



## Vision2020

### 1. Introduction

In July 2010 General Assembly adopted vision2020 as the framework of mission planning and church growth for the United Reformed Church in the coming decade.

#### **Vision2020**

Vision2020 is a ten-year strategic framework for mission planning and church growth. It is based on two central ideas: mission priorities (or statements of mission and purpose) and local mission pledges. The basic idea is that on a regular basis, e.g. every two years, churches identify one or two of these statements as their mission priority - as appropriate to their context and resources. They also identify what activities they will offer as an expression of that priority and share this with the Synod – this is the local mission pledge. It is envisaged that most, if not all, Synods will develop this process of making regular mission pledges through the Local Mission and Ministry Review (LMMR). The churches' mission pledges will help to shape the Synods' priorities and focus their resources. Synods in turn will make pledges to Assembly, and in doing so shape the work at denominational level and help the church as a whole to see where support and resources are needed.

### 2. Where we are now

Since the Assembly in 2010 the Mission Team has worked extensively on vision2020, liaising with Synods and Assembly Committees in particular to explore how they can engage with vision2020. Wider conversations have been had with the Assembly staff team at Church House and monthly staff meetings have focused on a vision2020 statement in an attempt to get an overview of what each 'department' is doing in that particular area of work. Over the course of the last year all statements have been covered.

Materials have been produced for local churches and for the website; and staff members have acted as resource people at Synod gatherings, ministers' conferences and the like to communicate as widely as possible what vision2020. A more detailed overview of these activities is given below.

#### **a. Vision 2020 and local churches**

A number of Synods have been very active in communicating what vision2020 is about to local churches and in trying to make links with the Synod's own strategic mission priorities or aspirations. More detailed reports on how the Synods have engaged with vision2020 are given as a separate document.

The Mission Team has produced a leaflet aimed at local churches, explaining the key principles of vision2020 and how as churches they can engage with it. The leaflet also includes information about vision2020 grants that are available for small one-off mission projects and for longer-term projects. The leaflet came to Synods later than planned, which has hampered communication in some cases, but it has now been distributed to local churches via the Synod offices with a joint letter from the Synod Moderator and the Mission Committee.

The website pages have been also been updated, with a vision2020 button on the home page, to give quick access to the relevant pages. The pages now include general information on vision2020, the full report to the 2010 General Assembly, the ten statements of our mission and purpose, the vision2020 grants information and application form, a link to the Synod Mission Enablers to help with vision2020, and downloads such as the leaflet, logos and a short PowerPoint presentation. ([www.urc.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/mission/vision2020](http://www.urc.org.uk/what_we_do/mission/vision2020).) A short resource to help churches make local mission pledges and a form to submit the local mission pledge are yet to be added, as the latter is subject to conversations with the Synods. In the longer term we are hoping to add a vision2020 module (for use by resource centres for learning and in lay training) and an inventory of materials already available for each statement. The Education & Learning Committee has started work on such an inventory.

A scan of about half of all annual returns of 2010 reveals that 30% of the churches are able to say which are their vision2020 priorities. This is encouraging, given that churches were asked about this very soon after vision2020 was adopted by the General Assembly. So far the three priorities mentioned most are Spirituality & Prayer, Community Partnerships and Evangelism. This tells us what some of the current priorities might be, while at the same time helping us to determine where the future challenges lie.

Where churches are not indicating their vision2020 priority we should not infer that they are not engaged in mission. Many if not most are, and it is urgent that we start mapping this activity. How we can encourage churches to make mission pledges, especially when LMMR is not yet fully operational, is an urgent item for further conversations with both the Synods and the Ministries Committee. We also need to think about how vision2020 and LMMR can be integrated more.

We are continuing to consider how we can communicate vision2020 as widely as possible. We are aware that much more is to be done and the development of a clear communication strategy will be crucial. One of the things we need to communicate clearly is how vision2020 and the Radical Welcome campaign relate: i.e. vision2020 as a strategic framework for all aspects of mission across the URC, and the Campaign as a programme enabling churches to address particular statements within vision2020, in particular evangelism, church growth, and hospitality & diversity. .

We also need to strengthen our support for local churches and would suggest this involves training people, making funding available and encouraging churches to share their stories. Mission Enablers and Training and Development Officers have an important role to play and involving them therefore will be instrumental. This is already in process, but more remains to be done. Communication and discussion of vision2020 with ministers, church-related community workers, and especially with new ministers and ordinands will also be an important part of the strategy in the time ahead. We are grateful for the opportunities we have already been given to share vision2020 through the college programmes, the new ministers' conference, the Welcome to the URC course, and Synod ministers' conferences.

The vision2020 grants have now been advertised widely and we are seeing an increase in applications from local churches. This suggests the need to enlarge the fund in the future, to support and encourage churches in their mission and outreach. The Mission Committee would like to consider the possibility of applying to CWM's Mission Support Programme. The website also refers churches to their own Synod's mission fund, where this exists.

The website also gives information about outside funds churches can access. We intend to collate and advertise information about other funds (e.g. for community work or interfaith work) as and when we find it. We hope that this combination of denominational, Synod and outside funding will provide a significant boost to the mission of local churches.

We have considered starting a story telling award to encourage churches to share their mission story. As a Committee we are undecided about how to proceed with this at this stage, but it is worth considering how we can use existing awards, such as the Community Awards and the Multicultural Storytelling Award to support vision2020 further. The Director of Communications has suggested making a short video about vision2020 for the website to start the process of sharing stories. In the long term, storytelling about mission involvement in local churches, will be a crucial part of vision2020 and is something that all departments/Committees could share. We would welcome ideas on how we can make this happen.

### **b. Vision 2020 and Synods**

Since October 2010 Mission Team members have started conversations with the Synods about their engagement with vision2020. We had envisaged that these conversations would involve the Synod Moderator, the Mission Team Link Person (or another link person from the Church House staff), the Synod's Core Member on the Mission Committee, and other people involved in developing the Synod mission strategy. The discussion would focus on the implementation and communication of vision2020, especially in relation to the Synod mission strategy and the Local Mission and Ministry Review process, and on how to use the denominational and Synod websites to gather the local mission pledges. This conversation has not yet happened in every Synod, as the engagement with vision2020 has varied greatly from place to place.

The Synod reports give a clearer overview of how they have engaged with vision2020 so far. We hope that the discussion at this Mission Council meeting may go some way in addressing the outstanding issues identified in this report.

### **c. Vision 2020 and Assembly Departments**

Several departments and Committees have started to explore what the vision2020 framework might mean for them. The role of wider Church House staff and other Assembly Committees remains an area for further discussion and development. Nevertheless, significant progress has been made:

- The Youth and Children's Work Committee has done considerable work on aligning their priorities with the vision2020 statements.
- The Church Related Community Workers have looked at their projects and linked them with the statements. The revised application form for CRCW ministry now encourages applicants to use the vision2020 materials as part of their reflections on their mission and purpose.
- The Education and Learning Committee has considered what it can do until General Assembly 2012 to support vision2020 and has tried to formulate its own Mission Pledge. Vision2020 has been shared in the 'Welcome to the URC' weekend and the new ministers' conference; an inventory of all the resources we have that relate to the vision2020 statements will be put together; and the annual Education & Learning Conference in December is organised around the vision2020 statements.
- The Mission Committee itself has reshaped its meetings around vision2020 statements, which each meeting focusing on two statements. For each meeting one or two other Assembly Committees have been invited to further the conversation around vision2020. This has included initial conversations with Communications, Youth and Children's Work and with Education and Learning. The remaining Committees will be invited to the February or May 2012 meeting.

What is urgent now is the development of guidelines in partnership with the Ministries Committee as to how local mission pledges can be developed within the Local Mission and Ministry Review process, although this may be in the hands of the Synods. Further

engagement with the Communications Committee on how vision2020 can be communicated is also needed, as is a conversation with the Finance Committee on how we finance mission across the denomination in the future.

### **3. Vision2020 and the Mission Team**

Since the adoption of vision2020 the Mission Team members have reshaped the team workplan. The 2011 workplan no longer focuses on the specific work areas of team members, but on the ten vision2020 priorities and the work each team member does in relation to these. This has given the team a better sense of working together, as well as new ideas for future team working.

A direct result of this was close co-operation between the Secretaries for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry (RJMM) and Mission on a conference on Evangelism (vision2020 statement 6) in July 2011, bringing together the RJMM and Mission Enablers networks. We suggest holding a vision2020 conference (on one of the themes) every non-Assembly year, with a different member of the Mission Team (or the Assembly-appointed staff team) taking the lead.

An addendum to each team member's job descriptions has been written to reflect each one's responsibility for and changing role in relation to vision2020. The discussion of the addendum is part of the annual appraisals taking place throughout September and October 2011.

The Mission Committee has started conversations on reshaping the 2013 budget around vision2020. It is envisaged that new ideas for the budget will be brought to the next meeting of the Committee and a small group has been commissioned to work on this with the Mission Team. The Committee is aware that this conversation needs to be set within the wider context of discussions on the financial future of the URC.

The URC website is due to be redesigned and the intention is that vision2020 will be integral in the new design. The total re-design will take place in February 2012.

### **4. Areas for further development or discussion**

Until the 2012 Assembly the focus of the Mission Committee is on advocating vision2020 with Synods and churches; and enabling the process of making local mission pledges (integrated with LMMR where appropriate). We envisage that after the General Assembly of 2012 vision2020 will be more or less self-running – and the focus will shift to accompaniment and support.

However, to achieve this target the following issues need to be addressed:

- a. Developing a clear communications strategy for vision2020, and in particular focused on how we communicate the relationship between vision2020 (a framework) and the Radical Welcome campaign (a programme).
- b. Working out the connection between Synod mission strategies and vision2020.
- c. Working out how churches can make local mission pledges, integrated with LMMR and otherwise, and how this information is shared both with the Synod and Church House.
- d. In the longer term: how vision2020 shapes future budgets and deployment.

*Francis Brienen/Ed Cox  
October 2011*