the order of service hangs on the office wall of a lawyer in Kuala Lumpur. The artist, Hanna Verghese entitled her artwork *Justice*, based on a text from Micah 6:8. The lawyer says it inspires him for his work in court.



2.4 Further information about WWDP may be obtained at:
www.wwdp-natcomm.org

Resolutions





Resolutions

Clerk

Resolution 1

Appointment of the Convener of Tellers for the election of the Moderators

General Assembly appoints XY to serve as Convener of Tellers for the election of the Moderators 2014-16.

Resolution 2

Appointment of Facilitation Group members

General Assembly appoints AB, CD, EF to serve as Facilitation Group members, with the freedom to involve others as appropriate.

Resolution 3

Change to the Structure of the United Reformed Church (Section B of the Manual) (Resolution 26 of General Assembly 2010)

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.

Resolutions

- (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. If such a motion is before the General Assembly it shall require a majority of two-thirds of the members present and voting to pass. If the motion is before the Mission Council it shall require a simple majority 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.

Change to the Structure of the United Reformed Church

1.1 This resolution enables Mission Council to act on behalf of General Assembly in approving constitutional amendments.

1.2 One of the knock-on effects of the change to a biennial Assembly is that the process for constitutional changes, which used to take two years, now takes four years. Currently constitutional changes must be agreed by one Assembly (by a two-thirds majority), referred to the synods in case any wishes to dissent, and ratified by the next Assembly (by a simple majority).

1.3 The proposal is that a constitutional change may in future originate in either Assembly or Mission Council. It will need a two-thirds vote to pass. It is then referred to the synods in case any might wish to dissent. As at present, if more than a third of the synods dissent, the matter falls. If the synods do not dissent, the matter then goes to the other body – to the Assembly if it began as a Mission Council resolution, and to Mission Council if it began in the Assembly. A simple majority vote of the Assembly is sufficient to ratify it, but it will require two-thirds majority of Mission Council for the change to be agreed.

1.4 This resolution was passed to the synods in 2010 and one synod dissented from it.

Resolution 4

Disciplinary Process amendments to Part I

(Resolution 5 of General Assembly 2010)

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”**.

Disciplinary Process amendments to Part I

This resolution does four things.

- i) It implements the decision that only an Assembly Commission should be able to refer a case from the Disciplinary Process to the Incapacity Procedure. Originally that authority rested with an Appeals Commission as well.
- ii) It removes the power of an Assembly Commission to make recommendations regarding a minister’s future conduct or supervision. These have been found to be unenforceable and after much consideration the decision has been to remove the issuing of recommendations from an Assembly Commissions list of options.
- iii) It brings the Special Appeals Body under the authority of General Assembly alongside every other aspect of Section O.
- iv) It enables Mission Council or Assembly to amend Part II in response to official government statements of good practice as well as case law and changes in legislation.

Resolutions

Resolution 5

Incapacity Procedure amendments to Part I

(Resolution 6 of General Assembly 2010)

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**”.

Incapacity Procedure amendments to Part I

This resolution does three things.

- i) It allows a Review Commission to refer an Incapacity case into the Disciplinary Procedure and to make other recommendations within defined limits.
- ii) It brings the Special Appeals Body under the authority of the General Assembly (equivalent to item iii in Resolution 4).
- iii) It makes the equivalent change as item iv in Resolution 4.

Resolution 6

Amendment to the Structure of the United Reformed Church

(Resolution 9 of General Assembly 2010)

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.}

Amendment to the Structure of the United Reformed Church

This resolution is an amendment to the Structure of the URC (Section B of the Manual). It removes Part I of both the Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure from the two-Assembly rule for constitutional changes. This means that in future all changes to Sections O and P can be agreed by one vote of Assembly or Mission Council without referral to the synods. It also tidies up two errors in the current version of the Structure.

Resolution 7

Amendment to the Ministerial Disciplinary Process

(Resolution 7 of General Assembly 2010)

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.

Amendment to the Ministerial Disciplinary Process

This resolution removes reference to the two-Assembly rule from the Ministerial Disciplinary Process.

Resolution 8

Amendment to the Incapacity Procedure

(Resolution 8 of General Assembly 2010)

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.

Amendment to the Incapacity Procedure

This resolution removes to the two-Assembly rule from the Incapacity Procedure.

Resolutions

Resolution 9

Bournemouth International Church

General Assembly receives the Bournemouth International Church as a local church of the United Reformed Church.

Bournemouth International Church

1.1 Bournemouth International Church was formally adopted as a mission project of the United Reformed Church at General Assembly in 2010. Since this time the church has been preparing to become a fully-fledged United Reformed Church.

1.2 The church traces its beginnings to a prayer meeting held in July 1998 at Joshua Han's house in Bournemouth. An International Church commenced meeting in Richmond Park Church on 10 January 1999, becoming known as Bournemouth International Church in January 2000. The church has met in various locations since then time including East Cliff URC. Since December 2010 the church has met in Boscombe Baptist Church for its Sunday services and some weekday activities. At present synod representatives are helping the church to find permanent premises for their purposes.

1.3 The church attracts numerous newcomers each year with the annual influx of international students into the Bournemouth area, and over 70 different nationalities have been involved in the church. There are currently 160 regular attendants at the church and the average gathering each Sunday is 110. The church has a worship coordinator, three worship leaders and various musicians, and currently has eleven Bible study groups meeting during the week with Bible studies being undertaken in three different languages.

Resolution 10

Heston Asian United Reformed Church

General Assembly welcomes the West London United Reformed Asian Christian Fellowship, a mission project of the United Reformed Church, as a local church of the United Reformed Church, to be known as the Heston Asian United Reformed Church (HAURC).

Heston Asian United Reformed Church

1 In a service on 7 September 2008 the Thames North Synod initiated a mission project on the premises of Heston United Reformed Church. The project planted a church among Asian Christians in the community. The Revd Noble Samuel was inducted as the minister on 18 October 2008. At that time, the fellowship had 22 people attending worship. This has grown now to 40 families. Attendance at Sunday services is between 80 and 100, with more attending services on special occasions.

2 The fellowship worships in Urdu, Punjabi and English and uses a variety of music and worship styles that represent its multicultural and multiethnic life. The fellowship has a strong vision to grow through sharing the gospel message, nurturing the faith of those who attend and also through its work in the local and wider community, including TV and radio broadcasts.

3 In the three years since its inception and under the guidance of Thames North Synod the fellowship has flourished and worked with the synod to understand how a URC congregation functions. In November 2011 the synod agreed that the fellowship had understood this and was seeking to live as a congregation bound by the Basis of Union of the URC. A resolution was passed that West London Asian Fellowship be recommended to General Assembly for recognition as a local church.

Resolution 11

Church changes

General Assembly receives notice of the closure of the local churches listed on pages 173 to 180 and gives thanks to God for their worship, witness and service.

Mission Council

Resolution 12

Re-appointment of the Treasurer

General Assembly appoints John Ellis as Honorary Treasurer for a further period of service from 2013 to 2017.

Re-appointment of the Treasurer

John Ellis was appointed Treasurer in 2007 and currently continues in a six-year term of service. He is eligible for re-appointment for a further four years. This resolution comes on the recommendation of Mission Council.

Resolution 13

The registration of civil partnerships on religious premises

General Assembly, recognising the considerable differences of conviction held within the church on same-sex relationships and holding to its Commitment on human sexuality passed in 2007, grants its consent for church meetings within the United Reformed Church, if they so wish, to direct the trustees of their church's premises (or to request the trustees of other premises, the use of which their church shares) to apply for approval of those premises for the registration of Civil Partnerships.

(This would be applicable in England and Wales only. It would not apply in Scotland, the Channel Isles or the Isle of Man where the law on civil partnership registration has not yet changed. The Scottish Government has initiated a separate consultation and the Synod of Scotland has made a submission in response.)

Resolutions

Resolution 14

Review of the role of synod moderator

- (a) Assembly receives the report of the Review Group on the Role of Synod Moderator and endorses the six principles for change incorporated within it.
- (b) Assembly instructs the general secretary to establish a group to give effect to the six principles in the report. This group should:
- incorporate the insights of other reviews currently underway;
 - consult with the synods;
 - create coherent proposals for changes in the procedures of the Church; and
 - report to General Assembly 2014, noting any outstanding issues requiring further work.

Resolution 15

Changes to the Structure

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to the Structure of the United Reformed Church: (Where sections are replaced, changes from the existing are shown in red type.)

Synod Functions**2(4)(A)(xvii)****Amend to read as follows:**

where the Synod, acting through its Moderator (or his/her duly appointed deputy) in accordance with either the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church (where the issues relate to perceived disciplinary breach(es)) or the Incapacity Procedure contained in Section P of the Manual (where the issues relate to perceived incapacity as defined in the Incapacity Procedure), considers that a minister or church related community worker is not or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E or Paragraph 2 of Schedule F, Part II to the Basis of Union, as the case may be, to take the appropriate one of the following courses namely (i) to refer the case of that minister or church related community worker into the Disciplinary Process in the manner prescribed by that Process and to act in accordance with the provisions thereof as regards the suspension of the minister or church related community worker concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Process (reference to be made to Paragraph 7.5 of the Structure to ascertain the point at which a Disciplinary case shall commence) or (ii) to follow the Consultation Procedure prescribed by the Incapacity Procedure which could in its turn lead to the case of the minister or church related community worker being referred into the Incapacity Procedure and to act in accordance with the provisions thereof as regards the suspension of the minister or church related community worker concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Procedure (reference to be made to Paragraph 6.5 of the Structure to ascertain the point at which a case shall commence within the Incapacity Procedure) (the transitional overlap which occurs when a case is referred back from the Disciplinary Process or the Incapacity Procedure leading to the commencement of a case within the other of them shall be a permitted extension of the Function).

2(4)(A)(xviii)**Amend to read as follows:**

to ensure that, where an Assembly Commission or an Appeals Commission

following a Hearing under the **Disciplinary Process contained in** Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church or a Review Commission or an Appeals Review Commission following a Hearing under the **Incapacity Procedure** contained in Section P of the Manual *{words omitted}* appends guidance to its decision to delete the name of the minister or church related community worker from the respective Roll, any such *{words omitted}* guidance is brought fully to the attention of those responsible for exercising oversight of the minister or church related community worker and any others **who might in the future** be identified as being proper and appropriate persons to receive such information;

2(4)(A)(xxi)

Amend to read as follows:

to consider the resignation of ministers or church related community workers not currently the subject of any case within **the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O** and in consultation with the moderator of the Synod to decide upon appropriate action *{words omitted}*;

2(4)(B) Remove this paragraph altogether.

2(4)(C) This paragraph now becomes 2(4)(B) and is amended to read as follows:

2(4)(C) No appeal shall lie against the decision by a Synod to initiate the **Disciplinary Process contained in Section O or the Incapacity Procedure contained in Section P** in respect of any minister or church related community worker under Function (xvii).

Area Functions

2(5)(A)(viii)

Amend to read as follows:

to consider the resignation of ministers or church related community workers not currently the subject of any case within the **Disciplinary Process** contained in Section O and in consultation with the moderator of the Synod to decide upon appropriate action (see also Paragraphs 2(4)(A)(xxi) and 2(6)(A)(xviii));

2(5)(A)(xviii)

Amend to read as follows:

to ensure that, where an Assembly Commission or an Appeals Commission following a Hearing under the **Disciplinary Process** contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church or a Review Commission or an Appeals Review Commission following a Hearing under the **Incapacity Procedure contained in Section P of the Manual** appends *{words omitted}* guidance to its decision to delete the name of the minister or church related community worker from the respective Roll, any such *{words omitted}* guidance is brought fully to the attention of those responsible for exercising oversight of the minister or church related community worker and any others **who might in the future** be identified as being proper and appropriate persons to receive such information;

2(5)(B) Remove this paragraph altogether.

General Assembly Functions

2(6)(A)(xi) *[Changes to this paragraph were approved under Resolution 9 of General Assembly 2010 and require ratification by General Assembly 2012.]*

2(6)(A)(xviii)

Amend to read as follows:

to decide upon questions regarding the inclusion on the Roll of Ministers and the Roll of Church Related Community Workers of the United Reformed Church which have been previously considered and transmitted with recommendations by synods

Resolutions

(but excluding any matter which is dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Process referred to in **Paragraph 7 of the Structure**). *{words omitted}*

2(6)(A)(xxiii)

Amend to read as follows:

in the absence of any reference into either the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church (where the issues relate to perceived disciplinary breach(es)) or the Incapacity Procedure contained in Section P of the Manual (where the issues relate to perceived incapacity as defined in the Incapacity Procedure) by the appropriate Synod (the case of any minister who is the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary or a Moderator of Synod being necessarily dealt with under this provision) and where the General Assembly (or Mission Council on its behalf) (acting through the Deputy General Secretary or his/her duly appointed deputy) considers that a minister or church related community worker is not or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E or Paragraph 2 of Schedule F, Part II to the Basis of Union, as the case may be, to take the appropriate one of the following courses namely (i) to refer the case of that minister or church related community worker into the Disciplinary Process in the manner prescribed by that Process and to act in accordance with the provisions thereof as regards the suspension of the minister or church related community worker concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Process (reference to be made to Paragraph 7.5 of the Structure to ascertain the point at which a Disciplinary case shall commence) or (ii) to follow the Consultation Procedure prescribed by the Incapacity Procedure which could in its turn lead to the case of the minister or church related community worker being referred into the Incapacity Procedure and to act in accordance with the provisions thereof as regards the suspension of the minister or church related community worker concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Procedure (reference to be made to Paragraph 6.5 of the Structure to ascertain the point at which a case shall commence within the Incapacity Procedure) (the transitional overlap which occurs when a case is referred back from the Disciplinary Process or the Incapacity Procedure leading to the commencement of a case within the other of them shall be a permitted extension of the Function);

2(6)(A)(xxvi)

Amend to read as follows:

without detracting from the general delegatory powers held by Mission Council, to give specific authority to Mission Council acting in the name of General Assembly to make with immediate effect such changes to any part of the Ministerial Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual or the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure contained in Section P as are recommended to Mission Council by the MIND Advisory Group (or such other Group or Committee as may in the future perform the functions of that Group), all such changes to be reported to the next meeting of the General Assembly.

2(6)(A)(xxvii) The existing Function (xxvi) becomes (xxvii)

2(6)(B) Remove this paragraph.

5 APPEALS

5(1) Remove this Paragraph.

5(2) This Paragraph to become Paragraph 5 and the opening words to read:

5. "The procedure for dealing with references and appeals falling outside Paragraph 6 (Incapacity Procedure) and Paragraph 7 (Disciplinary Process) is as follows:-"

The remaining 4 unnumbered paragraphs under the existing 5(2) are unchanged.

6 INCAPACITY PROCEDURE

6.1 After the words “...**consider that s/he is...**” insert the word “**not**” and after the words “**(in the case of CRCWs**” insert a closing bracket.

6.2 Add the following words at the end of this paragraph:

“..., and once so initiated that case shall be resolved in accordance with the Incapacity Procedure and not under Paragraph 5 above.”

6.3, 6.4 These paragraphs are unchanged.

6.5 Add a new paragraph 6.5 as follows:

6.5 A case shall commence within the Incapacity Procedure when the Synod Moderator or the Deputy General Secretary shall send or deliver to the Secretary of the Review Commission* a Certificate of Entry* and a Commencement Notice* (the expressions marked * being defined in the Incapacity Procedure).

7 Insert new Section 7 as follows:

7. DISCIPLINARY PROCESS

7.1 The Provisions of this Paragraph 7 shall apply to cases proceeding under the Disciplinary Process (Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church) where the person responsible for initiating it in respect of a particular minister or church related community worker considers that s/he is not or may not be exercising the ministry of word and sacrament or the ministry of church related community work as the case may be in accordance (in the case of ministers) with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E of the Basis of Union and (in the case of CRCWs) with Paragraph 2 of Schedule F, Part II thereto and perceives the issue as a disciplinary one not falling within Paragraph 6 above.

7.2 No right of appeal shall lie against any decision taken in accordance with Paragraph 7.1 above to initiate the Disciplinary Process in respect of any minister or CRCW, and once so initiated that case shall be resolved in accordance with the Disciplinary Process and not under Paragraph 5 above.

7.3 The decision reached in any particular case (whether or not on appeal) under the Disciplinary Process shall be made in the name of the General Assembly and shall be final and binding.

7.4 As soon as any minister or CRCW becomes the subject of a case under the Disciplinary Process, none of the Councils of the Church shall exercise any of its functions in respect of that minister or CRCW in such a manner as to affect, compromise or interfere with the due process of that case provided that the provision of such pastoral care as shall be deemed appropriate shall not be regarded as a breach of this paragraph.

7.5.1 In any case in which the Caution Stage (as defined in the Disciplinary Process) is invoked, that case shall begin with the calling in of the Synod Appointees as described in the Disciplinary Process.

7.5.2 In any case in which the Caution Stage is not invoked, that case shall begin with the calling in of the Mandated Group as described in the Disciplinary Process.

Education and learning

Resolution 16

Mandatory training

General Assembly accepts that it will sometimes be appropriate to make certain additional training mandatory under our EM3 provisions for ministers of Word and sacraments and church related community workers. It will be for Mission Council to agree the nature, expected outcomes, and monitoring of such training.

Mandatory training

1.1 All ministers of Word and sacraments and church related community workers in the United Reformed Church are encouraged to engage in continuing ministerial development, in ways that are relevant to the ministries to which they are called at particular times and in particular contexts. This is known as Education for Ministry Phase 3. In order to enable individuals to devote time and resources to this the General Assembly of 1999 endorsed the inclusion in terms of settlement (or their equivalent) of two weeks of study leave each year. The Training Report to Assembly of 1999 suggested a figure up to £700 towards training costs for each eligible minister, and this figure has remained at this level since then. This is accessed through the Synod Training Officer or equivalent, and is unaffected by whether service is full-time, part-time, stipendiary or non-stipendiary.

1.2 The purpose of the EM3 programme is to ensure that people in public ministry are engaged in continuous development, so that they are refreshed and equipped for the constantly changing demands of 21st century ministry. Some EM3 activities cost very little yet yield valuable rewards, whilst others demand investment of time and resources which stretch the budgets of individuals and the Church, and have long term positive impacts. The criteria for what can be included in EM3 is given in broad outline by Assembly and worked out in detail by individual ministers and their Synod officers.

2.1 From time to time there have been instances where the United Reformed Church has come close to requiring ministers of Word and sacraments and church related community workers to undertake particular training because the skills, knowledge and attitudes which it engenders are an essential part of what is expected of people in public ministry. Examples include Child Protection and Vulnerable Adult training, and some legislative aspects of trusteeship.

2.2 Given the public expectations that church ministry elicits, and the authority which comes from holding public office, the Education and Learning Committee and the Ministries Committee jointly propose this resolution.

Finance

Resolution 17

Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for 2011

General Assembly notes the Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2011.

Trustees' Report and Accounts for 2011

The accounts for the United Reformed Church's central activities are now presented as the Financial Statements of the URC Trust. Their formal adoption is therefore by the Trust but a copy of the 2011 Report and Financial Statements is provided to Assembly for information. The Trust will also appoint the auditors in consultation with the Finance Committee.

Resolution 18

Giving to the Ministry and Mission Fund

General Assembly, acknowledging the overflowing generosity of God and the desire of God's people to respond with grateful hearts:

- (i) thanks sincerely all church members and treasurers whose commitment has made possible Ministry and Mission Fund receipts totalling over £40m across the last two years;
- (ii) reiterates its policy agreed in 1992 and reiterated in 2003 that church members should be encouraged to give at least 5% of their income after tax to the Church;
- (iii) calls on all ministers, elders and lay preachers to present creatively the financial dimensions of Christian discipleship so that the Church becomes a community of cheerful givers.

Giving to the Ministry and Mission Fund

1 Over the last two years, discussions in the Finance Committee, URC Trust meetings and at Mission Council have often had to wrestle with the fact that the income to the Assembly's budget is falling steadily. This is mainly because giving to the M&M Fund, which typically provides over 90% of the budget income, looks likely to fall by nearly 2% in both 2011 and 2012, which in the context of inflation at over 3% represents a real reduction of around 5% per annum.

2 Assembly is invited to thank warmly many faithful members in local churches who give regularly and, through their local church's giving to the M&M Fund, pay for stipends, Assembly programmes and all the other costs of being a denomination.

3 Assembly is also invited to encourage a closer engagement with the Church's policy on tithing, recognising that a continued decline in income is not inevitable.

Resolution 19**Trends in Minister numbers**

General Assembly directs that for 2013 and until further notice, the target number of stipendiary ministers should be set so that the direct cost of supporting the ministry from the Assembly budget moves in line with the trend in overall membership numbers across the Church.

Trends in Minister numbers

1 In 2003 Assembly agreed that until further notice the target number of stipendiary ministers should be changed from that of the previous year by the same percentage as membership has changed (Assembly Record p31). As the trend reduction in membership had been around 3% a year, this in practice has meant that planning has been based on a reduction in the number of stipendiary ministers of 3% a year. The Ministries and Finance Committee work together to estimate future trends and to ensure the fluctuating number of ministers in service stays broadly in line with this policy. At the end of 2011 the number of stipendiary ministers was 498 (full-time equivalents) compared with a target number of 506.

2 The current Assembly policy was no doubt partly to ensure that the cost of sustaining the ministry, which falls predominantly on the Ministry and Mission Fund, did not rise faster than the likely giving of church members. If the costs per minister were not changing significantly, the policy would mean the costs per member would not rise.

3 However over the last five years, the costs per minister have risen, due both to stipend increases and to the greater contributions required for the Ministers' Pension Fund. Simultaneously the giving to the M&M Fund has begun to fall. Giving to M&M per member has continued to rise but not by a sufficient amount to offset the fall in membership, which over the last five years has averaged 3.5% per year. These trends threaten to open up a growing gap between the largest element of the Assembly budget's income – the M&M giving – and the largest element of the budget's expenditure – the support of stipendiary ministers.

4 In the medium term, many would hope that membership and income can be increased to remove the present degree of pressure on the budget. However until that new trend emerges, Mission Council believes the policy for the target number of stipendiary ministers needs to be changed. It is proposed that from 2013 the target number of these ministers should be set on the basis of the total costs falling on the Assembly budget moving in line with membership trends. In practice this would mean that if the costs per minister were to rise markedly, the number of ministers would be reduced rather than giving per member needing to rise much more rapidly than has proved possible in recent years. Similarly, if the wider economy were to improve sufficiently to relieve some of the pressure on the Pension Fund, a reduced cost per minister would allow the number of ministers to decrease more slowly.

5 The large number of expected retirements of the post-War Baby Boom generation of ministers in the next few years means that the proposed policy could be implemented without any change in the Church's policy of welcoming into training all those who are discerned to have been called to the stipendiary ministry.

Resolution 20

Reshaping the 2013 Budget

General Assembly, noting the need for a substantial reduction in net expenditure for the 2013 budget and the work done by Mission Council on specific areas of costs, requests that in preparing their 2013 budgets Committees achieve the following minimum net expenditure reductions relative to their 2012 budgets:

Assembly Arrangements Committee	£50k
Communications and Editorial Committee	£40k
Education and Learning Committee	£200k
Ministries Committee	£60k
Mission Committee	£150k
Youth and Children's Work Committee	£100k

Reshaping the 2013 Budget

1 Mission Council agreed in November 2011 that the deficit in the budget for 2012 was not sustainable and asked for a process to enable it to recommend to Assembly reductions in expenditure in the 2013 budget consistent with the Church's priorities. It asked the Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG) to oversee this process. As this work resonated with work being done by the Assembly Moderators' Think Tank, the Think Tank was asked to bring proposals for discussion to the March Mission Council. All Assembly Committees were asked to provide material about their own areas of work and priorities and this informed the Think Tank's initial suggestions. These suggestions were further developed by Mission Council.

2 Other business at the March Mission Council, much of it not predictable, meant that the later stages of the intended process at the Council were truncated and there was less debate than some Council members would have wished and certainly less than the Think Tank and MCAG had hoped. Nonetheless substantial time overall was spent on the issues and proposals come to Assembly with widespread support from the Council.

3 The Think Tank offered to Mission Council several broad guidelines to help shape the choice of budget priorities. Assembly comments on these would be helpful for the regular work of the Finance Committee and Mission Council in setting future budgets. They were:

- (i) We want to reshape the budget to better reflect our highest priorities for work that must be done centrally; cuts are never an end in themselves.
- (ii) We believe the local church most wants from the Assembly budget a supply of trained, paid and cared for ministers, who are treated well before, during and after their active ministries.
- (iii) We believe the local church and the synods want from the "centre" expert support in times of crisis and emergency.
- (iv) We are a much smaller Church than even five years ago and need to accept that we cannot be everywhere, do everything and sit at every table.
- (v) We recognise that outside this budget there are significant designated funds in the central Legacy Fund and in synods and via inter-synod resource sharing earmarked to support the most exciting of local risk-taking projects.
- (vi) We accept all our legal and constitutional obligations and do not seek to cut corners regarding them.

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- (vii) We do not want to suggest any staff reductions unless we are clear what work would be stopped, in order to avoid unreasonable burdens falling on other staff.
- (viii) We believe the Assembly Committees and their staff are more expert on the details of their work and responsibilities than either the Think Tank or Mission Council.

4 The questions the Think Tank suggested Council members might have in the forefront of their minds as they considered different options for cost reductions were:

- Q1: Which areas of this Committee's work would your local churches consider essential in the light of their engagement, as part of the whole Church, with God's mission?
- Q2: Which other activities of this Committee would be nice to have but not necessarily provided at Assembly level?
- Q3: If some activities identified in Q2 were no longer provided from the central budget, what would the consequences be?

5 As a result of their discernment process, Mission Council proposes to Assembly broad targets for each of the major programme committees as they prepare their 2013 budgets. There are specific areas for possible reduction behind the overall target figures but it would be left to the Committees to consider exactly how they achieved the reductions.

6 In addition Mission Council discussed several longer term topics for further cost reductions and the Committees will take those into account in longer term planning. The Think Tank, on the advice of the Finance Committee and the URC Trust, recommended to Mission Council that it identify savings of £1m in net expenditure. In fact Mission Council chose to only identify £600,000. Therefore if the committees' review of longer term costs do not produce significant savings a similar exercise is likely to be necessary in 2013 ahead of the 2014 budget.

7 The £600,000 reduction represents an overall reduction compared with the aggregate 2012 budgets of these committees of 14%. The major areas of cost in the budget not directly affected by these proposals are the infrastructural costs currently budgeted under the General Secretariat and Finance Committee. There was no consensus in Mission Council around the suggested item for immediate cost reduction in this area; for the longer term the intention is to explore ecumenical co-operation to achieve economies of scale. Another report coming to Assembly however proposes a major increase in costs in these areas and if Assembly favours that in principle, clarity will be required on how it is to be funded.

Resolution 21

Synod financial safety net

General Assembly agrees to a last resort financial safety net for synods in the form outlined in the following paragraphs 4-7.

Synod financial safety net

1 Mission Council noted the financial vulnerability of some synods and the unpredictable and voluntary nature of the existing inter-synod resource sharing scheme. It therefore asked the Finance Committee to prepare a possible safety net scheme. This would not replace the inter-synod resource sharing, which would continue in its present form. Nor would it provide unlimited funding for any synod activities. It would be a last resort facility for a synod which found it was unable to meet its basic financial obligations for providing the basic core work of a synod from within the synod itself. The safety net would only come into operation after a synod had taken all reasonable actions to increase its income and reduce its costs. In every case it would need specific authorisation by Mission Council.

2 After informal consultation with all the synods on an earlier draft, the Finance Committee offered to Mission Council a possible scheme, which was agreed. It is described below and is the basis of the proposed resolution.

3 Given the wide variety of what individual synods have chosen to undertake as synod work and staffing, and the difference of view about what is appropriate now, the only secure principle on which to assess the basic core work of a synod is to take the functions required of it by the General Assembly, through the Basis of Union and subsequent decisions. This does not imply that synods which have added many other tasks have been mistaken, simply that any underpinning from Assembly funds should be limited to functions required by the Assembly.

4 The stipends and some related costs of synod moderators are already funded from the Assembly budget. In broad terms the other essential core costs of running a synod arise from the following requirements:

- (i) holding decision-making sessions of synod, traditionally two annually;
- (ii) providing administrative support for the synod moderator;
- (iii) providing administrative and professional support for the synod trust, especially with regard to property matters, and the trust providing such support to local churches;
- (iv) overseeing ministers/CRCWs and candidates for the ministry and providing pastoral and mission support to churches;
- (v) fulfilling the functions of synod between synod meetings;
- (vi) liaising with General Assembly as required;
- (vii) providing support to local churches regarding good practice;
- (viii) functions required, urged or requested by Assembly resolutions, including currently:
 - employing and providing line management for a Children and Youth Development Officer (CYDO);
 - implementing Local Ministry and Mission Review and various other training requirements for EM2, EM3, elders, lay preachers and others.

5 To fulfil these responsibilities core costs in practice may have to cover, depending on the availability of skilled volunteers:

- (i) costs of holding two full meetings of the synod per year;
- (ii) provision of an office base for administrative staff;
- (iii) administrative and venue costs for committee meetings;
- (iv) part-time administrator to liaise with Church House and act as PA to the moderator;
- (v) CYDO, also acting as safeguarding adviser;
- (vi) training and development officer;
- (vii) part-time trust and property officer;
- (viii) part-time book-keeper;
- (ix) audit, accountancy and legal fees.

Resolutions

6 If a financial safety net were needed at some point for a synod to fulfil these basic core tasks, the following process would provide it within the framework of relationships that makes the United Reformed Church what it is today.

- (i) The safety net process would only be initiated at the request of the synod concerned.
- (ii) If the synod had not already supplied a three year budget plan to the Finance Committee it would present one.
- (iii) The Finance Committee would provide someone – the finance friend – to work alongside the synod to clarify its financial position and consider options for the future.
- (iv) If the synod wished to pursue the possibility of support from the Assembly budget, the finance friend would bring to the Finance Committee proposals supported by the synod.
- (v) The Finance Committee would make recommendations to Mission Council within the context of the Assembly budget in the light of the request from the synod. Any proposal for support would make clear whether this was a short term measure or expected to continue for the longer term.

7 In implementing this procedure, the following principles would be followed:

- (i) the synod would accept that all its resources, including designated funds and property, would be part of the discussion with the finance friend;
- (ii) the synod would accept that only the sort of core costs outlined above would be eligible for any support from the Assembly budget;
- (iii) the synod and Assembly would accept their legal and moral responsibilities towards all employees, and to ministers and CRCWs carrying out synod duties as part of their scoping.

8 While it would be easy to design a more complicated process, it is hoped a process on the lines outlined here would be an adequate framework for discussions between people all seeking the good of the whole Church. It would also avoid the need for the creation of any new committees.

Resolution 22

Ministers' Pension Fund: revision of benefits

[This resolution is subject to change once the results of the consultation on benefits changes is known]

General Assembly authorises Mission Council to agree to changes in the Rules of the Ministers' Pension Fund to reflect those changes in benefits on which the members' consultation in 2012 was based.

Ministers' Pension Fund: revision of benefits

1 Mission Council agreed to recommend changes to the benefits provided by the Ministers' Pension Fund. The detailed technical paper that sets out the issues addressed and explains the conclusions reached may be found in Appendix 5. This paper has been provided to all Fund members as part of the formal consultation.

2 The principal change would be to increase the Pension Age to 68 for the accrual of benefits in the future. This does not mean all ministers have to work until age 68. For older ministers approaching retirement the change will make little difference as benefits earned by service up to 2012 will still be calculated on the old basis assuming a retirement at age 65. For younger ministers it would mean that they will need to work

until age 68 to receive as good a pension as that which has hitherto been available to retiring ministers. However it will still be possible for any minister to retire at age 65 with reduced benefits if they so wish.

3 The other changes relate to modifying the rules for ill-health pensions for those who need to retire early on health grounds. The age restrictions on membership will also be removed so that all stipendiary ministers and CRCWs can join the scheme.

Resolution 23

Ministers' Pension Fund: rationale for ill-health pension enhancement

General Assembly, on behalf of the United Reformed Church, confirms to the Trustee of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund that it reasonably appears to the United Reformed Church that the introduction of a phased service enhancement to members of the Pension Fund joining after 31 December 2012, to be paid upon retirement in circumstances of ill-health (in the manner described in the May 2011 Mission Council Paper L4) fulfils a "business" need and will be to the benefit of members of the Pension Fund and the United Reformed Church.

Ministers' Pension Fund: rationale for ill-health pension enhancement

1 Through the work done by Mission Council, the Church has considered the level of ill-health pension which should be provided to future members of the Ministers' Pension Fund. The enhancement in respect of members who join after 31 December 2012 (contained in the May 2011 Mission Council Paper L4) rewards their loyalty and commitment to their ministry and the benefit that their extended experience of ministry is expected to bring to the United Reformed Church and its members. For the United Reformed Church it is expected that the phased service enhancement will not only help to encourage ministers to continue with their ministry until retirement but will also result in more consistency in the term of their ministry.

2 By law, where the rules of a pension scheme include terms which could result in a member with five (or more) years service receiving a less favourable benefit than a member with a longer period of service, the trustees of that scheme must seek confirmation from the sponsoring entity that this benefit design reasonably appears to the sponsoring entity to be fulfilling a "business need".

3 The United Reformed Church believes that an enhanced ill-health pension fulfils a "business" need for the reasons outlined above and the resolution is designed to confirm this to the Trustee of the Ministers' Pension Fund as required by legislation.

Resolution 24**Pensions Auto-Enrolment**

General Assembly agrees that from 1 July 2012 the Church will only offer two pension schemes for ministers and lay staff: The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund and The Pensions Trust Final Salary Scheme.

Pensions Auto-Enrolment

1 The Pensions Act 2008 saw the introduction of compulsory workplace pension provision from 2012. The Act compels all employers to automatically enrol all eligible workers into a pension scheme that meets or exceeds legal standards. For the purpose of pension provision, the Church has assumed that this provision should apply not only to lay workers but also to stipendiary ministers.

2 The Government regulations are fairly complex and lay down strict criteria relating to the kind of pension scheme which will meet the requirements of a Qualifying Workplace Pension Scheme, the eligible employees who must be auto-enrolled, the level of both employee/employer contributions and the specific administration required.

3 The Church currently administers a number of pension arrangements for ministers although there is only one pension fund available for lay employees. Administratively the new regulations will require a substantial amount of time to ensure compliance and therefore the relevant Committees of the Church are recommending that auto-enrolment be achieved only through the existing pension schemes, i.e. The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund and The Pensions Trust lay scheme.

Ministries

Resolution 25

Ending of full-time stipendiary service

Assembly agrees that full-time stipendiary service for Ministers and CRCWs will cease at the end of the month in which a person reaches her/his 68th birthday unless:

- a) a commitment to extend has been agreed through current procedures before 6 July 2012; or
- b) a case has been accepted by the Accreditation Sub-Committee that there are exceptional reasons why the particular piece of stipendiary service should be extended for a limited time.

Ending of full-time stipendiary service

- 1 In 2002 General Assembly resolved that:
 - full-time stipendiary service for Ministers and CRCWs will cease at the end of the month in which a person reaches her/his 65th birthday;
 - the option to stay in full-time service for a maximum of three years remained in 'exceptional circumstances'.
- 2 In 2006 General Assembly adopted a procedure for considering the extension of full-time stipendiary service by a minister of Word and sacraments or a church related community worker beyond the retirement age set by the United Reformed Church. This is known as our 'duty to consider' procedure and was prepared to reflect expected changes in employment law.
- 3 The duty to consider procedure is still an appropriate method of helping the Church to manage its finances whilst also having regard to the potential opportunities for Ministers and CRCWs preparing for service.
- 4 Raising the retirement age does not require Ministers and CRCWs to serve in a full-time capacity until they are 68 but it does allow for it to happen as the norm for those who wish to match their retirement to the age at which they can draw a pension from the URC Ministers Pension Fund without penalty.
- 5 Some former Congregational Union of Scotland Ministers have different retirement arrangements from other United Reformed Church Ministers and these would remain in place.

Resolutions

Resolution 26

Resourcing ministries

General Assembly:

- a) receives the report of the Ministries Committee working party on resourcing ministry;
- b) agrees that the resources used to support the Special Category Ministry programme will now be available to synods to support a wider range of ministry and sets the central Church costs of 2.5 stipends as the amount available to each synod; and
- c) requests the Ministries Committee to monitor the effects of this policy and consider whether it is practical and desirable to move to a method of funding all ministry that is delivered by a block grant to each synod.
- d) In light of the proposal to delegate decisions about special ministries to the synods, General Assembly agrees that the Ministries Committee should end the practice of making grants out of central funds to support higher education chaplaincy or workplace ministry.

Mission

Resolution 27

multicultural church, intercultural habit

- a) General Assembly celebrates its bold 2005 multicultural declaration, mindful of the changing landscape and context(s) for mission and ministry, what it means to be 'church' today, and of our need to deepen the ways we live justly as an inclusive Church.
- b) General Assembly, adopts a newly named focus: *multicultural church, intercultural habit*, marking the ongoing journey we are all on.
- c) General Assembly endorses the *multicultural church, intercultural habit charter* as an intentional way to enable renewal and a refocusing of how we live out our life together.
- d) General Assembly commends the aspirations of the Charter to the whole of the United Reformed Church (synods, local congregations and resource centres) encouraging all to seek relevant and contextual ways to make these real in our life together.

Resolution 28

Addressing the social impact of poverty and inequality in the UK

General Assembly resolves to encourage members of the United Reformed Church to “keep faith with the poor and challenge injustice” (*vision2020*) and to work to end inequality in our society by:

- a) affirming the work of CRCWs and others in working with the poorest communities;
- b) welcoming the moves by synods and congregations to commit to paying the Living Wage and encouraging others to do the same (which presently equates to £7.20 per hour outside of London and £8.30 in London);
- c) renewing our call for the introduction of a financial transaction tax as an innovative way of mitigating the impacts of poverty and inequality in the UK and other good causes such as climate change mitigation and adaptation and poverty alleviation overseas;
- d) encouraging churches and church members to actively challenge attitudes and language which treats those in poverty as anything less than people made in the image of God and to ask the Joint Public Issues Team to provide resources to help do this effectively both in the public and the private spheres;
- e) committing the Church to speak prophetically, particularly through the work of the Joint Public Issues Team and the Close the Gap campaign;
- f) supporting work to highlight injustices against the poorest, including spending decisions, unfair taxation and misrepresentation of the poorest.

Resolution 29

Drones

General Assembly:

- 1 receives the report and commends it for study;
- 2 directs the Joint Public Issues Team to produce appropriate materials to enable our churches to reflect biblically on the issues raised;
- 3 reaffirms the Christian vocation of peacemaking and the crucial importance of strict adherence to international law in the deployment of military force;
- 4 notes the growing concern regarding the humanitarian impact of explosive weaponry in civilian areas and urges that this concern be addressed in any use of Armed Unmanned Aerial Systems (AUAS);
- 5 petitions the UK Government to publish as much information as possible concerning current strategy and effect of AUAS strikes alongside future plans for AUAS development and use and in particular to :
 - a) provide greater clarity on the role that armed unmanned aerial systems play in current military strategy, with particular reference to counter-insurgency;
 - b) affirm that known individuals are not targeted unless such persons are directly engaged in hostilities at the time;
 - c) release information on all drone strikes including number of fatalities and publish a summary of all investigations into civilian casualties;

Resolutions

- d) in the interests of international law and joint co-operation on counter-terrorism, clearly state the UK Government's position on targeted killings and urge the United States to discontinue the practice of targeting suspected members of terrorist organisations with AUAS.
- 6 urges the UK government to begin to explore ways in which the international community might implement an arms control regime to reduce the threat posed by the development of systems capable of autonomous targeting and weapons delivery;
- 7 upholds the people of northern Pakistan and Afghanistan in prayer and welcomes opportunities for the United Reformed Church to join with ecumenical partners, academic institutions, the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Christian Council on Approaches to Defence and Disarmament in the further exploration and promotion of measures to encourage peace, justice and reconciliation in the context of violent insurgency.

Nominations

Resolution 30

Nominations

General Assembly appoints committees and representatives of the Church as set out on pages 146 to 160 of the Book of Reports, subject to the additions and corrections contained in the Supplementary Report to Assembly.

Youth and Children's Work

Resolution 31

Affirming Pilots

General Assembly affirms the Youth and Children's work offered by Pilots and commends it to all local churches.

*Proposed by Robert Weston, Convener, Youth and Children's Work Committee
Secoded by Soo Webster, Convener, Pilots Management Committee*

Affirming Pilots

Recognising that Pilots remains an effective organisation to support children and young people within the United Reformed Church to develop as disciples of Christ, we invite General Assembly to affirm the current Churches with Pilots Companies, the thousands of children and young people and the hundreds of leaders involved in Pilots through the resolution above. See Appendix 19.

Resolution 32**A Pilots Sunday**

General Assembly encourages local churches to celebrate Pilots through a dedicated Sunday service, suggesting a Sunday in June, every year.

*Proposed by Robert Weston, Convener, Youth and Children's Work Committee
Seconded by Soo Webster, Convener, Pilots Management Committee*

A Pilots Sunday

Currently Pilots Companies annually lead worship and celebrate the work of Pilots on *Pilots Sunday* (a Sunday in the year that is special to the local church). To formalize a set date across the church, we invite all churches, whether they have a Pilots Company or not, to pray for the work of Pilots and to offer thanksgiving to God through a special Sunday worship. We have suggested that local churches might like to choose a Sunday in June (which was the month of birth of John Williams, who has such a strong connection with the Pilots organisation). However, we recognise that this could be celebrated on any Sunday in the church calendar and we leave that at the discretion of each congregation.

Resolution 33**Adults aged 20 to 40**

In response to the growing numbers of adults aged 20 to 40 that are disappearing from the United Reformed Church, General Assembly asks Mission Council to address this issue and consider how to improve the integration of this age group at every level of the URC.

See Appendix 20.

Synods

Resolution 34

The Occupy movement (National Synod of Wales)

General Assembly resolves:

- a) to listen collectively to the witness of the Occupy movement in the UK and worldwide, and especially for the Gospel resonances within what is being said, and to share our own Gospel insights to enrich and enliven this conversation through our varied communication channels;
- b) to encourage the Mission Committee of the United Reformed Church to engage wherever possible with this movement and other partners in a common search for a more equitable economic system;
- c) to resist all proposals for reform which target the poor, in the UK and overseas, to pay the price for the mistakes of the rich and to request the Joint Public Issues Team to monitor and respond appropriately to such policy reforms;
- d) to examine ourselves prayerfully and penitentially, our investment policies and our deployment and mission strategies as the URC, to see where the critique of the Occupy movement might rightly be directed at us;
- e) strongly to urge trusts, committees and local churches within the United Reformed Church to take this resolution into account in taking decisions – both financial and otherwise.

Proposer: Revd Simon Walkling

Secunder: Revd Gethin Rhys

The Occupy movement

1 Background

1.1 In 2011 some members in the Wales Synod became interested in the Occupy Movement: in the issues it was raising, the way it worked, and the overlap with our own concerns. One of the training officers raised it at Synod Council and was encouraged to help synod debate the issue, with the help of others who were interested.

1.2 The Synod Meeting affirmed those aims and actions of the Occupy Movement that resonate with the Gospel: love of neighbour, justice, equality, and freedom from all forms of oppression, including the oppression that arises from the unequal distribution of power and wealth. It was agreed to bring a resolution to General Assembly on this matter.

1.4 The supporting information with this resolution echoes the report that went to the National Synod of Wales Meeting, with some updated information on the Occupy London movement and the Occupy Faith movement which formed following the eviction of the protest camp outside St Paul's Cathedral.

2 History

2.1 The Occupy movement is an international protest movement. Primarily directed against economic and social inequality, the movement was initiated when on 30 May 2011, a leader of the *Indignados*, inspired by the Arab Spring, called for a worldwide protest to take place on 15 October.

2.2 In mid-2011, the Canadian-based group *Adbusters Media Foundation* proposed a peaceful occupation of Wall Street to protest against corporate influence on democracy,

a growing disparity in wealth, and the absence of legal repercussions from the global financial crisis. The OccupyWallStreet.org web address was created on 9 June 2011.

2.3 One of the inspirations for the movement was the Democracy Village set up in 2010 outside the British Parliament in London. The protest received additional attention when the internet hacker group *Anonymous* encouraged its followers to take part in the protests, calling them to “flood lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades and Occupy Wall Street”.

2.4 By 9 October Occupy protests had taken place or were ongoing in over 95 cities across 82 countries. The Occupy London protest was launched via social media on 15 October. The original aim had been to protest in Paternoster Square and target the London Stock Exchange. However, the square was blocked off with barriers when the protesters arrived and they gathered on the steps of St Paul’s which provided an obvious place for them to sit down and assess the situation.

2.5 It was never the intention of the Occupy London protesters to occupy St Paul’s. However, as Giles Fraser points out, the churchyard and the steps of Wren’s magnificent cathedral provided the perfect amphitheatre for the drama that was to play itself out over the next few months in the heart of the City of London.

2.6 By 22 January 2012, the Meetup page “Occupy Together” listed 2,818 occupy communities worldwide, although camps in cities such as New York, Oakland and Zurich had been closed down by the authorities. The Occupy London protesters were also finally evicted from St Pauls churchyard in the early hours of the morning on 28 February 2012 in a relatively peaceful police operation, after their appeal failed.

3 Goals

3.1 Initially journalists suggested that it was hard to discern a unified goal for the movement, though by late October 2011 many in the movement were trying to rally it around a single, clear demand for a tax on computerised money market transactions, with a global march in support of ‘the Robin Hood tax’ planned for 29 October.

3.2 Naomi Wolf has argued that the impression created by much of the media that the protestors do not have clear demands is false. She argues they do have clear demands including a desire to end what they see as the corrupting effect of money on politics. *The New Yorker* magazine stated that the claims of the movement were clear: tighten banking-industry regulations, ban high-frequency trading, arrest all ‘financial fraudsters’ responsible for the 2008 crash, and form a Presidential commission to investigate and prosecute corruption in politics. According to *Bloomberg Businessweek*, protesters want more and better jobs, more equal distribution of income, bank reform, and a reduction of the influence of corporations on politics.

3.3 In late November 2011, Occupy London released their first statement on Corporations, where they called for measures to end tax evasion by wealthy firms. However, following their eviction from St Paul’s, Occupy London have regrouped and are planning a second wave of action for summer 2012 with motivation described in a press release:

It’s been four years since the financial crisis hit. Governments have failed catastrophically to implement the economic change needed to prevent it happening again. They have failed to protect their citizens’ interests against those of corporations and the financial markets. Ordinary people – families, small businesses and communities – are being forced to pay for a crisis they didn’t cause. May marks an international call to act locally and globally against this injustice and to fight for a sustainable economy that puts people and the environment we live in before corporate profits.

In the UK, the millionaires’ budget confirmed that the coalition seeks to reward those at the top of society, at the expense of our health service, education

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and pensions. We are already seeing the fallout of extreme austerity in other European countries where the economic activity has come to a standstill and the living standards of ordinary people have reached punishing lows.

The world's eyes are on London this year with the Jubilee, the Olympics ... but we all know that the pageantry and the spectacle can't hide what's really happening in the UK as politicians collude with the financial elite.

Occupy London is building for its second wave. You, your group, organisation or community are called to get involved – let's bring together concerned individuals and seasoned campaigners from across and beyond the political spectrum.

4 Challenge to the Church

4.1 The Occupy London movement has presented a profound, if unintended, challenge to the Church in the UK. This took the form of the prophetic drama enacted outside St Paul's Cathedral as the protesters set up camp and formed a visible community of defiant and hopeful witness against the status quo of unethical capitalism in the City of London. This was achieved amidst strong opposition from ecclesial, civic and financial authorities whose vested interests were threatened as visitors and strangers were welcomed and homeless and other socially excluded people found a place of refuge and consolation *outside* the Church.

4.2 The impact on St Paul's was devastating. Under the constant glare of the media and with banners posing the penetrating question, "*What would Jesus do?*", first the Canon Chancellor, Giles Fraser resigned, followed by the Dean of the Cathedral, the Rt Revd Graham Knowles, as the Cathedral Chapter tried to contain the crisis posed by the prophetic drama unfolding outside their building.

4.3 The crucial question that this drama raises for the Church – established and non-established alike – is *how do we discern God's activity amongst the poor and marginalised communities and individuals at a time of growing poverty and inequality in the UK and the rest of the world?*

4.4 St Paul's' response (which, for better or worse, in the eyes of the media and general public represents the response of the Church in the UK) was to call for the peaceful disbanding of this community and to invite protestors to debate the critical issues raised by the Occupy Movement inside the Cathedral 'under the dome' of St Paul's. This response has been weighed in the balance and found wanting by the protestors and media alike and whilst we are not called as the Church to respond to popular culture and media, we are called to discern the 'signs of the times' in our society and respond accordingly.

4.5 One such response has been the many Christians who provided spiritual and practical nourishment and support to the Occupy protestors outside St Paul's leading to the emergence of the Occupy Faith movement which is now a registered charity with the stated aim of building a more just society in the UK. Their vision and values are outlined on their website – see <http://www.occupyfaith.org.uk/> for details.

4.6 Occupy Faith has also planned a Pilgrimage for Justice from St Paul's to Canterbury Cathedral from 7-19 June 2012 to enable concerned citizens from all walks of life to come together to recreate an ancient journey in the hope of building a more equitable future. There are interesting comparisons that might be drawn between Occupy and the early history of all spiritual renewal movements in the church: protest; desire for corporate decision making; allowing local assemblies to make local decisions; and a desire to move away from systems that no longer serve, but burden people because of centralised and unaccountable power structures.

4.7 There is within the Occupy Movement much to commend itself to Christians of all denominations, and people of all faiths and none: a call for greater transparency,

stronger public oversight of corporations, and deeper moral accountability for individuals, corporations, and indeed from the very governments that continue to enable unfair and immoral financial practices.

4.8 Christians of all theological positions can and should support Occupy's demands for a more equitable financial system. We should engage in the struggle to find an economic and legal framework that challenges and transforms the power of the rich to maintain a privileged status at the expense of the poor. Often this wealth is obtained legally, but not ethically. We pray for and work towards the redistribution of wealth from the richest to the poorest, and assert that this is in keeping with the Gospel imperatives of sharing, caring and protecting the most vulnerable. To that end, we bring our resolution to General Assembly.

Resolution 35

Locally ordained ministry (Wessex Synod)

General Assembly requests the Ministries Committee and the Faith and Order Committee to consider whether some form of locally ordained ministry would be helpful to the mission of the United Reformed Church and to report back to Mission Council with a view to further discussion and a decision at General Assembly 2014.

Proposer: The Revd Clare Downing
Seconder: The Revd Michael Hopkins

Locally ordained ministry

1.1 Churches regularly ask for more ministry, by which they generally mean more ordained ministers. Some people who have the calling and the gifting to exercise a ministry of Word and sacraments, albeit modest in scope, cannot do so within the current systems of the United Reformed Church. Some elders and some lay preachers feel that their gifts and their training, especially through TLS, are not being used as fully as they might be for the mission of the Church. Ordained local ministry would be a way to address all these issues and support the mission of the Church.

1.2 Ordained local ministry is different from the existing non-stipendiary ministry because it would have significantly less, indeed quite possibly, no age restrictions, and a considerably lighter training requirement.

1.3 Non-stipendiary ministry has changed dramatically since it was introduced over thirty years ago. Churches of Christ elders, the inspiration for what was first called auxiliary ministry, worked in a quite different way from what non-stipendiary ministry has now become in the United Reformed Church. Tight age restrictions, and a longer and more rigorous training, leading to parity with stipendiary ministers, have resulted in far fewer people being able to offer the time required for the training for non-stipendiary ministry before they reach the age at which the Church currently deems them too old, and the number of non-stipendiary ministers is much lower than the number of people with a call to, and gifting for, an ordained ministry of Word and sacraments and the ability to exercise that within the current systems.

1.4 It is not for the proposers to pre-determine training and age requirements, but we do think it fair to the General Assembly to give a general outline of what we have in mind, namely that it might be reasonable to consider that the training course could be a similar level to the TLS course for assembly accredited lay preachers, perhaps with an additional year ("Gateways into Church Leadership"?). Thus if someone already has assembly accreditation as a lay preacher they are not likely to need enormous

Resolutions

amounts of further training. Likewise, there could be similar age requirements as for accreditation as a lay preacher, i.e. it is very likely to be possible for people well beyond any “retirement age” to offer for ordained local ministry, especially if they are already accredited as lay preachers.

1.5 Another point to note is that there are many lay preachers, and some elders, who are regularly presiding at sacraments, usually with appropriate authorisation, often in a reasonably small number of churches which they visit fairly regularly. In practice such people are already exercising a ministry of Word and sacraments. We believe that it would be far better theologically to ordain such people to a ministry of Word and sacraments. We also believe our ecumenical partners would find this easier to understand.

1.6 Ordained local ministry has already been tried in some dioceses of the Church of England, with mixed results – it is possible to find examples to suit every point of view for and against ordained local ministry. A more relevant example, though, might be the Church of Scotland, which introduced such a scheme in 2011 after four years’ preparatory work which is reportedly very successful so far.

1.7 A similar proposal was made in the Patterns of Ministry report in the mid-1990s, and was not then accepted by General Assembly. We believe that the mission circumstances we now face, the successful introduction of such a scheme among some of our partner Churches, and the passage of time, mean that such a scheme should be considered once more.

1.8 It is most important to note that the use of “local” refers to where the ministry is exercised, not the validity of the ordination. Anyone so ordained would be a United Reformed Church minister, but the lower level of training would only equip them to exercise that ministry locally. If such a person moved to a different geographical area their ordination would still be recognised, and it would be for the new synod to find an appropriate form of service for them.

1.9 It should also be noted that this resolution is not asking Assembly to agree to the introduction of such a form of ministry today, simply that it thinks that the idea has sufficient merit it be explored further in the appropriate places and brought back in due course.

United Church 2012
 Church 2012
 Reformed Church 2012
 Church 2012



