

# Paper 12

## Mission Committee

### Commitment for Life Review

United Church 2017  
Church 2017  
Reformed Church 2017  
Church 2017

# Paper I2

## Mission Committee

Commitment for Life Review

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Revd Bernie Collins: <a href="mailto:bernie.collins@thecrocker.net">bernie.collins@thecrocker.net</a> Francis Brien: <a href="mailto:francis.brien@urc.org.uk">francis.brien@urc.org.uk</a> Linda Mead: <a href="mailto:lmeadcf@urc.org.uk">lmeadcf@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	For discussion
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None</b>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Review of the Commitment for Life programme
<b>Main points</b>	Commitment for Life Reference Group organised a review of the programme, as agreed by Mission Committee October 2016. Review Group reported to Mission Committee September 2017. Mission Committee, affirming the value of Commitment for Life, urged developing without delay the new approaches identified, and taking stock of their impact after two calendar years.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Christian Aid and Global Justice Now Commitment for Life Reference Group

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	None at this stage
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None at this stage

# Commitment for Life Review

1. A review of the Commitment for Life programme took place in the period from September 2016 to September 2017. Mission Committee asked for the review to be carried out due to a substantial decline in giving, and other developments, such as political and economic changes in society, new forms of communication and information sharing, and changes within Christian Aid, which have all impacted on the programme.
2. The review took place over a period of almost a year, involving the gathering of financial and other data, consultation with synod focus groups, Commitment for Life advocates and others in local churches, the Commitment for Life Reference Group and with Commitment for Life's main partners (Christian Aid and Global Justice Now).
3. The results of the review were presented to the Mission Committee in September 2017, and Mission Committee now forwards a lightly amended version of this report (with Appendices) for the information of Mission Council.
4. In summary, Mission Committee received the Review report and:
  - 4.1 strongly affirmed the work of Commitment for Life as part of the mission of the United Reformed Church for justice in God's world
  - 4.2 recognised that the added value of worship, education and action by Commitment for Life are still important and relevant today
  - 4.3 further recognised that in the light of the present global economic and political climate there is a need for the programme to develop and reignite a passion for justice through:
    - new technology
    - engagement of a new generation of people
    - the creation of a new relationship with Christian Aid and Global Justice Now to suit their new working models
  - 4.4 urged the programme to undertake this work without delay.
5. Mission Committee also agreed to propose a resolution to this effect to the General Assembly in 2018, which would further include the provision for taking stock of the impact of Commitment for Life's new approaches after two calendar/financial years 2018 and 2019.

# Review of Commitment for Life

## 1. Context

- 1.1 The United Reformed Church, through its denominational programme 'Commitment for Life,' has been working in partnership with Christian Aid and Global Justice Now (formerly The World Development Movement) in its present form since 1992. The General Assembly programme was a direct response to the words in Micah, 'What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God'. It is about personal giving and a commitment to seek justice and an end to poverty. The programme grew out of the 1% appeal.<sup>1</sup> The Synod of Scotland joined the programme in 2000.
- 1.2 In 1992, a report to General Assembly stated: "Commitment for Life was offered to the Assembly, congregations and members of the United Reformed Church as a challenge and an invitation, one way of expressing our obedience to the words of Jesus as we follow in his way, our solidarity in the Spirit with our partners and the poor with whom they are striving for justice, and our faith in the God of hope, of peace, of love."
- 1.3 Commitment for Life's **vision** is 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.
- 1.4 Its **mission** is 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.
- 1.5 Its **aim** is to deepen the response of congregations through education, worship and action for long term development.
- 1.6 The programme is promoted by the Commitment for Life Coordinator with a volunteer reference group, synod advocates and church link people. Today Commitment for Life churches choose to support a partner country or region (Bangladesh, Central America, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory or Zimbabwe). They accept that this is about personal giving, with the idea of 1% of their disposable income still encouraged. They receive updates twice a year on their partner region, an annual poster and mini magazine, together with a variety of worship materials. The occasional educational events are arranged to cascade information on campaigns. From the total income raised by Commitment for Life churches, 75% is divided equally between Christian Aid's four country programmes in the partner regions and 5% is paid to Global Justice Now for their work on researching systems that keep people poor.
- 1.7 The remaining United Reformed Church share of 20% provides finance for the updates, annual posters and mini magazines (Christian Aid pay 50% of this), and other resources including envelopes, intro leaflets and festival based resources.

<sup>1</sup> Both the Presbyterian Church of England and the Congregational Churches in the late 1960s passed resolutions urging church members to give one per cent of their net income for development aid. Following the Uppsala World Council of churches 1968 assembly, the Congregational Church introduced a lengthy resolution for the 1% appeal which was agreed by the assembly. It asked Christian Aid to act as their agent. The first United Reformed Church Assembly in 1973 adopted a report from Church and Society to base a world development programme on political action, education and a financial appeal.

The coordinator's salary and pension fund contributions as well as home office expenses also are funded by the 20%.

- 1.8 Until recently, grants to organisations linked to the programme such as Fairtrade Fortnight, Jubilee Debt Campaign, Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme for Palestine and Israel and One World Week were given out of the URC share, but these ceased three years ago, as margins became tighter. The EAPPI grant is now given from the Mission budget.

## 2. Reasons for review

- 2.1 Contributions used to be in the region of £500,000 per annum, but the last few years have seen a substantial decline in giving, as well as churches asking to be removed from the programme. The general economic and political situation and ageing and shrinking congregations have also impacted on the programme. The internet and email have allowed people to find out more information on development issues and changed the way we communicate to churches. Christian Aid has been through substantial changes, both in terms of staff levels but also their way of working, and that has impacted on Commitment for Life. For these reasons, it was felt that this was the right time to review the programme and look at its future role within the URC.

## 3. Review process

- 3.1 The review group consisted of Francis Brienen (Deputy General Secretary – Mission), John Collings (Mission Committee), Revd Alan McGougan (Convenor Commitment for Life Reference Group), Linda Mead (Commitment for Life Programme Coordinator) and John Plant (Christian Aid Church Relations Manager).
- 3.2 The first meeting was held on 9 November 2016 where questions were decided upon that would be used to provide a broad feedback on the impact of Commitment for Life on Church Life.
- 3.3 November 2016 to May 2017  
 Synod focus groups: Scotland, Northern, West Midlands, Eastern, Yorkshire and Southern.  
 Advocates: Of the 9 Synods where there are advocates, 5 responded to the questionnaire.  
 Link people invited to comment in the March 2017 mailing.  
 Reference group: all members made contributions and discussed responses received.  
 Partnership Reports received from the Ecumenical World Development Conference, Global Justice Now and Christian Aid updated the report by Bryony Long 2016.  
 Financial and church numbers information collected for last 5 years.
- 3.4 May 2017  
 Reference group: Questionnaire responses, including comments collected from emails, letters and personal visits by coordinator. Key issues decided by reference group using all those collated.  
 June 2017: Mission Committee offered feedback.  
 August 2017: The review group met to assess the data, discuss the information gathered and make initial recommendations.  
 September 2017: The reference group considered the recommendations of the review group.

28-29 September 2017: Mission Committee to discuss recommendations.  
 October 2017: Mission Council.  
 Post October: Discussions with Christian Aid and Global Justice Now in light of recommendations.  
 July 2018: General Assembly.

## 4. Programme Achievements

- 4.1 From the responses gathered it was evident that the programme was still highly thought of. With the gospel message of 'good news for the poor' at its heart it is seen as part of the whole mission of the church. It sits within the vision2020 framework relating to statements 8, 9 and 10.
- 4.2 Millions of pounds have been raised by local churches which has enabled Christian Aid to work with those most in need. The money we raise provides greater flexibility for Global Justice Now and Christian Aid.
- 4.3 Commitment for Life kept churches informed of all major campaigns such as Make Poverty History, Jubilee Debt, IF campaign and climate justice. It provides a significant Christian voice at many campaign meetings.
- 4.4 Resources produced have enabled churches to be well informed and knowledgeable. The yearly outline service and prayer sheets are being well used.
- 4.5 Trips to and visits from our partner areas have enriched the lives of many people and inspired them to take action and share that passion for justice.
- 4.6 The intern programme with Christian Aid ran for five years and was hugely successful. All five interns brought many gifts and still speak on our behalf. The reference group initially started funding the programme as part of our legacy for the future and this has been realised as all the interns have embarked on worthwhile careers.
- 4.7 Through Commitment for Life churches have been enabled to be involved in campaigning for justice. It was felt that 'the Church' could speak out where charities could not.

## 5. Christian Aid (Appendix 1)

- 5.1 Christian Aid has been an integral part of the programme since its inception. They continue to change, both in terms of staff levels but also in ways of working, which has impacted on Commitment for Life. Many features that were unique to the programme, such as committed giving, festival worship materials (Harvest, Lent and Christmas) and monthly campaign actions are now part of Christian Aid's fundraising year and approach. Their church partnership programme, with excellent match funding projects, has also drawn money away from Commitment for Life.<sup>ii</sup>

---

<sup>ii</sup> Money donated to Christian Aid through the Partnership Programme is for particular projects matched funded through contracts with the European Commission. They have a very narrow focus as the money given is for these projects for a limited period. Christian Aid have always stated that this giving should be in addition to normal giving.



- 5.2 Recent internal changes have altered the emphasis of work and it will become increasingly difficult to work with a country focus rather than Christian Aid's new thematic approach. The loss of their communication officers and CIU (Communication and Information Unit) has meant there are few people available in London with expert knowledge of our partners or relevant issues. Indeed, some communication officers are now abroad, which is a good thing, but it is more difficult to obtain the information the programme requires. As the current changes evolve, staff with responsibility for Commitment for Life at various levels, will be in different geographical areas. It becomes imperative that the line of command is clear and communication succinct. Present staff are working to raise the profile of Commitment for Life within the organisation, especially in the regions.

## 6. Global Justice Now (Appendix 2)

- 6.1 The World Development Movement was part of the original programme in 1992. Set up as a campaigning and cutting edge organisation, many of the original advocates were chosen from their members. In 2015 Global Justice Now's contributions were reduced from 10% to 5% at Mission Council because of the decrease in income and the need to cover administration costs. Their campaign actions are still shared in updates and mailings.

## 7. Current context

- 7.1 The general economic and political situation has also impacted on the programme. According to the Charities Aid Foundation's latest report, overall giving to charity fell by 5% to £9.6bn in 2015. The report said that this apparent decrease could be 'an early indication of a decrease in charitable giving amongst individuals.' Medical charities received the highest proportion of total donations with 16%. Religious charities, together with children and young people's charities, tied in second place. People, within the three nations, are questioning whether the UK government should be giving 0.7% for global development with poverty on the increase in the UK.
- 7.2 The average URC attendance figure is 55,579. That compares with a figure of 74,087 in 2007 – a decline of 25%. This includes the total attendance in ecumenical churches, most of which will not actually be URC. Originally, advocates linked into their district councils and were allowed a time to speak at these meetings. This was an excellent way of sharing topical information and reminders of the programme. In 2005 district councils ceased and, by necessity, synod meetings dealt with more business matters. Advocates missed these local links and many left in the next year as they felt they were no longer in touch with those churches for which they had a responsibility. Of the 13 Synods, 4 are without a synod advocate. These are Wales, North Western, Thames North and South Western. Of the 1,426 churches in the denomination 33% (475 churches) are Commitment for Life churches. This compares with 42% in 2012.
- 7.3 Ways of communication have changed dramatically since the programme's launch. Previously all information went by postal mail to link people whilst advocates were sent regular updates on campaign issues and successes. However, the internet has allowed people to find their own information on development issues. Enquiries often now come directly to the programme coordinator. Resources, updates, magazine and posters have regularly been redesigned to make them fresh and inviting.

## 8. Giving

- 8.1 Commitment for Life has always put equal emphasis on education and giving. Many churches have a well-established season for Commitment for Life during which a special service is held. A few churches raise money by events such as communion collections or themed evenings, although these are in decline as it is becoming more difficult to get members to attend extra events. The message of making that commitment to give regularly, even if this is not so exciting as doing a sponsored bungee jump or mountain trek, is at the heart of the programme. We give because God first loved us. Inspiring and enthusiastic speakers were seen as essential in exciting congregations in many of the responses.
- 8.2 The most common query from churches concerns confusion about where the money goes. The perception is that the contributions go directly to a church's designated region, rather than being divided equally among the four regions. This has never been the case and has been stated in all resources sent out over the last 11 years, if not before.
- 8.3 The programme understands that younger people give in different ways. They are usually interested in the issue, but topics that they can relate to are more popular, e.g. mental health. The successful internship programme worked closely with URC Youth but was not able to raise contributions. Different ways of giving should be explored that suit younger members, e.g. texting or Just Giving.

## 9. Current Financial Position

- 9.1 Contributions were in the region of £500,000 but the last few years have seen a substantial decline in giving. The year 2016 saw an 11% decrease. (Appendix 3).
- 9.2 In 2012 there were 678 churches on the database, but by 2017 this had dropped to 475. This is mainly due to churches who had not given over the last three years being asked if they wished to remain in the programme. Of the 149 church letters sent out, 21 replied to remain on the database and 14 wished to be removed. These, together with the 114 who did not respond, were deleted from the database.
- 9.3 In 2016 the total raised was £337,480. The URC 20% share was approx. £68,000. Basic running costs were in the region of £58,000. This included salary, associated pension costs, resources, home office costs, mailing, reference group and advocate expenses.
- 9.4 If the 2017 income drops by 8% there would be a deficit. If the administration percentage should need to be changed to 25%, would this be an acceptable administration cost? In a recent survey by the Charities Aid Foundation people thought charities should only spend 15% on costs.<sup>iii</sup>

## 10. Current Challenges

- 10.1 These are the most frequent issues raised in response to the questionnaire:

<sup>iii</sup> <https://nfpsynergy.net/press-release/public-thinks-charity-spending-admin-more-double-their-acceptable-level>



- 10.2 The preference for small projects where results can be seen. Long term development is not popular or visually attractive.
- 10.3 The average age of members and congregations. Many of these were newly retired when the programme came into being and were enthusiastic and willing to promote the new programme. Today many are no longer with us or feel they have 'done their bit'. Many have lost their extra income because of the fall in interest levels in this economic climate.
- 10.4 A good many people who responded saw Christian Aid and Commitment for Life as the same. This confusion was one of the most quoted responses. When a church does leave the programme, it is usually to support Christian Aid directly.
- 10.5 The unique selling point of it being a denominational appeal does not ring true today. Many people attending churches today are not aware of the denomination or are in a Local Ecumenical Partnership and find giving to one denomination difficult. A third of United Reformed Churches are LEPs.
- 10.6. Many churches prefer to campaign on issues that are ecumenical and/or interfaith, such as Fairtrade or climate change, so can include the whole community. It should be noted that the programme coordinator attends meetings of such agencies and feeds back information to churches. Commitment for Life is one of the 12 voting members of The Fairtrade Foundation and supported Fairtrade Fortnight financially until the drop in income meant grants could not be given.
- 10.7 Being 25 years old means that many of those around at its inception, who understood the move from the 1% appeal, are no longer with us. Many of those worshipping today do not know the programme's history.
- 10.8 Confusion with Synod 'Belonging to the World Church' scheme. Effective Synod linking affects the programme.
- 10.9 Concern that the programme may well be coming to a natural end.

## 11. For consideration

- 11.1 The review group brings the following statements to Mission Committee for consideration:
- The review group affirms the work of Commitment for Life as part of the mission of the United Reformed Church for justice in God's world.
  - The added value of worship, education and action by Commitment for Life are still important and relevant today.
  - In the light of the present global economic and political climate we must recognise the need for the programme to develop and reignite a passion for justice through:
    - New technology
    - Engagement of a new generation of people
    - The creation of a new relationship with Christian Aid and Global Justice Now to suit their new working models.

# Appendix 1

## Christian Aid input

### Summary

Christian Aid's relationship with the United Reform Church (URC) as a sponsoring denomination is longstanding, far reaching and well-established. Commitment for Life (CfL) exists within the wider context of this valued relationship. It reflects a key element of our partnership and raises significant income to support Christian Aid's work.

CfL supporters are some of Christian Aid's most committed supporters and engage with us throughout the year through Christian Aid Week; Community partnerships; Christmas appeal and much between. Many CfL Link people are also CAW organisers, campaigners and church multipliers.

We are keen to explore how together we can renew the inspiration and vision that has engaged supporters of CfL over the past 25 years. We believe that this practical expression of faith in action has the potential to play a significant role in the wider mission of the church as well as continuing to support the work of Christian Aid partners.

### Context of Review (July 2017)

This year is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CfL Christian Aid's partnership with the URC. Within the URC the scheme is promoted by Linda Mead, the CfL Coordinator and on a voluntary basis by the Reference Group and Link People.

CfL churches choose to support a partner country or region (Bangladesh, Central America, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory or Zimbabwe) and can change annually. They receive updates twice a year about their partner region and an annual update about all regions.

From the total income raised by CfL 75% is divided equally between Christian Aid's country programmes in the partner regions. The remaining income is 5% paid to charity partner Global Justice Now (formerly World Development Movement) and 20% is for administering the programme

### Scope of this review

This review is being undertaken by the URC Mission Committee. The TOR are summarised below (see appendix 1 for detail).

Aims: To determine how the current Commitment for Life programme will transition into any further ongoing work in this area by:

- Reviewing the achievements of the Commitment for Life programme
- Assessing the ongoing and future needs of the programme
- Assessing what form of programme the United Reformed Church needs now in order to achieve the vision and mission of Commitment for Life.

Objectives: To review the achievements of the Commitment for Life programme by:

- Its own vision and mission statement
- Looking at income, number of participating churches and interest with which it deals (including how it is expressed in worship, education and action)
- How Commitment for Life relates to vision2020.

To assess the ongoing and future needs of the programme by:

- Identifying any new priorities and future needs in local churches
- Considering how the programme can be refreshed or reinvented in order to generate a greater level of involvement and support from the URC
- Considering ways to reverse the current decline in regular financial donations
- If need be, by planning for a managed closing of the programme and making recommendations for alternative ways of supporting Christian Aid and Global Justice Now.

## Key Christian Aid stakeholders

- Linda Mead – Commitment for Life Coordinator
- John Plant – CfL Project Manager (and manages URC relationship for CA)
- Charlotte Scott – CEPO for Commitment for Life
- Mark Sturge – Project Sponsor for CfL
- Regional Coordinators – promotion of CfL across UK

## Summary of Scheme

In the past financial year, CfL raised £337, 484. At present, there are approximately 1,400 URC churches in the UK and of those 475 are actively engaged with CfL ie 34%.

For Christian Aid, the scheme provides significant and valued income. For that reason, CfL has now been established as a *project* within SPD. This enables us to give it a better focus within our wider engagement. The project now has its own Church Engagement Project Officer (CEPO) working 2 days per week with John Plant overseeing the scheme as part of his role.

The benefit of CfL being established as a project is that there is now more investment of time and resource into the scheme. It also provides opportunities to strengthen and develop our relationship, offer better support for innovation and mobilisation, and better attend to your needs and agreed objectives.

## Income

At its high point, CfL was raising around £500,000 per year. This has declined over time, and the last 5 years (2012-2016) show an overall downward trend. We are keen to find ways of working together to attend to this decline but it is important to note that income remains significant.



## Engagement levels across URC

There are 475 churches currently supporting CfL. This represents a reduction overall and that in turn reflects a number of factors including a clean-up of data. Whilst the level of support is good we would be keen to have a deeper understanding of the challenges facing churches that may have contributed to the decline and explore how those can be tackled.

## Current investment

Expenditure can be divided into three sections; printed resources, promotion and supporter trips.

## Resources

CfL programme cost of all printed materials is split 50/50 between Commitment for Life and Christian Aid. Resources produced are two A4 updates (one in March, another in November) featuring the partner regions and a small CA campaigns update. In addition, CfL churches receive an annual update in July – an A5 16 pages booklet and an A2 poster – which features all partner regions, and a CA and Global Justice Now update.

Staff time (both CA and CfL) is not accounted for within these costs. It is important to point out that the full time CfL Coordinator's (Linda) role encompasses all the administration and promotion of CfL. Linda's salary is paid for through CfL funds raised as part of the 20% admin cost.

The resources are planned and managed through the CA Creative Team and Charlotte Scott oversees this process.

Christian Aid does not do any active promotion of Commitment for Life at the moment. There are plans to do a week of social media promotion from the main CA accounts in August 2017 and this will be the first time this has been done.

## Promotion

Christian Aid does pay for advertising in URC publications for CA key moment appeals. This has been noted as confusing by some CfL churches as people have trouble understanding the difference between Christian Aid and Commitment for Life.

## Supporter trips

In 2014, Commitment for Life supporters were taken on a trip to El Salvador to see first-hand the work in their newest partner region. The total cost was £20,000 and whilst it is difficult to attribute direct financial outcomes from this, coverage of CfL across URC channels has increased and the URC supported a successful match fund bid to DFID.

In 2017 there was a similar visit to Zimbabwe with key CfL supporters and this is also likely to significantly increase coverage of CfL within the URC as well as on CA social media.

In the past, these visits have been an effective way to inspire the most committed givers, whilst also recognising their contribution to communities through Commitment for Life. A more strategic approach to promotion following a trip could be beneficial for maximising these opportunities.

## Strengthening communications

There have been many changes within Christian Aid in the past two years, especially to our communications staff. There is concern from CfL, and from the 2015 CA review of CfL, that this could make the scheme more challenging as it will be harder to gather the kinds of stories supporters are used to.

This may prove to be the case in some countries, however a recent trip to Zimbabwe has re-opened staff links and provided many stories for future updates.

The movement of Communications staff from London to being based in-country also provides opportunities for more direct updates to supporters and more up-to-date information. It also gives chances for more direct input from social media.

Gen Lomax is currently looking at the possibilities of a Communications Officer in Bangladesh and this could provide a pilot scheme for the new ways of working for CfL if a good relationship is established

## Qualitative feedback

This SWOT analysis done in combination with Linda Mead and those participating recently in the trip to Zimbabwe, reflects the breadth of views shared more widely by supporters.

It reveals opportunities for strengthening CfL and highlights issues for attention. Some of these issues can be addressed immediately and others require further exploration. The recommendations for further consideration suggest where attention should be focused.



<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ownership by URC</li> <li>• Biggest denominational fundraising appeal</li> <li>• Long term commitment</li> <li>• Opt in scheme (decision of the whole church)</li> <li>• Regular updates on 4 countries gives variety</li> <li>• Focused on specific countries</li> <li>• Long term relationships with partners</li> <li>• Understood as part of the mission of the church</li> <li>• Programme coordinator embedded in URC</li> <li>• Advocates and link people</li> <li>• Has built good partnerships and engagement more broadly with Christian Aid.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire to see 'where my money is going'</li> <li>• Lack of quick wins to report back</li> <li>• Internal changes at CA disrupting communication</li> <li>• Challenge of recruiting advocates and reps.</li> <li>• Confusion with other Christian Aid offers</li> <li>• CA regional teams uncertain about CfL</li> <li>• Congregations changing and losing contact with original vision</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project approach will give greater focus</li> <li>• New communications – digital etc.</li> <li>• Refresh and renew offer</li> <li>• Developing supporter trips to reinforce connections</li> <li>• Stronger ownership by URC and connection to mission</li> <li>• Engaging with young people (FURY)</li> <li>• Greater visibility of global church partnerships</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing numbers in congregations</li> <li>• Reducing income</li> <li>• Aging congregations</li> <li>• Changes in charity giving over 25 yrs</li> <li>• Other offers from Christian Aid more attractive or filling gaps previously done by CfL</li> <li>• Wider economic situation in UK</li> <li>• Staff turnover at CA</li> </ul>

## Building on strengths, developing opportunities, addressing weaknesses and mitigating threats

CfL is a significant expression of our partnership with the URC. We believe that it demonstrates a practical endeavour to proclaim good news to the poor and reflects the heart of the church's mission. When the church acts boldly this proclamation exercises a compelling call to those in the wider community. When CfL was launched, it was regarded as inspirational. We would like to work together with the URC to renew, refresh and reinvigorate CfL in the light of the issues identified above and within the wider review.

We would welcome further joint exploration to:

- **Review our governance arrangements to ensure they support joint working effectively**

This includes ensuring that Christian Aid's project approach is delivered in a way that strengthens our partnership and enables CfL to flourish.

- **Invest in CfL to support the wider mission of the church**

CfL demonstrates a commitment to a just world and a desire to put faith into action. Our experience is that this partnership not only enables a key part of the church's mission to be delivered but has the potential to speak in a compelling way to a wider audience beyond the church. For churches that wish to reach out into the wider community and demonstrate a living faith, CfL offers an inspiring vision of transformational change to end global poverty. Supporting churches to make these connections within their wider life could offer an exciting opportunity for mission. It would require a bold investment but it is one that CA would support with strengthen capacity from regional staff.

- **Strengthen internal and external communications to increase participation in CfL**

How can we fully utilise promotional and communications channels? For example, ensure CA and URC publications (Reform), websites, social media, denominational letters for CAW all promote and reinforce the CfL message in a coherent way. There may be opportunities to build on the success of working with URC media team on the 2014 Christmas appeal to seek additional opportunities to communicate with URC network.

Christian Aid can ensure all CA staff in regions and nations have the information and tools they need to promote CfL to URC churches and nurture existing CfL churches.

How do we make best use of new ways of communicating and new ways of engaging? It would be helpful to review our materials and investigate possibilities for reducing the amount of printed communications materials produced and maximising digital offerings.

There is also an opportunity to work with a new Communications model in Bangladesh and build a relationship which will benefit CA and CfL. Charlotte Scott to explore this possibility with Gen Lomax and Bangladesh Country Team.

- **Develop and pilot new funding ideas within CfL**

The Zimbabwe trip yielded the opportunity to explore investment funding from churches for small business ventures of beneficiaries. CA Social Enterprise team are keen to explore this further given the match between CfL countries and the countries they are focusing on. It would provide a new and exciting offer that would enable greater learning about development. A pilot scheme could yield new fundraising opportunities and bring some fresh ideas to the partnership.

- **Explore areas of potential growth**  
For example, reflect on the aging population in URC congregations, combined with a high level of commitment to Christian Aid and the Commitment for Life. A CfL legacy campaign in 2010 resulted in two legacies, £75k in 2012/11 and £100k in 2012/13.
- **Strengthen supporters and their networks to build capacity for wider engagement**  
This could include possibilities for linking CfL supporters with one another through an annual event or more local synod-based events. This would build a sense of community for those who may feel isolated within their own church.
- **Deepen supporters understanding and passion**  
This could include looking at supporter travel and how we might offer that more widely. The Zimbabwe trip in 2017 and El Salvador trip in 2014 have yielded enthusiastic supporters with personal stories to tell. Working specifically with these people and setting some goals may help to use their personal enthusiasm to best effect for the partnership.

## Appendix 2

### Global Justice Now

Commitment for Life provides crucial support for Global Justice Now's work in the UK and at the global level, while also enabling Global Justice Now to support the United Reformed Church in its goal "to influence those in power and equip local congregations to take action against everything that undermines or destroys fullness of life... to challenge unjust structures and seek economic justice from the local to the global marketplace" (as outlined in the URC's vision2020).

### Partnership and accomplishments

Commitment for Life's financial and practical support over the last 25 years has been invaluable for Global Justice Now. Commitment for Life has helped us mobilise resources and reach audiences with our campaigns that we simply would not have been able to without this partnership.

The unrestricted funding we have received from Commitment for Life has enabled us to run effective campaigns that quickly respond to a changing context. There has also been a positive knock-on effect as we've been able to apply for further funds using Commitment for Life's financial support as "match funding", multiplying the impact of Commitment for Life's support. Most importantly, funding from Commitment for Life has helped empower us to maintain our independence and not rely on funding from the government or corporations. This gives Global Justice Now the freedom to continue to speak out for a more just and equal world.

Our long-standing partnership with Commitment for Life has also been key to connecting hundreds of individual churches within the United Reform Church with broader global issues. We have worked together on numerous campaigns, engaging church communities and providing them with action cards, posters and information to fight water privatisation in the global south, end exploitative arms deals and combat unfair trade. Commitment for Life's role in communicating our campaigns and connecting us with church communities has made this possible.

Commitment for Life's support has made a significant contribution to a number of our achievements over the years, with one inspiring recent example being the Trade Justice Movement and the campaign to defeat the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). Ultimately, we won this victory by building a huge coalition of faith groups, development NGOs, environmental groups and consumer groups. Commitment for Life played a crucial role, working with us (alongside Christian Aid) to produce and disseminate a prayer pack resource for churches about trade justice. The pack included prayers, writings and ideas by people from a range of Christian traditions who share a conviction that trade injustice is a barrier to the fullness of life promised by the kingdom of God (<http://www.globaljustice.org.uk/resources/ttip-and-trade-justice>). Commitment for Life's contribution expanded and strengthened the coalition, helping to ensure our success.

## Looking forward

Global Justice Now's upcoming campaigns offer an even greater opportunity for the URC community to connect with issues that are important to them, as outlined in the URC's vision2020. Our campaigns for the next year include:

- Access to medicines**

The right to health and access to effective medicines is under threat around the world from the disproportionate power of the pharmaceutical industry. Globally, more than 10 million people die every year because they cannot access or afford the drugs they need. Much of the problem stems from the dominant medical research and development (R&D) model, which lets corporations charge extortionate prices for medicines, putting patients and national health services at risk. This model also creates incentives for companies to place R&D on the most profitable drugs above badly needed medical innovation, causing a growing crisis as research on antibiotics fails to keep up with diseases. This is in spite of the fact that 30% of R&D – and up to 80% of innovative early research – is publicly funded. Our campaign, run in partnership with organisations across the global south, aims to introduce a fairer system of funding R&D that would ensure publicly-funded R&D leads to accessible, affordable medicines. This aligns well with the URC's aims, particularly Statements 8 (Global Partnerships) and 9 (Justice and Peace) of vision2020.
- Trade democracy**

As the UK government renegotiates trade deals and relationships around the world, it is more important than ever that parliament and the public have a say in trade agreements. Our campaign aims to make trade negotiations more transparent and democratic. In partnership with global trade justice networks, we are working to ensure that we can safeguard and extend protections for workers' rights, migrants' rights and the environment. Fairer trade has proved to be a popular issue with many congregations, and our campaign will provide numerous opportunities for churches to get involved.
- Migrants welcome here**

This campaign aims to address the worrying rise in hate crime and the increasingly hostile environment for migrants in the UK. Our approach combines tackling hate in the media with working at the community level to help local activists and their communities discuss migration in an open and informed way. This campaign is ideally suited for engaging congregations, giving churches the opportunity to host or become involved with a varied programme of events, including trainings, discussions, film screenings and festivals. It also aligns strongly with Statements 4 (Community Partnerships) and 5 (Hospitality and Diversity) of vision2020.

To run these campaigns into 2018 and beyond, we rely on the financial support we receive from Commitment for Life, as well as on the opportunity to connect with congregations and engage a broader audience in our campaigns. We hope we can look forward to continuing our work alongside Commitment for Life.