



MISSION COUNCIL

13 – 15 MAY 2013

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The Learning Church: The Next Chapter

This paper is brought to Mission Council for information on a piece of work which has been commissioned by the Education & Learning Committee.

Purpose of the work

To bring resolutions for shaping future whole church learning to the General Assembly of 2014. These will be put forward from an assessment of the progress made towards realising the aspirations of the United Reformed Church Training Review of 2006.

In commissioning this work the Education & Learning Committee recognises the major changes that there have been in the economic, ecumenical, and ecclesiological environment since 2006. The resolutions to Assembly 2014 will emerge from active conversations about the shape of the learning church, informed by the principles of appreciative inquiry.

Shaping the conversation

A task group from outside the Education & Learning Committee has been appointed: Revd Terry Oakley, Revd Lindsey Sanderson, Revd Kumar Rajagopalan (London Baptist Association), with the Secretary for Education & Learning providing clerical support. The group will report regularly to the Committee and is developing a panel of readers who can comment on the products of their discussions from the breadth of perspectives found within the URC and from ecumenical partners. The task group has been supplied with extensive background documentation, given the freedom to ask pointed questions, and charged with the accountability that comes from being committed to the good health of the United Reformed Church.

The task group will be looking at all aspects of the learning church, and will be visiting the networks and sub-committees of the Education & Learning Committee, the Resource Centres for Learning, and other Assembly Committees and relevant networks. Such groups and committees are made up of people from local churches and Synods, but the task group will also seek appropriate ways of holding conversations directly with a small number of churches. The Quinquennial review of the Windermere Centre is due in 2013 and the task group will be augmented in order to incorporate this in to their schedule.

The motivation for this task

The driving forces for this piece of work are:

- *Exploration* – affirming that which is good in the church's learning experiences, and using this more intentionally
- *Realism* - being honest about the strength of both the centralising tendencies and the vigour of independency and dissent which are features of the United Reformed Church

- *Vision* – using our size as the United Reformed Church (a large small organisation) to best advantage and preparing for new ways of being church
- *Suspicion* - when there's less money around, what will be cut?
- *Frustration* – what the URC wants to happen, in terms of collaboration in learning, has not yet happened to the extent to which the 2006 Training Review aspired, despite the best intentions of all concerned.

Timetable

September 2012	Terms of reference agreed for the task group
January 2013	Members appointed and started work, with schedule of visits
June 2013	E&L Committee to receive report from the task group
September 2013	E&L Committee receive update from the task group
	The quinquennial Windermere Review
January 2014	E&L Committee receives final report from the task group and prepares report with resolutions for General Assembly
March 2014	Mission Council opportunity to comment on the report for Assembly
July 2014	General Assembly to debate the report and resolutions

A more detailed discussion of the aspects to be considered and the assumptions underlying this process is available from the Secretary for Education & Learning.

Revd Fiona Thomas
Secretary for Education & Learning

5 April 2013