



# C1a

## Assembly Sunday Appeal

### Background

- 1 The November 2011 meeting of Mission Council discussed at length the Budgets for 2012, 2013 and beyond and many comments encouraged thinking about the income side of the Budget as well as the expenditure side. In particular, the Moderators elect suggested that a way of raising awareness about the financial situation and of helping address it directly would be to have a special offering on the Sunday of the 2012 Assembly both at Assembly and in local churches. They suggested the proceeds might be dedicated to reducing the large 2012 Budget deficit.
- 2 Since Mission Council this idea has been discussed in several fora, including the Moderators' Think Tank, the Mission Council Advisory Group and the Finance Committee. While the principle of a special Appeal won widespread support, there was a variety of views about the detail. Mission Council now needs to make a decision so that publicity can be organised as soon as possible.

### A Proposal

- 3 As is normal at the Sunday worship during Assembly, an offertory should be taken up and for this URC 40<sup>th</sup> birthday year it should be a special Appeal for the Ministry and Mission (M&M) Fund.
- 4 Advance publicity would invite all local churches to share both in aspects of the Assembly service when they meet for worship on Sunday 8 July and in the Appeal. It would be for the local Church Meeting to decide in what way they contributed to the Appeal: this might be by giving their main morning offertory or by a retiring collection or by an activity or celebration with a fund-raising element.
- 5 The rationale for the special Appeal would be that the Budget is under pressure and Mission Council believes that the highest priority for the Budget in the view of most local churches is to sustain the stipendiary ministry. In order to avoid pressure growing on the Church's capacity to sustain stipendiary ministry, giving to the Ministry and Mission Fund needs to start growing again. This is a long term challenge. As a prelude to meeting this, the whole Church is invited to give something extra on Assembly Sunday towards the M&M Fund before reviewing their regular M&M giving for 2013 and beyond.
- 6 This rationale dovetails easily with the planned emphasis of the incoming Moderators on responding with joyful generosity to the lavish generosity of God. It also dovetails with the planned Resolution for Assembly from the Finance Committee refreshing our commitment to the Church's existing policy on tithing.
- 7 This rationale has the further benefit of focusing on a topic of widespread interest and concern. It will thereby help the whole United Reformed Church, gathered in Assembly

and dispersed locally, feel we are contributing in solidarity with congregations in all sorts of circumstances around the country.

- 8 In some local contexts, congregations might want to present the Appeal mainly as a 40<sup>th</sup> birthday thankoffering for the life of the United Reformed Church and particularly for those who have exercised life-changing ministries within it.
- 9 If Mission Council supports this approach, the annual “Thank You” report leaflet on the M&M Fund, which is sent to every local church, would feature the Assembly Sunday Appeal idea. As in previous years the leaflet would be accompanied by a letter giving more factual information and figures about the central Budget so that informed presentations can be made locally. It should be possible to have this publicity in local churches before the end of April to give time for decisions about Assembly Sunday.
- 10 It may also be possible to prepare other material for widespread distribution before July. Some might be based around the 40<sup>th</sup> birthday theme. In addition, the Stewardship Sub-Committee hopes to produce new material on the theological understanding of stewardship with clear links to the Vision 2020 themes.

### **Resolution**

*N.B. This resolution was rejected by Mission Council.*

**Mission Council, noting the pressures on the M&M Fund which finances stipendiary ministry:**

- (i) **agrees that the offertory at the Assembly worship on Sunday 8 July should be a special Appeal devoted to the M&M Fund;**
- (ii) **encourages all local churches to share in this Appeal on Assembly Sunday.**

John Ellis  
Treasurer

18 February 2012