

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Portsmouth 2003

July 5th - 8th

Annual Reports, Resolutions
and Papers



General Assembly

2003

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**Annual Reports,
Resolutions & Papers**

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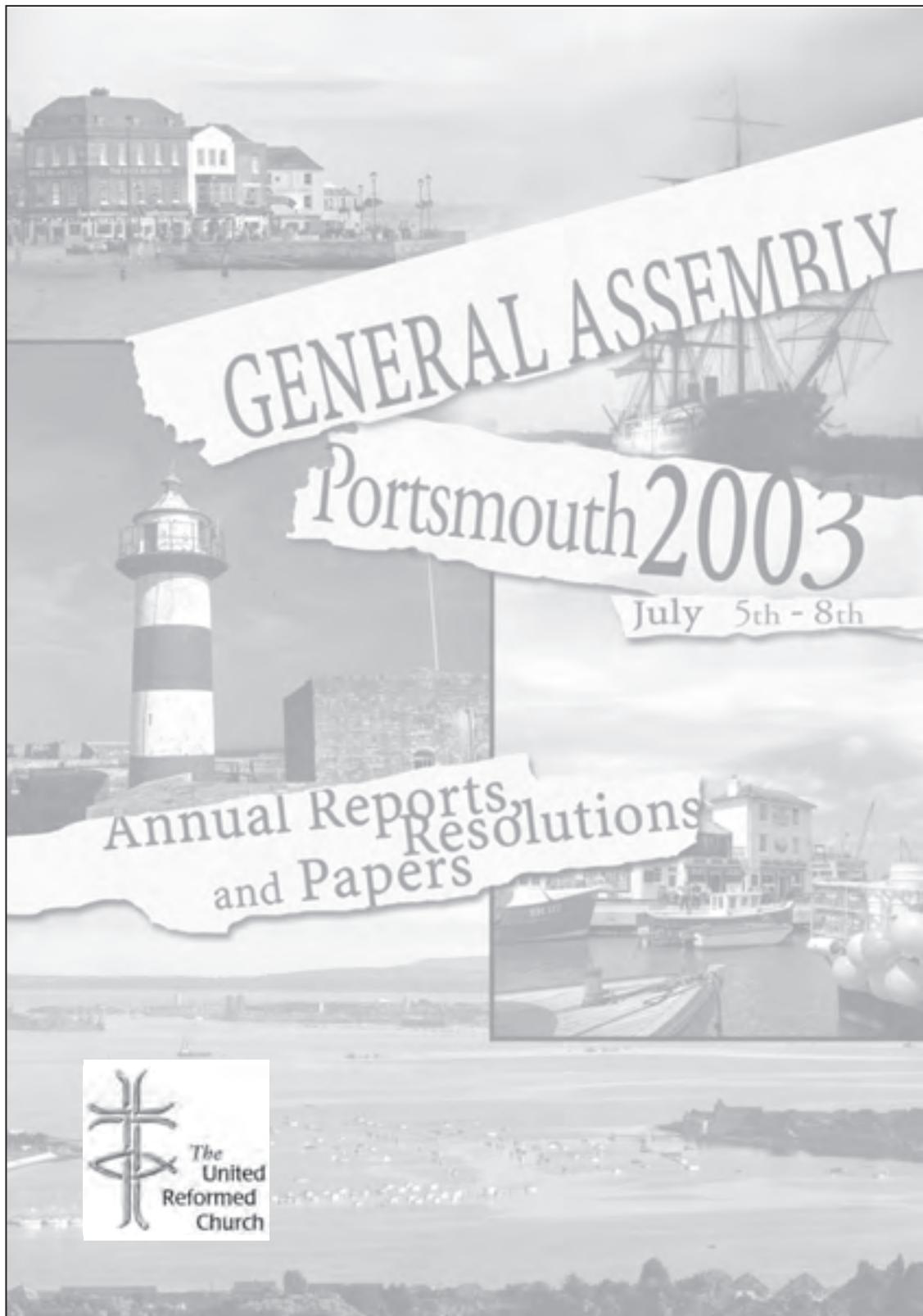
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NOTE The General Assembly in 2000 decided that from 2001, committees will report in alternate years, except where for legal or administrative reasons annual reports are required. The latter are listed above with an asterisk.

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Standing Orders



Standing Orders of the Assembly

1. The Agenda of the Assembly

1a. At its meetings the Assembly shall consider reports and draft motions prepared by its Committees which include the Mission Council or by synods, and motions and amendments of which due notice has been given submitted by individual members of the Assembly.

1b. The Assembly Arrangements Committee shall prepare before each meeting of the Assembly a draft order of business, and submit it to the Assembly as early as convenient in the programme.

1c. Motions arising from a report which have been duly seconded and submitted by individual members of Assembly under rule 3b shall be taken at a point in the business determined by the Moderator on the advice of the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee.

1d. If notice has been given of two or more motions on the same subject, or two or more amendments to the same motion, these shall be taken in the order decided by the Moderator on the advice of the Clerk.

1e. The Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee may, during the meeting of the Assembly, propose that the order of business be changed.

2. Presentation of Business

2a. All reports of Committees, together with the draft motions arising therefrom, shall be delivered to the General Secretary by a date to be annually determined, so that they may be printed and circulated to members in time for consideration before the date of the Assembly meeting.

2b. A synod may deliver to the General Secretary not less than twelve weeks before the commencement of the annual meeting of the Assembly notice in writing of a motion for consideration at the Assembly. This notice shall include the names of those appointed to propose and second the motion at the Assembly.

2c. A local church or district council wishing to put forward a motion for consideration by the General Assembly shall submit the motion to its synod for consideration and, if the synod so

decides, transmission to the Assembly, at such time as will enable the synod to comply with Standing Order 2b above. In the case of a local church the motion must be submitted to the synod through the district council.

2d. A member of the Assembly may deliver to the General Secretary not less than 21 days before the date of the meeting of the Assembly a notice in writing of a motion (which notice must include the name of a seconder) to be included in the Assembly agenda. If the subject matter of such a notice of motion appears to the General Secretary to be an infringement of the rights of a synod or a district council through which the matter could properly have been raised, the General Secretary shall inform the member accordingly and bring the matter before the Assembly Arrangements Committee which shall advise the Assembly as to the procedure to be followed.

2e. Proposals for amendments to the Basis and Structure of the URC, which may be made by the Mission Council or a Committee of the General Assembly or a synod, shall be in the hands of the General Secretary not later than 12 weeks before the opening of the Assembly. The General Secretary, in addition to the normal advice to members of the Assembly, shall, as quickly as possible, inform all synod clerks of the proposed amendment.

3. Motions and Amendments

3a. A report presented to the Assembly by a Committee or synod, under rule 1, shall be received for debate, unless notice has been duly given under rule 2d of a motion to refer back to that Committee or synod the whole or part of the report and its attached motion(s). Such a motion for reference back shall be debated and voted upon before the relevant report is itself debated. To carry such a motion two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. When a report has been received for debate, and before any motions consequent upon it are proposed, any member may speak to a matter arising from the report which is not the subject of a motion.

3b. During the meeting of the Assembly and on the report of a Committee, notice (including the names of proposer and seconder) shall be given to the Clerk of any new motions which arise from the material of the report, and of any amendments which affect the substance of motions already presented.

The Moderator shall decide whether such motion or amendment requires to be circulated in writing to members before it is discussed by the Assembly. During the course of the debate a new motion or amendment may be stated orally without supporting speech in order to ascertain whether a member is willing to second it.

3c. No motion or amendment shall be spoken to by its proposer, debated, or put to the Assembly unless it is known that there is a seconder, except that motions presented on behalf of a Committee, of which printed notice has been given, do not need to be seconded.

3d. A seconder may second without speaking and, by declaring the intention of doing so, reserve the right of speaking until a later period in the debate.

3e. It shall not be in order to move a motion or amendment which:

- (i) contravenes any part of the Basis of Union, or
- (ii) involves the church in expenditure without prior consideration by the appropriate committee, or
- (iii) pre-empts discussion of a matter to be considered later in the agenda, or
- (iv) amends or reverses a decision reached by the Assembly at its preceding two annual meetings unless the Moderator, Clerk and General Secretary together decide that changed circumstances or new evidence justify earlier reconsideration of the matter, or
- (v) is not related to the report of a Committee and has not been the subject of 21 days' notice under 2d.

The decision of the Moderator (in the case of i, ii, iii, and v) and of the Moderator with the Clerk and the General Secretary (in the case of iv) on the application of this Standing Order shall be final.

3f. An amendment shall be either to omit words or to insert words or to do both, but no amendment shall be in order which has the effect of introducing an irrelevant proposal or of negating the motion. The Moderator may rule that a proposed amendment should be treated as an alternative motion under Standing Order 3k.

3g. If an amendment is carried, the motion as amended shall take the place of the original motion and shall become the substantive motion upon which any further amendment may be moved. If an amendment is rejected a further amendment not to the like effect may be moved.

3h. An amendment which has been moved and seconded shall be disposed of before any further amendment may be moved, but notice may be given of intention to move a further amendment should the one before the Assembly be rejected.

3i. The mover may, with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Assembly, alter the motion or amendment proposed.

3j. A motion or amendment may be withdrawn by the proposer with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Assembly. Any such consent shall be signified without discussion. It shall not be in order for any member to speak upon it after the proposer has asked permission to withdraw unless such permission shall have been refused.

3k. Alternative (but not directly negative) motions may be moved and seconded in competition with a motion before the Assembly. After any amendments duly moved under Standing Orders 3f, 3g and 3h have been dealt with and debate on the alternative motions has ended, the movers shall reply to the debate in reverse order to that in which they spoke initially. The first vote shall be a vote in favour of each of the motions, put in the order in which they were proposed, the result not being announced for one until it is announced for all. If any of them obtains a majority of those voting, it becomes the sole motion before the Assembly. If none of them does so, the motion having the fewest votes is discarded. Should the lowest two be equal, the Moderator gives a casting vote. The voting process is repeated until one motion achieves a majority of those voting. Once a sole motion remains, votes for and against that motion shall be taken in the normal way and in accordance with Standing Order 6. (3.9.2b)

4. Timing of Speeches and of Other Business.

4a. Save by prior agreement of the officers of the Assembly, speeches made in the presentation of reports concerning past work of Assembly Committees which are to be open to question, comment or discussion shall not exceed 5 minutes.

4b. Save by the prior agreement of the officers of the Assembly, speeches made in support of the motions from any Assembly Committee, including the Mission Council, or from any synod shall not in aggregate exceed 45 minutes, nor shall speeches in support of any particular Committee or synod motion exceed 12 minutes, (e.g. a Committee with three motions may not exceed 36 minutes). The proposers of any other motion of which due notice has been given shall be allowed an aggregate of 10 minutes, unless a longer period be recommended by the officers of the Assembly or determined by the Moderator. Each subsequent speaker in any debate shall be allowed 5 minutes unless the Moderator shall determine otherwise: it shall, in particular, be open to the Moderator to determine that all speeches in a debate or from a particular point in a debate shall be of not more than 3 minutes.

4c. When a speech is made on behalf of a Committee, it shall be so stated. Otherwise a speaker shall begin by giving name and accreditation to the Assembly.

4d. Secretaries of Committees and full-time Executive Secretaries who are not members of Assembly may speak on the report of a Committee for which they have responsibility at the request of the Convener concerned. They may speak on other reports with the consent of the Moderator.

4e. In each debate, whether on a motion or on an amendment, no one shall address the Assembly more than once, except that at the close of each debate the proposer of the motion or the amendment, as the case may be, shall have the right to reply, but must strictly confine the reply to answering previous speakers and must not introduce new matter. Such reply shall close the debate on the motion or the amendment.

4f. The foregoing Standing Order (4e) shall not prevent the asking or answering of a question which arises from the matter before the Assembly or from a speech made in the debate upon it.

5. Closure of Debate

5a. In the course of the business any member may move that the question under consideration be not put. This motion takes precedence over every motion before the Assembly. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded and the proposer of the motion or amendment under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule. Should the motion be carried the business shall immediately end and the Assembly shall proceed to the next business.

5b. In the course of any discussion, any member may move that the question be now put. This is sometimes described as "the closure motion". If the Moderator senses that there is a wish or need to close a debate, the Moderator may ask whether any member wishes so to move; the Moderator may not simply declare a debate closed. Provided that it appears to the Moderator that the motion is a fair use of this rule, the vote shall be taken upon it immediately it has been seconded. When an amendment is under discussion, this motion shall apply only to that amendment. To carry this motion, two thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. The mover of the original motion or amendment, as the case may be, retains the right of reply before the vote is taken on the motion or amendment.

5c. During the course of a debate on a motion any member may move that decision on this motion be deferred to the next Assembly. This rule does not apply to debates on amendments since the Assembly needs to decide the final form of a motion before it can responsibly vote on deferral. The motion then takes precedence over other business. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded and the proposer of the motion under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule or that deferral would have the effect of annulling the motion. To carry this motion, two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. At the discretion of the Moderator, the General Secretary may be instructed by a further motion, duly seconded, to refer the matter for consideration by other councils and/ or by one or more committees of the Assembly. The General Secretary shall provide for the deferred motion to be represented at the next Annual Meeting of the General Assembly.

5d. The motions described in Standing Orders 5a, 5b and 5c above are exceptions to Standing Order 3c, in that they may be moved and spoken to without the proposer having first obtained and announced the consent of a seconder. They must, however, be seconded before being put to the vote. Precedence as between motions under 5a, 5b and 5c is determined by the fact that after one of them is before the Assembly no other of them can be moved until that one has been dealt with.

6. Voting

6a. Voting on any motion whose effect is to alter, add to, modify or supersede the Basis, the Structure and any other form or expression of the polity and doctrinal formulations of the United Reformed Church, is governed by paragraph 3(l) and (2) of the Structure.

6b. Other motions before the Assembly shall be determined by a majority of the votes of members of the Assembly present and voting as indicated by a show of voting cards, except

- (i) If the Assembly decides before the vote that a paper ballot be the method of voting or
- (ii) if, the show of cards indicating a very close vote, the Moderator decides, or a member of Assembly proposes and the Assembly agrees that a paper ballot be the method of voting.

6c. To provide for voting in the case of a paper ballot, and to assist in taking a count of votes when the Moderator decides this is necessary, the Nominations Committee shall appoint tellers for each Assembly.

7. Questions

7a. A member may, if two days' notice in writing has been given to the General Secretary, ask the Moderator or the Convener of any Committee any question on any matter relating to the business of the Assembly to which no reference is made in any report before the Assembly.

7b. A member may, when given opportunity by the Moderator, ask the presenter of any report before the Assembly a question seeking additional information or explanation relating to matters contained within the report.

7c. Questions asked under Standing Orders 7a and 7b shall be put and answered without discussion.

8. Points of Order, Personal Explanations, Dissent

8a. A member shall have the right to rise and call attention to a point of order, and immediately on this being done any other member addressing the Assembly shall cease speaking until the Moderator has determined the question of order. The decision on any point of order rests entirely with the Moderator. Any member calling to order unnecessarily is liable to censure of the Assembly.

8b. A member feeling that some material part of a former speech by such member at the same meeting has been misunderstood or is being grossly misinterpreted by a later speaker may rise and request the Moderator's permission to make a personal explanation. If the Moderator so permits, a member so rising shall be entitled to be heard forthwith.

8c. The right to record in the minutes a dissent from any decision of the Assembly shall only be granted to a member by the Moderator if the reason stated, either verbally at the time or later in writing, appears to the Moderator to fall within the provisions of paragraph 10 of the Basis of Union.

8d. The decision of the Moderator on a point of order, or on the admissibility of a personal explanation, or on the right to have a dissent recorded, shall not be open to discussion.

9. Admission of Public and Press

Members of the public and representatives of the press shall be admitted to the Assembly unless the Assembly otherwise decides, and they shall occupy such places as are assigned to them.

10. Circulation of Documents

Only documents authorised by the General Secretary in consultation with the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee may be distributed within the building in which the Assembly is meeting.

11. Records of the Assembly

11a. A record of attendance at the meetings of the Assembly shall be kept in such a manner as the Assembly Arrangements Committee may determine.

11b. The minutes of each day's proceedings, in duplicated form, shall be circulated on the following day and normally, after any necessary correction, approved at the opening of the afternoon or evening session. Concerning the minutes of the closing day of the Assembly the Clerk shall submit a motion approving their insertion in the full minutes of the Assembly after review and any necessary correction by the officers of the Assembly. Before such a motion is voted upon, any member may ask to have read out the written minute on any particular item.

11c. A signed copy of the minutes shall be preserved in the custody of the General Secretary as the official record of the Assembly's proceedings.

11d. As soon as possible after the Assembly meeting ends, the substance of the minutes together with any other relevant papers shall be published as a "Record of Assembly" and a copy sent to every member of the Assembly, each synod, district council and local church.

12. Suspension and Amendment of Standing Orders

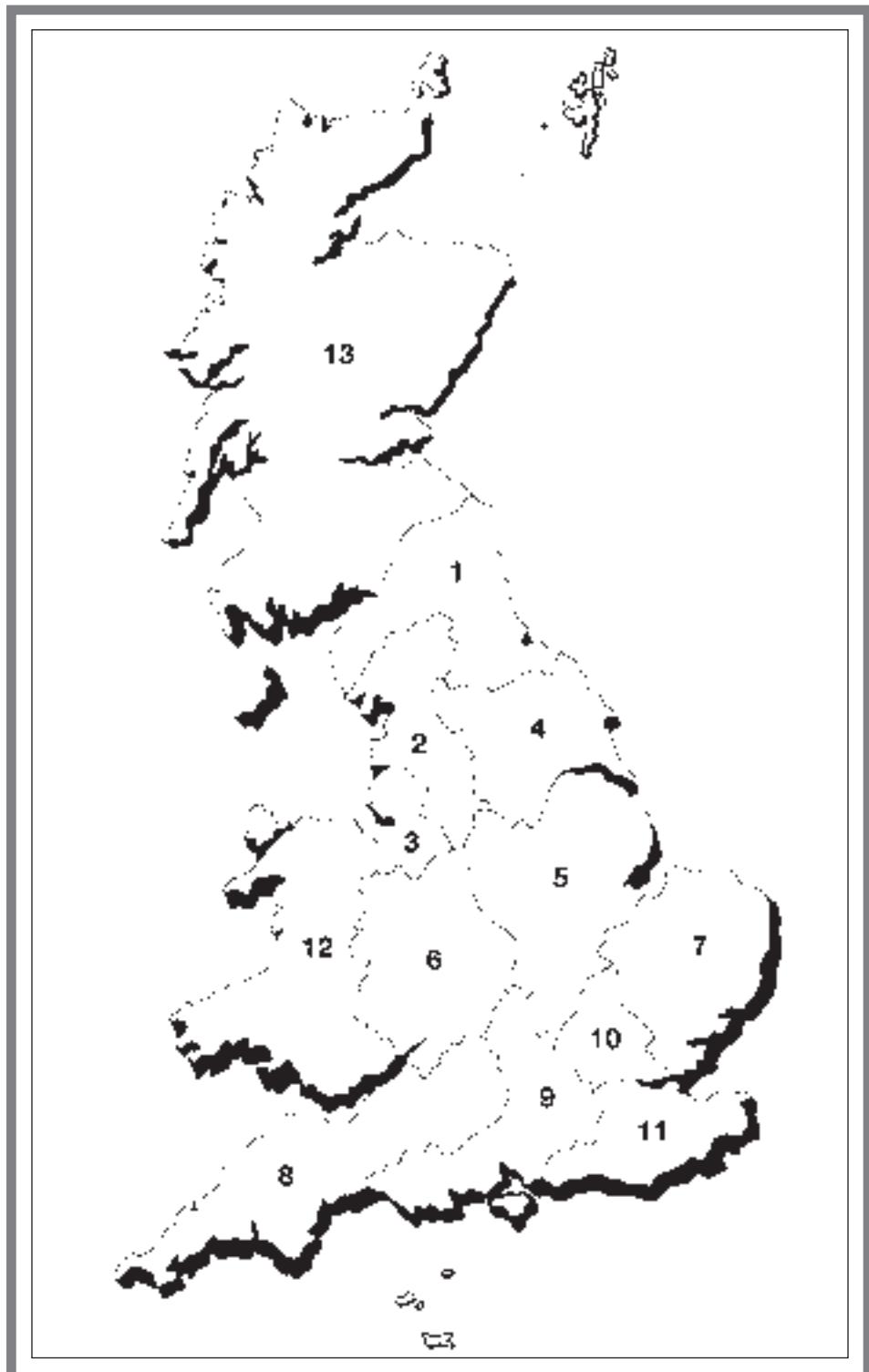
12a. In any case of urgency or upon motion made on a notice duly given, any one or more of the Standing Orders may be suspended at any meeting so far as regards any particular business at such a meeting, provided that three-fourths of the members of the Assembly present and voting shall so decide.

12b. Motions to amend the Standing Orders shall be referred to the Clerk of the Assembly for report before being voted on by the Assembly (or, in case of urgency, by the Mission Council). The Clerk of the Assembly may from time to time suggest amendments to the Standing Orders, which shall be subject to decision by the Assembly.



The
United
Reformed
Church

Synods



- 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

North Western Synod

1.1 The North Western Synod brings together people and churches in diverse places from the mountains of the Lake District and the shipyards of Barrow, by way of the industrial towns and farmland of Lancashire, to the Greater Manchester conurbation and the edges of the Peak District. Manchester, as the major population centre, has experienced revival with the success of hosting the Commonwealth Games and a new life as a tourist centre. It has yet to be seen how far this new life can benefit the rundown inner areas, but the church here as elsewhere is contributing to the regeneration effort.

1.2 Issues raised at Synod meetings have reflected concerns in local communities. In areas of Lancashire and Greater Manchester, economic decline and tensions between people of different colour and faith have resulted in political extremism and violence. Several local churches are deeply involved in the development of inter-faith understanding. Inter-faith work in Oldham was reported to the General Assembly at York in 2001. United Reformed churches are active in the support of asylum seekers dispersed into the local communities.

1.3 As regional government becomes a prospect, the Synod heard with interest Monsignor John Devine talk of his work as the Churches' Officer for the North West, working with the Regional Development Agency, pointing out the strength of the churches if they act in partnerships for communities. United Reformed Church ministers and members are active in regeneration programmes and debates across Greater Manchester. In Fairtrade Fortnight in 2001, the Synod met in Garstang, Britain's first Fairtrade town, and heard about giving practical effect to policies for the rights of the developing world.

1.4 In District Pastoral Committees and Council meetings, people have been trying to raise the sights of local church members from the immediate concerns of maintaining, with declining numbers of members, buildings and organisational structures established in more confident times. Several local congregations have decided to close their buildings and disperse, but others are developing imaginative new plans. Regular Consultations on Mission Enabling and Training (COMET) have brought together members of Synod committees and teams to spend some time discussing concerns such as inter-faith relations or concepts of Christian leadership and some time on more immediate practicalities.

1.5 Local Leadership of local churches has been established in some parts of the Synod for many years, but has been given a new impetus in the production of a new policy. Eighteen people have taken part in a course based on that developed by Mersey Synod and the response has been lively and productive. Accreditation should be completed by the time of the General Assembly.

1.6 The North West values its many international links, often derived from the centres of higher education in the region. The Revd Chang Jen-Ho was welcomed to the Synod with his arrival in Manchester as National Chaplain to Taiwanese Students in Britain. The Synod is strengthening the link with the Waldensian Church in Italy on behalf of the United Reformed Church, building on the work of the United Reformed Church Waldensian Fellowship, based in the North West, which for over twenty years has organised visits between the two churches. We intend to find opportunities to bring together people working in similar fields in the two churches, such as ecumenism, education and immigration, to share experiences.

1.7 We formally give notice that, in order to relate to the clustering of Baptist churches in the area, the United Church in Hyde (Baptist and United Reformed), was transferred from the South East Manchester District to the North East Manchester District.

1.8 In the summer of 2000, the Synod said farewell to the Revd Keith Forecast after eight years of pastoral care as Synod Moderator, with a grand service of thanksgiving at Blackburn Cathedral. The Revd Peter Brain was welcomed as the new Moderator and has shown the church clarity of purpose for challenging times. We wished the Revd Nigel Uden well as he left St Annes-on-Sea to become Moderator of the Southern Synod. Raymond Clarke was thanked for his service as Synod Clerk, when he was replaced by George Morton in 2001.

The National Synod of Wales

1 Re-imagining the Future

- Being Church Differently.

1.1 Following the publication of the 'Growing Up' report the National Synod of Wales, like others, wanted to find a way of addressing those issues that are taxing the whole Church. We had already appointed an Advocate for the Five Marks of Mission to help us embody the report in our life. We want to encourage the whole people of God to consider those wider issues of discipleship, ministry, and mission that face the United Reformed Church. We began a process we called 'Re-imagining the Future - Being Church Differently.'

1.2 During 2002 each District held District Days based around the 'Re-imagining' theme. They proved to be very encouraging and what was learned there was fed into a major week-end consultation held in Aberystwyth University in September 2002. Representatives from each congregation, serving ministers, interim moderators, children and young people were invited for the week-end. Our purpose was simply to provide the space and the challenge for us to talk together about God. We focussed on God rather than structures so that we could re-discover the foundation on which to approach ministry and mission questions. God's people did their best theology whilst in exile, and Walter Brueggemann's use of the Exile paradigm for the Church was very helpful and challenging.

1.3 Groups of people wrote discussion starter documents which were published and sent to each local congregation. Since all serving ministers and interim moderators were at the week-end consultation, we asked a group of people – none is a minister of Word and Sacraments – to develop a worship resource pack based on the lectionary readings. It was printed and a copy sent to each local congregation most of whom did use the material for their act of worship and celebration.

1.4 We invited others from the wider church to bring their insights and skills to us. Among them the Revd Dr David Cornick and the Revd Dr John Sutcliffe, our theological reflectors, offered us helpfully critical reflections. John's written reflection is before the churches and we are now following up and trying to encourage the conversations from that week-end to continue.

1.5 There is much more that could be said, but this gives a flavour. We have expended a good deal of energy and resource into this process but it is proving to be very encouraging.

2 Buildings Inspection

2.1 We are in the process of the first systematic inspection of all our church property. It is causing a good deal of anxiety for most of our congregations. With two thirds of the inspections now completed the estimated expenditure is over £2.5m. In its way this is also part of our Re-imagining. The question raised for us is not so much where do we find all this money? Rather it is whether we should think about finding all this money? Are there other ways of being church today? A hard question? Of course it is.

3 Ministry Mission and the Whole People of God.

3.1 Alongside this process the Training and Development Team has a vital ministry. It comprises the Synod's Training Officers, Ecumenical Officer, Rural Officer, Advocate for the Five Marks of Mission, Convenor and Moderator. Together the team enable and encourage ministers, Lay Preachers, individuals and congregations for ministry and mission. 'Training for Learning and Serving' continues to be one of our major emphases. We now have in the region of 50 people who have benefited from that course. Our task is to discover how all the resources we have can be employed along with the deployment of our ministers of Word and Sacraments to offer ministry across the Districts and Synod.

4 Ecumenical Bishop.

4.1 Since General Assembly met last year we have seen a major disappointment. The Enfys (meaning 'Rainbow' and symbolising the Covenanted Churches in Wales) proposal to appoint an Ecumenical Bishop in East Cardiff suffered a blow when one of our Covenant partners, the Church in Wales, did not feel that they could support such a move at this time. (The Presbyterian Church of Wales had withdrawn from the proposal at a much earlier stage). Nevertheless this recent decision has prompted the five Covenant partners to re-examine our understanding of our 30 year Covenant. This process will run for something like a year. During this time we are looking forward in anticipation to where God is leading us.

5 We do not lose heart!

5.1 This disappointment reminds us that it is not always easy to "Re-Imagining the Future", to "Be Church Differently", and we not underestimate the task ahead of us. Nevertheless the sense of excitement about this process is tangible. With others we look forward to the way the United Reformed Churches in Wales in all their variety and partnerships will continue to become a witnessing celebrating communities of Jesus Christ.

Mersey Synod

1 Profile

1.1 The most compact synod, Mersey is nevertheless a synod of marked contrasts. For instance in Wirral District suburban wealth meets urban blight and deprivation. Rural Cheshire contrasts with inner city Liverpool where the Synod is trying to find creative ways of using its resources of ministry and money.

2 Clusters as a tool of mission

2.1 In recent years we have been focussing on the establishment of clusters, groups of church with a geographical identity yet often with diverse gifts and needs. This exercise grew out of the need to take action over deployment but is evolving into a way of addressing mission needs at the local level. It is now becoming clear that we have entered on a process of continuous change and who knows where God will lead us? Our hope is that clusters will offer a flexible way forward and not become a new set of stone tablets.

2.2 Administratively, the Synod has tried to work within the present structures of the United Reformed Church but to mould these to the needs of our mission for today. We are attempting not to increase the number of meetings and to use our minister where they can be most effective. What fits today does not fit tomorrow – ministers move, churches are alive to change, we modernise our mission and adjust to the needs.

3 Marshalling the gifts of lay people

3.1 As ministers adjust to their changing roles, there is a need to empower lay people, to realise the huge breadth of talent God has given. When people receive help and encouragement they rise to the occasion. With this in mind Mersey created the Local Church Leadership Course and the fourth group of people are about to be trained for their individual leadership role, which is specific to each. An introductory course, entitled 'Invited to lead worship in your own church', is much in demand. There has also been an encouraging growth in take up for TLS courses.

4 The Synod Team and office

4.1 Our commitment to growing people and local churches is ably served by the team of Training Officer, Youth Leadership Training and Development Worker and Mission Development Officer. All share with the Moderator and staff in working in the new synod office and resource centre. This was purpose-built

and has proved its worth. So much is gained by the team being on one site with the Moderator in terms of professional sharing, fellowship and support, to their benefit and that of the synod.

5 Synod Life

5.1 Synod has been led by its committees and task groups in thinking about a variety of contemporary issues – everything from ageing to the purpose-driven church and new sorts of mission. It has a budding relationship with the Swedish Covenant Church and exchanges have taken place. Pilgrimages and retreats are popular and take us to Iona, southern Scotland and to Windermere. The Moderator led an ecumenical delegation to Cologne and preached on the occasion of the city's twinning with Liverpool, the sixtieth anniversary of the allied bombing of Cologne.

6 Communication and Publicity

6.1 The Synod has a Communications Officer who works part time to produce a bi-monthly magazine, 'Lookout!' which is distributed to every worshipper. A synod directory is produced each year, making it a reliable source of information for the churches. Our efforts to publicise our work outside have met with limited success, in common with the experience of the wider church.

7 Special People

7.1 The Synod has taken pride in the election of its FURY representative, Emma Pugh, as chair of FURY. We are glad her talents will still be available to the synod and commend them to the wider church.

7.2 We have been well served by the Revd Graham Cook as Moderator for over eight years. He has been a great leader, enabler, innovator and publicist. He has served as Free Church leader on Merseyside, historically a high profile role, alongside the Roman Catholic Archbishop and Anglican Bishop.

7.3 Behind that high public profile he is a man of great compassion, a true pastoral carer, one who loves the church and its people because he first loved God. He has a great gift of communication, to groups large and small, both in person and through the media. His unique style has been equal to the role he has fulfilled for his Lord in this Synod. There will be much weeping at his leaving alongside the thanksgiving for his service. We wish Graham and his wife Jean, who is always at his side, a happy and healthy retirement.

West Midlands Synod

1 Synod Vision

1.1 Since our last report to Assembly in 2000, our main preoccupation has been the development of a vision for the Synod. This is based on the belief that the church is always in need of renewal, that that renewal is of God and is in continuity with the way God has shaped the lives of his people over the past centuries.

After much discussion, Synod stated in March 2001 that:

The vision for God's people is rooted in the life of God,

- bearing fruit in the work of the Creator, in the redeeming life of Christ, in the empowering of the Holy Spirit,
- life that is like a spring of water ever welling up to renew and refresh us,
- a glimpse of reality we cannot always see,

and that it should be implemented through what we have called the "**Springs of Living Water**" programme.

This has involved setting aside most of each morning of Synod to explore a particular theme by means of displays, presentations, workshops and discussion groups. An informal planning group with different membership each time has been set up to work out the details for each programme.

1.2 In October 2001, the theme of **Worship** was explored by means of displays, videos, storytelling, dramatic Bible Study, puppets, clowning, and the presentation of different kinds of space for meditation, prayer, etc. After an initial introduction, people were encouraged to wander around the church buildings sampling different aspects of and ways to present worship.

1.3 In March 2002, **Spirituality** was introduced through a series of workshops covering topics such as the Spirituality of Ageing, of Children, of Loss, in the Workplace, Celtic, and Black and Asian Spirituality. Members were able to choose two of these during the morning.

1.4 In October 2002, we tackled **Believing** through two speakers from different standpoints, and then groups considering a number of questions asking, for instance, what the most important elements of belief were for them, what they asked of people wishing to become church members, and in what new ways we could articulate our faith for contemporary society.

1.5 This March, **Ecumenism - Relationships for Mission** was covered by nine presentations and discussions on, for example, ecumenism in an area of great deprivation about to undergo major regeneration, developments in town centres and a new housing estate, comparing rural and suburban shared churches, work with asylum seekers, and ecumenical theological education.

1.6 Next October, it will be **The Church in the World**, and in March 2004 there will be a general discussion on where we have reached and where we should go from there.

Having more time to explore a topic has been widely appreciated, and concentrating the more formal business into the afternoon has focussed minds helpfully!

2 Youth and Training

2.1 One of the other matters on which we have been concentrating recently has been to look at what we do and should be doing in the areas of working with children and young people. We set up a small review group some time ago and, while much useful information and views have been gathered, we are still some way from a clear strategy. The recent departure of our YCWT, Wallie Warmington, after over twelve years' service, has created another element of uncertainty in this area.

2.2 The context of our serious financial position, where we are running a large deficit budget, has caused us to review whether we can afford to continue the YCWT post, and we have decided that for the time being we need to clarify our overall strategy first, but may seek to make some limited funds available more directly to Districts to support projects where people locally are working with young people.

2.3 Apart from the departure of the YCWT, there has been another change to our Training Team. The Revd Dr Neil Messer, our first Ministerial Training Officer, left his post with the Synod and at the Queen's Foundation in July 2001 to take up a position in the University of Wales. In January 2002, the Revd Dr Michael Jagessar succeeded him in both posts. We will be reviewing our Training Strategy over the next year to assess how effective it has been and whether it needs amendment.

3 Other issues

3.1 We have also established a small group to consider whether our District boundaries and structures are still appropriate for the 21st century Church. Current thinking seems to favour ecumenical clusters in place of Districts, but we await the group's report at our October Synod.

3.2 We have also been developing a coordinated Deployment Policy across the Districts, and in March 2002 Synod adopted our Racial Justice Strategy, "Launching out into the deep", which we are beginning to implement through a network of Racial Justice Advocates.

4 Personalia

While we have been glad during this period to 'loan' our Moderator to the national Church as Assembly Moderator for 2001-2002, we have been pleased to have her back again! It was also good to know that she accepted reappointment for a further five years. We have also been very grateful for the eight years of outstanding service given by our Synod Treasurer, David Hibbard. We have been even more appreciative of his willingness to continue unofficially until our new Treasurer, Roger Woodall, was able to take up the position at the beginning of this year. We are well served by our Synod Officers, and our dedicated Office staff, and we record our thanks to them all.

In a number of areas, we feel we are on the move, but perhaps our message should be 'watch this space' - or rather the West Midlands!

Resolution I**Eastern Synod**

General Assembly notes that the present policy of the Training Committee is to allow only a reduced sabbatical period (two months instead of three) for ministers who have reached the age of sixty, is concerned that this conflicts with equal opportunities principles, and asks the Training Committee to reconsider the policy with a view to allowing the full sabbatical period for such ministers.

*Proposed: Revd Bill Mahood
Seconded: Revd Peter Ball*

1 The resolution has been put forward in the belief that a sabbatical is a time for reflection on the past, taking stock of the present and preparing for the future. It should be a time that is enriching for the person and not simply about learning new skills.

2 The work of ministry and the journey of faith do not cease at retirement. Therefore, a sabbatical during the last five years of ministry may be of even greater significance in providing the dimension of preparation for change in one's pilgrimage.

3 The present rules for CME (Continued Ministerial Education) seem to reflect a degree of ageism and therefore may devalue the final years of ministry.

Resolution 2

The National Synod of Scotland 1

General Assembly endorses the resolution passed by the National Synod of Scotland accepting and approving the six recommendations of the Scottish Church Initiative for Union Proposal.

Resolution 3

The National Synod of Scotland 2

General Assembly endorses the resolution passed by the National Synod Scotland agreeing that, in the event of any other partner church or churches rejecting the Scottish Church Initiative for Union Proposal, the United Reformed Church should proceed in the process with those partners willing to do so.

1.1 The Scottish Church Initiative for Union Proposal represents seven years of work (building on 25 years of work done by the Multilateral Conversation). The partner churches involved have been the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church (before the union of 2000 both the United Reformed Church and the CUS were involved.)

1.2 The remit of the group, at the initial invitation of the Scottish Episcopal Church, was to prepare a Basis and Plan for Union. The Proposal offers a model of unity which could, in time, lead to full union.

For the present, it outlines only the general direction, the possibility of local piloting, the encouragement of a closer working relationship between the partners, and a commitment to go on developing the model.

1.3 At its March meeting, the National Synod of Scotland carefully considered the Scottish Church Initiative for Union Proposal. The full text, including the six recommendations, appears in **Appendix 1**. Each of the recommendations was considered separately and passed. The responses of the other partners will be known by the time General Assembly meets.

Resolution 4

The National Synod of Scotland 3

General Assembly mindful that in recent decades military technology has developed substantially, that definitions and terminology for various acts of warfare have been evolving, and that the politics of conflict has moved into a new, post-Cold-War era, asks its Church and Society Committee to explore and prepare a report on the ethics of warfare for the twenty-first century.

The report should take account of;

- a) an understanding of terrorism, suicide bombing and state sponsored assassination
- b) weapons of mass-destruction, including nuclear, chemical, biological and multi-kiloton [conventional] bombs
- c) weapons which continue to cause death and suffering in a post-conflict era, e.g. land-mines, unexploded cluster-bombs, depleted uranium dust.
- d) the argument that a perceived threat is justification for a pre-emptive attack, or that "regime change" is a legitimate objective for armed aggression.
- e) other matters germane to the concept and practice of 'Total War'

In whatever methodology it adopts the Committee is encouraged to take account of past General Assembly resolutions and to consult ecumenically and internationally."

1.1 In the 1950's and 1960's the memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was fresh in the public consciousness. The morality of nuclear armaments was hotly debated. Against the background of the cold war and its nuclear arms race, the political debate

centred on deterrence, but there was a historical perspective, gradually sidelined in the cold war, which remains relevant to any debate on the morality of war and weaponry. The concept of 'Total War' needs to be re-examined along with its implications.

1.2 From post-mediaeval times to the development of air warfare and missile technology, armies and navies fought wars at the behest of governments, and although civilian populations were frequent casualties, those casualties were seen as collateral damage, and not themselves the target of the aggression. Since the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War, war was waged not just against military targets, but centres of population. This war against a people as opposed to its army or government became known as 'Total War'. The blitzkrieg and fire-storming of whole cities was developed, and the nuclear bomb can be seen as the logical extension of the notion that civilian populations are legitimate targets, different only in scale from the blitzkrieg.

1.3 Terrorism, which appeared to rise in the Twentieth Century, perceives as legitimate the targeting of civilian populations. Public abhorrence of it derives from its 'innocent' targets as opposed to 'military' ones. In the context of Total War the question needs to be asked whether it is any more or any less evil than attacks on civilian populations by other means. Are there some moral differences in destroying a city's population by carpet bombing, by nuclear bombing or by poisoning the water supply?

1.4 After the Korean War in which nuclear weapons were not used, the arms race created huge over-capacity in the stockpiles of nuclear weaponry held by both the East and the West. Eventually a number of Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties and Nuclear Non-proliferation Agreements were signed. At the same time as stalemate had developed in the Nuclear balance of terror between the Super Powers, proxy conflicts using conventional weapons were fought between governments and their opponents in various countries where the East and the West were vying for influence. The United States' use of chemical weapons such as Napalm and Agent Orange in the Vietnam War raised again the question of indiscriminate weapons and the exposure of a civilian population to their effects. Although some powers signed treaties limiting or banning the development of chemical and biological weapons no one was sure how well these treaties were kept or how verifiable were the assurances given. It was also argued that defence against such weapons is dependent upon a measure of research and development work on the weapons themselves.

1.5 The aftermath of the Cold War's proxy conflicts left swathes of countryside in the old war zones on different continents seeded with countless land mines, which have continued to kill and maim civilians ever since, often women and children. The on-going humanitarian cost, the indiscriminate nature of the weapon and the extent to which it was used, have led to public outcry and indeed the creation

of a treaty against the use of land mines. Already concerns have been raised that unexploded cluster bombs in Afghanistan are a similar indiscriminate hazard to the civilian population in the post conflict era. The destructive capacity of the U.S. 'Daisy-cutter' Bomb used against the Taliban in Afghanistan has raised concerns that it too is an indiscriminate weapon.

1.6 In the Gulf War, Britain and America used armour-piercing shells tipped with depleted uranium and this was intended as a precise, tactical weapon. It has been calculated however that as a consequence three hundred tons of depleted uranium dust have been left in Iraq, and the incidence there of childhood cancers and leukaemia has multiplied many fold. Descriptions of the aftermath resemble the predicted aftermath of a 'dirty bomb' [terrorist device with conventional explosive used to spread radioactive contamination].

1.7 It seems appropriate that the church should look afresh at the morality of warfare in the twenty-first century - revisit the implications of 'Total War' and examine the consequences of weapons whose effect is indiscriminate. International Law has said that the only justification for war is in response to an attack that has been made. The present U.S. administration seems to believe it would be justified in carrying out a pre-emptive strike against a perceived threat of attack from another country. It has also introduced 'regime change' as an objective in any war against Iraq. [The unilateral invasion of Grenada (1983) and Panama (1989) as well as intervention in El Salvador and Nicaragua (throughout the 1980's) suggests that the concept is older than the phrase.] The time seems right for the church to consider and evaluate these new developments in the thinking of the world's only super power.

1.8 Many questions, ethical, legal and theological, are raised by the practice of 'Total War'. In a Twenty-first Century democracy, where the government should be accountable to the electorate, is an electorate ultimately responsible for the military policies of its Government? If so, can that responsibility for military policy, which didn't exist in the nineteenth century, justify 'Total War' [in a way that was not previously justified]? What implications are here for our attitude to terrorism? Does 'terrorism' need to be redefined? Are land mines, cluster bombs, or tons of depleted uranium dust 'weapons of mass destruction', and should definition of this term be left only to politicians and journalists? The Church urgently needs to think afresh about the theology and ethics of warfare and weaponry in the 21st century.

1.9 *The Synod of Scotland agrees to put forward to the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church the above resolution.*

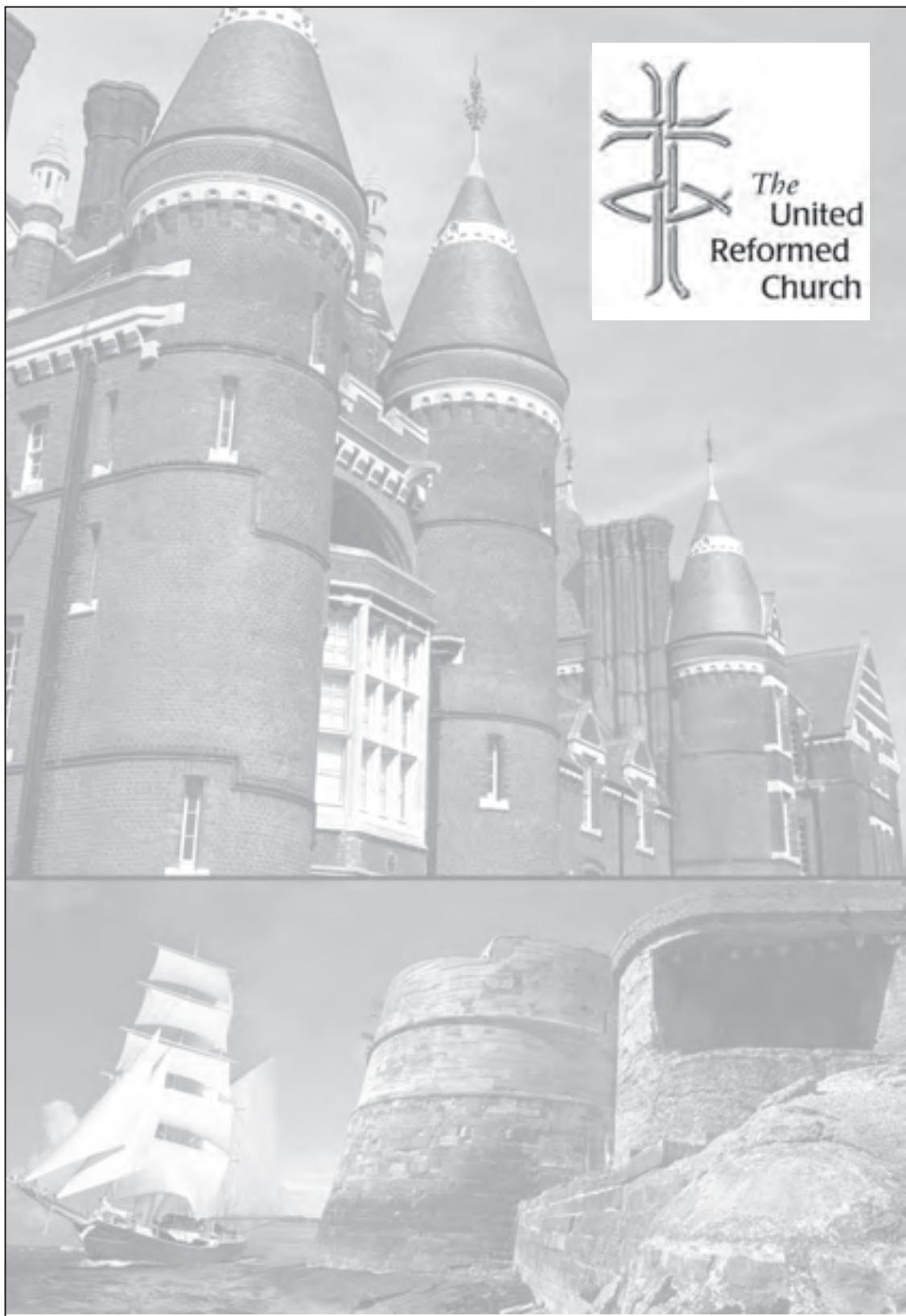
Resolution 5

Yorkshire Synod

General Assembly asks its officers, through the Churches Main Committee, to open discussions with appropriate government agencies with a view to:

- i) obtaining adequate assistance with the extra costs or securing a more equitable distribution of the grant aid already made available for the maintenance of historical church buildings and
- ii) securing a relaxation of the regulations surrounding the granting of "change of use" for redundant places of worship.

Churches - Changes and Synod Moderators' Report



Churches - Changes

Resolution 6

Closure of Local Churches

General Assembly receives notice of the closure of the local churches listed below and gives thanks to God for their worship, witness, and service throughout their history.

Closure of Local Churches

1 Loftus, Durham & Teesside District

1.1 Regular Congregational services commenced in the schoolroom in the centre of Loftus village on November 6th 1827. Greatly assisted by the friends of Silver Street Congregational church in Whitby, the pioneers bought a site in Lamb's Lane (now North Road) and constructed the first solid building to be known as Loftus Congregational Church. The first minister was the Revd J Henderson. This building was used without much alteration until 1906 when the present building was erected.

1.2 This was carried out whilst the Revd T Colledge Booth was minister. The building stands on the corner of West Road and Westfield Road and was constructed with an external pulpit. In 1912 a new organ was presented to the church by Mr Andrew Carnegie who then lived at Skebo Castle and also by Mr W B Brittain.

Northern

1.3 In 1972 the congregation became part of the United Reformed Church and in 1992 at the formation of the East Cleveland Group it was thought that Loftus would be a participant church in that group. However Loftus declined this invitation preferring instead to go its own way. The last minister in pastoral charge was Revd Ann King who sadly died in August 2001.

1.4 The condition of the building has slowly deteriorated. Some parts are unsafe and continue to be an insurance liability. There is a well below the hall, which needs to be pumped out regularly to prevent flooding. The final church meeting was held on 25th November 2002 when members decided to close with a final act of worship and thanksgiving on Sunday 19th January 2003. Revd Norma Johnson led this service.

2 Chorley Old Road, Bolton

Leading Bolton Congregationalists opened a school for worship and social activities in 1895 and a separate sanctuary in 1900. With an increasing congregation, the school became too small and a new Sunday School was built in 1931. Afternoon Sunday School classes changed to morning Junior Church in 1960.

In 1979 the church became a member of the Bolton North Group of ten churches served by a team ministry and when small groupings were formed in 1996, Chorley Old Road shared ministry in Trinity Pastorate. The centenary year was celebrated memorably in 1995, when work, worship and planning

North Western

events resulted in special fellowship. The events included a wonderful performance of Messiah, a Summer Fayre and a programme for children in August. The Centenary Thanksgiving Service and a flower festival were highlights of the year and funds were raised for Guide Dogs.

Quite soon after this, the number of children and adults declined. Rain damage to the tower and other structural problems in the church building forced unwelcome decisions. Although sharing the hall with community uses was considered, it was reluctantly decided to close, with a final service on 23 February 2003.

3 Weaste, Salford

On the initiative of a Congregationalist manufacturer, Henry Lightbown, a church and Sunday School were built in 1900. This building was soon not big enough, and a new church was added in 1910, the older building remaining as halls and Sunday School until burnt down in 1979. The second minister established it as a Congregational church, from being known as the Lightbown Memorial Chapel.

The church was well served by a succession of active ministers, secretaries and leaders of organisations providing a range of social activities, including women's and men's organisations, a three tier

North Western

Sunday School, Boys Brigade, Guides and Brownies. After the two world wars were golden years when families involved themselves fully with church life, but later church life declined as numbers reduced. As the congregation aged, with no young people coming in, remedies were sought. Changes to the building were considered, but with only twenty members it was decided to call it a day.

The church had been a useful and inspiring enterprise for a hundred years. Over the years, it had been a centre for the local community and five men had been called to the ministry.

4 Somerset Road, Bolton

A mission hall was planted in Mornington Road, Halliwell, by the St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Bolton in 1900, initially to teach children. With the success of the mission, a church and hall were built and opened in 1910 on Somerset Road. The fellowship grew, attracting people of Scottish origin until the congregation was able to support its own minister independently of St Andrew's Church. All the children's uniformed organisations flourished and there were meetings for men, young wives and women, and a drama society.

Decline in the cotton industry led to families moving and Moslem and Hindu families moved to the area. Concern grew about the cost of ministry and maintaining the buildings with lack of income and declining attendances. The church joined the Bolton North Group of ten churches in 1974, but this was

North Western

felt to strain the continuities of fellowship and after much debate the a group of three churches was formed with one minister.

In 1992-93 it was decided to upgrade the church and hall and this was achieved with much fund raising and effort by 2001. The congregation was ageing and there were no young girls coming forward to be Rose Queen after 2000, but there was a warm comfortable church, new kitchens, toilets with disabled facilities, and a fine timber floor in the hall. Use of the hall was increasing, when dampness and dry rot forced a decision to close because of the cost or repairs. It was recognised that the people, not the buildings, are the church and the people can move on to pastures new. The final service was held in August 2002.

5 Ladybridge Road, Cheadle

The church had its origins when Adstock and Cheadle Hulme, now busy and populous, was a scattered village with six farms. A mission from the then Congregational Church on Swann Lane began in a rented weaving shed, rented at a cost of one shilling and sixpence a week including fuel and cleaning. A mission hall opened in 1905, at a cost of £450 raised at the dedication service. This allowed the work in the district to be extended and the hall was registered as a church in 1950. A former army hut provided for a Sunday School and social purposes from 1930 until demolished in 1966. A new hall opened in 1966, built largely by the work of Church members, with additional voluntary help.

North Western

The Church was involved in a number of affiliations with other parishes over the years, but gradually the membership had dropped and become increasingly elderly. A Church Meeting held on 11 August 2002 resolved to unite as a single congregation with the sister church at Swann Lane, and the fruits of that partnership are now witnessed in goodwill and togetherness. The mission has returned full circle to its roots.

6 Allithwaite

'The Mission', as it was affectionately known for many years, was built in 1908 by a local landowner as a community centre for the villagers. Hymnbooks for Sunday evening hymn singing were an early purchase, so it was not surprising that, after the First World War, the wooden building was acquired by the local Congregational church. For many years there was one membership roll and minister for the churches at Allithwaite and Grange-over-Sands.

The Christian Endeavour home at Kents Bank used to provide transport to the evening service for visitors, but the home closed in the early 1980s,

North Western

and since then the number of faithful worshippers has declined rapidly. Efforts to find ways by the congregation to encourage a stronger presence within the local community did not bring the hoped-for results, in part because of the limitations of the building. A special church meeting at Allithwaite in August 2002 decided with regret that the continued use of the building was no longer viable. A final service of thanksgiving for the life and witness of the church at Allithwaite was held on 24 November 2002, followed by a celebratory tea in the new community centre to thank all those who had helped the church in Allithwaite.

7 Zion United Reformed Church, Wakefield

Zion United Reformed Church, Wakefield, at its Annual General Meeting on 17th April, 2002, resolved that the church was no longer sustainable and should close and disperse after a final Celebratory Service on July 21st. This was not entirely negative, as members had taken a hard and realistic look at its life and future, concluding that it was better to end with dignity and for members to link up with other churches. District Council, on 11th July, and Synod, on 12th October 2002, concurred with this

Yorkshire

very difficult decision. Most members have joined one of two other United Reformed Churches and a significant number joined churches of four other denominations. The Housegroup, Women's Guild and Prayer Group continue, symbolising the positive way this fellowship has dealt with declining numbers of members.

Zion Chapel had been a place of worship since 1782.

8 Horncastle

The Independents were active in the Lincolnshire town of Horncastle in 1781, when a William Robinson received a dissenters' certificate to use his house for worship. The first chapel was opened in 1821. It was a time of rich growth, and the congregation soon outgrew its premises. Under the leadership of John Jackson, a local miller and baker, and William Parker, a local attorney, a second and much larger chapel was built. It was opened in March 1822. A vestry and Sunday School were added in 1825, and the congregation continued to thrive throughout the successive years. At the turn of the century, the Revd Thomas Lord was minister for a second time; he was still preaching when he celebrated his 100th birthday in 1908.

East Midlands

Sadly, the 20th century saw the decline experienced by so many churches. By the 1970s the congregation was too small to meet in the main building. In due course the church building and its surrounding graveyard were disposed of, while the congregation moved to the town centre Parish Church of St Mary's where they were welcomed into a Local Ecumenical Partnership. United Reformed Services continued on a monthly Sunday evening basis, until last year, when the death of the last three members meant that the time had come to close the church. We give thanks to God for this faithful and influential church and for all its witness, ministers and people over a span of more than two hundred years.

9 Tolleshunt d'Arcy

In common with many other villages toward the end of the 19th century, Tolleshunt D' Arcy was keen to set up a Congregational Chapel for those not wishing to attend the Parish Church. In 1881 application to use a barn was made in which to hold services on Sunday evenings during summer months. By 1887, with a membership of 17, they were out of the barn and into their own building. Membership numbers increased to 40, Sunday School began and Worship Services were held on Sunday morning and evening. Life continued like this until the late nineteen thirties, but just after the Second World War the Sunday Morning Service ceased.

In 1972 an AGM was held; 13 Members attended and voted to join The United Reformed Church. The chapel had a good working relationship with the Parish Church and in 1985 it was decided that United Services were to be held one Sunday evening each month, alternating between Church and Chapel. In 1988, Centenary Services of Thanksgiving were held and celebrations continued for a week. By 1993 the Sunday School had ceased and replaced by a joint effort with the Parish Church held in neutral premises.

10 Tower Road, Hindhead

Life was first breathed into Tower Road United Reformed Church in 1896 following the generous gift by Mr John Grover, a local developer and builder, of the land and building which was to become Hindhead Free Church (Congregational). He also funded a second church (Beacon Hill) just over a mile down the road.

The original church building was initially used as a general meeting hall in the care of two superintendents, the Revd G B Stallworthy from Poole and the Revd Alfred Kluht, a retired Congregational Minister. By 1901 the original hall had been extended to include a new hall and adjacent manse, along with the installation of electric lighting. In those days Hindhead was regarded as a very healthy area, similar to Switzerland, and the church provided a much needed place of worship not only for local residents but also for the rich and famous who frequented the area. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and George Bernard Shaw were regular attenders. The Church was proud to be the first place of Christian witness in the area.

But times change. The big hotels have gone and the Hindhead crossroads have become a traffic bottleneck. We live in an age where people do not do Church, particularly on a Sunday, and if we are true to

Eastern

During 1996 and 1997 an interregnum occurred within the Colchester Group. Consequently there were no Church Meetings or AGMs. However, in July 1998 a Minister was appointed. Unfortunately, the Membership had reduced to 5 and the question arose as to whether anything could be achieved by altering the building to make it more multi-purpose. Authorisation was given for an assessment of the building which found that it needed extensive work such as re-pointing and rewiring etc. There appeared to be no obvious way forward for such a small Membership to meet such expenditure. As relations with the Parish Church were quite close, the Members were made to feel welcome to worship there.

As a result of this, resolutions were passed, as required, for the closure of the Chapel. Worship ceased on the 12th December 1999, when the Service not only dealt with the closure but also gave thanks for 111 years of faithful witness.

Wessex

our Christian faith then we need to hear God's calling that it is the people and not the buildings which are the Church. To justify two Church buildings in such close proximity is difficult and after much prayer, the decision has been taken to focus our attention on the Beacon Hill site. In so doing, our vision is to create an ecumenical worship/ community/Christian centre.

The lives of many hundreds if not thousands of people have been changed and enriched by the life and witness of Tower Road United Reformed Church. We give thanks for all those who have served the Church so faithfully during its long history, from those who have stood in the pulpit to those who have kept it clean.

In closing the Church, we are merely ceasing to use this particular building for public worship. The people who are Tower Road will live on. Some will take their gifts and skills to other congregations in their local communities, others will join with their sister Church at Beacon Hill. The important thing is the witness continues and that witness will be stronger because the congregation of Tower Road have been courageous enough to hear God saying "your work here is finished – I want you to work somewhere else" and to answer that call.

11 Woodhall Farm, Hemel Hempstead

In response to the growth of housing in the Woodhall Farm area of Hemel Hempstead and encouraged by the Church of England, Revd Henry Gordon (United Reformed Church) established a church centre in 1975 in a converted private house. The church was successful in gaining new members but though valiant efforts were made by Mr Gordon and the succeeding ministers to build a stable congregation, this was frustrated by a highly mobile population. Efforts were made to establish links with the nearby LEP of Grovehill (RC, Baptist, CE), but although this was achieved in practice, formal arrangements were not concluded.

Thames North

More recently the establishment of an Ichthus Fellowship in the area of Woodhall Farm has attracted many of the young families and the number worshipping at Woodhall Farm Church Centre has declined. In December 2001 a church meeting decided that the church should close and a last service was held on 24 March 2002. Most members have transferred to Grovehill LEP where they have been warmly received by the Anglican vicar.

12 Clapham United Reformed Church

On 9 November 2002 a Service was held to celebrate the Uniting of Clapham United Reformed Church and St Andrew's United Reformed Church Battersea and the Opening of St Andrew's new building.

On 24 November 2002 the final Service at Clapham United Reformed Church was held in their building in Grafton Square.

Southern

We give thanks to God for the life and witness of the former Clapham United Reformed Church and wish the united congregation at St Andrew's every blessing.

13 Earlsfield United Reformed Church

The members of Earlsfield United Reformed Church decided that their church should close at the end of December 2002. This decision was taken with great courage and much regret.

The final Service was on 12 January 2003. The small congregation was joined by over 100 former members, ecumenical representatives and friends for this memorable Service of Thanksgiving.

Southern

We give thanks to God for the life and witness of the former Earlsfield United Reformed Church.

14 Berea, Blaina

The first Church was known as Little Berea – the date of this Church is not known. It became a Baptist Church and closed in 1999. The present Church was built in 1842 by men bringing stone to the site before they went to work in coal mines and iron works. It was opened for worship in 1850 as a Welsh Church.

Berea took an active part in the life of the area between Nantyglo and Blaina. The Revd David Williams was the first Minister, and his son, also David Williams, was also minister of the English Congregational Church in Blaina.

Wales

Tragically, depression saw many young people having to move to places all over the world. Their descendants have often come back to see the Church where their grandparents first worshipped Jesus Christ. The Church had many activities – even two meetings each night – including Saturdays. Sadly the depression continued in the area to the point where the church was unable to continue; it closed in February 2002. There were once 23 churches in Nantyglo and Blaina; now only 6 remain, but the work and witness to the gospel still goes on. We give thanks for over 150 years of faithful witness.

15 Hannah Street, Cardiff

Hannah Street Congregational Church was formed in 1866 on the initiative of the Revd John Davies, then Minister of Mount Street Welsh Congregational Church, who saw the need for services in English in the neighbourhood of Cardiff Docks. In a hired room Mr Davies preached in English and in a short time a Sunday school was established and a Church formed consisting of 14 members. By 1867 the Church was sufficiently confident to build a permanent building and in June of that year the foundation stone of an imposing building was laid and the Church was opened almost exactly a year later.

By 1912 the Church was feeling the strain of difficult and adverse conditions. In the words of a contemporary historian the Docks district was experiencing the 'migration of the class of persons on whom our churches mainly depend for support, people of foreign extraction largely taking the place of British residents'. Church and congregation dwindled to a point where in 1917 the Church building was sold. However,

Wales

the remaining members persisted and the Church continued to operate from a house in neighbouring Patrick Street where a Sunday school and preaching services were held. In 1919 the Church reported 28 members, a Sunday school roll of 105 with an average attendance of 90. In the post-war redevelopment of Butetown, by agreement with the City Council in exchange for certain other properties, the Church acquired premises and land in Hannah Street where a house was converted and a Chapel built. Over the next 40 years or so the numbers and influence of the Church declined to a point where only one member remained, although the Church building was used for worship by an independent evangelical church. On the death of the sole remaining member, District Council decided with sadness to declare the Church closed and to dispose of the property. District Council has given thanks to God for the service of those many people associated with Hannah Street over the 137 years of its existence.

16 Neyland

The foundation stone of the Bi-Centennial Memorial Chapel was laid in 1864 and the building work was completed in 1865. As the fortunes of the town grew with the development of the boat yards and the proposed sailings to Ireland, the congregation grew. At a Sunday School tea in December 1898, over two hundred scholars and teachers sat down. The guiding influence at this time was Revd William Powell who joined the church in 1888 and whose ministry lasted for over four decades.

In the 1940's the chapel became the home of the Neyland Choral Society and their celebrity concerts – involving the choir and many internationally known opera singers – were for many years the cultural highlight in the area.

Wales

In the 1980's, as a result of dwindling congregations, the chapel, which had now become the United Reformed Church, became part of the Cleddau Pastorate involving Tiers Cross, Rosemarket, Hook and Tabernacle Milford Haven, under the leadership of the Revd David Morgan. It was on the occasion of his retirement in the late 1990's that the few remaining members decided, reluctantly, that the 'Cong' should close its doors after nearly 140 years of worship in Neyland.

17 Tabor United Reformed Church, Maesycwmmer

Wales

Tabor 'old chapel' was built in 1829 by a group of Congregationalists or Independents who had previously worshipped in a cottage near Gellideg Isaf Farm. The land was leased to them by Mr Henry Thomas, Gellideg. Its minister in 1830, Revd Harries, was also the minister of New Bethel, Mynyddislwyn, until ill-health forced him to give up his work at Tabor.

At this time in Maesycwmmer the Welsh language was more in use; this is evidenced in some of our records in the Victoria Library concerning its Sunday School of adults and children, and in graveyard inscriptions.

The number of worshippers having increased, the 1829 building was enlarged in 1855 to double the capacity. The earlier building had an entrance to the gallery from a staircase outside. During the rebuilding the services were held in a barn on Gellideg Farm.

A succession of ministers followed Mr Harries until in 1869 the Revd T J Hughes of Abertillery began a pastorate which was to last many years. The number of members increased from about 50 in 1869 to 200 by 1904. Because of this growth, a larger chapel was built in 1867. The architect who designed it was the Revd Thomas Thomas (or Thomas Landore), who had developed this so-called 'Landore style' in Swansea.

Among later ministers were the Revd E B Powell, Revd Ivan Jenkins, Revd Frank Saville and Revd Gerald Smith. Mr Jenkins was a student pastor at Tabor in 1929 and ordained in 1930. During the 14 years of his ministry, the church and all its branches flourished. By 1939 he had enrolled 129 new members, increased the Sunday School to 200, and the Young People's Guild to 70. For a while, during the ministry of the Revd Gerald Smith, Tabor and the English Congregational Church at Fleur-de-Lis formed a joint pastorate. In 1971 Tabor decided to join the United Reformed Church. During the following years three Interim Moderators were appointed, the Revd Geoffrey Plowman of Cardiff, the late Mr John Phillips, and Mr Robert Moverley of Caerphilly, whose help and support were very much appreciated.

18 Zion, Wattsville

Zion was built as a 'daughter' church of Trinity Congregational Church in Pontywaun when the residents of Wattsville, who had to travel 3 miles to worship in Pontywaun, decided that they would like a church in their own village. The land was donated by the organisation which was later known as the National Coal Board and construction began. The building Zion was intended to be the schoolroom attached to a larger chapel but there were insufficient funds and the larger chapel was never built. It is said that the benches which were used as pews came from the deck of a liner which had been sent to C H Bailey's shipyard in Newport to be broken up. Mrs Bailey was an influential supporter of the Congregational churches in the Newport area and often offered items to furnish the church buildings in the surrounding valleys. The first service was held at Zion in November 1907.

Zion was an active church for most of its life with a large Sunday School and Sisterhood contributing to the worship on a regular basis. The church was also very proud of its choir which was trained by a series of highly respected local musicians. In more recent times, the congregation of Zion joined with the members of other local churches for monthly worship services and attempted to engage with the youth of the local community by running a youth club for a time.

In 1996, the church became part of the United Reformed Church Rhymney Valley pastorate, together with Bethany, Ystrad Mynach and Van Road, Caerphilly, with the Revd Shelagh Pollard as pastor. Though her ministry was brief, the church benefited enormously from her energy and dedication, and from the worship and fellowship with the sister churches. Both buildings at Maesycwmmer buildings were listed in October 1997. The increased burden of maintaining them, together with the decline in membership led to the closure of the church in 2002.

Tabor gives thanks for its 173 year history of Christian worship and witness.

Wales

The last decades have been times of great change in the valleys of South Wales and the demography of the community of Wattsville has changed recently. This was reflected clearly in the life of Zion: its congregation grew older and declined in number and the young people moved away from the area as there was little prospect of local employment.

A small, faithful group continued to worship at Zion until, in the autumn of 2001, the report from the buildings inspector confirmed what had long been feared; the chapel was structurally unsound and remedial work was prohibitively expensive. The members held a meeting on 2nd June 2002 at which it was decided with great sadness that the last service would be held at Zion on 30th June 2002. The last service was one of thanksgiving for the life of the church at Wattsville, for its witness in the community and for the many blessings received by all those who had shared fellowship in this 'schoolroom' over the past 95 years.

Moderators' Report

“THE GREAT FEAST”

INTRODUCTION

‘What is your sustaining spirituality as a church? - What holds you together when you are facing difficult issues?’ These questions were asked of the United Reformed Church during the sexuality discussions. They weren’t questions to which there was one set answer. Some would say that we just don’t think like that in the United Reformed Church. We’re too disparate and varied to think of one sustaining spirituality. Others would say that we have a whole host of spiritualities. Yet others question the use of the word itself.

This report is written at a time when the United Reformed Church is facing another set of difficult issues, issues shared by many churches in the west – to do with declining numbers of members, reducing finance and the need to change the shape of the institutional church. In autumn 2002 the United Reformed Church launched a radical review of the life of the church in order to tackle some of these issues head on.

This report seeks to look at a response to the question of our sustaining spirituality, a response that builds bridges with the many people in our society who are seeking spirituality, although who often find what they’re looking for outside the traditional church. The Moderators felt that the time was right in their annual report to draw the church closer to all that undergirds, strengthens and sends us out in these changing times.

The response to these issues offered in this report picks up on the biblical image of the ‘Great Feast’ – a banquet offered by God to which all are invited and at which all are fed, - body, mind and spirit. At a time of diminishing financial resources, the picture of the ‘Great Feast’ reminds us of the wealth of God’s resources that nourish God’s people. At a time such as this we are called back to the source of our faith – to the God who, in Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, offers us life in all its fullness. Instead of giving in to the temptation to despair at the difficulties in front of the church, we are reminded of the hope which constantly lies before us.

EXPERIENCE OF SPIRITUALITY IN TODAY’S WORLD

‘Spirituality’ is a contemporary buzzword encompassing a cross-section of life.

- Courses are run on ‘Spirituality in the Workplace’.
- Spirituality crops up in government health and education papers.
- New age shops abound, selling crystals and candles, helping people to ‘find themselves’.
- The theme is taken up in plays, novels and films. Eg ‘The Diary of Bridget Jones’ contains a spirituality that brings together Matthew and Marx and Buddhism in a free-ranging combination of themes.
- Bookshops stock large sections on spirituality but only a few shelves on traditional religion
- The use of candles in the home, as a resource for a more gentle environment, a help to relaxation or a focus for meditation, is greatly on the increase

Public events such as the tragic killing of the children at Soham bring an outpouring of what some would say is a spiritual response. The sense of shared loss and grieving, symbolised by the laying of flowers, the signing of books, and the lighting of candles, either within a building or on the street, is a pointer to a larger dimension of life than that which makes up the daily round.

The word ‘spirituality’ is used in a variety of ways. It can refer to a particular approach to living e.g. being environmentally aware, with a practical emphasis on a simple lifestyle, which conserves the earth’s resources, and on the importance of recycling. Or it can be used in a general way to describe those things that give people meaning and purpose in living.

Many current uses of the word don’t specifically involve religion. One example of this is the way in which the sections for religion and spirituality in a bookshop are often well separated, with the much larger space given over to spirituality. And yet spirituality has a rich heritage in the church – from the asceticism of the Early Church Fathers, to the spiritual exercises of Ignatius and the piety of the Puritans, the Wesleyan holiness tradition and the charismatic revival found in black Pentecostalism at the start of the last century in the USA, the development of the Taizé and Iona communities, the Quaker focus on a spirituality that embraces peace-making and the current interest in ‘Celtic’ spirituality.

While traditional Christian religion in our society is said to be at an all-time low, interest in a variety of spiritualities is at an all-time high. A quick search on the internet under the word 'spirituality' revealed nearly four million web sites!

All this ferment about spirituality provides the church with possibilities and challenges. It's a good time for the church to be looking again at herself and seeing the ways in which connections can be made between the contemporary interest in spirituality and what the church at her best has to offer.

However there are a number of dilemmas for the church in trying to bridge the gap between the contemporary search for spirituality and the Christian faith.

DILEMMAS FOR THE CHURCH

It might seem obvious that people would look to traditional religion of one kind or another in their search for spirituality. Religions that have seemed to be more contemplative and mystical than Christianity, such as Hinduism and Buddhism have played a role in people's search, particularly since the 1960's and 1970's. At present Islam is a growing religion in England. Why not Christianity and the church?

The following are some negative perceptions of the church that have led to a questioning of the church's role in the development of the spiritual life:

- the church is about rules and obedience to a rigid framework for life
- the church is about telling people what to do, rather than enabling people to discover life for themselves
- the church sucks people into her life and then tires them out
- the church boxes God up in a religious hour once a week
- the church is about running an organisation and making sure people get to meetings
- the church is about maintaining buildings and appealing for money
- the church isn't self-aware and doesn't help people to grow in their own self-awareness
- the church is more concerned for running her own life than being involved with the needs of the world.
- Where the church is concerned for the needs of the world, people don't consider this a spiritual matter

These are perceptions that are not only held by people outside the church, but that also surface from time to time amongst the people of God in the church. There can be a gap between the way the church is experienced, and what is ideally believed

about the church. They are perceptions that need to be addressed if we are to make the connection between people's search for spirituality and the Great Feast that God offers in Jesus Christ.

However, spirituality in our contemporary society can take a number of different forms. At one end of the spectrum, these search for the transcendent in life. At the other end of the spectrum these can be seen to be part of the human quest for fulfilment, rather than a journey towards an 'other', and in particular towards the Christian God. Some forms of spirituality then become human constructions, independent of a divine source. Consumerism can be made godly. 'Spirituality' can be focussed on increasing competitiveness and self-interest.

There is perceived to be a gap between spirituality and religion. Spirituality is seen to do with the fulfilment of the individual, while religion, especially the Christian religion, has overtones of running an institution. In a time when the authority of institutions across Western society is being questioned, a religious institution does not provide a natural model for those who search for spiritual dimensions to their lives.

The abundance of books and articles on this subject from a Christian perspective illustrates the serious thinking that is going on and the way that many people continue to find their spiritual renewal in the Christian setting. (It's interesting that much of the writing comes from Canada and the United States and from Catholic writers)

CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY FOR TODAY

Christian spirituality offers a great feast, flowing from the God who gives people many good gifts. This feast feeds the body with healing and wholeness, enriches the mind with thoughts and ideas and gives life to the spirit with energy and power. While there are times when it seems as though all that church has to bring is a meagre buffet, at her best the church shares in the great feast given by God, a God-centred spirituality that is holistic and relational and brings creativity, freedom and hope.

The Trinity

At the heart of the Christian faith lies the Trinitarian God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, held together in a loving relationship. The life of God flows into the world in acts of creation and redemption. God is both the one who makes himself vulnerable, suffering in Jesus Christ for the sake of the world, and the one who gives power in the Holy Spirit. This loving God, through the offering of Jesus Christ, calls us into relationship with himself and with one

another. In Christ we realise our full humanity. God is both present with us and very close to us and yet also wholly other than us and shrouded in mystery.

This God is the one who calls us to himself and in whom we can place our trust. Augustine wrote 'You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.'

Out of our awareness of the Trinitarian God come a number of elements in our understanding of spirituality.

Christian spirituality is:

a) **Relational.** – Spirituality that flows out of the life of the Trinitarian God calls us into loving relationship, with God and with one another. Who we're meant to be and how we're meant to live come out of the loving relationships we have with God and with all of God's people. These relationships lie at the heart of the Christian life. As we gather around the table of the Lord's supper, the supreme feast of the people of God, we do so, not as a gathering of individuals but as a community of people who have been bonded together in love with one another and their God.

b) **Holistic – in terms of the whole person.** Christian spirituality is about seeing a person as a whole - body, mind and spirit. If we look to the life of Jesus, we see the way in which he responded to people at their moment of need, whatever that particular need was. Often his encounters would be at a point of sharing food. Each time his response was to offer nourishment for life. To Nicodemus he said he must be born again; to the five thousand, he offered bread for their physical needs as well as teaching for their spiritual needs; to the leper he offered healing; with the scribes and the Pharisees he engaged in an intellectual argument. Spirituality embraces the need for physical well being, the intellectual search for understanding and the spirit's desire for new birth.

c) **Holistic - in terms of the whole of creation.** Spirituality that arises out of a God who creates and is continually re-creating, is a spirituality that embraces creation. The beginning of Genesis points us to the way the creation finds its origin in God's creating work. Isaiah 35 offers us a picture of a new creation. The prophets challenge the people to come back to God's covenant and to seek justice. Revelation gives a vision of when all creation will be gathered again into God's hands. We have a role to play in the concern for environmental and ecological areas that

have come to the fore in our society and for the kind of relationships we are to have with the whole world, relationships of peace and justice. We are called to be prophetic, challenging, and peacemaking.

d)

Drawn to worship. Spirituality that flows out of the life of the Trinitarian God draws us to worship. In worship we honour the one who brings us into being, who gives us new life and who holds us in love. We claim God's closeness and sense God's ultimate mysteriousness. Worship is renewing, refreshing, life-giving, and freeing. We live in a world in which we are in danger of drowning God out in the clamour of our words and the clamour of our lives. We need to take time to stop and wait upon God and not only in the one hour a week on Sunday. However, for many people this time each week is the one time of visible and corporate encounter with God. This places a high responsibility on those who lead worship and on the whole people of God who share in the offering of worship to do so in a way which is worthy of the God whom we honour. At the heart of our worship is the Great Feast of Holy Communion, at which we share in the benefits of Christ's offering of himself for us and are fed for the journey to which he calls us.

e)

Prayerful. Christian spirituality wells up out of the life of personal and corporate prayer. This prayer frees and strengthens both the individual and the community, rooting us in the life of God. Jesus lived a rhythm of prayer and engagement with the needs of people. In Matthew 14: 13 & 23 Jesus, caught between grieving and the needs of the crowd, twice withdraws to a deserted place to pray. The life of prayer has been well embodied over the centuries by those such as monks and nuns who have dedicated themselves full-time to prayer. One of the responsibilities and opportunities of the ordained ministry is taking time to pray. But prayer is not just for the professional and doesn't just happen in one particular way. The whole people of God are called to pray and there is a great feast of different styles and patterns of prayer that can give life.

f)

Biblical. Christian spirituality is resourced by scripture. Yet the sexuality discussions reminded us that we need to re-discover ways of engaging with scripture. The daily reading of scripture is no longer a reality for many people. There is a big debate about the starting point for looking at scripture and the understanding that we bring to our reading of it. Yet we neglect our roots in

scripture at our peril. The scriptures point us to the God who has always been at work with his people and continue to inspire and strengthen God's people for their daily living.

g) **Rooted in a caring community.** The Christian tradition reminds us that our spirituality is not an individualistic matter, but is about a life shared in community. This community arises out of our participation in the life of the Trinity. We find our identity in our belonging to God and to one another. The early church quickly embodied a pattern of mutual care, a pattern that local churches today seek to follow. But there is a question for us today as to how we define and build community in a society when concepts of community have become more fragmented. This leads us to engage with both geographical communities and communities of interest.

h) **Self-sacrificial service.** At the heart of the Christian faith lie both the cross and the Resurrection. As followers of the way of the cross, Christians are called to offer their lives in service to others. The way of the cross involves living with struggle and sacrifice. Christian spirituality reclaims, for the whole people of God, the importance of self-giving, of dying to the self in order to find the self.

i) **Counter-cultural.** Spirituality leads us again to look at the relationship that we have with the culture(s) in which we are set. There are aspects of culture that we want to claim as good and other aspects from which we want to have a critical distance. A part of our spiritual journey is about living in a way that offers an alternative pattern of life to our world. E.g. finding our salvation in Christ rather than in consumerism; living as individuals and churches in a way that is clearly for others rather than ourselves; willingly taking on the cost of obedience; living with hope rather than fear – as in relation to asylum seekers and refugees.

DISTINCTIVE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH ELEMENTS OF SPIRITUALITY

From within the tradition of the United Reformed church there are both positive aspects of our understanding of spirituality and areas that need further work.

Amongst the positive aspects in our church are the following:

- **the use of scripture.** We are rooted in scripture and see our understanding of scripture as continually developing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit
- **freedom in worship.** The dissenting tradition claimed the freedom to worship in a way that was unconfined by a specific service book. That freedom still opens up the possibility of developing new and creative ways of worship, in response to the God who is worthy of our worship and in a way which takes seriously the communities in which we are set.
- **being eclectic.** Our freedom has given us the possibility of calling on a great diversity of patterns of spirituality in an open exploration of what is on offer.
- **Spirit-filled worship and life.** It is the Holy Spirit who leads us into our worship and who shapes our life. The tradition of setting our meetings in worship and waiting together upon the leading of the Holy Spirit shapes our faith and our life.
- **participation of the whole people of God.** We have emphasised the importance of every individual in the sight of God and the way in which each individual has access to God and can share fully in the Christian community at every level.
- **engaging with the context.** The Reformed tradition, with its emphasis on the church being continually re-shaped in each age through the Word and the Spirit has brought its own particular understanding of the need to engage with the context in which we are set.

However there are also areas needing working on from our tradition:

- **personal faith development.** The Church Life Profile (2002) told us that United Reformed Church people are often stronger on social action than on developing their own faith. There is a need to draw together pastoral care with growth in faith, so that individually and in community the people of God expand their knowledge of God
- **emphasis on prayer.** The life of prayer has sometimes been seen to rest with either the 'professional' or a small group. We need to do more to enable each person to discover suitable styles of prayer so as to experience the richness that prayer offers.
- **widening approaches to worship.** Although we have emphasised our freedom to decide how we are going to worship, we have often limited that freedom to choosing specific patterns of worship (not getting much beyond the so-called 'hymn sandwich') We stand for the participation of the whole people of God in the life of the church, yet in practice this participation can be limited when it comes to worship. Our people can be seen to be passive

observers, watching the professional at work – whether the ‘professional’ is the minister or lay preacher or a worship group. However, an increase in different people sharing in the leading of worship shouldn’t become a performance. Claiming the great feast of possibilities that the church as a whole, across time and across the nations, has to offer, can be an enriching experience. The development of worship teams in many places is a welcome enlargement of our understanding of worship.

SPIRITUALITY AT THE HEART OF OUR ECUMENICAL JOURNEY

Spirituality has the possibility of uniting us across different denominational divides. It does so in a practical way – in people’s experience of sharing the riches of the spiritual life of sisters and brothers in Christ from different backgrounds. But it does so also in a theological way – as we grow into our awareness of coming closer to the same God who has called our sisters and brothers in Christ to himself and who, like us, have put their trust in God.

Spirituality is a point of ecumenical giving and receiving, both as individuals and as churches. We come offering the gifts of our own tradition and open to receiving the gifts of other traditions. We sing each other’s hymns and celebrate each other’s saints. We bring our particular understanding of the breaking open of the word; others bring their particular understanding of the breaking of the bread.

THE SPIRITUAL SUSTENANCE OF THE MODERATORS

Amongst the Moderators, we were aware that we come at spirituality with different approaches. We each respond differently to the God who first seeks us. A brief survey of the Synod Moderators revealed the wealth of ways in which the Moderators find that their spirituality is nourished and their relationship with God strengthened:

- reading the lessons set for the day in the daily lectionary
- writing prayers based on these readings
- daily prayer
- spending a length of time each day in silent prayer
- developing prayers and liturgies for Sunday worship
- taking groups to Iona
- going on retreat
- leading retreats
- using the United Reformed Church Prayer Handbook and Synod and District Prayer cycles
- benefiting from the insights of the world

- church and of particular missionaries
- finding inspiration in the words of hymns and in a huge variety of different forms of music, including the secular
- praying with small groups
- sharing with groups of people in the preparation and presentation of worship
- corporate worship and Bible study – with congregations and committees
- discovering the creator through the creation
- praying while being outside and walking
- reading particular books
- seeing movies
- encounters with other people
- through the significant moments in life of birth, death and love
- talking to a spiritual director
- being in aesthetically and liturgically significant church buildings
- finding inspiration in holy places, including church buildings
- in wrestling with God in the dark times
- in the making of sacrifices and in the struggle to live a servant life
- in working with others through difficult issues

THE SPIRITUAL SUSTENANCE OF CONGREGATIONS

Spirituality is not only an individual matter, but is shaped in our life in community. We looked at the great feast of possibilities that undergird the spiritual life of congregations:

- prayer and Bible study
- house groups
- healing services
- services involving people with differing abilities e.g. blind etc
- ecumenical services following the pattern of the host church
- Taize or Iona services
- church weekends
- ‘threshold points’ of believers baptism and confirmation where there is a collective sense of renewal and re-dedication
- pilgrimages, within this country and abroad, flower festivals – which use the visual and involve people
- outdoor services for people on holiday
- church musicals
- overseas partnerships
- night shelters for the homeless
- alternative patterns of worship e.g. four services for different purposes on a Sunday evening reflective services
- notices on the outside notice-board about who the church is praying for
- an ‘open door’ policy – the church building being open to the community in different ways

- for meeting, for serving, with space for prayer
- District world church month with an event in each church of the District
- District or Synod prayer diaries, praying for the churches
- District course on prayer
- Commitment for Life – being prophetic by taking action for a particular part of the world

ISSUES:

How shall we, in a time of change, live together around the table of the great feast and share that feast with the world in which we are set?

There are a number of issues which bear further reflection:

- **personal patterns of the spiritual life for church members.** As part of our pastoral care it would be helpful if we gave more attention to working with each person who is part of our church, on his or her own pattern of prayer and spirituality.
- **different patterns for different people.** People vary enormously in their spiritual needs depending on such things as their time of life, family commitments, and geographical setting. We need to be able to work on different patterns of growth in the spiritual life in response to the particular needs of individuals and communities.
- **the nature of prayer and praying.** People have many questions about the nature of prayer and the role of prayer in the Christian life. We need to give time to letting these questions come to the surface and be mulled over.
- **a rule of prayer.** Would it help us if we explored again the idea of a “rule of prayer” for our church? This would not be something that was necessarily followed in the same way by each person and congregation, but rather something that mutually sustained us across our differences. It would help us together to focus on our shared obedience to Jesus Christ.
- **the dilemma of busy-ness.** The stress factor of those in work goes on increasing along with the time pressures that make up contemporary life in Britain today. Sometimes the church herself can be so busy that she just wears people out! Developing a well-focussed pattern of spirituality is not about adding another demand, but taking a look at the way the whole of life is lived, individually and as a church as a whole.
- **conflict** – this can be seen as a negative aspect to be avoided, but we also need to look creatively at the ways in which differences of view, and the struggle over articulating these in one another’s company, can be seen as mutually enriching and part of our shared spiritual journey.

- **decision-making.** Being conciliar is part of our spiritual discipline as the United Reformed Church. Yet our meetings can become the place for expressions of personal preference rather than for searching together for God’s purposes. We need to look again at the variety of ways in which we discern God’s purposes for our common life.
- **liberating Bible study.** There have been times when study of scriptures has been seen as a boring option that is a minority interest in our congregations. The study of scripture needs to be refreshed through such areas as the arts, whole-person engagement and all-age exploration.
- **buildings.** The church sometimes feels constrained by her buildings. However buildings can offer the possibility of creative approaches to spirituality in terms of a good aesthetic and liturgical use of space. They can also be places where people can simply ‘be’ rather than places which focus on activity.

CONCLUSION

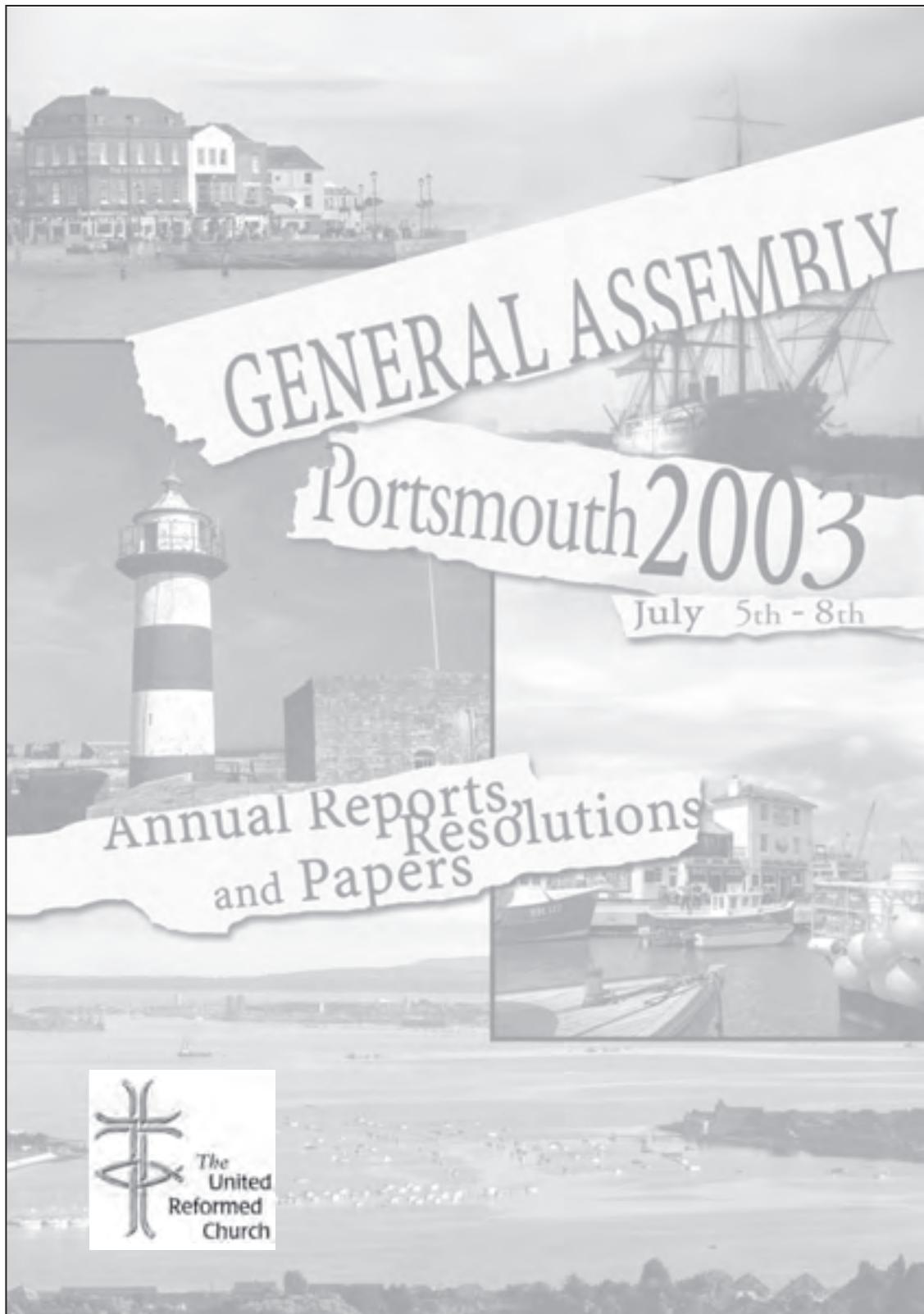
Spirituality draws us back to the Holy Spirit, who comes to energise and free us. Through the wind and flame of the Holy Spirit, the unexpected does happen. In a time of change, the church can feel tempted to hold on to what is known and secure in each place. We need to be drawn back to the God who has sustained his people in many different ways over the generations and who will still be with us as he leads us in unexpected ways into his future.

This Trinitarian God, Father Son and Holy Spirit, calls us to come close to God and to each other. As we are drawn back to God, so we are also sent into God’s world, sharing with all people the Great Feast of love that God offers.

MOVEMENTS OF MODERATORS

In September we were pleased to welcome David Miller as Moderator of the South Western Synod and we look forward to welcoming Terry Oakley as the Moderator of the East Midlands Synod in October. Two of our longest serving Moderators, Malcolm Hanson (East Midlands, retiring in September) and Graham Cook (Mersey, retiring in January) are about to retire. Both Malcolm and Graham have made significant contributions to the Moderators’ meetings and to the whole church as Synod Moderators and Moderators of General Assembly. Amongst the great wealth of gifts they have brought, including those of leadership and prophetic vision, we will particularly miss Malcolm’s ability to bring clarity in the drawing up of reports and guidelines and Graham’s way with words in the writing of prayers and the leading of devotions. We wish them the blessings of unexpected new beginnings in retirement!

Mission Council



Mission Council

The purpose of the Mission Council is to enable the Church, in its General Assembly, to take a more comprehensive view of the activity and policy of the Church, to decide more carefully about priorities and to encourage the outreach of the Church to the community. Its service is directly towards the Assembly, but its concern is with the whole Church and all its members, so it will seek to be aware of the pains and joys, the adventures and hopes of the whole body.

Members: The officers of the General Assembly, the past Moderator, the Moderator-elect, the Legal Adviser, the conveners of the Assembly standing committees (except the Pastoral Reference Committee), the synod moderators, two representatives of FURY Council, and three representatives from each synod.

The representatives of synods in March 2003 were:

<i>Northern Synod</i>	<i>Dr Peter Clarke, Revd Pamela Ward, Mrs Roberta Wood</i>
<i>North-Western Synod</i>	<i>Revd Geoffrey Townsend, Mr Eric Chilton, Mrs Janet Eccles</i>
<i>Mersey Synod</i>	<i>Revd Martin Hardy, Revd John Kingsley, Mr Donald Swift</i>
<i>Yorkshire Synod</i>	<i>Revd John Jenkinson, Mr John Seager, Mrs Val Morrison</i>
<i>East Midlands Synod</i>	<i>Mrs Anne Ball, Mrs Barbara Turner, Revd David M Miller</i>
<i>West Midlands Synod</i>	<i>Revd Simon Helme, Mr Simon Rowntree, Mrs Ann Sheldon</i>
<i>Eastern Synod</i>	<i>Revd Richard Mortimer, Revd Victor Ridgewell, Mr Ken Woods</i>
<i>South Western Synod</i>	<i>Revd Roz Harrison, Revd Paul Snell, Miss Angela Bebbington</i>
<i>Wessex Synod</i>	<i>Revd David Bedford, Mrs Veronica Taylor, Revd Simon Thomas</i>
<i>Thames North Synod</i>	<i>Mrs Helen Clapp Revd Dr Robin Pagan, Revd Jane Wade</i>
<i>Southern Synod</i>	<i>Mr Ian Chalmers, Revd Lesley Charlton, Mrs Marion Bayley</i>
<i>National Synod of Wales</i>	<i>Mrs Janet Gray, Mr Stuart Jones, Revd David Marshall-Jones</i>
<i>National Synod of Scotland</i>	<i>Revd Ken Forbes, Mrs Helen M Mee, Miss Catriona Smith</i>

1 Our meetings

1.1 During the year Mission Council has met residentially at High Leigh, Hoddesdon and the Hayes, Swarwick Conference Centres; and for a one-day meeting at the Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh.

1.2 As will be seen from several paragraphs in this report (e.g. 4.1, 4.3 and 4.7) Mission Council has given a good deal of time and attention to the future mission of the church and to the international context in which Christians live.

1.3 The Moderator has played a significant role in guiding the January and March meetings. His use of the Psalms as a focus for worship and bible study at last year's General Assembly was extended to Mission Council, well complemented by the worship leadership of the Moderator's chaplain, the Revd Lesley Charlton. The Council was grateful to the Revd Elizabeth Welch (the immediate past Moderator) for chairing the October Mission Council at short notice, when the Moderator was indisposed.

1.4 Theological reflection at the October meeting was provided by the Revd Nigel Collinson (Secretary of the Methodist Conference) and at the March meeting by Mrs Elizabeth Fisher, a member of the General Synod of the Church of England. The practice of discussing the written reflections at the following meeting has continued.

2 Responding to the Assembly

2.1 The following are responses to resolutions of the 2002 General Assembly:

2.2 *Resolution 4 (Record page 38) Ecumenical Bishop in Wales.* Subsequent to the Assembly accepting the Proposal for the Appointment of an Ecumenical Bishop for Cardiff East (The Common Document), it failed to secure necessary support from some ecumenical partners. The Clerk will therefore bring a resolution which halts the process agreed by last year's General Assembly.

2.3 *Resolution 14ii (Record page 15)* asked Mission Council to issue guidelines on ways in which District Councils and synod appointments to Assembly could offer continuity and respect the church's policy on equal opportunities; and on the more effective sharing of reports and decisions with district/ area councils and church meetings. This work is yet to be done.

2.4 *Resolution 17 (Record page 41)* in last year's Mission Council Report (one of the resolutions from the report on **Authority in the United Reformed Church**) was withdrawn for further consultation. A revised resolution appears below (Resolution 10)

2.5 *Resolution 54* (Record page 40) asked Mission Council to appoint an **Honorary Assistant Treasurer**. As a new Hon. Treasurer took up his responsibilities in January, it was decided (with his agreement) to delay seeking to appoint an Hon. Assistant Treasurer for the time being.

2.6 *Resolution 56*, Record page 35 requested the **Ethical Investment Advisory Group** to “give regular attention to the more detailed research and policies of some sister churches; the scope for greater United Reformed Church participation in relevant ecumenical bodies; the option of day-to-day investment decisions being given to managers explicitly committed to a Christian ethos” and “to bring recommendations to the 2003 meeting of the General Assembly through Mission Council”.

Mission Council confirmed the appointment of Dr Brian Woodhall (subsequently replaced by Mrs Fiona Smith)(United Reformed Church Trust), Mr Richard Nunn (United Reformed Church Pensions Trust Limited), Ms Avis Reaney (Financial Secretary), Mr John Ellis (Church and Society Committee Nominee) and Mr Matthew Prevett (FURY) to the group, its convener being the Deputy General Secretary, and its secretary being the Secretary of Church and Society.

Recognising that it can act only in an advisory capacity, the group seeks to become a standing independent forum which discusses ethical issues, gathers information and produces guidelines which will be of use to the whole Church. It is also investigating ecumenical partnerships with which it may be possible to work. Further work to consolidate all these ideas needs to be done, and the group hopes to report more fully to Mission Council and General Assembly in 2004.

The group noted that the United Reformed Church Trust has taken the decision to transfer the management of the Church's own investment funds from HSBC Asset Management (Europe) Limited to an ethical fund of CCLA Investment Management Limited.

The Clerk will propose a correction to the Assembly Record 2002 related to this resolution.

3 Actions on behalf of the General Assembly

3.1 **Appointments of synod moderators.** Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council appointed the Revd Terry Oakley as Moderator of the East Midlands Synod, for a period of seven years to 31 September 2010, and re-appointed the Revd Elizabeth Anne Welch as Moderator of the West Midlands synod for a further 5 years until 31 August 2008.

3.2 **Appointments to staff posts.** Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council appointed the Revd Richard John Mortimer as Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith and Order, for a period of five years to 31 August 2008. It also re-appointed the Revd John William Steele as Secretary for Life and Witness for a further period of three years to 30 September 2006, and Mrs Karen Bulley as Pilots Development Officer for a further period of three years to 30 September 2006.

3.3 **Other appointments.** Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council made the following appointments :

Section O process working party

The Revd Tony Burnham (convener) (2006)

Mr Hartley Oldham (secretary) (2006)

Racial Justice Committee

The Revd Andrew Prasad (convener)(2007)

Westminster College Board of Governors

Mr John Kidd (2006)

Conference of European Churches Assembly

The Revd Malcolm Hanson

Council for World Mission Assembly

Mrs Olive Bell, the Revd David Coleman,

Ms Catherine Lewis-Smith,

the Revd Philip Woods

3.4 **Basic ministerial stipend.** Acting on behalf of Assembly, Mission Council set the basic ministerial stipend for 2003 at £17,952.

3.5 **Assembly Commission.** Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly appointed a Commission to consider the circumstances of a minister who has been in dispute with various councils of the United Reformed Church for a considerable period of time. The report of the Commission was considered in a closed session of Mission Council at its March meeting, as a result of which the Council agreed a process to be undertaken in an attempt to bring this matter to a conclusion. On completion of the process, a further written report will be made to General Assembly.

4 Other actions

4.1 **Review of the United Reformed Church.**

“With a view to transforming the United Reformed Church for effective life and witness in the 21st century”, Mission Council has committed itself “urgently and radically to rethink the Church's priorities, programmes and processes, consulting widely throughout the United Reformed Church, ecumenically and with secular organisations”. The General Secretary has been charged to call together a small group to undertake this work as a matter of urgency, drawing up the terms of reference for the group, and providing regular progress reports to meetings of Mission Council.

4.2 The task group on personal and conciliar leadership and authority in the United Reformed Church, established to provide a theological understanding of leadership and authority as practised in the Church, reported to Mission Council on two occasions during the year. The report is still under consideration, especially that part which refers to the role of synod moderators.

4.3 Pastoral Strategy. Mission Council initiated conversations with the Methodist Council to see if the two churches could work together more closely in discovering an appropriate pastoral strategy, which would allow a more efficient and effective sharing of resources in mission. The initial positive response, which led to meetings between General Secretaries and some other staff, resulted in the production of a joint leaflet which encourages people, wherever there is genuine potential, to explore together creative ways of being an effective Christian presence. Responses are invited offering ideas and suggestions, to be sent either to the Deputy General Secretary or the Assistant Secretary of the Methodist Conference before 24th October 2003.

4.4 The report of the task group established by Mission Council to review the Windermere Centre was received by Mission Council and the following recommendations were approved:

1. That appreciation be expressed to all who have contributed to the Windermere Centre in the years since its inception enabling it largely to achieve the objectives for which it was founded.
2. That the United Reformed Church continue to regard the Windermere Centre as its Assembly training centre and a training resource for the whole Church.
3. That the Director be encouraged to continue to implement his vision of the Windermere Centre as a place where the future pattern of life and witness of the United Reformed Church can be explored.
4. That, as far as possible, a balance be maintained between essential activities aimed at assisting the Church corporately to develop its mission and the more popular activities aimed at personal spiritual development and fellowship.
5. That Assembly and synods be encouraged to use the Windermere Centre as much as possible for committee meetings, consultations and training events.
6. That the Windermere Centre and Northern College continue to explore the possibility of joint work, particularly in the area of Continuing Ministerial Education, and implement it as soon as possible.
7. That the Windermere Centre and Carver Church together through the Interim Joint Council, give further consideration to the building project and

investigate possible sources of funding from outside the United Reformed Church.

8. That the ongoing programme of alterations to provide more en-suite and more single bedrooms be continued.
9. That the annual central church financial support for the Windermere Centre be maintained.
10. That the budget figure for the Windermere Centre in the central United Reformed Church accounts be clarified by being divided into specific headings.
11. That a review of the work of the Centre be initiated by Mission Council in 2007 and thereafter every five years.

4.5 Resource Planning Advisory Group. Mission Council appointed the Revd Bill Wright to be secretary of this group until 2006 on the resignation of Mrs Erica Young, who would remain as a member of the group until 2005. The need for responsible and careful judgement about the Church's financial position vis-à-vis deployment totals was the main theme of the group's report to Mission Council during the year, and is reflected in resolutions 7 and 14 below.

4.6 The Church House Management Group, established to oversee issues of management and staffing at Church House, and to provide guidelines for terms and conditions of Assembly-appointed staff, met for the first time in November and had its own terms of reference agreed by the January Mission Council. Those serving on the group include the Revd John Waller (convener), the Revd David Marshall-Jones, Mrs Val Morrison, and Mr John Woodman. Four staff members are in attendance: the Financial Secretary, the Secretary for Communications and Editorial, the Office and Personnel Manager, and the Deputy General Secretary, (who is secretary to the group).

4.7 Statements on the International Situation:

News of the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe conveyed through our *Commitment for Life* partners at Silveira House, led to the following statement being issued from the January meeting :

4.7.1 The Mission Council of the United Reformed Church, having received news of the continuing deterioration of the situation in Zimbabwe

- Expresses its support for our partners and people in Zimbabwe in these difficult times
- Encourages Christian Aid to be more responsive to the situation in Zimbabwe and requests that a delegation appointed by the Church & Society Committee meet with the Director of Christian Aid to explore this further.

4.7.2 Increasing concern about the military build-up which led to armed conflict with Iraq, caused Mission Council, meeting in January, to issue the following statement in the name of the United Reformed Church:

The Mission Council of the United Reformed Church, noting the increasing military preparations for an invasion of Iraq and the universal rejection by churches and church leaders in the United States, the United Kingdom and around the world of war as the solution to the threat posed by Saddam Hussein's regime

- Expresses its concern that the scale of this military build-up creates a momentum that increases the probability of war
- Supports the view that the UN Weapons Inspectors should be allowed to complete their work
- Believes that, in the 'post 9.11' world, United States and United Kingdom-led military action against Iraq will further destabilise the international situation
- Urges, therefore, that more be done to effect a peaceful outcome that affirms western respect for the Arab world and a desire to foster just and peaceful relations between all God's peoples
- Recognises the considerable stress and worry for the families and friends of military personnel already sent to the region and for those with relatives and friends living in the region
- Urges its congregations to seek ways of ministering to those facing such anxiety
- Calls upon members of the United Reformed Church to reach out to people of the other Abrahamic (Christian, Jewish, Muslim) faiths and covenant with them to work and pray for peace in Iraq and throughout the Middle East, and for good community relations in the UK, recognising that the journey to such commitment will be costly and painful as difficult and divisive issues are faced and wrestled with before our God who calls us all to live with justice and mercy
- Encourages all those who are praying and witnessing for peace, giving thanks for their ministry.

A further statement was issued at the outbreak of hostilities, and was reported to March Mission Council

4.8 **Time for Action.** The publication of the report of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, *Time for Action*, on sexual abuse and the church, led Mission Council to establish a small inter-committee working party under the convenership of the Revd Bill Mahood, to study it and consider a response to CTBI on behalf of the United Reformed Church.

4.9 **Church Related Community Work Programme.** Mission Council, considering deployment targets for numbers of Church Related Community Workers, resolved:

- that from 2004 the total deployment quotas for Synods should include both posts for stipendiary ministers and Church Related Community Workers;
- the aggregate United Reformed Church quota should increase by 26 with effect from 2004 to allow for the inclusion of CRCW posts; and
- from 2004 onwards two posts for each of the 13 Synods should be reserved exclusively for CRCW appointments.

A letter has been sent to each Synod to clarify the practicalities of implementing this decision.

4.10 Mission Council also accepted that the partial devolution of management of CRCWs was an appropriate response in current circumstances to the concern expressed in 1998 about the involvement of Synods and Districts in the management of the CRCW programme. It also agreed that proposals for a renewal of the CRCW Development Worker appointment from 2004 onwards could be placed before the Staffing Advisory Group for assessment by the same criteria as applied to other applications.

4.11 On the advice of its Staffing Advisory Group, Mission Council agreed to the appointment of a **Secretary for Youth**, giving authority to the Youth and Children's Work Committee and Staffing Advisory Group to agree a job description.

4.12 **The Oversight of Youth and Children's Work Trainers**

Mission Council, having taken account of the extensive consultation which has taken place between the Training and Youth and Children's Work Committees, and with those most directly involved, agreed to amend the terms of reference of both the Training Committee and Youth and Children's Work Committee to bring about a change of responsibility for the oversight of YCWTs. Close co-operation shall continue between the two committees; the Training Committee giving "advice" to the programme, while the Youth and Children's Work Committee shall have "oversight". YCWTs shall continue to be managed at synod level.

Resolution 7

Ministries

Recognising the current financial difficulties of the United Reformed Church, General Assembly:

- i) reiterates the call it made in 1992 to church members to give at least 5% of their take home pay to the Church;
- ii) agrees that for 2004, and 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;
- iii) encourages Synods and District and Area Councils to develop appropriately flexible and adventurous deployment plans.

Resolution 8

Westminster College Bursar

General Assembly agrees to the following changes to the Structure of the United Reformed Church

Delete 'and Bursar' from General Assembly function (vi) and replace 'Board of Studies' and with 'Board of Governors' in that same function so that it reads:

'..to make regulations respecting Theological Colleges belonging to the United Reformed Church, to appoint the principal, professors and other members of the teaching staff, and Board of Governors, and to superintend their work'.

There are two respects in which Function (vi) of the functions of the General Assembly as laid down in the Structure of the United Reformed Church and which apply to Westminster College is now out of date. The Board of Governors feel that the time is right to amend it to reflect the present situation. They concern the Board of Studies and the Bursar.

Function (vi) of the General Assembly in The Structure of the United Reformed Church reads as follows:

'to make regulations respecting Theological Colleges belonging to the United Reformed Church, to appoint the Principal, Professors and other members of the teaching staff, Board of Studies, and Bursar, and to superintend their work'.

Since 1980, General Assembly has not appointed the Bursar, and it will make for effective management if the Board of Governors continues to exercise this function. Hence the proposed change.

In 1978 General Assembly agreed that the Board of Studies should be appointed by the Ministerial Training Committee, and in 1995 the Assembly established a Board of Governors, one of whose functions was to appoint a Board of Studies. Neither of these decisions is reflected in a change in the Structure. The Assembly is invited to amend the Structure to give effect to its earlier decisions.

Resolution 9

Section O Advisory Group

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to Part I of the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline:

Paragraph 1

Paragraph 1.2. Insert "disciplinary" after the opening words "Once the..."

Paragraph 2

Insert "(whether or not on appeal)" after the words "particular case".

Paragraph 3

Insert the following additional definitions in their correct alphabetical positions and amend the sub-numbering of the other definitions as required:

'Initial Enquiry' shall mean the enquiry conducted by the Mandated Group in conjunction with the Moderator of the Synod during the period beginning when it is called in by the Moderator and ending when it serves either a Notice of Non-Continuance or a Referral Notice in accordance with the Rules of Procedure.'

'Notice of Non-Continuance' shall mean a Notice served on the Moderator of the Synod by the Mandated Group at the conclusion of the Initial Enquiry to indicate that it does not intend to proceed further with the disciplinary case against the Minister.'

Paragraph 4

Paragraph 4.1 Delete the current paragraph and replace with:

'Subject the age limit imposed by Paragraph 4.4, appointment to the Commission Panel shall be by Resolution of the General Assembly on the advice of the Nominations Committee (or such other committee as may in the future perform the functions of the Nominations Committee), who shall in considering persons for appointment take into account (i) the need for balance and for a variety of skills and specialisations, particularly in the following areas – experience in ministerial oversight, theology and doctrine, law, counselling, psychology, mental health, experience in conduct of meetings and tribunals, and (ii) the advantages of including on the Commission Panel persons from a variety of ethnic minority backgrounds.'

Paragraph 4.2. Insert the words '**Subject the the age limit imposed by Paragraph 4.4,**' before the words '**Members of the Commission Panel**'

Paragraph 4.4. Insert a new Paragraph 4.4. '**When any member of the Commission Panel reaches the age of seventy, s/he must forthwith resign from the Commission Panel and shall no longer be eligible to serve on any new Assembly Commission, but any person who reaches his/her seventieth birthday whilst serving on an Assembly Commission in a case in progress may continue so to serve until the conclusion of that case.**'

Paragraph 6

Paragraph 6.4 Delete all and replace with: '**Those charged under this Paragraph 6 with the appointment of the Assembly Commission shall (so far as possible) (i) appoint at least one man and at least one woman onto the Assembly Commission, and (ii) have regard to the nature of the case, the need for balance and the skills, specialisation and cultural understanding of the members of he Commission Panel.'**

Paragraph 7

Paragraph 7.1.1 Delete all.

Paragraph 7.1.2 Renumber as 7.1.

Paragraph 8.

Delete all and Insert 'Procedural matters arising under the Section O Process shall in every case be dealt with in accordance with the Rules of Procedure.'

Paragraph 11

Paragraph 11.3. Add a new Paragraph 11.3. '**No-one other than the Parties has any right of appeal from a decision of the Assembly Commission.**'

Paragraph 12.

Delete all and insert:

12.1 'The Appeals Commission for the hearing of each such appeal shall consist of the following five persons:

- (a) a Convener who shall be a member of the United Reformed Church (but not necessarily a member of the General Assembly) with legal and/or tribunal experience to be selected by the officers of the General Assembly and**
- (b) the Moderator of the General Assembly or if for any reason he/she should be unable to serve, a former Moderator of the General assembly to be selected by the officers of the General Assembly and**
- (c) three other members of the General Assembly to be selected by the officers of the General Assembly.**

12.2 'The relevant date for ascertaining whether persons qualify for appointment under Paragraph 12.1 is the date on which under the Rules of Procedure the Secretary of the Assembly Commission notifies the General Secretary that an appeal has been lodged against the decision of the Assembly Commission.'

12.3 'In selecting persons for appointment to the Appeals Commission in accordance with Paragraph 12.1(c) the officers of the General Assembly shall, so far as possible, apply the same criteria as are set out in Part I, Paragraphs 4.1 and 6.4, in relation to appointments to the Commission Panel and to Assembly Commissions.'

12.4 'All persons proposed for appointment to an Appeals Commission, in any capacity, are subject to Part I, Paragraph 7.1.'

Paragraph 18

Delete "shall, if requested to do so, appoint a representative to attend any hearing conducted under the Section O Process for such purpose" and Insert 'shall appoint a representative to attend the Hearing for such purpose, unless his/her attendance has been expressly dispensed with by the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission as the case may be.'

Paragraphs 21 & 22

Delete all and Insert a new Paragraph 21

Save only as provided in Paragraph 21.2, this Part I of the Section O Process is subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure.

21.2 Mission Council acting in the name of General Assembly has authority by single resolution of that Council to make as and when necessary and with immediate effect such changes to Part 1 as are, on the advice of the legal advisers to the United Reformed Church, required to bring the Section O process into line with the general law of the land consequent upon any changes in legislation and/or case law.

All such changes to the Section O Process as are made by Mission Council under Paragraph 21.2 shall be reported to the next annual meeting of the General Assembly.

The main function of the Section O Advisory Group is to keep the wording of the Section O Process itself under constant review and to advise Mission Council upon any changes which need to be brought to General Assembly. However, it also has the important role of providing guidance and training for those people who will be involved in the cases themselves. Currently it is producing five sets of Guidelines; for District Councils, their Mandated Groups, Ministers, Synod Moderators, members of Assembly Commissions and a more general paper setting out the process and general timetable intended for complainants and people indirectly affected by the Section O processes.

During the last twelve months, the Group has also run two training sessions, one for Synod Moderators and one for members of the Commission Panel. In addition it is sometimes asked to examine the impact of issues of discipline on other areas in the life of the Church.

The General Assembly of 2002 remitted questions to the Group concerning the disciplining of lay persons and elders, and of Ministers of other denominations in the service of the United Reformed Church. Together with these questions the group has been

engaged in discussions on the question of the disciplining of Ministers of the United Reformed Church who serve in Local Ecumenical Pastorates and have been granted Ministerial status in another denomination.

It was felt inappropriate to use Section O procedures in dealing with Elders and Church Members. Part 1 Paragraph 9 of Section O defines the criteria to be used by the Assembly Commission in terms of Schedule E of the Basis of Union and this schedule applies only to Ministers of Word and Sacrament.

Ministers of other denominations in the employ of the United Reformed Church will generally be treated for disciplinary purposes as though they were lay employees except that in cases where, were they ministers of the United Reformed church, reference to the section O process might be deemed appropriate, a formal reference and report to the appropriate authorities of their own denomination will be made.

In the case of Ministers holding status in more than one denomination the Group is not yet in a position to report.

The Group has been reviewing the working of the Section O Process and proposes several changes to Part 1. While many of these are clarification four are not.

- i) It is proposed to introduce an upper age limit at which members of the Commission Panel must retire. This is not because of any dissatisfaction with any current members of the Panel but rather to bring our practices into line with the general practice whereby Judges, Magistrates and members of Secular panels must retire.
- ii) It is proposed to alter the rule regarding the chairing of the Appeals Commission so that this shall in future be the responsibility of a Convener with specialist skills in this area, rather than the Moderator of the General Assembly as at present.

- iii) It is proposed to introduce a special exception to the rule requiring changes to Part 1 of the Section O Process to be dealt with under Paragraph 3(l) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church, where rapid changes are needed because of changes in the law.
- iv) It is proposed to introduce a clause requiring those appointing the members of the Assembly Commission to ensure that there is at least one man and one woman on the Commission together, where appropriate, with people appointed because of special skills, knowledge or cultural awareness.

Resolution 10 Task Group on Authority in the United Reformed Church

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to the Standing Orders of the Assembly with effect from the close of the annual meeting of the Assembly in 2003:

Alter the title of Standing Orders section 5 to read:

“Motions on Status or Closure of Debate”

and add a new paragraph 5a:

“A member of Assembly may deliver to the General Secretary not less than 21 days before the date of the meeting of the Assembly a notice in writing of a motion that the General Assembly, for the better consideration of a specified resolution and its related documents, goes into a committee of the whole Assembly. Provided that the Moderator, Clerk and General Secretary together decide that this rule may appropriately be applied in the case of the said resolution, the motion shall be presented immediately following the opening speeches in support of the primary motion. For such a motion to be carried, two thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. Committee procedure enables members to speak more than once and exploratory votes to be taken on particular points or suggested changes. The number and length of speeches shall be at the discretion of the Moderator. After discussion in committee and decision on any proposed changes the Clerk shall draw the attention of the Assembly to any changes to the original text which have been agreed.

The Moderator shall then declare the committee stage to be ended, and the Assembly shall proceed to hear a closing speech from the mover of the motion under discussion and proceed to a vote on the motion, subject to any further motion under Standing Order 5. The decision of the Moderator with the Clerk and the General Secretary on the application of this Standing Order shall be final.”

Re-number the existing paragraphs 5a, 5b, 5c and 5d as 5b, 5c, 5d and 5e respectively, and in the new 5e, amend the first reference to “5a, 5b and 5c” to read: “5b, 5c and 5d” and the second reference to “5a, 5b and 5c” to read: “5a, 5b, 5c and 5d”.

1 General Assembly 2002 received the report of the Task Group on Authority in the United Reformed Church and passed eight of the nine resolutions arising from the report. The outstanding resolution was Resolution 17, which sought to change standing orders to make it possible for the whole Assembly to go into committee.

2 The report of the Task Group on Authority offered the following commentary to resolution 17 (3.9.2a):

This would be a useful provision for those occasions when a document is attached to a resolution. At present only the resolution can be amended, which means that the presented document must

Resolution 10

be accepted in total, as it stands, or rejected. It has been useful, for example when considering a proposed revision to Schedule C to the Basis, for the Assembly to have the flexibility of working on the document in committee.

If the Assembly were to work in this way certain practical arrangements would need to be made (e.g. sufficient time must be allowed and consideration might be given to asking someone other than the Moderator to chair the debate in committee). Therefore, it would be advisable to require 21 days' notice to be given of the intention to move that the Assembly go into committee. Any document which might need to be considered in this way would be included in the Book of Reports which is sent to members of Assembly well in advance of the meeting, so the requirement for notice should not present difficulties.

At present if a document is to be debated in this flexible manner it requires that the Standing Orders be suspended. A motion to achieve this must be supported by three quarters of members in order to be passed. It would be excessive to require such a level of support for a motion that the Assembly should go into committee. It is, however, of sufficient significance to require a two thirds majority.

3 At General Assembly 2002 an amendment to Resolution 17 was tabled which did not challenge the principle of a change to standing orders, but suggested two specific changes to the mechanism for going into, and coming out of, committee that was being proposed to General Assembly by Mission Council:

- i) The amount of written notice required of a motion to go into committee (Mission Council was proposing a firm 'not less than 21 days'; the amendment suggested a much more flexible 'normally ... not less than 21 days').
- ii) The inclusion of a different process for coming out of committee which would ensure that closure was reached in the matter before the re-imposition of standing orders. The minute would then be read and formally agreed.

4 In the light of this amendment, and given that time was tight to allow adequate consideration of the amendment, the Convener of the Task Group offered to withdraw the Resolution 'in order that further consultation could take place'.

5 Following further consideration and consultation, Mission Council is not persuaded by the force of the proposed amendment for the following reasons:

i) The amount of written notice required:

- a) Operating 'in committee' would likely be considerably more time consuming for Assembly than operating under standing orders. The timetabling of Assembly would be extremely difficult if it were permissible for resolutions to be proposed to move the Assembly into committee mode at any point during debate.
- b) Precedent suggests that it may not necessarily be the Moderator who chairs the Assembly when it is operating in committee mode, helping to make clear that Assembly is functioning in a different way. Time would be needed to make proper provision for this.

ii) Process for coming out of committee mode:

a) Under the change to standing orders proposed by Resolution 17, the original resolution would be proposed and seconded under the normal rules of debate, then the motion to go into committee would be put. If this were agreed then all subsequent debate and decision-making would be carried out without the restriction of the normal rules. It seems appropriate for the closing speech to be taken, as were the opening speeches, under the normal Assembly rules, providing symmetry. Of course, as the wording made clear, decision on proposed changes would be made while the Assembly was working in committee, but it would still need to hear the closing speech, and would still have the opportunity to vote against the whole motion.

b) It may be difficult given the constraints of time to formulate a minute of the decisions made in committee. Of course, everyone would need to be clear about any changes which had been made, but this could adequately be done on the resumption of standing orders by the Clerk (backed up by the PowerPoint presentation) drawing the attention of Assembly to the changes which had been made whilst in committee mode.

6 Accordingly, Mission Council brings Resolution 10 which is largely in the same form as the resolution which was withdrawn in 2002, but with the addition of the inclusion in the standing orders of provision for the Moderator, Clerk and General Secretary to decide together that the suggested use of the standing order is appropriate.

**Resolutions from the Task Group reviewing the
National Youth Resource Centre at Yardley Hastings**

The text of the Task Group's report is in **Appendix 2**.

Resolution 11

Yardley Hastings 1

General Assembly thanks God for all who have been involved in the life of the National Youth Resource Centre, Yardley Hastings, for their commitment and inspiration.

Mission Council has requested that the Alternative Resolutions procedure be used.

The Task Group presents the following alternative resolutions

EITHER

Resolution 12a

Yardley Hastings 2

The General Assembly instructs the Youth and Children's Work Committee and General Secretariat to oversee its implementation as recommended in the Task Group Report so that

- a) the Centre be renamed the "Yardley Hastings Centre for Youth and Children's Ministry (United Reformed Church)"
- b) the positions of Centre Minister and Centre Manager be discontinued and the positions of Centre Director and Centre Chaplain be created
- c) the Centre Management Committee be discontinued and the Executive Committee be created
- d) decisions are made about the location of Assembly staff for youth and children's work
- e) the appraisal and review process timetabled in section 6 of the Task Group report is implemented
- f) the 'greater vision' contained in Appendix VIII is given to the General Secretary to consider as a part of the review of the life of the United Reformed Church commissioned by Mission Council in October 2002

OR

Resolution 12b

Yardley Hastings 3

The General Assembly instructs the Youth and Children's Work Committee and General Secretariat to implement the closure of the National Youth Resources Centre Yardley Hastings and cessation of use of the Yardley Hastings United Reformed Church buildings by the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church

The Task Group will not put forward Resolution 13 if the alternative resolution 12b, requested by Mission Council, is agreed by the Assembly.

Resolution 13

Yardley Hastings 4

General Assembly requests all its committees to contribute to the development of the Yardley Hastings Centre for Youth and Children's Ministry (United Reformed Church).

Resolution 14**Budget for the year 2004**

General Assembly accepts the budget for the year 2004, set out in Appendix 6 to the Book of Reports

1. The proposed budget for 2004 is set out in Appendix 6 to the Book of Reports which also shows, for comparison, the budgets for 2002 and 2003 and the actual amounts for 2001 and 2002.

2. Assumptions

This Budget is based on a number of assumptions and it is important that all concerned recognise that if these assumptions are not realised there could be a major problem.

The assumptions include:

- that a declining budget deficit can be accepted for 2004 and 2005 provided that we can see it being eliminated thereafter.
- It is the intention that the target number of stipendiary ministers will track membership from 1st January 2004, but the budget for 2004 is based on the expected number of stipendiary ministers. Initially the number on the payroll will exceed this tracking figure, but the projections show that within a few years numbers will be on track. Indeed it is vital to continue to encourage all suitable candidates for stipendiary (as well as non-stipendiary) service.
- that the Ecumenical Committee and Communications & Editorial Committee will be able to put into effect the substantial savings that they have most helpfully offered, and that other expenditure will be within budget.
- that General Assembly does not agree to any additional expenditure not fully matched by reductions in expenditure already budgeted.
- that the increase in contributions needed for the Ministers' Pension Fund will be 3.8%, of which the Church would pay 2.55% and ministers 1.25%.

3. Stipend Increase

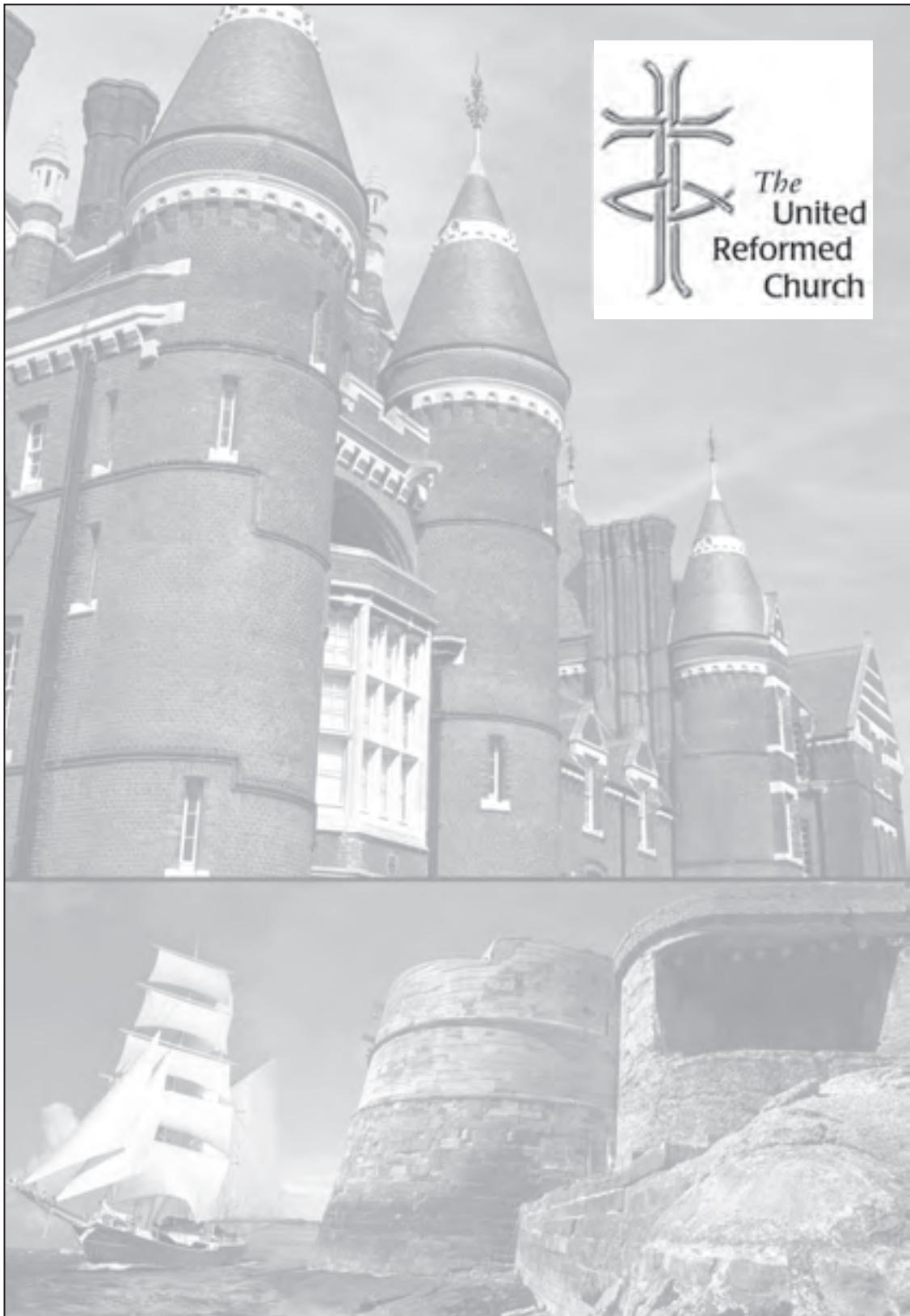
The budget allows for an increase in stipend of 3.5% in 2004. It should be noted that in addition to the additional 1% employee's National Insurance contributions our assumption is that ministers will also have to pay an additional 1.25% pension contributions. After taking account of inflation ministers would, therefore, have a small pay cut in real terms.

4. Ministry and Mission contributions

The draft 2004 budget was discussed at a District and Synod Treasurers' consultation at Swanwick in February. The impact of the increase in employer's National Insurance contributions of 1% (announced too late to affect the 2003 budget) and employer's Pension Fund contributions (2.55%) was recognised as well as the difficulties faced by many congregations in raising their own M&M targets. As a result of rigorous control of expenditure and change in the future target number of stipendiary ministers (noted in the assumptions above) an increase in M&M contributions of 4% over the actual pledges for 2003 was accepted, noting that this would lead to a projected deficit of £430,000 in 2004. Projections showed that provided our assumptions continue to be realised future increases in M&M contributions would be lower and our budget deficit eliminated before our reserves are reduced to a dangerous level.

Mission Council received a full presentation on these issues and supported the proposals.

Committees



Assembly Arrangements

This Committee plans and budgets for General Assembly

Committee Members

Convener: Mr William M McVey **Secretary:** Mr Hilary Gunn
Moderator, Moderator-elect, General Secretary, Clerk to Assembly,
Convener of Local Arrangements Committee for the relevant year.

1 General Assembly 2005

The Committee brings a resolution that the Assembly of 2005 should be held at the University of Warwick from 2nd-5th July.

2 Discussion about General Assembly

2.1 In addition to the normal work of preparation this year, the Committee has devoted considerable attention to the financial cost of General Assembly. It rapidly became apparent that there were very few ways in which a significant reduction could be achieved immediately in this annual cost of approximately £200,000.

2.2 The most significant factors in this cost to the church are: the frequency with which Assembly is held, and the number of people attending at the expense of the church. Any change in the frequency of meeting, or any significant changes in those entitled to attend Assembly, would require an amendment to the Basis of Union – thus involving a two-year process of change, with the result taking effect only in year three of this process.

2.3 In view of the wide-ranging review of church life presently underway, the Committee was inclined to make suggestions to that process rather than complicate the situation further in the short term by proposing any immediate changes. However, alternatives that have already been considered include: Assembly to be held every third year; a considerable reduction in the number of representatives at Assembly from the Districts and/or a different method of allocating that representation; the abolition of the Synod representatives (who are currently in addition to the District representatives); a restriction in the number of former Moderators attending Assembly; a restriction in the number of staff in attendance; greater use of the United Reformed Church web-site for the publication and distribution of Assembly reports and information; the separate publication of the full Annual Report and Accounts, with an abridged version in the Assembly Reports.

2.4 Reluctant consideration was given to the idea of inviting people to make a contribution towards the cost of their attendance at Assembly. Mission Council expressed its opinion by way of a resolution instructing the Committee to include that invitation in the letter to Districts. However, the Committee wish to make it quite clear that attendance at General Assembly is not dependent upon any financial contribution being made by the person concerned. The Committee is pleased to encourage generous giving, throughout the church for all purposes, as our response to the many gifts that God has provided.

3 Our conclusion about the future of General Assembly

3.1 The Committee firmly concluded that considering General Assembly from the financial aspect was the wrong approach. The cost is important. But the Committee would first prefer to stimulate a debate about the nature, form and purpose of General Assembly. From that might then be derived, amongst other matters, the nature of the representation and the frequency of meeting. The practical arrangements and the cost would then become a consequence – rather than a determinant – of the decisions made about the better ordering of our life and witness as the United Reformed Church.

4 An additional voting procedure

4.1 For the first time at General Assembly, motions may be moved and seconded in competition with a motion already before the Assembly. The advantage of this is to allow a preference to be expressed in a complicated matter, without the risks attached to an “all-or-nothing” vote on the issue. The details of this are set out in Standing Orders, paragraph 3k. The Clerk to Assembly, Revd James Breslin, will be pleased to guide members of Assembly in the implementation of this new and useful device for the better consideration of complicated issues.

5 Future Assemblies

5.1 Planning continues for General Assembly in its present form for the years to 2005. Detailed work is already underway on General Assembly 2004, which will be held at the University of Glamorgan as acknowledgement of the presence of the United Reformed Church in Wales. Assembly will return to a geographically-central location for 2005 – possibly followed by a regional location (2006) and another central location (2007), before again possibly visiting Scotland (2008). The suggestions for these latter locations are dependent upon the outcome of the discussions about the future of General Assembly.

6 Convener of Tellers

6.1 The Committee would like to draw the attention of Assembly to the retirement this year of the Revd George Thomas as Convener of Tellers.

This task is one that is often regarded by members as being an activity that anyone could do, and a task that each person is convinced that they could do better than the current incumbent of the post. In spite of that, George has, in a calm and discreet manner, brought wisdom and commitment to a delicate and sometimes difficult job over many years. The Committee invites Assembly to thank the Revd George Thomas for all this work.

6.2 The Committee is pleased to announce that the Revd John Pugh, from the Eastern Synod, has agreed to take up this responsibility at General Assembly in 2004.

Resolution 15**General Assembly 2005**

Assembly agrees that the General Assembly in 2005 will meet at the University of Warwick from 2nd-5th July.

Assembly Pastoral Reference

The purpose of the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee is to consider the cases of ministers which are referred to it by Mission Council, synods, district councils, or their committees or by moderators of synods. (See GA 1999 reports P.122). By a Welfare-Sub-Committee, it also deals with all welfare and emergency matters which reports in general terms only, directly to the General Assembly.

Committee Members

Convenor: Revd David Jenkins **Secretary:** Deputy General Secretary

*Revd Arnold Harrison, Mr Okeke Azu Okeke, Revd Pat Hall, Mrs Irene Brunskill, Revd Keith Forecast,
the Convenor of The Welfare Sub-Committee, the Treasurer, The General Secretary*

1. The Committee continues to respond to the pastoral needs of ministers and their families, to authorise payment of stipend where ministers experience situations of dis-location and the breakdown of relationships in local pastorates, through times of extended ill-health or personal crisis.
2. Through the Welfare Sub-Committee, support is brought to ministers, to widows and widowers, and to children both in times of emergency and by making grants for specific needs.
3. The Committee continues to give advice when consulted by Synod Moderators and by the councils of the church. It recommends and promotes the use of the **Ministerial Counselling Service** which is a confidential service available to ministers and their families. This resource is being drawn on more and more, indicating its continuing value. Through one of its members, Irene Brunskill, the committee keeps links with '**Broken Rites**', the inter-denominational support group for divorced and separated wives of ministers, and receives reports of its work.
4. The Committee continues to value the expertise brought to its work by its members. Their work is confidential but their shared skills and wisdom are brought to bear upon each individual situation. The Committee sometimes needs to draw on additional expertise from across the Church and welcomes the names of doctors, psychiatrists and therapists whose skills can be made available from time to time.
5. Since it last reported to Assembly, the Committee also expresses its gratitude to its former secretary, John Waller, to Ray Adams its present secretary and to Judy Stockings, whose work on behalf of the committees maintains their high standards of discretion and ensures their smooth and responsible running.
6. At this Assembly David Jenkins will complete his service as convenor and Nelson Bainbridge, as convenor of the Welfare Sub-Committee. We express our deep thanks to both conveners for their leadership in this vital area of our pastoral work. We welcome Keith Forecast as the new convenor of the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee and Alan Wharton convenor of the Welfare Sub-Committee.

Welfare Sub-Committee

Convenor: *Revd Nelson Bainbridge*

Secretary: *Mrs Judy Stockings*

1.1 The Sub-Committee continues to further the welfare work of the Church in giving assistance to ministers and their families in times of special need. Routine matters are handled by the Secretary, whose pastoral concern is widely appreciated. Other matters are dealt with by the Officers or by the Committee at its meetings two or three times a year. In November 2002 a letter was sent to all stipendiary Ministers and Church Related Community Workers to remind them of funds available for welfare purposes.

1.2 During the last year gifts amounting to £147,110 were made. Included in this figure was £9,200 given to spouses of ministers following bereavement and £46,095 by means of Christmas gifts to widows, widowers and their families. £70,021 was sent to ministers for assistance in the education of their children.

1.3 The Sub-Committee has maintained its concern for assistance to ministers facing major problems of debt. Experience has shown that guidance given by the Credit Action Trust is generally limited to their publications and to advice given confidentially over the telephone. In many cases advice may also be found through face-to-face consultation at the local or neighbouring Citizens Advice Bureau.

1.4 The outgoings of the Sub-Committee in making grants in recent years have been considerably in excess of income and consideration has been given to the best use of available funds. If no more funds become available through legacies or a reversal of the decline in investment income it may be necessary to ask the General Assembly for monies to be transferred from the General Funds of the Church in order to maintain the welfare work of the Church at the level which has existed in the past.

Church and Society

This committee seeks to serve local churches, district councils and synods, ecumenical and appropriate secular bodies, in raising awareness, sharing information and encouraging reflection and action on matters of justice and peace, healing and reconciliation. It seeks to represent the concern of the church for such matters to government and others with power over the life of people in these islands, acting ecumenically wherever possible. It is responsible for *Commitment for Life* (including the 1% appeal) and will promote such other programmes as will help the above aims.

Committee Members

Convenor: Revd Martin Camroux

Secretary: Dr Andrew Bradstock

Administrator: Ms Wendy Cooper

Programme Director, Commitment for Life: Mrs Anne Martin

Mr Geoffrey Duncan, Revd Owiny Laber, Mr Simon Loveitt, Revd Alan Paterson, Mrs Catriona Tait, Mrs Helen Warmington attending by invitation: Mr Graham Handscomb (Free Churches Education Committee),

*Mr George Morton (CTBI Environmental Issues Network), Revd Brenda Russell (Churches Together for Healing),
Revd Neil Thorogood (Churches' Peace Forum)*

1 Iraq

1.1 At the time of writing the military offensive against Iraq, led by the United States with the support of the British Government, is in full swing. The mainstream churches in both the UK and US have been unanimous in condemning the bellicose stance of their governments, and Church and Society and International Relations have been monitoring the situation closely and considering how best the United Reformed Church should respond at every turn. Our response has included (i) a statement issued in September 2002 by the Moderator of General Assembly and General Secretary expressing the Church's view that a military attack on Iraq at that time would be 'ill-advised, unjustified and immoral'; (ii) the adoption by Mission Council in January of a resolution, moved by the Convener of Church and Society, recording our concern that the US administration is officially endorsing a 'pre-emptive strike' policy; (iii) participation by the Moderator of General Assembly in a delegation of US and UK church leaders to see the Prime Minister in February to press the case for an alternative to war; and (iv) a statement issued by the Moderator and General Secretary the day war was declared regretting the British Government's decision to support the United States in its action and reiterating the Church's view that the use of force at that time was 'morally wrong'. The statement urged Her Majesty's Government to work with the UN, the EU and relief agencies to prepare for humanitarian aid to be made available to the people of Iraq, and stressed that the United Reformed Church did not see the war as a 'conflict between the Christian West and the Muslim world'. It urged 'all Christians and Muslims to recognize the common grounding of their faith in the God of

Abraham who calls us all together to seek the peace of nations.' The statement also welcomed the news that the US had agreed to the publication of a 'road-map' to reactivate the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians and urged the UK Government to be 'energetic and resourceful in following through on this key development.'

2 Ghana

2.1 Concerned that, within the globalization process, governments, corporations, non-governmental organisations and international finance institutions so seldom appear to come together to explore common ground, Church and Society facilitated a two-day seminar at High Leigh in November 2002 around the issue of water sector reform in Ghana. Provision of water in the developing world is a hotly-debated issue, and in some countries has led to violent unrest; and the aim of the High Leigh event was to create a 'safe space' where the main stakeholders in the process in Ghana might listen to and better understand each other and so help that process to advance peacefully and with due attention paid to the interests of all parties. Representatives from the Ghana Trades Union Congress, the World Bank, the Department for International Development, a private company interested in the water franchise in Ghana and leading non-governmental organisations from Ghana, the UK, the United States and the continent attended; and under the expert moderation of the Liberal Democrat peer Lord Shutt and the journalist Stella Orakwue, a cordial and extremely constructive dialogue took place which enabled the process to move on. The potential for this model to be adopted in other contexts, including by local churches around issues in their community, is well worth exploring.

3 Commitment for Life

3.1 Achievements

3.1.1 Commitment for Life last came before General Assembly in a conspicuous way in 2000 when Christian Aid's Director, Daleep Mukarji, thanked us for the steady rise in engagement by local churches with the programme. In 2002 we raised £527,000, a remarkable increase over the £445,000 received in 2000. Last year we sent £401,000 to Christian Aid, £52,500 to the World Development Movement, and made significant grants to the Trade Justice Movement, the Jubilee Debt Campaign, the Fairtrade Foundation, One World Week and various organisations engaged in development education. A full list of grants made by the programme is available on request.

3.1.2 The number of participating churches is currently just short of 600, but we continue to increase at the rate of approximately one church per week. We are pleased that the Synod of Scotland plans to launch Commitment for Life in September 2003. The team of Advocates has grown to 53 and we have a further group of Associate Advocates.

3.1.3 In January 2003 Daleep Mukarji wrote to thank us for our continuing support. 'The programme is the very best way for United Reformed Church congregations to work with Christian Aid, supporting people in our world who are vulnerable and suffering,' he wrote. 'The close partnership between Christian Aid and the United Reformed Church is what makes the programme so effective and so important. The Commitment for Life resources we produce together help you to bring your concern for poverty and justice into the life of your congregations all year round, and the focus on just four countries encourages a deeper understanding of the often complicated development issues we deal with. Whether your response is through prayer, action or giving, you are part of a movement for justice, exposing the scandal of poverty, and changing the world.'

3.2 Campaigning

3.2.1 Campaigning has become an increasingly important part of our work. Charity can make a difference but if poverty is to be eradicated, structural change must accompany giving and aid. 'You should tithe, yes, but you should not leave undone the important things – justice, mercy and faith,' as Matt. 23:23 puts it. Commitment for Life raises awareness on a number of issues, enabling us all to work to bring about change. We long to see people empowered so that they may have greater control over their destiny, and we join with others in challenging governments, international bodies and corporations when their policies appear harmful to the poor.

3.2.2 **Fairtrade** is an important part of our campaigning work. It represents an alternative trading system in a world of open markets and

lack of protection for the trade of poor countries. The Fairtrade Foundation claims that 24% of the population know about the Fairtrade mark but less than 5% buy fairly-traded products regularly. We hope that amongst our churches the figure is higher and that not many are still serving Nescafé and other non-fairly traded products. World coffee prices are at a 30-year low, resulting in coffee farmers being paid below the cost of production. Not only are 25 million coffee farmers suffering but several countries have been reduced to deeper levels of borrowing and debt. Fairtrade is a part of the answer. Each March we try to ensure that every church is aware of Fairtrade Fortnight and that a statement is made at all Synods. This year we produced a new resource *It's not fair! Exploring fair trade with the children in the churches*, co-branded with some of our ecumenical partners.

3.2.3 The **Trade Justice Movement**, a coalition of organisations and churches including our own, draws attention to the gross inequalities and injustices in the way trade rules are drawn up. Poor countries are asked to open up their markets and remove protection for their agriculture and other sectors, while we in the richer nations protect our own businesses with a wealth of subsidies and protectionist measures. We are witnessing the impoverishment of producers in poor countries across the world and the growing hold of corporations from the rich nations over the supply of essential services. Dairy farmers in Jamaica pour their milk down the drain as subsidized EU powdered milk becomes the norm; cotton farmers in Mali find prices driven down because US farmers receive huge subsidies; tomato growers in Ghana find local markets flooded with surplus tinned tomatoes from Italy (but yet are required to pay more to water service providers than before).

3.2.4 The **World Development Movement** has focused on the impact of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), demonstrating how liberalising trading in services, particularly essential ones like water, has a huge impact on the poor as well as diminishing countries' control over their own economies. The aims of the campaign include: preventing poor countries being forced to open their markets; championing their right to manage their own economies; and preventing the expansion of the World Trade Organisation agenda to include new issues such as investment.

3.2.5 The Jubilee 2000 campaign placed the issue of sovereign debts on the political agendas of the G8 countries and helped bring about the cancellation of \$34 billion of debts and the promise of more. Research shows that countries which have received debt relief have spent the money saved on education and health provision. More than twenty of the world's poorest countries are still going through the process towards greater debt relief but are unlikely to emerge with sustainable levels of debt.

The crisis in the price of commodities, such as coffee and cotton, makes it impossible for countries to be free of debt obligations where debt relief is tied to export levels. We continue actively to support the **Jubilee Debt Campaign and Jubilee Research**.

3.2.6 Other important campaigning issues are poverty and HIV/AIDS, poverty and the environment, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These latter aim to break the cycle of poverty and improve the quality of life for millions of people, especially children, by 2015. We produced a series of leaflets on these topics under the title 'Going Global' in conjunction with International Relations. We continue to be active in the Grow Up Free From Poverty (formerly International Action Against Child Poverty) coalition which puts pressure on the signatories to the MDGs to ensure that all the targets are met.

3.3 Partners

3.3.1 Our partners matter. We watch their situations with concern and engage with the issues that confront them. We hear from them and take every opportunity to make our partnerships real. These have become whole church partnerships.

3.3.2 Palestine

3.3.2.1 The suffering of the Palestinian people and their subjugation to random acts of wanton violence, intimidation and humiliation have caused us increasing concern during the past year. Not only Palestinians but the Israelis are suffering, particularly young people. But still the settlement building goes on and nothing seems to halt the Israeli government or require it to abide by UN resolutions prohibiting this practice in the occupied territories and the violation of human rights laws. David Lawrence visited Israel/Palestine in October and wrote three strong articles in *Reform*. Commitment for Life has been producing 'Moving Stories', an e-mail resource containing grassroots stories of despair and courage. We invite churches to understand the reality of life for many Palestinians. We want to move from better awareness to advocacy in alliance with others. Christian Aid's powerful report *Losing Ground: Israel, poverty and the Palestinians* documents with accuracy the deteriorating situation in the towns and villages.

3.3.2.2 The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) is a new initiative of the World Council of Churches. It is a response to a call made by the heads of churches in Jerusalem. Its mission is to accompany local Christian and Muslim Palestinians and Israeli peace activists in their nonviolent efforts to end the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Accompaniers will serve for three months and monitor and report violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. They

stand in solidarity with the churches and all those struggling nonviolently against the occupation. Public speaking upon return is part of the commitment.

3.3.3. Zimbabwe

3.3.3.1 In October 2002 we welcomed two colleagues from Silveira House who visited churches in the Wessex and South Western synods. By Christmas famine seemed to be looming in Zimbabwe as food supplies ran out or were distributed only to government supporters. We were able to send £2k to Silveira House to meet some emergency needs. As the crisis deepened Mission Council unanimously resolved to express its concern about the situation to both the Government and Christian Aid. While there are allegations that some food aid in Zimbabwe is being distributed on the basis of political affiliation, Christian Aid partners have continued to operate over the past financial year without political interference. They have spent over £4.5 million on emergency food aid and it continues to reach those for whom it is intended.

3.3.4 Bangladesh

3.3.4.1 Six FURY members visited our partners the Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB) in January 2003, seeing first hand the emergency distribution of blankets during an exceptionally cold spell. We have invited CCDB staff to visit churches here in the UK during October 2003. CCDB struggles against poverty and a widespread lack of education and resources by providing a range of opportunities for skills training and empowerment. The way women come together in fora to discuss the obstacles to their own betterment is an example to others. Women are in the forefront of the campaign for debt cancellation.

3.3.5 Jamaica

3.3.5.1 The globalising of the economy has meant for Jamaica a huge influx of cheap imports including subsidized EU and American foodstuffs. These include milk powder, which has ruined the livelihoods of many dairy farmers. Violence is becoming more widespread, one consequence of the gross inequalities between rich and poor in the island. We sent £5k in 2002 towards the work of Jamaica Aids Support which has featured large in Christian Aid's programme on HIV/AIDS. We also sent £7k towards the rebuilding of the toilets at S-Corner, a clinic and community development project serving thousands of residents in the deprived Bennetland ghetto of Kingston. It is currently functioning with just 2 loos!

3.3.6 We long to see more churches engaging with the programme. Among the new resources we can offer are posters, stories and prayer cards on each partner, as well as materials on 'Making Commitment for Life Sunday special', 'Preaching for Justice' and 'Harvest worship'.

4 ...A Time to Die

4.1 Assembly 2002 welcomed the work on death, dying and bereavement undertaken by our working group, and copies of the resource pack were sent to all churches in the autumn. The pack has been well received, and a number of helpful suggestions as to how it can be improved submitted. It is hoped that the pack will also be widely used outside of the United Reformed Church.

5 Jobcentres

5.1 The report of the research by forty United Reformed churches into the type and quality of work available in local Jobcentres - *Worth Working For? Job Opportunities in 21st Century Britain* - was launched at a special reception at the House of Commons in January 2002. The event was hosted by David Drew MP and attended by representatives from our ecumenical partners, agencies, and some of the churches involved in the research. A presentation was made by, among others, the Director of the Greater Manchester Low Pay Unit (GMLPU), with whom we collaborated in this project. Copies of the executive summary were sent to all MPs with constituencies in England, Scotland and Wales, and many replied. Fifty MPs signed an Early Day Motion drawing attention to the Report tabled by Huw Edwards MP. The Convener of Church of Society, the Director of the GMLPU and David Drew and Huw Edwards later had a very constructive meeting with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and his officials, to discuss the Report's findings in detail. The recent computerization of the Jobcentre system, enabling job-seekers to access vacancies on offer across the country from any Jobcentre, rules out the possibility of a further similar project being undertaken. The new system - which appears to be working to the advantage of job-seekers - does not lend itself to being monitored in a way that could involve local churches.

6 Education

6.1 The Government's support for an increase in the number of schools with a distinctly 'religious' ethos has sparked a lively debate among educationalists, churches and faith groups; and although the United Reformed Church has a direct interest in only a small number of schools the Church and Society Committee has sought to draw up a statement on the issue on its behalf. The Committee also felt that the Church would welcome the opportunity to discuss the issue, and has accordingly tabled a resolution - to which its statement forms an introduction - to Assembly this year. The Church has two representatives on the Free Church Education Unit, which handles all educational matters on behalf of the free churches.

7 Environment

7.1 The agenda of the Environmental Issues Network of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (EIN), on which Church and Society is represented, was dominated last year by the World Summit for Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in August. The Summit marked ten years since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro which set an agenda for the concept of sustainable development. Before the Johannesburg Summit EIN discussed the role of the churches and, with other Christian environmental organisations, prepared a briefing paper and a prayer. It also had input into related initiatives in Scotland, Wales and Europe. The United Reformed Church published *What a World*, edited by Geoffrey Duncan and Pamela Pavitt, with appropriate timing. Through CTBI a letter was sent to the Prime Minister urging action on the aims of the Summit. Some consider the outcome of the Summit disappointing, though it was valuable in so far as it kept sustainable development on the international agenda. Church representatives who attended found helpful the grassroots events organised by the South African Council of Churches, including worship in the townships.

7.2 EIN has specifically challenged churches not only to encourage their local congregations to consider the environment but to ensure that their own church offices improve their environmental performance. Within the United Reformed Church this has been brought to the attention of the Church House Management Group. Eco-Congregation, a government-supported programme to stimulate environmental action by the churches, has had a slow response from congregations, and churches are urged to engage with the project. Its website www.encams.org/ecocongregation is recommended.

8 JustShare

8.1 The JustShare coalition of churches and Christian agencies, of which the United Reformed Church was a founding member, continues to develop a constructive dialogue with institutions in the City of London about globalisation, poverty and economic justice. In 2003 it again organised events in the City on May Day and in the weeks leading up to it, including debates involving senior figures from Government, banking, the church and the agencies, and fair trade stalls outside City churches.

9 Peace Fellowship

9.1 The United Reformed Church Peace Fellowship has a membership of 111 individuals and two churches. It welcomed Mission Council's resolutions on Iraq and the international situation and Thames North Synod's initiative enabling United Reformed Church people to march together in London on 15 February against a war in Iraq. The Fellowship joined the lobby of Parliament on 12 March calling

Resolution 16

on the government to ensure that any military action against Iraq was in accordance with international law. The Fellowship commends 'Why Violence? Why Not Peace?', a World Council of Churches' study guide to help individuals and groups in the churches to reflect and act in the Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2010). Copies are available from the World Council of Churches (or download from www2.wcc-coe.org/dov). Instead of simply condemning violence, churches could make non-violence the distinctive mark of following Christ's way.

10 AIDS Working Group

10.1 The group has sought to clarify its aims to enable it to work more effectively. It agreed that, since the United Reformed Church has limited resources and expertise, it should not seek to duplicate the excellent work already being done by other churches and agencies but be selective and concentrate on what it can do well. Its overall aim is to encourage ministers and congregations to have a greater awareness of the local and global effects of the HIV/AIDS virus. More

specifically it hopes to (a) provide information about the causes and effects of the virus on human beings at a UK and global level; (b) encourage churches to make a pastoral response and take appropriate campaign action; and (c) regularly research resources already used by other agencies and churches and invite people with specialist expertise to give advice.

10.2 The group has communicated mainly through the pages of *Reform* and the United Reformed Church website, and by circulating materials to enable congregations to observe World Aids Day. All churches received the Christian Aid liturgy 'Together in Hope and Prayer' and the Oxford churches' Red Ribbon Group resource leaflet. The group will maintain regular contact with those responsible for ministerial training and the Commitment for Life programme.

10.3 It is with profound sadness that we report the death of Phyllis Mortimer. We miss her from our meetings and her invaluable contribution.

Resolution 16

Faith Schools

Assembly views with concern the Government's commitment to increasing the number of 'faith schools' in England and Wales.

While affirming the right of local communities to decide the nature of their school, and regretting the lack of 'faith input' and promotion of a religious worldview to be found in some state schools, Assembly's concern is that schools promoting a particular faith position may contribute to an erosion of our multi-cultural experience at a time when greater understanding and dialogue between faith communities is more vital than ever.

Welcoming the affirmation given by OFSTED to the teaching of Religious Education in schools, Assembly calls upon churches to support people teaching RE in state schools and encourage others to consider it as a vocation.

1.1 The issue of 'faith schools' has been much in the news. The Government has publicly stated its desire to see more established, and while in some quarters this is welcomed because of the emphasis such schools place on promoting a religious worldview, others see these schools as contributing to existing divisions within society. Some have a fear that they will help to erode our multi-cultural experience at a time when greater understanding and dialogue between different faith communities is more vital than ever. How is the United Reformed Church to respond to this development?

1.2 One way forward in the debate might be to separate the fact that Roman Catholic, Church of England and Methodist schools exist (and have a rich heritage) from the issue of *whether further such schools should be established*. It appears to be the question of *increasing* the number of church schools

that is proving divisive, rather than whether such schools should exist at all. One compelling argument in favour of allowing the number of faith schools to increase is that putting a block on their development would be an act of discrimination against minority faith groups, which currently have only a mere handful of schools. Withdrawing the right of parents to educate their children according to their religious beliefs would also raise questions about the kind of society we live in, a point made by the former Secretary of State for Education, Estelle Morris, in her presentation to the General Synod of the Church of England in March 2002. Thus the question would seem to be whether the new schools will continue the trend adopted by many existing church schools of welcoming pupils of different traditions and faiths, for then the argument that they will foster divisiveness will be seen to have less weight.

1.3 But there are other issues to be taken into account. What signal would be given to schools with no faith basis if, as a result of the popularity of denominational schools, more of the latter were to be given the go-ahead? Might this not suggest that, as a society, we were giving up on non-faith schools? We might remember that, such was the commitment of the free churches to the principle of state education in the last century, they gave up many of their own schools. And given that church schools tend, at least as a consequence of the exercise of parental choice, to be selective, would not the move to develop more such schools be a worryingly retrogressive one? The danger is that, by placing so much emphasis on the importance of the 'faith dimension' in schools, we lose sight of the fact that education is primarily about setting children off on the path of lifelong learning. If schools should primarily be places where young people are stimulated to study, ask questions and pursue knowledge and understanding, and not to be nurtured in the faith, state schools might be better able to provide a 'good' education than religious ones. Ofsted has encouraged the teaching of Religious Education in schools, so should we not call upon churches to support people teaching RE in state schools, not to see their contribution as just supporting church schools.

1.4 That being said, the role of the local

community in deciding the nature of their school must be underlined. The type of school found in any community will clearly depend upon the local context – for example, whether it is rural or urban – and the religious and ethnic composition of the community. If schools are genuinely to reflect their local community then we must recognize that some, especially in inner-city and urban areas, will be predominantly of one faith or of one race. We affirm, however, that the best form of education is a school for the whole community.

1.5 While acknowledging the demands this places on the teacher-training process, we continue to hold to the ideal of state schools providing high quality education, including religious teaching appropriate to a society in which many different faith positions are held. However, where local communities and congregations consider that these demands can be met within the context of a school of a particular faith tradition, the right of that community so to act should be fully respected. We acknowledge the many opportunities that exist for Christians to influence education, not least as school governors or through the Standing Advisory Committees for Religious Education, and encourage Christians of all ages to consider seriously the vocation of teaching.

Resolution 17 Millennium Development Goals (2015 targets)

General Assembly:

- i) welcomes and endorses the Millennium Development Goals;
- ii) pledges itself to work, with others, to see that they are achieved by the year 2015;
- iii) reaffirms its commitment to the Trade Justice Movement and encourages congregations to support the campaign actively by writing to their MP and taking other relevant actions.

1.1 Two-thirds of the world's children still live in abject poverty. 183 million are malnourished. 113 million, two-thirds of them girls, receive no schooling. 30,000 die unnecessarily every day. Child poverty is the morally unacceptable result of our failure to overcome injustice in our world.

1.2 To tackle the worst excesses of poverty, governments across the world, including the UK's, together with the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, non-governmental organisations, churches and faith groups have signed up to the Millennium Development Goals. These goals provide a benchmark by which efforts to overcome poverty and improve the quality of life for the world's poorest people can be measured. The need for more debt relief for the poorest countries is seen as essential if the targets are to be realised,

while the Trade Justice Movement campaigns to enable poor producers to have the opportunity to trade their way out of poverty.

1.3 Specifically the Millennium Development Goals aim to:

- a. eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by halving, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger;
- b. achieve universal primary education in all countries;
- c. promote gender equality and empowering women by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015;

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- d. reduce by two-thirds the mortality rates for infants and children under five;
- e. reduce by three-quarters maternal mortality;
- f. combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
- g. ensure environmental sustainability, including halving by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and by 2020 to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers; and
- h. develop a global partnership for development.

1.4 As a church with a long record of campaigning for justice through Commitment for Life and other programmes, the United Reformed Church should publicly endorse these goals. We should pledge ourselves, with other faith groups and non-governmental organisations, to see these goals achieved through campaigning, lobbying, awareness raising and monitoring. Specifically we should campaign actively for trade rules to work in the interests of poor countries as a vital step towards the achievement of the first Millennium Development Goal.



Doctrine, Prayer and Worship

The purpose of the Committee is:

- to encourage and advise the Councils and Committees of the United Reformed Church in their continual study of theology, enabling the Church to reflect upon and express its doctrines;
- to participate in and respond to ecumenical and inter-faith discussions on doctrinal matters;
- to produce resources and arrange consultations, in response to requests or on its own initiative, in order to enable the Church in all its councils to grow in faith, devotion and spiritual experience;
- to publish regular and occasional prayer and worship materials;
- to support and develop ecumenical and international collaborations in the areas of faith and order and spirituality;
- to oversee the work of the Prayer Handbook Group and the network for Silence and Retreats.

Committee Members

Convener: Revd John Young

Secretary: Revd Kirsty Thorpe

Staff Secretary: Revd Dr David Cornick

Members: Revd Hugh Graham, Revd Charles Martin, Revd Glyn Millington,
Revd Dr Robert Pope, Mrs Jenny Poulter, Revd Alistair Smeaton.

Representatives of other Committees: Revd David Bunney (Silence and Retreats Network),
Revd Sally Thomas (Inter-Faith Relations Committee).

Representatives from other Churches: Revd Stephen Wigley (Methodist Church),
Canon William Croft (Church of England).

I What are we here for?

1.1 In recent meetings the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee has given much consideration to its role. A number of things have given rise to this. Partly it stems from the prevailing mood of self-reflection within the denomination as whole. Furthermore as our Convener is from the Synod of Scotland this has challenged the Committee to explain and account for itself, in response to questions from someone with a new perspective, both sympathetic and critical. The legacy of working on two recent reports for Mission Council, which were not acted on, also prompted the Committee to reconsider its role.

1.2 Ecumenical representatives on the Committee have brought some concerns into focus, since they expect Doctrine, Prayer and Worship to be the place where the United Reformed Church does Faith and Order work, and then find this is not always the case. For instance due to questions of timing and urgency, as well as the infrequency of Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee meetings (January and July), the United Reformed Church doctrinal papers written for the trilateral conversations 'Conversations on the way to unity' were only seen by those participating in the talks and not the Committee.

1.3 Another area of work in which Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee needs to understand its role and communicate well is the consideration of ecumenical texts. The Advisory Group on Faith and Order comes under the Ecumenical Committee and was formed to make detailed study of these texts, providing a critical resource for that Committee as well as for Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee, which sends a member to it. It would be unworkable to study complex texts in any other way but to do this work through the Advisory Group on Faith and Order is not without its difficulties. At times Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee is left wondering how much voice it has in responding to doctrinal issues in ecumenical texts. Usually the Committee is invited to suggest amendments for a draft response from the Advisory Group on Faith and Order. This response is then seen by Ecumenical Committee, which has the final say in giving guidance to General Assembly. The officers of Ecumenical Committee and Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee would like to develop closer working relationships. This may be helped by the inclusion of Faith and Order concerns in the job description of the new Secretary for Ecumenical Relations.

1.4 In discussing its role the Committee has clearly identified the value of greater inter-committee working and cooperation, especially to avoid duplication of effort and the possibility of misunderstandings. Whenever another Committee does work which involves making doctrinal statements the process by which this becomes known to the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee can quite often be haphazard and unclear. There is always a tension between using accessible language and using theologically accurate language. A case in point would be the Committee's current cooperation with Youth and Children's Work Committee, which is producing new literature on baptism, for use in local churches.

1.5 Another question with which the Committee regularly wrestles is whether greater clarity on doctrinal issues is desirable or necessary, both for the wellbeing of the United Reformed Church and for its relations with other denominations. For instance, would it be helpful to publish a list of resolutions on doctrinal matters from past General Assemblies? Are clearer identity in terms of faith and order, and coherent decision-making in this area, goals to be pursued or are they at odds with our self-understanding and ethos?

1.6 As one step forward in terms of the Committee's identification of its role and purpose, a new remit has been drafted and can be found at the opening of this report. The intention is to describe our field of work more succinctly and accurately than the previous version. The Committee trusts that General Assembly will support this altered remit.

2 Worship

2.1 Great time, consideration and care have gone into the production of new services of worship for the United Reformed Church, especially on the part of the Drafting sub-committee and its convener, John Reardon. Whenever work falls behind deadline the dilemma arises as to whether to honour the original timetable, and sacrifice quality, or take longer so as to produce something worthy of the original intention. The project has encountered a series of obstacles and were the process to begin again now, with the benefit of hindsight, the Committee would do it differently. Despite the difficulties on the way, we are glad and proud to offer to the churches the services published this year in printed form and on CD Rom, as well as those to come in summer 2004. The Committee's membership reflects the breadth of the denomination so we each have texts we favour and others that are less to our taste, just as everyone else will. Our policy has been to include a variety of liturgical styles while remaining true to the characteristics of Reformed worship. Experience

suggests we should expect some criticism – service books can provoke strong reactions – but we hope for some bouquets among the brickbats!

2.2 The decisions to change to a two-stage publication, and loose-leaf binder format, were partly forced on the Committee by circumstances yet they may have been providential. A binder is much more flexible than a hardback book and allows for the easy addition of other material as the user wants. Having the printed material available on the accompanying CD Rom, plus a wide range of related worship resources, is also a new and creative venture.

2.3 This summer's publication consists of four orders of Communion, texts for Baptism, thanksgiving for the birth of a child, Confirmation and membership as well as services for evening worship, daily worship and prayers for healing and laying on of hands. Next summer the second group of texts and a second CD Rom will appear, including orders for funerals, marriage, rededication, ordination and induction of ministers, ordination of elders, and commissioning of lay preachers and Church Related Community Workers. The publication will be launched at General Assembly in Portsmouth.

3 Prayer Handbook

3.1 The Prayer Handbook is currently in the throes of reassessing its method of presentation as well as its content and tone. A loose-leaf format is being explored and those who would like to buy a Prayer Handbook folder plus annual inserts in future are asked to contact the Prayer Handbook Committee through 86 Tavistock Place before the end of June

4 Doing theology together

4.1 One of the most encouraging parts of the Committee's work in recent years has been the planning and hosting of evening meetings at General Assembly. The discussions on ordination and the nature of eldership have demonstrated that there is a thirst for theological debate within the United Reformed Church. Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee looks forward to returning to this pattern at future meetings of General Assembly.

5 Silence and Retreats

5.1 The Silence and Retreats network reports on its work elsewhere in these Reports.

6 **Appreciation**

6.1 Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee relies heavily on the wisdom and input of its staff secretaries, two of whom have completed their service in the last year. We thank John Waller for his support and hard work and also Sheila Maxey who, as Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, has attended our meetings so as to liaise between us and Ecumenical

Committee. Hugh Graham and Charles Martin complete their service this summer and we are grateful for their work and for representing the denomination on the Joint Liturgical Group and the Faith and Order Committee of the Methodist Church respectively. Thanks also go to John Reardon for his work in convening the Drafting sub-committee of the new service book.



Ecumenical

The role of the Ecumenical Committee is to foster ecumenical development in the life of the United Reformed Church:

- a) in response to the Basis of Union (para.8)
'The United Reformed Church has been formed in obedience to the call to repent of what has been amiss in the past and to be reconciled. It sees its formation and growth as a part of what God is doing to make his people one, and as a united church will take, wherever possible and with all speed, further steps towards the unity of all God's people.'
- b) in relation to other churches and the wider community - in these islands, across Europe, and throughout the world.

The committee will seek to ensure that wherever the United Reformed Church meets in worship, council or committee, it is working in partnership with Christians in the locality, the World Church and the whole human family.

TASKS

Among the tasks of this committee is listening to those with experience of the World Church, including other Christian traditions in Britain and Ireland, and to those with experience of current affairs and of other faiths.

The Committee maintains official United Reformed Church links with overseas churches and world and regional ecumenical organisations. It guides the United Reformed Church's participation in the Council for World Mission. Through it official contact is made with British and Irish ecumenical bodies.

The work of selecting, training and caring for missionaries and overseeing exchange of personnel is undertaken by the International Exchange Sub-Committee.

Committee Members

Convener: Revd John Rees

Secretaries: Revd Sheila Maxey, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

Revd Philip Woods, Secretary for International Relations

Revd Dale Rominger, International Relations Programme Officer

Members: Revd Mary Buchanan (- 2002), Revd Phillip Jones (- 2002),

Revd Elizabeth Nash (- 2002), Revd Bryan Shirley, Mrs Darnette Whitby-Reid, Revd Cecil White,

Revd Rowena Francis (2002 -), Mr Malcolm Porter (2002 -) Revd Lindsay Sanderson (2002 -)

The National Synod of Scotland: Revd John Smith (-2002), Revd Mary Buchanan (2002 -)

The National Synod of Wales: Revd Stuart Jackson.

Convener of the International Exchange Sub-Committee: Revd John Crocker (- 2002), Revd Chris Baillie (2002 -)

Representatives of other committees: Dr Andrew Bradstock (Church and Society),

Revd Alistair Ellefsen-Jones (Inter-Faith Relations), Revd Carole Ellefsen-Jones (Training),

Revd Hugh Graham (Doctrine, Prayer and Worship), Revd Suzanne Hamnett (Life and Witness),

Mrs Rosemary Johnston (Youth and Children's Work), Ms Avis Reaney (Finance),

Mrs Katalina Tahaafe-Williams (Racial Justice).

Representatives of other churches: Mrs Elizabeth Fisher (Church of England),

Revd Peter Sulston (Methodist Church), Revd Colin McClure (Presbyterian Church in Ireland)

1. Introduction

1.1 The **Three Ecumenical Principles for a Missionary Church in Today's World** were brought to the 2001 General Assembly by the Ecumenical Committee and, with one amendment, adopted and commissioned to be produced in the form of an attractive leaflet. Those leaflets were available by the 2002 General Assembly and have been widely distributed, not only to every local United Reformed Church, but also to colleagues and visitors from other churches at home and abroad.

1.2 The Ecumenical Committee has continued to use them as a yardstick for its work and so this report will group a selection from the wide range of the committee's activities over the past two years under the three headings of the ecumenical principles.

1.3 In addition, a theme runs like a golden thread through this report, as it does through all the work of the committee: **we are about relationships before we are about structures.** Ecumenical relationships without structures are very vulnerable

and so the committee must also be concerned with the structures of partnership at home and abroad, but structures without relationships are lifeless.

2 to expand the range and deepen the nature of the Christian common life and witness in each local community.

2.1 In April 2002, the **Methodist/United Reformed Church Liaison Committee** sponsored a consultation, hosted by the Mid and West Wiltshire United Areas, on the possible use of that ecumenical model elsewhere. Participants came from all over England and Wales, with more from the United Reformed Church than the Methodist Church. This reflected the relevance of the model of a united area for our church at this time of clustering and grouping and radical re-thinking.

2.2.1 The two main conclusions were, firstly, that there must already be good relationships on the ground, and they must go beyond one or two individuals, if the structure of a united area (serving as both district council and circuit) is to be effective: and, secondly, that the life and witness of the shared local church life of these two churches would benefit from serious doctrinal conversations on our understandings of ministry and of authority. A brief report of the consultation can be found on the ecumenical page of the United Reformed Church web site.

2.2 In November 2002, the **Group for Local Unity of Churches Together in England** hosted a consultation entitled '**Local Ecumenical Partnerships in changing times.**' It was an open-ended, some would say incoherent, consultation. No one doubted that single congregation LEPs were here to stay. Like any other local church, they needed to be enabled and challenged by the parent churches. However, the emphasis of the consultation was on taking local covenants to a deeper level of commitment - an example of relationships before structures. That emphasis was not unconnected to the ecumenical enthusiasm of the Roman Catholic and Baptist representatives. The former cannot enter into single congregation LEPs and the latter were more concerned with shared mission and service. The Salvation Army's growing ecumenical commitment is also a new factor in the changing ecumenical landscape.

2.3 The Secretary for Racial Justice has twice given presentations to the committee on various ways in which the United Reformed Church might **develop closer relations with congregations from the Reformed family, who do not (mainly) worship in English and who often share our buildings.** The quality of the local relationships, with a few exceptions, does not yet seem ready for more formal recognition that we and they are part of the same part of the body of Christ. In this we lag behind

some of our UK partner churches and are failing to respond to our changing society.

2.4 In April 2002 the committee hosted a **consultation of younger ecumenists** (i.e. under 40) from within the United Reformed Church and asked them about their vision for the future of the Church. They saw one church in terms of organisation and interchangeability of leadership in each local community - but worshipping in several places and in different styles. Although impatient of present denominational divisions, they were concerned about where authority lay and anxious about abuse of power, whether by councils or by individual leaders.

3 to proclaim more clearly, in word and deed, that in Christ we are one World Church family living in a world which God loves

3.1 Developing relationships with particular partner churches around the world through the personal experience of as many people as possible has been at the heart of the *Belonging to the World Church* programme. (see resolution 19) But the committee is also responsible for **church-to-church relationships, expressed through and beyond the Council for World Mission.**

3.2 The committee has given **priority to partnerships with churches in particular need.**

- **The Churches of Christ in Malawi** is a CWM member church of 50,000 members, with only 20 ministers and 6 evangelists - and yet is thriving on local lay leadership. Malawi, including the Churches of Christ schools, needs teachers because one-third have died of HIV/AIDS. Through the pages of *Reform* this need has been promoted, but when one considers what they are achieving with a model of ministry inherited from the British Churches of Christ we have as much to receive from them as to give.
- The United Reformed Church has developed relations with **two Presbyterian churches in Angola** over the years, offering occasional scholarships in Britain. Today, having listened to them about what can be achieved in Angola, we are funding English teaching and other training programmes there at a fraction of the cost of bringing Angolans over here to train and so offering new opportunities to many more people than had previously been the case.
- In response to the desperate situation in the Middle East, and at the request of the 2001 General Assembly, the United Reformed Church is developing relations with **the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon.** A consultation, with the theme 'Identity', was held in February 2003 at a

time when all eyes were on Iraq and what would unfold there.

3.3 Some partnerships are more explicitly reciprocal.

- **Our two Korean partner churches**, the Presbyterian Church of Korea and the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, are considering the possibility of uniting and asked to come and learn about our history and current life as a united church. We and they were challenged by the visit which took place in October 2002. They spent time in London and in the South Western Synod and, whilst impressed with our union and our commitment to ecumenism and to working ecumenically, they wondered what we understood by mission and indeed whether mission in the UK was suffering because of a lack of competitive spirit between the churches! This dialogue will continue in October in Korea.
- **Our two Ghanaian partner churches**, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana, after decades of sending a Ghanaian minister to serve us and the Ghanaian community in the London area, have, in 2001 and 2002, also hosted parties of United Reformed Church ministers who have Ghanaians in their congregations. Over a period of ten days they were introduced into the culture, rites of passage and spirituality of Ghanaian Presbyterians. Thanks are due to Revd John Danso who had the original idea for this most useful in-service training event, which has been picked up in the *Belonging to the World Church* programme. In 2004 this will move to the Caribbean with an event aimed primarily at those with Jamaicans in their congregation.
- In June 2002 **the Evangelische Kirche der Pfalz and the United Reformed Church signed a new partnership agreement** at their bi-annual theological consultation in Landau, Germany, as they look to the 50th anniversary of this partnership in 2007. This is one of our longest-standing partnerships and involves congregational twinnings, exchange of ministers, and a particular link with the Yorkshire synod.

3.4 The World Church family gathers in larger groupings

sometimes according to geography, sometimes according to church tradition, in order to identify and carry out their particular common calling. Although these gatherings - for example, **Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, the Conference of European Churches, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council, the World Council of Churches** - may seem faceless structures

to those who never experience them, they consist of people on whose commitment and enthusiasm and openness to other perspectives much depends. If the World Church family is to witness to the reconciling power of the Gospel in a broken and warring world then people must meet and listen to one another, however difficult that might be – and then share those insights back home.

3.4.1 For example, six United Reformed Church people attended **the Seventh International Consultation of United and Uniting Churches** in September 2002 in the Netherlands - all in different capacities. One was the official representative of the United Reformed Church, one a member of the planning group, one a keynote speaker, one presenting a case study, one leading a Bible study and one representing the Welsh Commission of Covenanting Churches. Out of that face to face meeting with people from churches in every continent which had united or were trying to unite for a variety of reasons, came important questions (based on some challenging encounters!) which touch our life as the United Reformed Church: Are we better able, as a united church, to address the issues which divide the human family? While pursuing unity at home, do we perpetuate or even encourage disunity abroad by the way we practise partnership in mission? Do we cherish the streams of tradition which formed us, so that we do not just become another denomination but a church on the way to a greater unity we cannot yet see?

3.5 **Relationships, especially beyond the local, are particularly vulnerable in times of financial pressure.** The United Reformed Church has, in the past, contributed to the UK ecumenical bodies out of proportion to its size. The committee, with much regret, took the opportunity of a revised formula for the member churches' contributions and decided to offer only the required minimum. At its January 2003 meeting, it agreed to make further cuts in the 2004 budget by freezing, for a year, grants to various other ecumenical pieces of work and bodies.

3.6. **The Council for World Mission is our closest World Church family and the richest.** It has been using its new money creatively and generously, with an emphasis on mission, on ecumenical working, and on devolving initiative to its regions. It is through CWM money that the United Reformed Church has been able to develop its multi-cultural, multi-racial ministry and to support some exciting local mission projects identified by Mission Council's Advisory Group on Grants and Loans. CWM money has made it possible to appoint a full-time European Region Mission Enabler, Ms Francis Brienens. But CWM is about much more than money. Our relationships within that family are being continually strengthened by the sending and receiving of mission partners, by

the Assembly Moderators' visits, by synod exchanges and partnerships with particular churches, by the sharing of news through *Inside Out* and the CWM videos, and by regular praying for one another with the help of the *Prayer Handbook*.

3.7 The World Church family lives, as our ecumenical principle states, 'in a world which God loves' and so the political and economic context in which our partners live is of concern to us. Since September 11 2001 (a day on which the committee was meeting) **the committee has had the international situation on its agenda as never before**, with our understanding of global events being informed by the perspectives of partners around the world. In this, our relationships give us an intimacy with events that might otherwise seem distant and remote. Through Mission Council and General Assembly it has voiced the concern of the United Reformed Church about the Middle East and the prospect of war in Iraq. Letters of sympathy and solidarity have been sent to partner churches in the United States, Pakistan, India and the Middle East.

4 to persevere in the search for the visible and organic unity of the Church.....

4.1 **This principle has been tested and challenged in various ways in all three nations** over the past two years. What has become clear is that there are different ways to unity, different understandings of the nature of unity, different understandings of the nature of the Church, and we, as a united church committed to the unity of all God's people, need to be prepared, with integrity and consistency, to explore different paths with different partners. That requires us to be rigorous in our theological work and honest about the theological breadth of our church. As we develop creative relationships with a variety of partner churches within the body of Christ, so we strengthen our capacity to develop more creative relationships between those of a different theological standpoint within our own church.

4.2 **The proposed covenant between the Church of England and the Methodist Church**, and the report of the trilateral informal conversations involving the United Reformed Church have had a prominent place on all the agendas of the committee over the past two years. The fruit of that work is to be found in the supporting statement to the committee's resolution on this matter (see page 64).

4.3 The committee shared the National Synod of Wales' deep disappointment at **the failure**, through lack of a sufficient majority in the Church in Wales' vote, **of the proposal for an Ecumenical Bishop in Wales**. It could perhaps be seen as a structural proposal which did not have enough of

a relational basis. However, as with the proposed English covenant, the process has shaken up the ecumenical movement and is now challenging the Welsh churches to consider how real is their ecumenical commitment and with which partners it might be possible, at present, to move on.

4.4 The committee has also followed closely **the Scottish Church Initiative for Union (SCIFU)**. (see resolution 2 page 14 from the National Synod of Scotland.) It ambitiously offers a Basis and Plan for Union at a time when covenants seem to be in and structural unions are not. However, it is an imaginative proposal, rooted in a concern for shared mission in the community, and it allows for considerable diversity in local church life.

4.5 The search for the full unity of the Church requires us not only to develop ecumenical relationships, but also together as churches to dig ever deeper into the meaning of the Gospel and the nature of God and therefore the nature of the Church. This is slow, painstaking work which may, in time, call us to radical change.

4.6 In November 2001 **Churches Together in Britain and Ireland held a thought-provoking consultation on 'Ways to Unity'** at which the United Reformed Church was well represented. The traditional starting point of 'our common baptism' was strongly challenged. Member churches are now being asked to reflect on how they 'incorporate' people into the Church and what they believe is the role of the Holy Spirit in the process.

4.7 **What does being Reformed mean today?** That was a question addressed at a consultation at the Windermere Centre in December 2001 of representatives from the Church of Scotland, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Presbyterian Church of Wales and the United Reformed Church. Do the 'free churches' in England have a future as an ecumenical grouping distinct from Churches Together in England? That is the question being addressed at present by the churches of the Free Churches Group within Churches Together in England.

4.8 Addressing these questions at some depth is part of the search for the full unity of the Church. Discussing at some depth the answers to Jesus' question 'Who do you say that I am?' given on the CWM video of that name, is also part of that search.

5 Thanks, farewell and welcome

5.1 One of the stated tasks of this committee is 'listening to those with experience of the World Church, including other Christian traditions in Britain and Ireland.' The committee has benefited from

the presence, annually, of Revd Elizabeth Nash, the present Moderator of the Department for Cooperation and Witness of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and Revd Jill Thornton, a new 'younger member' of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches. It has also greatly valued the insights and contributions to discussion of Revd Colin McClure from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Revd Peter Sulston from the Methodist Church and Mrs Elizabeth Fisher from the Church of England.

5.2 After ten years as Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, we say farewell to Revd Sheila Maxey, who is retiring at the end of July. Not only has Sheila's contribution to the development of the ecumenical life of the United Reformed Church been enormous, but she has become a highly regarded figure in the ecumenical scene across the nations; for example, through her work as Moderator of the Church Life Liaison Group of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) and as a member of the Scottish Church Initiative For Union (SCIFU). Sheila's constant commitment to the highest standards of good practice and her fundamental belief in the importance of relationships, ensure that the work she has been doing

(for example, in building up the Ecumenical Officers' network, fostering the development of single ethnic congregations, facilitating collaboration with Doctrine, Prayer & Worship on issues of faith and order and many other things) will endure. We wish her a long, happy, healthy (and busy-doing-ecumenical-things) retirement.

5.3 We welcome Revd Richard Mortimer, as the newly appointed Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith & Order. (The addition of 'Faith & Order' to the job title indicates that the post, building on the work of the previous Secretary, now includes a particular emphasis on this area). Richard is admirably qualified for the work, having had a wide range of ecumenical experience at both local and wider levels, and having formerly served as a member of the Ecumenical Committee. His theological knowledge, insightful mind, personable character, thorough working methods and passionate commitment to the ecumenical journey are recognised by our ecumenical partners as well as ourselves, and they join us in looking forward eagerly to working with Richard in the years ahead.

Resolution 18

Anglican Methodist Covenant

General Assembly

- a) **gives thanks to God for the proposal of an Anglican Methodist Covenant** as a significant move towards the Christian unity for which we pray – and to which we, as a united and uniting church are committed in our Basis of Union - and as a strengthening of God's mission to the world through the co-operation it encourages.
- b) rejoicing in the stated commitment of the Church of England, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church to the unity of the Church of Christ, **instructs the Ecumenical Committee to explore** with these two churches (but with an openness to other partners) what further steps would be necessary to form a covenantal relationship or relationships between or among these churches.
- c) **gives thanks to God for *Conversations on the Way to Unity***, the report of the tri-lateral informal conversations between the three churches – for the common ground it uncovers, for its honest exploration of difference within the one body of Christ and for the dedicated service of those who represented the United Reformed Church – Revd Robert Andrews, Revd John Waller, Revd Elizabeth Welch and Revd Sheila Maxey.
- d) **affirms the agenda for further work** on this ecumenical journey with these partners as set out in paragraph 73 of *Conversations on the Way to Unity*:
 - the relationship between how we understand the nature of the Church and our understanding of the nature of and path to Christian unity
 - the relationship between personal and conciliar oversight and authority in the life of the church, locally and more widely
 - our understandings of ordination and authorisation of the whole range of ministries
 - the relationship between and understanding of baptism and membership
 and **adds**, as a matter of priority, from the riches of our traditions and for the sake of the mission of the Church, the question of how ministry is (and may be) exercised through persons and councils, locally and more widely, **by the whole people of God**; and how such ministry is to be recognised within a covenantal relationship.
- e) mindful that all ministries in the United Reformed Church are open to both men and women (Basis of Union para 25) and that “the United Reformed Church declares that the Lord Jesus Christ, the only ruler and head of the Church, has therein appointed a government distinct from civil government and in things spiritual not subordinate thereto” (Basis of Union Schedule D.8), requires the **Ecumenical Committee** in any future conversations to keep before the Church of England our concerns about its present limits to women's ministry and our difficulties with its present established position.

1.1 The Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church (1972, 1981 and 2000) states that “as a united church (we) will take, wherever possible and with all speed, further steps towards the unity of all God’s people.” The 2001 General Assembly re-stated that commitment in 21st century terms by adopting *Three Ecumenical Principles for a Missionary Church in Today’s World*. In those principles the breadth of our commitment to “the unity of all God’s people” was set out – ranging from a continuing commitment to work towards the visible and organic unity of the Church to expanding the range of our local Christian partnerships in mission and service; from welcoming Christians from many cultures into our local churches and being changed by them to developing our world church partnerships in mission. It is in the context of this broad commitment to unity in mission that we are called to explore each new challenge to be faithful to our calling to seek “the unity of all God’s people.”

1.2 From our experience of uniting we have two main insights to share, which we believe to be a matter of ‘gospel’ and not just ‘good practice’. Firstly, one test of the faithfulness of a unity proposal to God’s purposes lies in the way the smaller partner is listened to and considered. Secondly, there is a fruitful tension between unity and diversity in all such proposals which must be held and not resolved – unity not uniformity is the goal.

1.3 We are a church in three nations and in each the ecumenical opportunities and challenges are different. However, just as the whole United Reformed Church has been concerned with the proposals for an Ecumenical Bishop in Wales and with the Scottish Church Initiative for Union, while allowing the views of the two national synods to carry great weight, so this resolution, although applying to England, is of concern to the whole Church.

1.4 The English church scene is noted internationally for its many Local Ecumenical Partnerships and the United Reformed Church, the Methodist Church and the Church of England are the major players in them. In 1995 the Church of England and the Methodist Church began, informally at first and then formally from 1998, to seek a more formal relationship which would facilitate their shared

mission locally and at diocesan and national levels. We were invited, along with other partners, to appoint ecumenical participants to those talks and Revd Dr David Thompson and Revd Sheila Maxey served in that capacity. Because of the United Reformed Church’s close involvement with both churches in Local Ecumenical Partnerships of all kinds, trilateral informal conversations were also set up to run alongside the formal conversations. The reports of both sets of conversations were received at General Assembly 2002 and Assembly commended both for study and response throughout the church.

1.5 The Ecumenical Committee and the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee, advised by the Advisory Group on Faith and Order, considered the two reports. They came to the conclusion that this was not the time for a detailed critique of either the covenant proposal or the trilateral report. Rather it was the time to consider them as a whole in the light of our broad-based ecumenical commitment, the urgent missionary task and the reality of local ecumenical life. This meant listening to the whole United Reformed Church.

1.6 The Ecumenical Committee arranged for every local church, district council and synod to receive material to enable it to express a view on whether the United Reformed Church should, if invited, be party to this or a similar covenant and whether, if so, there were treasured aspects of our tradition or perhaps problematic aspects of our partners’ traditions which should form part of the exploratory process. Over 100 local churches, 16 district councils and every synod responded. The thoughtfulness and perceptiveness of the responses is a tribute to the life and health of our church meetings and elders’ meetings and other councils. In some cases, especially in the synod meetings, ecumenical partners took part in or enabled the discussion. The resolutions above reflect, in general and majority terms, the tenor of the responses. It was reassuring to discover that most of the concerns raised fell within the list of ‘further work’ already to be found in the trilateral report, *Conversations on the Way to Unity*.

Resolution 19

Belonging to the World Church

The General Assembly receiving the report of the Ecumenical Committee on the *Belonging to the World Church* programme

- a) welcomes what has been achieved and encourages the committee to continue to develop the programme, and
- b) encourages more people to make use of the opportunities it offers to experience and learn from the world church and so enrich the life and witness of the United Reformed Church.

In 1998 the General Assembly adopted the *Belonging to the World Church* programme with the following resolution:

This Assembly receives the Belonging to the World Church programme proposals and encourages the Ecumenical Committee to implement them.

The report setting out the details of the *Belonging to the World Church* programme envisaged that the first pilot programmes would be up and running in 1999/2000. However, unforeseen difficulties in the early stages of implementation meant that no significant developments occurred until 2001, when Dale Rominger took up the post of International Relations Programme Officer.

At a point now when most aspects of the programme, as modified by the Ecumenical Committee in its review in January 2001, are up and running (see below) the Ecumenical Committee felt it right to take stock of what the programme set out to do and what it is achieving and to provide a report to the General Assembly.

The central objective of the programme was:

To raise our awareness of the world church so that we might

- *Stretch the imagination and vision of people in the United Reformed Church by exposing them to churches whose life and circumstances whilst markedly different from ours, offer much to be learned about being the church engaged in God's mission today*
- *Take seriously the global challenges facing us and find ways of responding together as Christians called to care for God's world.*

To do this our international relations staff has developed opportunities and programmes on a mutual reciprocal basis with our partner churches around the world as follows (using the headings from the original report):

1. Initial ministerial training
 - Group Exchange Programme opportunities with the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, the Presbyterian Reformed Church in Cuba, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana.
 - Grants of up to £1,500 per person for individual programmes that meet certain criteria and are arranged through consultation with the college/training course, and the International Relations Office.
2. Global Partners
 - Enabling synods to develop exchange programmes with partner churches outside of Europe.
 - With the *Commitment for Life* programme bringing *Commitment for Life* partners here to share their stories and experiences with United Reformed Church congregations and councils and assisting with United Reformed Church exposure visits to *Commitment for Life* partners.
3. Continuing Ministerial Education
 - Programme opportunities for new Assembly appointees (committee conveners and staff) with the Presbyterian Reformed Church in Cuba and the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan
 - Programme opportunities for ministers and lay people ministering in multi-ethnic situations to learn about the cultures and traditions of particular ethnic groups with the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana and the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands.
 - Grants of up to £1000 no more than once every five years for ministers and Church Related Community Workers over and above their usual CME grants for the international-related costs (i.e. travel, etc.) of an overseas CME event/experience.
 - Development of the (ecumenical) International Ministry Exchanges programme to enhance the range of opportunities and the CME content of the programme.

Resolution 19

4. Lay training Opportunities
 - Provision of funding, advice and assistance with travel arrangements for international lay training initiatives/opportunities.
 - Promotion, grant assistance and increased take-up of opportunities through the World Exchange volunteer programme.
5. Opportunities for Young People and Children
 - Participation in the international *Bridge Project*.
 - Provision of international travel opportunity for the FURY Chairperson (akin to the opportunities offered to the Moderator of General Assembly).
 - Promotion of and funding assistance with international opportunities for young people.
6. Research Fellowships
 - Funding and support for the Woodlands Project in conjunction with Northern College and North Western Synod.
7. Scholarship Programme
 - Improved use of placements for scholarship holders with United Reformed Church congregations.
 - Refocusing of the programme to better meet the needs of our partner churches.
8. World Convention of the Churches of Christ
 - Promotion of this opportunity to share in a large (several thousand strong) gathering of Christians from around the world when it meets in Brighton, 28 July – 1 August 2004, co-hosted by ourselves and the Fellowship of the Churches of Christ.

Over 100 people a year from the United Reformed Church are directly supported through the programme, giving them an experience of the life and witness of our overseas partner churches in their context. Many hundreds more here in Great Britain have an opportunity to meet and share with our overseas partners who are visiting us to share their stories and experiences within the life of our congregations and councils.

Those who have experienced the programme are excited by its benefits as they find themselves envisioning how the church could find new ways of living out God's mission in their context, or begin to make connections with people in another part of the world and through their eyes see the international issues and challenges facing us today in ways which make fresh sense, leading them to discover new responses.

Not surprisingly with a programme as ambitious and as complex as this there have been problems. In particular we have discovered that patience is a virtue and a necessity when piecing together international programmes and exchanges, and that personal contact makes all the difference, building trust and confidence with churches who are not always used to being treated as equal partners.

At its meeting in January 2003 the Ecumenical Committee adopted a number of minor modifications to this programme and to a range of other international programmes, bringing these programmes into the framework of *Belonging to the World Church*, effecting some savings both of funds and staff time. In particular it resolved to end the Research Fellowships programme, as it had not developed as expected (that is with a significant world church component). However, the committee continues to work with colleges and synods attempting to secure funds for such initiatives from other sources. It also resolved to integrate the (1996) European partnerships policy with the Global Partners programme to enable a better overview of all such activity and a streamlining of the funding sources.

The *Belonging to the World Church* programme (excluding the scholarship programme which already existed, but which has been incorporated into the *Belonging to the World Church* framework) costs around £170,000 a year (including staff costs). This has been funded by drawing down on the World Church and Mission Unexpended Income Fund and so to date it has not been a charge on the Mission and Ministry fund. A time will come, however, in the not too distant future, when a decision will need to be taken on whether this programme should be funded from the main budget of the church. In the meantime the Ecumenical Committee proposes to continue the development of the programme, believing that it is enhancing the United Reformed Church's life and witness both here in Great Britain and overseas and that it is meeting its central objective:

To raise our awareness of the world church so that we might

- *Stretch the imagination and vision of people in the United Reformed Church by exposing them to churches whose life and circumstances whilst markedly different from ours, offer much to be learned about being the church engaged in God's mission today*
- *Take seriously the global challenges facing us and find ways of responding together as Christians called to care for God's world.*

Resolution 20**International Situation**

The Ecumenical Committee in consultation with the officers of the Church and Society Committee will bring a resolution on the international situation in the light of current events at the time of the Assembly.

1.1 In the past year Mission Council has responded to international events issuing statements on behalf of the church in the light of unfolding events, particularly in respect of the Middle East. We have also worked collaboratively to bring our concerns to the attention of the government and others. In particular the Moderator of the General Assembly, John Waller, participated in a joint United States and British church leaders delegation to meet with the Prime Minister in mid-February. Later in the same month, during a consultation with our partner the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, he was able to brief Christian and Muslim leaders in the

Middle East on the actions of British and American churches to oppose the use of war as a mechanism to rid Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction. In March, the Secretary for International Relations shared in a 'webchat' initiated by the Presbyterian Church (USA) on the threat of war with Iraq, enabling a number of churches around the world to share their concerns and answer viewers' questions before an audience of Internet users.

1.2 Depending on events at the time Assembly may wish to make further comment or commend other actions.

International Exchange Sub-Committee

The International Exchange Sub Committee is responsible for the selection, training and caring of mission partners for service here and overseas, and for overseeing the exchange of personnel, including the World Exchange volunteer programme.

Committee Members

Convenor: Revd John Crocker (until December 2002)

Revd Chris Baillie (since January 2003)

Staff Secretaries: Revd Philip Woods – Secretary for International Relations

Revd Sheila Maxey – Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

Revd John Rees (Convenor, Ecumenical Committee), Mr Peter Bryant*, Revd Keith Riglin*, Revd Gwen Collins, Revd Peter Brain*, Revd Birgit Ewald, and since Assembly 2002 Revd Nigel Uden and Mrs Heather Barnes.

* Members until Assembly 2002

1 Introduction

1.1 The major pre-occupation of the International Exchange Sub-Committee over the last two years has been the revising of the guidelines for the sending and receiving mission partner programmes. Although our practice had been adapted in the light of experience, this was the first rewriting of the guidelines in ten years and now gives us, prospective mission partners and receiving situations a most comprehensive 'handbook' to aid us as we share people in mission with our partners both within the Council for World Mission (CWM) and beyond. In undertaking this we involved the Personnel Resources staff of CWM and one month after we finalised our guidelines they too launched a revised edition of their 'Sharing People in Mission' handbook.

1.2 The new Guidelines have been produced in a format that enables easy updating, as our experience is that they are a work in progress, with regular changes called for as practice changes both within the United Reformed Church, our overseas partners and CWM. Nonetheless to have rethought the whole package has been a valuable exercise and deepened our appreciation of all that is involved of so many people in so many places in these valuable exchanges of personnel between churches.

1.3 At the same time the committee has also codified its grants policies and incorporated them within the *Belonging to the World Church* programme to produce a more coherent system for supporting international exchange within the life of the United Reformed Church.

1.4 All of which makes us sound rather bureaucratic, which is far from the truth, as our meetings centre around the experiences of the people we are sending and receiving as mission partners, or who are otherwise engaged in international exchanges.

2 Sharing People in Mission Overseas

2.1 Since our last report Mary and Paul Thomas, along with their children, Peter and Helen, have taken up their appointments with the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. Mary is serving as a tutor with the ITLD programme and Paul as a Maths teacher in a church school.

2.2 In the same period Elspeth and Ewan Harley completed their short-term appointment with the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa and Jane Stranz moved from pastoral ministry with the Reformed Church of France to take up an appointment with the World Council of Church translation service.

2.3 Continuing in overseas service are Stephen and Hardy Wilkinson working with the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM) and Alison Gibbs with the United Church of Zambia. All three are our longest serving mission partners with the Wilkinsons having served thirty-one years and Alison Gibbs nineteen.

2.4 What these barest of details fail to tell you is the stories our mission partners have to share about serving God in sickness and health, facing natural disasters, or virtual civil war, or economic crises, all the time working cross-culturally and for most whilst thousands of miles away from home and the families and friends that are dear to them. Neither do they tell of the rich blessings that they have received from sharing in the life of another country and all that they have gained from the new friendships that they have made in the settings they find themselves. Of course its not all challenge or blessing, with the daily reality being much more mundane. Nonetheless there is still something a little different about service overseas and with our partner churches we join in giving thanks for the service that these individuals offer in the service of God's global mission today.

3 Sharing People in Mission from Overseas in Great Britain

3.1 Likewise for those mission partners we receive here. The life of the United Reformed Church and, in many cases, its ecumenical partners continues to be enriched and challenged by mission partners from beyond Europe. Their work takes many forms and we have much to thank them for. At this Assembly, Mrs Jasmine Jebakani from the Church of South India finishes four years as a theological educator on the Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme, an ecumenical non-residential training course based in Salisbury. She is an Old Testament teacher, and has also brought Indian and feminist perspectives to her work. She has been accompanied by her husband, Jacob and her sons, Jachin and Jonathan.

3.2 Also at this Assembly, Revd Francis Amenu from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana will end his four years of service to the Ghanaian community in the London area both within and beyond the United Reformed Church. He has worked to build bridges of understanding between different groups and cultures and denominations, not only within the Ghanaian community. He has been accompanied by his wife, Gertrude, and their four teenage (and older) children – Christabel, Ethel, Mark and Lucille. He will be succeeded by Revd Godwin Odonkor from the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, who will be accompanied by his wife, Paulina, and their little boy, Tsui.

3.3 Mr David Jonathan, from the Church of North India, is in his second year as an inter-faith worker in Luton. He works through an ecumenical organisation called Grassroots and is focusing on building bridges of trust and personal experience between church people (in particular from the United Reformed Church) and people from the other faith communities. He is accompanied by his wife, Anjana and their little daughter, Muskaan.

3.4 Revd Chang, Jen-Ho, from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, is completing his first year as a chaplain to Taiwanese students in Manchester. His brief also includes a bridge-building element – helping Taiwanese Christians to relate to British churches and British churches to learn how to welcome and learn from Christians from other cultures who are strangers in our midst. He is accompanied by his wife, Hsui Wen, and their young son, Yueh Shuo.

3.5 Revd Henry Iputau, from the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa, arrived in January to assist Princes Street United Reformed Church, Norwich in its mission in the community. He is accompanied by his wife, Maressa.

3.6 Two young volunteers from CWM partner churches have joined the Yardley Hastings team: Tedy Nkowane, from the United Church of Zambia and Nozipho Mpofu from the Zimbabwe Synod of the Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa. Llanfair, the church in Penrhys in South Wales has continued its partnership with the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar through Tiana Raharisoa who has spent a year there.

3.7 Support, review and reflection. The committee continues to ensure that the mission partners are well supported, that their position is reviewed after one year and that there is serious reflection on the experience towards the end of the four years. The committee has also introduced a system of post-service review two or three years after the mission partner has returned home. The committee believes that reflection by United Reformed Church people on the experience adds considerably to its value. Following our now usual practice with the Ghanaian ministry, a major review (held once every four years), involving the leadership of the two partner churches in Ghana, took place in May 2002.

4 World Exchange

4.1 During the last two years more people have availed themselves of the opportunities offered by this ecumenical volunteer programme, with the following taking up placements:

Helene McLeod, Guatemala, 2001
Emma Dones, Malawi, 2001/2002
Nora Harbour, Malawi, 2002/2003
Ron Harbour, Malawi, 2002/2003
Sandra Fox, Malawi, 2003
Nicolas Morrice, India, 2003

4.2 World Exchange continues to develop its work in other areas through the creative use of its base in Edinburgh, St Colm's International House, where amongst other things, working with World Exchange we deliver our English language scholarship programme.

4.3 In April Philip Woods (Secretary for International Relations) completed his term as Chairperson of World Exchange, but will continue to remain on the World Exchange Board as our representative.

5 International Ministry Exchanges

5.1 This international ecumenical programme enabling exchanges between church professionals has developed substantially in the last year following its partnership with the Council for World Mission to promote more North-South exchanges. Although still

predominately assisting exchanges between Great Britain and North America it has also assisted United Reformed Church ministers to enter into exchanges with ministers in India. Alongside this the programme now emphasises developing these exchanges as continuing ministerial education opportunities with participating ministers being encouraged to identify aspects of church life they wish to focus on and learn more about in another context.

5.2 Unfortunately the programme faces a major challenge in raising the funds it requires to sustain this expanded programme. However, much work is being put into this, especially by our partners in the USA. In October a meeting will be held of all the partner churches and agencies to review recent developments and consider the long term funding of the programme.

6 Scholarship Programme

6.1 During this last period the Scholarship Programme has been substantially reorganised in response to the expressed needs of the partner churches that have been its beneficiaries.

6.2 In particular, following a request from the Igreja Evangelica Reformada d'Angola to fund training programmes in Angola rather than bring people to the UK we have completely revised the programme with all our African partners following in-depth consultation with all of them. Thus, instead of bringing two people a year per partner church to the UK at a cost of around £7,500 we are funding a range of locally delivered education and training opportunities to a similar value and standard but which benefit between 60 and 120 people a year per partner church depending on the country.

6.3 Following the same principle we have also adapted our joint programme with the Romans 1:11 Trust, so that in this round we will together be supporting the training of pastors in the rapidly expanding Reformed Presbyterian Church in Uganda.

6.4 Alongside this the English language programme has continued to develop and we now offer once a year an opportunity for around 14 people from selected partner churches to come here and participate in an intensive English language training programme for church workers, which is followed by a placement in a United Reformed Church congregation and then a concluding get together for the participants in London, with an introduction to the wider work of the United Reformed Church.

6.5 To enable all this we have had to curtail the one-year postgraduate scholarships, but again this decision was reached in consultation with our partners whose preference is for the developments outlined above.

7 People

7.1 The committee is well served by its members who have to undertake many more tasks and assignments over and above attending its meetings. Conveners in particular can find themselves called upon to undertake some of the more difficult issues and we have been grateful for John Crocker whose commitment to our work has served us well. We welcome John's successor, Chris Baillie, and look forward to the gifts and insights he will bring to our work.

7.2 With the close of this Assembly more wide-ranging changes take effect as Sheila Maxey retires from her position, where she has done so much to develop the receiving mission partners programme (which forms the bulk of the committee's work). She will be much missed for her thoughtful creative insights and the pastoral care with which she has exercised this particular ministry. In her place we will welcome Katalina Tahaafe-Williams (Secretary for Racial Justice) recognising that the receiving mission partner posts are substantially connected to the ongoing development of multi-cultural ministry and learning in the life of the United Reformed Church.

Finance

The Committee is responsible for the general financial oversight of funds administered for the benefit of the United Reformed Church under the overall authority of the General Assembly, for ensuring that proper procedures are in place for the maintenance of accounting records, the safe custody of assets and the preparation of financial statements, for giving financial advice to other councils of the church as appropriate, and for taking such decisions with regard to the finances of the Church as are necessary within the policies set by General Assembly.

Committee Members

Convener: Mr Graham Stacy (Hon. Treasurer – until 31.12.02)

Mr Eric Chilton (Hon. Treasurer – from 01.01.03)

Secretary: Ms Avis Reaney (Financial Secretary)

Mrs Alison Holt, Mr Gordon Latham, Revd John Piper, Miss Muriel Proven, Mr John Rowatt,
Dr Brian Woodhall (Convener, United Reformed Church Trust) and Mr John Woodman.

1 Personalia

1.1 On 31st December 2002, Graham Stacy retired as Honorary Treasurer after 6 years. Graham has made an outstanding contribution to the life of the Church. He has overseen the improvement of much of the work undertaken by the Finance Office at Church House and has also streamlined the way our accounts are presented to General Assembly. He has been a strong advocate for change in the way we operate generally in the Church and has

been influential in the many committees in which he has served at Church House. He will be sorely missed. We wish to record our grateful thanks on behalf of the whole Church for all he has done for us.

1.2 This year the Committee also bids farewell to Gordon Latham and John Piper whose terms of office are completed at this General Assembly. We thank them both for their valuable contribution to the work of the Committee.

Resolution 21

Accounts

General Assembly adopts the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2002.

1 2002 Accounts

1.1 The 2002 accounts are set out in Appendix 6 and include a report from the Finance Committee commenting on the result for the year and the financial position as at 31 December 2002.

Resolution 22

Ministry and Mission Fund

General Assembly gratefully acknowledges the giving of the churches in 2002 to the Ministry and Mission Fund and the work of the local church, district and synod treasurers.

1 The giving of the members of the Church to central funds

1.1 The financial operation of the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration could not happen if each Church Treasurer did not make very great efforts to ensure that the money required for this part of the work is in the local bank account on 20th of each month, for collection by direct debit.

1.2 That this system runs very smoothly is evidence of much hard and devoted work, and in thanking the Church for the response to the appeal for Ministry and Mission, the committee would also wish to acknowledge that largely unthanked group, the treasurers, in local churches, and also at district and synod level.

Inter-Faith Relations

The task of the committee is:

- To encourage and assist the churches in inter-faith situations.
- To affirm and support individuals involved in inter-faith dialogue on behalf of the church.
- To engage in direct contact with people of other faiths, particularly through our advisers on dialogue with Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and New Religious Movements.
- To develop theological understanding of inter-faith dialogue and mission.
- To keep abreast with what is happening in the teaching about other faiths in schools and colleges.

Committee Members

Convenor: Mrs Daphne Beale

Secretary: Revd Sally Thomas

Mr Matthew Bean, Revd Alistair Ellefsen-Jones, Miss Marie Williams, Revd Peter Colwell

Advisers: Revd Jonathan Dean (Judaism), Revd Dr John Parry (Sikhism), Dr Elizabeth Harris (Buddhism),
Revd David Taylor (CAIRS), Revd Michael Ipgrave (CTBI)

Staff Link: Mrs Katalina Tahaafe-Williams (Secretary for Racial Justice)

1 The Aftermath of 11 September 2001

1.1 Assembly 2002 asked us to make available further information on questions to do with the nature of Islam with specific reference to the concept of Jihad. This we have done and is the subject of a resolution.

1.2 We have been aware that there has been a rise in the level of abuse against Muslims in particular in the rest of Europe as well as in this country. This has been of great concern and we need to keep aware of the dangers this can bring to society, especially when so much fear of terrorism is being generated by governments. There has also been a rise in anti-Semitism. In all this we need to be very careful to distinguish between the acts of governments and the faith they profess.

1.3 The rise in fear of terrorism has allowed repressive measures to be introduced in many countries, including our own, which infringe human rights ideals. Much of this fear is linked with particular religions. Fear and persecution of Muslims in one part of the world can bring in its wake fear and persecution of Christians. Our committee has been mindful of all these concerns.

2 The Five Marks of Mission

2.1 Witness and Proclamation. Witness involves meeting and, if the meeting is to be fruitful, needs understanding and sensitivity. This is particularly true when meeting with someone of a faith other

than Christian. It is often easier to talk of faith with someone who has a deep faith of their own but there is a danger of comparing the best of our own religion with the worst of theirs. The new TLS course is designed to help members to cross faith boundaries with knowledge and respect.

2.2 Nurture. One of the roles of the committee is to nurture our members so that they can grow in their own faith as they meet those of another faith. We are grateful to all those who are helping in this, particularly the London Inter Faith Centre and the ecumenically produced journal "Inter Faith Exchange".

2.3 Service. Our service within our communities needs to be done ecumenically and this should include wherever practicable those of other faiths. Our faith is about healing and wholeness for communities as well for individuals and healing prejudice is part of that service.

2.4 Justice. We are called not only to counter prejudice but also to create a just society. For faiths to work together with mutual respect we must continue to work for world peace through political as well as humanitarian means and that will include defending the rights of asylum seekers.

2.5 Care for creation. Christians have traditionally been good at caring for people but less good at caring for the rest of God'

3 Dialogue

3.1 Guidelines for dialogue have been produced by many bodies including CTBI and the Inter Faith Network. A new publication from the World Council of Churches updates their previous guidelines and it is hoped that this will be a basis for reviewing the CTBI guidelines. Do make use of these guidelines, they give the principles as well as practical ideas which need to be borne in mind when meeting others.

3.2 Local dialogues. Our committee encourages you to engage in dialogue in your own local setting. We can give advice and even provide you with some of the resources you may need. We hope that your Synod Advocate for inter faith relations will also be able to help. It is vital for the health of our communities that such dialogue takes place.

4 Thank you

4.1 At the end of my period of office I would like to say thank you to the members of the committee and the advisors who have supported me and the work with so much time and expertise. I wish the new convenor well.

4.2 My thanks are due also to the United Reformed Church for seeing the importance of this work and encouraging us all in the doing of it.

4.3 Over the years we have been grateful for support and encouragement of our ecumenical partners and the Inter Faith Network for the UK.

4.4 Finally thanks to those of you who have ventured in faith on the path of dialogue. May you find blessings on the way.

Resolution 23**Inter-Faith Relations**

Assembly urges local churches, Districts and Synods to establish good relations with Muslims in the community and to enhance their understanding of the world of Islam and Muslim attitudes towards Christianity and the West.

Resolution 51 (f) and (g) from Assembly 2002 stated

'General Assembly encourages the Committee for Inter-Faith Relations to produce educational material which will be of assistance to congregations and individuals seeking to understand Islam and in particular what the Qur'an says about jihad and martyrdom; welcomes and encourages all initiatives by local congregations to build bridges with other faith communities which create space for understanding international events in a local cross-cultural context.'

In response to this the Inter-Faith Relations Committee has prepared both a short document on jihad and martyrdom and a fuller document for those who wish to look further into the background of these concepts. We urge you to read these papers.

The world situation is constantly changing but behind many of the conflicts are deep mis-understandings between the cultures and thought forms of the East and West and in particular between Islam and Christianity. We need to know each other better at all levels with respect rather than vilification. We shall find much that we share in common but respect does not imply that we should agree on all points. As we really begin to understand each other we can share our differences and may even be able to learn from each other.

We therefore encourage you to take heart as we journey together in faith.

Life and Witness

The purpose of the Life and Witness Committee is :

- to enable the local church to capture the vision of God's mission for itself and to plan its life accordingly;
- to encourage growth in faith among people of all ages;
- to challenge members in their stewardship and witness;
- to encourage the local church to engage with its community in evangelism, if possible ecumenically; to enable each church to engage with its local community in partnership and service; by gathering ideas and experience, including best practice, and advocating these to the local church; by monitoring and assessing relevant government policy and advising the local church accordingly;
- to support the work of elders and the work of the district councils in their oversight of the local church;
- to stimulate district councils and synods in the development of their own strategies for mission;
- to support the work of the Windermere Centre and of the Rural Officer/Consultant;
- to enable ongoing reflection on issues related to the Community of Women and Men in the Church.

Committee Members

Convenor: Revd Brian Jolly **Secretary:** Revd John Steele

Revs, Eddie Boon, Linda Elliott, Ken Forbes, Suzanne Hamnett, Angela Hughes, Peter Hurter, Bob Warwicker,

Mrs Jenny Carpenter, Mrs Alison Lowe, Mrs Sheila Thatcher, Mr Jim Wilkinson

Convenor of Stewardship Sub-Committee: Mr Keith Webster

1 People

1.1 Since the committee last reported to Assembly in 2001 it has been strengthened by the presence of Peter Hurter and Linda Elliott as new members, and by Brian Jolly as Convenor.

1.2 Frank Beattie resigned as Convenor of the committee at the end of 2001 and we thank him for his leadership. Elizabeth Kam and Peter Ball left us at the last Assembly, and at this Assembly we say farewell to Eddie Boon, Suzanne Hamnett, Sheila Thatcher and Bob Warwicker; we sincerely thank them all for their contributions to the work of Life & Witness.

1.3 We continue to be indebted to John Steele for all he does in his role as Secretary for Life and Witness, and have been pleased to learn recently that Mission Council has reappointed him for a further term of 3 years from September 2003.

2 The Windermere Centre

2.1 The new Director of the Windermere Centre, Lawrence Moore, began his work on 1st April 2002! Around the same time Mission Council commissioned the first ever review of the Windermere Centre. The findings of the review group are awaited, and will have been presented to Mission Council by the time Assembly arrives. Representatives of Life and Witness, and the Windermere Advisory Group, together with the new Director, met with the review group and shared their vision for the future of the Centre: to be a space

within the church to dream, to plan and develop life-in-mission and to be a catalyst and location for much of the strategic planning, thinking, training and spiritual development across the Church.

2.2 There is a new rolling programme aimed at developing the different aspects of life-in-mission: biblical and theological, worship and preaching, pastoral care and practice, a critical engagement with contemporary culture, ecumenical life and prayer and spirituality. The Centre is liaising with Assembly committees to offer events that promote and develop their work and disseminate mission theology and practice throughout the Church. The new programme also has a particular eye to the needs of ministers via the CME programme. A number of events focus on empowering the ministry and witness of lay people. Churches and groups continue to use the Centre to enrich and develop local life. Undergirding all of this is the conviction that life-in-mission is Spirit-life and cannot be sustained without a deepening and vibrant personal faith and spirituality.

2.3 The Centre now has a fully equipped conference room with digital projector and Smart Board. Chairs and beds have been replaced and facilities continue to be upgraded. There is an urgent need for the Centre to increase its en-suite accommodation, and several possibilities are being explored. There has been a positive re-appraisal of links between the Centre and Carver Memorial Church which share the same site, and it is hoped that enhanced co-operation may benefit both in the future.

3 Stewardship Advocacy

3.1 Following last year's narrow defeat of the Southern Synod resolution to establish one or more national stewardship advocacy posts, Life and Witness has been working to find another way to develop effective stewardship advocacy throughout the church's life. Consequently funding has been secured to provide for the training of stewardship advocates for each district and synod. These councils are being invited to send specially selected people - those who are willing to grasp the importance of stewardship advocacy and regard it as a ministry of encouragement and prayer - for a short intensive course at the Windermere Centre. Following training, advocates will become part of a network, facilitated and supported through the Stewardship Sub-Committee, through which they will share information, good practice and experience, and help make the connections between the mission needs of our church and available resources.

3.2 Two courses are already planned, for August 4th-7th and December 12th-14th and they will be repeated in following years. Funding will cover costs and accommodation; it is hoped that districts and synods will be able to contribute to a fares pool. Contact the Life & Witness Office for further details.

4 Church Membership resources

4.1 Towards the end of 2001 David Jenkins and his team began an initiative to create new materials for church membership, with a view to having them available from this Assembly.

4.2 From initial research a flexible approach seemed to be preferred to another 'rigid' programme. They are currently putting the finishing touches to a 'A Gift Box' – a variety of articles on basic faith themes from a wide spectrum of authors and presented in an easy to handle card-index format. 'A Gift Box' will be a versatile resource for individual and group study as well as in membership preparation, and will shortly be available.

5 Evangelists

5.1 The 2001 Assembly acknowledged the need to identify those in lay and ordained ministry who have the gift of evangelism, and directed the Life & Witness Committee to initiate work towards finding ways of releasing and supporting men and women to exercise ministry as evangelists. As a first step in this process the committee has, through the production and distribution of the booklet '*Growing Up to the Ministry of Evangelists*' undertaken a significant exercise of direct consultation across the church. Local churches, districts and synods were asked to respond to several questions and to share news about individuals in the

churches already engaged in ministry as evangelists. Now the information and comments received are being analysed and explored, and discussions with other committees of the church are underway in order that issues (for example, to do with assessment, training, accreditation) can be worked through before recommendations are brought to a future Assembly. It is critical that such preparatory work is thorough in order to lay sound foundations for the future ministry of evangelists within the United Reformed Church.

6 Community of Women and Men in the Church

6.1 With the aid of a substantial grant from the Council for World Mission a consultation was held at the Windermere Centre in September 2002 bringing together Synod, General Assembly Committee and women's organisation representatives with the core group of the Community of Women and Men in the Church.

6.2 This explored two issues. Firstly, sexual harassment and the strategy required to ensure that related good practice and guidelines are in place in all the councils of the church, from local church to General Assembly. It is hoped that an interdisciplinary working group will be established to take this work further. Secondly, priorities for future work. It was agreed that inclusive participation within our church life is vital; there was a hope that Equal Opportunities, Racial Justice and the Community of Women and Men in the Church would continue to work together to increase awareness of this issue and offer education so that opportunities for service are open to all.

6.3 Violence against women is an issue that is being covered by ecumenical bodies and other churches. The Community of Women and Men in the Church networks with many of these (eg the Churches Together in England Women's Co-ordinating Group). The United Reformed Church is responding to the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland report '*Time for Action – Sexual abuse, the Churches and a new dawn for survivors*'.

7 The Rural Officer/Consultant

7.1 Jenny Carpenter, in her joint United Reformed Church/Methodist role, is based with ecumenical colleagues at the Arthur Rank Centre in Warwickshire. She is available to churches and Synods for preaching and training events (she recently led a workshop at Fury Assembly on "We are what we eat!").

7.2 Jenny services the Churches Rural Group, a Co-ordinating Group of Churches Together in England, which recently commended a key Methodist paper 'What is an effective Christian presence?' It argues that an effective Christian presence in each village

depends on ecumenical approach and understanding, strategic planning in the deployment of ministry, whether lay or ordained, and Christians identifying fully with the well-being of their village. Northern Synod is tackling such issues ecumenically to ensure that ministry and mission are not further diluted in rural Northumberland.

7.3 The rural church is experiencing high regard, not least because of its stance with farmers and other rural people during the Foot and Mouth Disease crisis. Through administration of the ARC-Addington Fund, which made hardship grants of £10.3m it became clear that many rural businesses were crippled with debt and that many needed help in finding an appropriate exit strategy. The Fund's new role is to offer affordable alternative housing to country people enabling them to relocate with dignity whilst continuing to reside in and contribute to the well-being of their community.

7.4 The website (<http://www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk>) is being remodelled to offer a much wider range of resource materials, including seasonal worship material, farming briefings and articles. The thrice-yearly magazine *Country Way* gives useful insights on life and faith in the countryside.

7.5 Synods have recently been challenged to appoint a rural link person to alert the Synod to rural issues, to liaise with the Rural Officer/Consultant, and to represent the Synod at ecumenical gatherings of Rural Officers.

8 Mission Enablers Network

8.1 Life & Witness continues to facilitate and support the growing network of those involved with mission and evangelism enabling in the United Reformed Church. Currently there are some two dozen people regularly in touch and sharing experiences, ideas and good practice across the three nations, as well as in occasional residential meetings. Working patterns vary according to the needs and priorities of the Districts or Synods in which they work, but the network enables everyone to keep up to date with current mission thinking. Last year, they produced 'Out and About' a CD-ROM of tools and resources for use in local churches and communities, and material is already being gathered for a second edition.

9 Local Church Leadership

9.1 The 1998 Assembly encouraged synods and district councils in consultation with local churches to identify forms of local church leadership and to explore ways in which these may be recognised, affirmed and developed using Guidelines agreed by the Assembly. Over the past 18 months or so Life and Witness

has been pleased to facilitate two consultations in which representatives from synods met to share the ways in which local church leadership had been developed. Understandably synods have moved at different speeds, for a variety of reasons. Some have put a lot of resources into developing the concept and, with district councils, have progressed to identifying, training and commissioning local church leaders; others are exploring the concept tentatively. The consultations were valuable opportunities to exchange experience, ideas and reservations. The Life & Witness Committee will continue to monitor developments and facilitate further opportunities for sharing between synods as appropriate, and will report further to a future Assembly.

10 Holiday Forum

10.1 Since the last report, numbers at Holiday Forum, held at The Hayes, Swanwick, have increased with under 18's taking up almost a third of the places available. This year it may be necessary to refuse people, for the first time ever! It is good to note that we are attracting people who are ecumenical partners.

10.2 The Steering Group continues to try and vary the programme. This year there will be canoeing on The Hayes Lake and BMX biking for the over 12's, in addition to the usual activities for the youngsters, together with more traditional activities such as 'Songs of Praise', Bible Study, Discussion Groups, Forum Quiz Evening. All of these are knitted together by the daily services and theme talk- this year the theme leader is David Cornick, the worship being led by Paul Floe. Tom Bayliss leads the music.

10.3 In 2004 we look forward to Lawrence Moore as the Theme Leader, assisted by John Cox.

11 Literature

11.1 'Interim Moderators in the United Reformed Church'

This revised and updated booklet has only been produced recently and is already proving a useful resource for local churches and District Councils, as well as to those currently serving, or thinking about serving as Interim Moderators.

Available on the website (www.urc.org.uk) the Bookshop, or direct from the Life & Witness Office on receipt of an SAE (33p postage).

Stewardship Sub-Committee

Sub-Committee Members:

Convenor : Mr Keith Webster **Secretary :** Revd John Steele
Members : Mr Mick Barnes, Mr Frank Dale, Mrs H Anne Mitchell,
Mrs Sheila Yates and Revd David Legge

12 Introduction

12.1 The sub-committee has the aim of developing and promoting ways in which the church at all levels can exercise real stewardship of the gifts entrusted to it.

12.2 People

During the past year we have welcomed David Legge as a member of the sub-committee. At this General Assembly Frank Dale and Sheila Yates come to the end of their terms of service, and we take this opportunity to thank them for their contributions to the work of the sub-committee.

12.3 TRIO – The Responsibility Is Ours

There has been a continuing demand for the updated version of TRIO. It remains a very powerful means by which local churches can effectively focus on

basic financial stewardship matters and enable an increase in the overall level of direct giving. We continue to commend TRIO to the churches, together with the TRIO follow-up booklet.

12.4 'ACT' – Acclaim Christ Together

This new publication is a resource to help local churches develop their thinking about what might be required for a mission enterprise or initiative – the very thing for a church which might be sure of mission possibilities and opportunities surrounding it, but less sure about how to swing into action! ACT arises from 'Growing Up', in particular the practical consequences of the 5 Marks of Mission, and looks at stewardship in the widest sense with the aim of ensuring the most effective and efficient use of resources. It lays out processes and procedures and gives guidance on planning. ACT will soon be available, and we commend it to the churches.

Ministries Sub-Committee

Accreditation Sub-Committee

Sub-Committee Members

Convenor: Revd Kenneth Chippindale **Secretary:** Revd Christine Craven

Mr Peter Mann, Revd Roberta Rominger, Revd Keith Argyle, Mrs Sheila Telfer, Mrs Judith Booth

Roll of Ministers

1	Admissions to the Roll (from 1st April 2002 to 31st March 2003)	3	Changes within the Roll (from 1st April 2002 to 31st March 2003)
a)	By Ordination – Stipendiary: Dilys Brace, Connie Bonner, Helga Cornell, Jacky Embrey, Lynn Fowkes, Stella Hayton, Michael Hopkins, Timothy Jackson, Elisabeth Mullen, Nicholas Mark, Catherine Morrison; Colin Offor, Heather Pollard, Angela Steele, Michael Thomason, David Walton, Paula West, Heather Whyte	a)	Non-Stipendiary to Stipendiary: Philip Osborn
b)	By Ordination – Non-Stipendiary: Lorna Bantock, Jayne Bazeley, Jane Campbell, Peter Christie, Meryl Court, Anne Gray, Maria Hooper, Paul Jupp, Patricia Lloyd, Timothy Meachin, Maurene O'Hagan, Carole Pearl, Jennifer Simmons, Lynda Spokes, Erna Stevenson, Lena Talbot, Geoffrey Wright	4	Church Related Community Workers (from 1st April 2002 to 31st March 2003)
c)	By Transfer from other Churches: Samuel Cyuma (Presbyterian Church of Rwanda); Brian Hunt (Presbyterian Church in Ireland); Gareth Jones (Congregational Federation), A Leslie Milton (NSM) (Church of Scotland); Janos Nagy (Hungarian Reformed Church); Andrew Prasad (Church of North India); David Trafford (Baptist); Bruce Waldron (Uniting Church in Australia)	a)	By Commissioning: John Saunders, Lesley Whiting
2	Deletions from the Roll (from 1st April 2002 to 31st March 2003)	b)	Deletions (from 1st April 2002 to 31st March 2003)
a)	By Resignation and/or Transfer to other Churches: Francis Cattermole, Ian Croft (transferred back to Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand), David Hilborn (transferred to Church of England), Mia Hilborn (transferred to Church of England), Peter Roche, Michael Stolton (transferred to Church of England)		By Resignation: Allison Trimble
		5	Lay Preachers
			The following members have successfully completed their course of study and have been Nationally Accredited between 1st April 2002 and 31st March 2003.
			Northern Synod:- Alison Moodie, Raymond Tipping
			North Western Synod:- Andrew Checkley, Elizabeth Fletcher,
			Mersey Synod:- Peter Richards
			Yorkshire Synod:- Neil Robinson, Archibald Savage
			Eastern Synod:- Peter Watchorn
			Wessex Synod:- William Eaton
			Thames North Synod:- Michaela Lawrence
			Southern Synod:- Maureen Lawrence

Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee

Sub-Committee Members

Convenor: Mr Geoffrey W Wood **Secretary:** Mrs Judy Stockings
Honorary Treasurer: Mr Graham Stacy (to 31/12/2002) Mr Eric Chilton (from 01/01/2003)
Convener, Pensions Executive: Mr Victor Hugheff
Mrs Jill Strong, Revd Pauline Loosemore, Mr Barry Swift, Revd Roger Woodall

1 Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration

1.1 **The Plan.** Last year Assembly approved the updated and revised Plan. During the year other issues have been raised regarding the Plan. All the issues raised have been carefully considered but no changes to the Plan are recommended. The Plan is kept under constant review.

1.2 **National Manse Guidelines.** Assembly received the Report on Ministerial Remuneration in 1999 and this included (at para. 3.6) a proposal that National Guidelines be agreed with regard to the provision of manses. Synods have been widely consulted and the new proposed Appendix E is a result of those discussions.

2 Pensions – Church Related Community Workers

2.1 Resolution 34 at Assembly 2002 (recognising the ministry of CRCWs) was carried but in order for the constitutional amendment to proceed the decision requires ratification at Assembly 2003. Subject to ratification provision needs to be made for the inclusion of Church Related Community Workers as members of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund.

Resolution 24 Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration

General Assembly approves and adopts, as an addition to the Plan for Partnership, Appendix E:

APPENDIX E – NATIONAL MANSE GUIDELINES

1. Background

1.1 Review of Ministerial Remuneration

During the Review information was sought from Synods about their policies for manse provision. The conclusion was that it would benefit ministers and those responsible for providing manses if there were clear nationally agreed guidelines based on current best practices; recommending a list of benefits that should be included in such guidelines. This Appendix seeks to address that issue.

It should be stressed that having sought information from Synods, most do have guidelines. It also has to be recognised that in seeking to set guidelines it is important to offer some flexibility to take account of local circumstances. For example, it is felt that a garage should be provided and indeed that should be seen as a requirement. But it has to be recognised that this is not always a practical possibility.

Within that flexibility Synods should take care to ensure that standards are maintained when considering the provision of manse accommodation.

1.2 Plan for Partnership

A responsibility is placed upon District Councils (para. 6.3.1) – taking advice from Synod – to take note of the condition and facilities of the manse or, if alternative arrangements are to be made, should approve the details of the arrangement before concurring in Calls and regularly thereafter.

2. Process

2.1 Location

This will depend on many factors but churches may wish to seek a location so that the minister is within walking distance of the church; or one of the churches in the pastorate.

Resolution 24

A manse adjoining the church should be avoided in the exercise of pastoral care for the minister.

The purchase of a manse is a substantial investment and the church would be wise to consider locating in an area where property values might be expected to be maintained (or may appreciate). Consideration should be given to other factors e.g. proximity to schools and shops and availability of public transport.

2.2 Type and Structure

Care must be taken where an older property is considered to ensure that the costs of bringing the house up to a reasonable standard – and costs of further maintenance – are not excessive.

A full professional survey must be obtained prior to the purchase and this should be carefully assessed. It is important to give consideration to the condition of the roof, walls, gutters, wallplaster, glass, drainage, water supply, gas & electricity installations, ventilation and woodwork. Internal decoration may present less of a problem if the structure is sound. Poor external decoration may point to structural problems e.g. rotting woodwork and this should be looked at with great care.

Redecoration work may be relatively inexpensive – but to remedy structural defects can be very costly.

2.3 Standard

The manse is the minister's 'office' as well as being a home for the minister and his/her family. The Plan (para. 6.3.2) does seek to ensure that as far as possible the minister has use of a separate room as a study at the manse. The manse should be suitable for a wide range of ministers and their families – and this requirement for flexibility should be carefully considered when the manse is purchased. In the case of smaller modern properties care should be taken that there is adequate accommodation for interviews when the study itself is not large enough for that purpose. Churches should avoid as far as possible the need to change a manse each time a minister is called – although there may be circumstances when this may be necessary.

3. Requirements

3.1 Accommodation

This should include:-

Lounge
Dining Room (separate if possible)
Kitchen
Hall (large enough to provide for cloaks)
Study (downstairs is recommended)

Bedrooms: at least 3 good size rooms – 4 if possible
Bathroom and Toilet
Downstairs toilet is seen as essential
Garage and/or adequate parking
Grounds – paths, gate and fences in satisfactory repair, garden of manageable size.
Storage space

3.2 Facilities and equipment

The manse should have:-

Full Central Heating
Water heating system
Bathroom fitted with modern equipment including a shower
Kitchen of reasonable size with adequate space for larger electrical appliances
Double-Glazing is desirable
Adequate number of power sockets throughout the house
Telephone points – including the study
Security locks on external doors – and windows where possible
Smoke detectors
Curtain rails and light fittings in all rooms.

3.3 Heat conservation

It is important to have regard to heat conservation for economy purposes and for the comfort of the occupants. Give consideration then to e.g.

Roof insulation
Lagging of pipes and water cistern
Double glazing

4. On Going Responsibility

4.1 Maintenance

This is very important and an annual inspection should be undertaken to ensure provision is made for a programme of maintenance. This is for the benefit of the minister and his/her family and is also to ensure the value of the asset is protected. Synods should ensure there is a mechanism in place to monitor the way District and the local church exercise their responsibility for maintaining the property in good order. The church should identify who is to be responsible for ensuring the procedure for maintenance of the property is followed. It is normal practice for the church building to be surveyed on a regular basis, normally every 5 years. The manse should be included in such a review.

4.2 Services

Servicing of main appliances and boilers are essential.

4.3 Insurance

The property should be adequately insured at all times. Do check the insurance cover if the property is empty to ensure that all risks are fully covered.

1.1 The Report on Ministerial Remuneration received and endorsed by Assembly in 1999 said the Review Group 'concluded that it would benefit both ministers and those responsible for providing manses if there were clear, nationally agreed, guidelines based on current best practice.'

1.2 Consultation has taken place with all Synods, many of which have guidelines in place. Those guidelines vary little in substance and so setting National Guidelines will not greatly affect existing patterns within Synods but will bring together best practice.

1.3 The housing market varies widely across the United Reformed Church and so the guidelines include sufficient flexibility to be of practical application within individual Synods.

Resolution 25**Ministers' Pension Fund**

General Assembly amends the definitions of the Rules and the Rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund by the addition of the words in *italics* in the Rules shown:

Add a new Definition 27 to read

27. ***CRCW***

means any commissioned Church Related Community Worker.

Add a new rule 12.6 to read

12.6 *Commissioned Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs).*

Add a new rule 14.1.1.4 to read

14.1.1.4 *From 1 August 2002 any CRCW under the age of fifty five years at the date of commissioning to stipendiary service remunerated under the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration, may become a contributing member of the Fund. His/her contribution shall commence from the first day of the month following such commissioning.*

Amend Rule 14.1.2 to read

14.1.2 If a contributing member serving full-time reduces his/her commitment to that of part-time service whilst under normal pension age, the Pension Trustee may raise the Pensionable Service to the level applicable to a full-time minister or *CRCW* having regard to the length of any previous full-time service, to the age and health of the member, to the fraction of basic stipend being paid and to the purpose and pensionability of any other employment and shall in such cases allow full membership of the Pension Fund, contributions then being payable on the full basic stipend.

Amend the first paragraph of Rule 20 to read

20. **III-health Retirement**

In the event that a member retires before normal pension age on account of incapacity to undertake the duties of a stipendiary minister or *CRCW* due to ill-health duly certified to the satisfaction of the Pension Trustee, he/she shall be entitled to an immediate pension which shall be calculated as provided in Rule 18 but with the substitution of the date of retirement for the attainment of normal pension age provided always that when the period of pensionable service completed up to the date of retirement is less than twenty years, the amount of pension will be calculated on the basis of:

1.1 In 1987 General Assembly decided that Church Related Community Workers should be as fully integrated as possible. The development of the CRCW programme now requires further movement

to achieve this. The Resolution provides for the inclusion of CRCWs as members of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund.

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 synod moderators and Assembly appointed staff.

Committee Members

Convener: Revd Dr Stephen Orchard [2006]

Secretary: Revd Hazel Martell [2005]

Synod Representatives:

I Revd Terry Oakley	II Revd Ruth Woolaston	111 Mr Donald Swift	IV Mr John Seager
V Mrs Irene Wren	VI Mr Simon Rowntree	VII Revd Elizabeth Caswell	VIII Revd Roz Harrison
IX Mr Graham Rolfe	X Revd Clabon Allen	XI Mrs Christine Meekison	XII Dr Jean Sylvan-Evans
XIII Revd John Arthur with the Immediate Past Moderator and General Secretary.			

1. ASSEMBLY STAFF APPOINTMENTS

1.1 The Review Group convened by Mrs Ruth Clarke recommends the re-appointment of Revd Elizabeth Welch to serve as Moderator of West Midlands Synod for a further term of 5 years from 1st September 2003 to 31st August 2008.

1.2 The Review Group convened by Revd Elizabeth Nash recommends the re-appointment of Revd John Steele to the post of Secretary for Life & Witness for a further period of three years, from 1 October 2003 until 30 September 2006.

1.3 The Review Group convened by Revd Glyn Jenkins recommends the re-appointment of Mrs Karen Bulley to the post of Pilots Development Officer for a further period of three years from 1 October 2003 until 31 August 2006.

1.4 The Nominating Group for Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith & Order convened by Revd Elizabeth Welch recommends the appointment of Revd Richard John Mortimer for a period of five years, from 1 August 2003 until 31 July 2008.

1.5 The Nominating Group convened by Revd John Sutcliffe recommends the appointment of Revd Terry Oakley to serve as Moderator of East Midlands Synod for seven years from 1st October 2003 until 31st August 2010.

1.6 The Review Group convened by Dr Anthony Jeans recommends the re-appointment of the Revd Elizabeth June Caswell to serve as Moderator of the Eastern Synod for a further term of 5 years from 1st February 2002 until 31st January 2009.

1.7 The following groups have been appointed:
Nominating Group for Moderator of the Mersey
Synod Moderator Nominating Group:
Convener : Mr Simon Rowntree
Secretary for Youth Work Nominating Group :
Convener : The Peter Noble
Yardley Hastings Task Group:
Convener : Revd John Humphreys

2. ASSEMBLY COMMITTEES and Sub-COMMITTEES

Notes:

1. The Moderator, the Moderator-elect, the immediate past Moderator and the General Secretary are members *ex officio* of every Standing Committee.
2. Officers and members appointed since Assembly 2002 are indicated by one asterisk (*), two asterisks (**) denotes those whom Assembly 2003 is invited to appoint for the first time. (#) indicates a Convener Elect who will become Convener in 2004. (□) indicates a Secretary Elect who will become Secretary in 2004.
3. The date in brackets following the names indicates the date of retirement, assuming a full term.
4. Many committees have cross-representation [e.g. the Ecumenical Committee has representatives from Doctrine, Prayer & Worship, Church and Society, Youth and Children's Work etc.,] These are internal appointments and are not listed here.
5. In accordance with the decision of General Assembly 2000 some nominations have been made by the National Synods of Wales and Scotland.

2.1 ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS

Convener: Mr William McVey [2006]

Secretary: Office & Personnel Manager

Synod Representative for forthcoming Assembly

Synod Representative for previous Assembly who is then replaced after 'review' meeting by Synod Representative for Assembly two years hence.

Moderator, Moderator-elect, General Secretary, Clerk to Assembly

2.1.1 Tellers for Election of Moderator for 2005**

Mr Donald Swift [Convener], Dr Peter Clarke, another

2.2 CHURCH and SOCIETY

Convener: Revd Martin Camroux [2006]

Secretary: Secretary for Church and Society

Revd Alan Paterson [2005]

Revd Owiny Laber [2005]

Mr Geoffrey Duncan [2006]

Mr Simon Loveitt [2006]

Revd Tjarda Murray** [2007]

Mrs Glenna Paynter** [2007]

Miss Emma Pugh** [2007]

2.3 COMMUNICATIONS and EDITORIAL

Convener: Revd Martin Hazell **[2007]

Secretary: Secretary for Communications

Revd Peter Moth [2004]

Miss Elizabeth Bruce [2004]

Mrs Melanie Frew [2004]

Revd Bob Maitland [2005]

Mr Peter Knowles [2005]

Revd Martin Truscott [2005]

Ms Eleri Evans [2005]

Mr Philip George [2006]

Revd Martin Whiffen **[2007]

2.4 DOCTRINE, PRAYER and WORSHIP

Convener: Revd John Young [2005]

Secretary: Revd Kirsty Thorpe [2004]

Revd Glyn Millington [2004]

Mrs Jenny Poulter [2004]

Revd Dr Robert Pope [2005]

Revd Alistair Smeaton [2005]

Revd Prof Alan Sell* [2007]

Revd Geoffrey Clarke** [2007]

Revd Hilary Collinson** [2007]

Revd Dr Susan Durber** [2007]

Miss Sarah Lane** [2007]

Dr John Turner** [2007]

2.5 ECUMENICAL

Convener: Revd John Rees [2005]

Secretary: Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

Mrs Darnette Whitby-Reid [2004]

Revd Bryan Shirley [2005]

Revd Cecil White [2005]

Revd Rowena Francis [2006]

Mr Malcolm Porter [2006]

Revd Lindsey Sanderson [2006]

Mrs Ann Shillaker** [2007]

Revd Stuart Jackson representing the National Synod of Wales

Revd Mary Buchanan representing National Synod of Scotland

2.5.1 ECUMENICAL - INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Chris Baillie [2007]

Secretary: Secretary for International Relations

Revd Birgit Ewald [2005]

Mrs Heather Barnes [2006]

Revd Nigel Uden [2006]

Mrs Eileen McIlveen** [2007]

Revd Michael Thomason** [2007]

2.6 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Convener: Revd Wilf Bahadur [2006]

Secretary: Ms Ruth Norton [2004]

Miss Sarah Moore [2004]

Ms Gloria Bujan [2005]

Mr Derek Estill [2006]

Mr Alan Hart [2006]

Revd Sue MacBeth** [2007]

Revd Derek Hopkins** [2008]

2.7 FINANCE

Convener: The Treasurer

Secretary: Financial Secretary

Miss Muriel Proven [2004]

Mr John Woodman [2005]

Mr John Rowatt [2005]

Ms Alison Holt [2006]

Revd David Dones** [2007]

Mrs Marie Whitman** [2007]

Convener of the URC Trust

2.8 INTER-FAITH RELATIONS

Convener: Revd Dr John Parry [2007]
Secretary: Revd Sally Thomas [2004]
Revd Alistair Ellefsen-Jones [2004]
Mrs Jean Potter** □ [2008]

Miss Marie Williams [2005]

Revd Peter Colwell [2006]

2.9 LIFE and WITNESS

Convener: Revd Brian Jolly [2005]
Secretary: Secretary for Life and Witness
Revd Angela Hughes [2004]
Revd Peter Hurter [2005]
Mr Colin Ferguson** [2007]

Mrs Alison Lowe [2004]
Revd Linda Elliott [2006]
Revd Ian Fosten** [2007]

Revd Kenneth Forbes [2005]
Mrs Sheila Brain** [2007]
Revd Michael Hodgson** [2007]

2.9.1 LIFE and WITNESS - STEWARDSHIP Sub-Committee

Convener: Mr Keith Webster [2004]

Secretary: Secretary for Life and Witness

Mrs Anne Mitchell [2004]
Mrs Jackie Haws** [2007]

Mr Mick Barnes [2005]
Mrs Susan Wilkinson** [2007]

Revd David Legge [2006]
Mr Ray McHugh**# [2008]

2.9.2 WINDERMERE ADVISORY GROUP

Convener: Mr Jim Wilkinson [2005]

Secretary: The Director of Windermere

Mrs Christine Millward [2004]
Convener of Windermere Management Committee

Dr Peter Clarke [2005]

Revd Bernard Collins** [2007]
Convener of Life and Witness Committee

Representative of Carver URC

2.10 MINISTRIES

Convener: Mr John Ellis [2006]

Secretary: Secretary for Ministries

Revd Peter Noble [2004]
Revd Pauline Barnes [2006]
Convener of National Assessment Board

Mrs Alison Biggs [2005]
Mrs Joan Trippier** [2007]

Revd Stuart Brock [2005]
Revd Paul Whittle** [2007]

2.10.1 MINISTRIES - ACCREDITATION Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Ken Chippindale [2005]

Secretary: Secretary for Ministries

Revd Keith Argyle [2005]
Revd Adrian Bulley** [2007]

Mrs Sheila Telfer [2005]
Revd Tony Wilkinson** [2007]

Mrs Judith Booth [2006]

2.10.2 MINISTRIES - CRCW Management Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Alison Hall [2004]

Secretary: The CRCW Development Workers

Mrs Adella Pritchard [2004]
Mrs Janet Holden [2006]

Mr Chris Lawrence [2005]
Mr Peter Twilley** [2007]

Revd John Burgess [2006]
*vacancy convener elect**# [2008]*

2.10.3 MINISTRIES - LAY PREACHING Sub Committee

Lay Preaching Commissioner: Dr Philip Theaker [2007]

And four members elected by the Lay Preacher Commissioners Consultation

2.10.4 MINISTRIES - MAINTENANCE OF MINISTRY Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd John Piper [2007]

Secretary: Financial Secretary

Revd Pauline Parkin [2004]
Mr Patrick Hickey** [2007]

Mr Barry Swift [2004]
The Treasurer

Revd Roger Woodall [2004]
Convener of Pensions Executive

2.10.5 MINISTRIES - RETIRED MINISTERS HOUSING - Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd John Pugh [2008]

Secretary: Secretary Retired Ministers' Housing Society Ltd

Mr Malcolm Lindo [2007]

Mrs Edith Tolley [2005]

Mrs Pauline Mewis [2006]

Revd Elizabeth Caswell [2008]

The Treasurer

Note: Properties are managed by a Company *viz:* **RETIRED MINISTERS HOUSING SOCIETY LTD**

Details of the Members of the Board etc may be obtained from the Secretary: Mr Tony Bayley at Church House.

2.10.6 NATIONAL ASSESSMENT BOARD

Convener: Mrs Darryl Sinclair [2005]

Retiring 2004	Revd Marilyn Allen, Revd Craig Bowman, Revd Graham Hoslett, Revd Kevin Watson
Retiring 2005	Dr David Cutler, Revd Rachel Poolman, Dr Jean Stevenson, Mrs Joyce Sutcliff
Retiring 2006	Revd Thomas Heggie, Revd Michael Mewis, Revd Peter Poulter, Revd Hilma Wilkinson
Retiring 2007	Revd Diana Cullum-Hall, Miss Sarah Dodds, Revd Roy Fowler, Mrs Wilma Frew, Mrs Pat Poinen, Revd Nigel Uden, Revd Simon Walkling
Retiring 2008	Mrs Judith Harris**, Mrs Barbara Lancaster**, Dr Cameron Wilson**

2.10.7 PANEL FOR ASSESSMENT CONFERENCES - CRCW - Sub-Section

Revd Susan Armitage [2004]

2.11 NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Dr Stephen Orchard [2006]

Secretary: Revd Hazel Martell [2005]

Synod Representatives: *another* [1], Revd Ruth Wollaston [2], Mr Donald Swift [3], Mr John Seager [4], Mrs Irene Wren [5], Mr Simon Rowntree [6], Revd Elizabeth Caswell [7], Revd Roz Harrison [8], Mr Graham Rolfe [9], Revd Martin Hazell [10], Mrs Christine Meekison [11], Dr Jean Silvan Evans [12], Revd John Arthur [13], with the Immediate Past Moderator and the General Secretary

2.12 PASTORAL REFERENCE COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Keith Forecast [2007]

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary

Mr Okeke Azu Okeke [2004]	Revd Pat Hall [2004]	Mrs Irene Brunskill [2005]
Revd David Miller [2007]		
Convener of Welfare Sub-Committee	The Treasurer	The General Secretary

2.12.1 PASTORAL WELFARE Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Alan Wharton [2007]

Secretary: Mrs Judy Stockings

[*ex officio* Financial Secretary, The Treasurer, Convener Pastoral Reference Committee]

2.13 RACIAL JUSTICE

Convener: Revd Andrew Prasad* [2007]

Secretary: Secretary for Racial Justice

Revd Julie Martin [2004]	Mrs Helen Renner [2004]	Revd John Campbell [2005]
Mrs Vanessa Honeyghan [2005]	Mrs Sandra Ackroyd** [2007]	Mrs Elaine Patrick** [2007]
Revd Norman Setchell** [2007]		

2.14 TRAINING

Convener: Revd John Humphreys [2007]

Secretary: The Secretary for Training

Revd Paul Ballard [2004]	Mrs Anthea Coates [2004]	Revd Dr John Parry [2004]
Revd Principal John Dyce [2005]	Mrs Susan Brown [2006]	Revd Sue Henderson [2006]
Revd Malachie Munyaneza [2006]	Mrs Valerie Burnham** [2007]	Dr Ian Morrison** [2007]

2.15 YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S WORK

Convener: Revd Kathryn Price [2006]

Secretary: Mrs Soo Webster [2004]

Revd Andrew Willett [2004]	Mrs Daphne Clarke [2005]	Ms Lorraine Downer [2005]
Revd John Sanderson [2005]	Mrs Elaine Thomas [2005]	Mr Huw Morrison [2006]
Mrs Hannah Middleton** [2007]	Mrs Doreen Watson** [2007]	Mr Augustus Webbe** [2007]
FURY Chair FURY Council Member		

2.16 DISCIPLINARY PROCESS - Commission Panel

Convener: Mrs Helen Brown [2005]

Deputy Convener: Revd David Helyar** [2007]

Secretary: Mr Brian Evans [2005]

Members:

retiring 2004

Mr Martin Ballard	Revd John Chisholm	Mrs Ruth Clarke	Mr Mike Garnett
Revd Brenda Hill	Mr Ray Holden	Miss Janice Jeater	Revd Margaret Juhasz
Mr Peter Jolly	Dr John Kennedy	Revd David Main	Mr Peter Mann
Mrs Barbara Martin	Mrs Vera Maskery	Revd Dr Rick Mearkle	Mr John Moore
Mr Ian Lloyd Parry	Revd Shelagh Pollard	Revd Raymond Singh	Revd David Skitt
Mr Donald Taylor	Revd Margaret Taylor	Revd Joan Winterbottom	Ms Elizabeth Whitten

retiring 2007

Dr Noreen Baillie	Miss Ina Barker	Mr Keith Brookes	Revd Ken Chippindale
Revd Jessie Clare	Mrs Janice Cockcroft	Miss Kathleen Cross**	Revd Alison Davis
Revd John Du Bois	Mr Ralph Forsyth	Mrs Wilma Frew	Revd Joan Grindod-Helmn**
Mr Alan Hart	Revd Peter Killick	Miss Elizabeth Lawson QC	
Revd Julian Macro	Revd Ted Marley	Revd Denise Megson	Mrs Sheila Pratt
Mr Nicholas Pye	Revd Michael Rees	Revd Dr David Thompson	Mrs Shelagh Tweed

3 MISSION COUNCIL

Mission Council acts on behalf of General Assembly. It consists of the Officers of Assembly, the Moderator-elect, the immediate past Moderator, the Legal Adviser, two representatives of FURY, the Synod Moderators and three representatives from each Synod together with the Conveners of Assembly Committees.

Northern Synod	Dr Peter Clarke, Revd Pamela Ward, Mrs Roberta Wood
North-Western Synod	Revd Geoffrey Townsend, Mr Eric Chilton, Mrs Janet Eccles
Mersey Synod	Revd Martin Hardy, Revd John Kingsley, Mr Donald Swift
Yorkshire Synod	Revd John Jenkinson, Mr John Seager, Mrs Val Morrison
East Midlands Synod	Mrs Anne Ball, Mrs Barbara Turner, Revd David Miller
West Midlands Synod	Revd Simon Helme, Mr Simon Rowntree, Mrs Ann Sheldon
Eastern Synod	Revd Richard Mortimer, Revd Victor Ridgewell, Mr Ken Woods
South Western Synod	Revd Roz Harrison, Revd Paul Snell, Miss Angela Bebbington
Wessex Synod	Revd David Bedford, Miss Veronica Taylor, Revd Simon Thomas
Thames North Synod	Mrs Helen Clapp, Revd Dr Robin Pagan, Revd Jane Wade
Southern Synod	Mr Ian Chalmers, Revd Lesley Charlton, Mrs Marion Bayley
National Synod of Wales	Mrs Janet Gray, Mr Stuart Jones, Revd David Marshall-Jones.
National Synod of Scotland	Revd Ken Forbes, Mrs Helen M Mee, Miss Catriona Smith

4 TRUST BODIES**4.1 UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST**

Convener: Dr Brian Woodhall [2004]

Secretary: Mr Tony Bayley

Directors:

Ms Valerie Ham [2004]	Revd David Marshall-Jones [2004]	Mr John Squires [2004]
Dr Brian Woodhall [2004]	Mr Peter Ward [2005]	Revd Leslie Watson [2006]
Revd Paul Bedford [2008]	Mrs Fiona Smith [2008]	Mr Malcolm Littlefair** [2009]
[ex officio Financial Secretary, General Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, Secretary-Retired Ministers' Housing Society]		

**4.2 THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS' PENSION TRUST LTD
- BOARD MEMBERS**Chairman: *to be advised*

Secretary: Financial Secretary

Members of United Reformed Church: Mr Richard Nunn[2005], Mr Philip Sheridan [2006], Mr Brian Moore [2008], Mr Michael Goldsmith** [2009]

Members of Fund: Revd Kenneth Graham [2005], Revd Gwen Thomas [2007], Revd Graham Spicer** [2009]

Revd Michael Davies [2008]
[ex officio Financial Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, Convener MoM sub-committee, Convener MoM Pensions Executive]**4.3 CONGREGATIONAL MEMORIAL HALL TRUST**

Revd Peter Grimshaw	Mr Victor Fox	Revd David Hannen
Revd Dr Peter Jupp	Mr Hartley Oldham	Mr Graham Stacy

4.4 THE AUSTRALIAN FRONTIER SERVICES CHARITABLE TRUST

Mr Clem Frank

Mr Brian Wates - joint appointment with Uniting Church in Australia

5. Representatives of the UNITED REFORMED CHURCH to Meetings of SISTER CHURCHES

Presbyterian Church in Ireland	Revd Elizabeth Welch
General Synod of Church of England	Revd Fleur Houston
Methodist Conference	Revd John Rees
General Assembly of Church of Scotland [note5]	Revd Elizabeth Welch, Revd John Arthur, Revd Ross McLaren Revd Bill Mahood
Presbyterian Church of Wales [note5]	Revd Shem Morgan
Union of Welsh Independents [note 5]	Revd Dr David Cornick
Congregational Federation	Revd Stuart Jackson
Church in Wales Governing Board [note 5]	Revd Ken Forbes
United Free Church of Scotland [note5]	Revd David Tatem
Provincial Synod of the Moravian Church	

6. Representatives of the UNITED REFORMED CHURCH on ECUMENICAL CHURCH BODIES

The following have been nominated as United Reformed Church representatives at the major gatherings of the Ecumenical Bodies listed.

Note: A list of representatives to other ecumenical bodies, commissions and committees, co-ordinating groups and agencies, who are appointed by the relevant committees, will be distributed to all members of General Assembly. Additional copies are available, on request, from the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations.

6.1 Council for World Mission

Revd David Coleman	Mrs Olive Bell	Ms Catherine Lewis-Smith
Secretary for International Relations	General Secretary or Deputy General Secretary	

6.2 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland - Assembly 2002

General Secretary	Convener of the Ecumenical Committee.	
Secretary for Ecumenical Relations	Secretary for Church and Society	
Mrs Katalina Tahaafe-Williams	Mrs Wilma Frew	Revd John Young
Miss Nikki Andrews	Mrs Jackie Yeomans	Ms Lorraine Downer
Revd Ray Adams	Mrs Ruth Clarke	

6.2.1 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland - Church Representatives Meeting

General Secretary	Mrs Wilma Frew
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6.3 Churches Together in England - Forum 2003**

General Secretary	Secretary for Ecumenical Relations	Mr Mark Argent,
Revd Bernie Collins	Miss Alison Micklem	Mr Dan Pipe
Revd Peter Poulter	Revd Kirsty Thorpe	Mrs Darnett Whitby-Reid
3 more names to be confirmed		

6.3.1 Churches Together in England - Enabling Group

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

6.4 ACTS (Action of Churches Together in Scotland) see Note 5

Central Council	Revd John Arthur
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6.5 CYTUN (Churches Together in Wales) see Note 5

Council	The Synod Ecumenical Officer (alternate Synod Moderator)
	Mrs Jackie Yeomans (alternate Mrs Eileen McIlveen)

6.6 FREE CHURCH COUNCIL for WALES see Note 5

Synod Ecumenical Officer (alternate Synod Moderator)
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7. United Reformed Church Representatives at formal bi-lateral and multi-lateral committees.

7.1 METHODIST/United Reformed Church Liaison Committee

The Secretary for Ecumenical Relations together with:

Ms Rachel Greening	Revd Peter Poulter	Revd Roy Fowler
Revd Harry Lanham	Mrs Karen Watts	

7.1.1 HEALTH and HEALING DEVELOPMENT GROUP

Revd Brenda Russell	Dr Margaret Moore	Mrs Jackie Ballard
Revd Delia Bond		

7.2 Anglian-Moravian Contact Groups

Revd David Tatem

7.3 ENFYS (The Commission of Covenanted Churches in Wales) see Note 5

Synod Moderator	Synod Ecumenical Officer	Mrs Ann Shillaker
Revd Henry Gordon	Revd David Cassidy	Revd Alan Willcocks

7.4 SCOTTISH CHURCHES INITIATIVE FOR UNION [SCIFU] see Note 5

Revd John Arthur	Revd Alan Paterson	Synod Ecumenical Officer
Secretary for Ecumenical Relations		

8. United Reformed Church Representatives on Governing Bodies of Theological Colleges etc.,

8.1 Mansfield College:

Ministerial and Educational Training Committee:	Professor Malcolm Johnson [2006] Revd Rachel Poolman [2006] Convener of the Training Committee Secretary for Training
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8.2 New College London

Foundation Trustees:	Revd John Pugh [2005] Mr John Smethers [2006], Mr Graham Stacy** [2007]
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8.3 Northern College

Council of the Partnership for Theological Education, Manchester:

Secretary for Training,
Revd David Jenkins [2005]
Mr Bill McLaughlin [2005]
Mrs Helen Brown** [2007]
vacancy ** [2007]
vacancy ** [2007]
Secretary for Training

8.4 Westminster College: Board of Governors

Convener: Revd Dr David Thompson** [2008]
Clerk: Revd Clifford Wilton [2006]
Mrs Sally Abbott [2006]
Revd Sandra Lloydlangston [2004]

Mr Don Taylor [2004],
Revd Craig Muir** [2009]
Secretary for Training

8.4.1 Cheshunt Foundation

Revd Dr Jean Black
Mr David Butler

8.4.2 Cambridge Theological Federation

Joint Academic Committee

Convener Westminster College Governors
Secretary for Training
Secretary for Training

8.5	Homerton College Trustees	Revd Dr David Thompson [2004] Mr John Chaplin [2005] Mrs Elisabeth Jupp [2006] Lady Sally Williams** [2007]
8.6	Queen's College, Birmingham	Revd Elizabeth Welch Mr Howard Bridge Secretary for Training in attendance
8.7	Aberystwyth (Memorial College)	Mr Leslie Jones
9.	GOVERNORS of COLLEGES and SCHOOLS with which the United Reformed Church is associated	
9.1	Caterham School	Revd Nigel Uden, Mr John Mathias
9.2	Eltham College	Revd Clifford Charlton
9.3	Walthamstow Hall	Miss Margaret Vokins
9.4	Milton Mount Foundation	Miss Nan Mark Revd Peter Grimshaw Revd George Thomas Mrs Clare Meachin Mr David Butler Revd David Cuckson** [2007]
9.5	Silcoates School	Dr Peter Clarke [2005] Revd Arnold Harrison [2005] Revd Brenda Hill [2006] Dr Clyde Binfield** [2007] Mr David Figures** [2007]
9.6	Taunton School	Revd David Miller
9.7	Wentworth College	Revd Brian Rawling
9.8	Bishops Stortford College	Revd Nigel Rogers
10.	Miscellaneous: The United Reformed Church is represented on a variety of other national organisations and committees as follows:	
	Retired Ministers and Widows Fund	Mr Ken Meekison, Mrs Jill Strong, Mr Laurence Macro
	Christian Education Movement Council Churches Main Committee Congregational Fund Board	Mrs Margi Jenkins Ms Avis Reaney, Mr Hartley Oldham Revd Margaret Taylor, Revd Eric Allen, Revd John Taylor, Mr Tony Bayley, Revd David Helyar**
	Guides' Religious Advisory Panel National Christian Education Council Pilots Management Committee Scouts' Religious Advisory Group United Reformed Church History Society	Mrs Susan Walker Mrs Patricia Hubbard, Mrs Rosemary Johnston Mr Huw Morrison Revd David Marshall-Jones Mrs Mary Davies, Revd Dr Peter Jupp, Mrs Carol Rogers, Revd Eric Wollaston, Revd Dr David Thompson
	Wharton Trust	Mr Norman Fabb

Resolution 26

Nominations

General Assembly appoints Committees and representatives of the Church set out on pages 83 to 90 of the Book of Reports subject to additions and corrections contained in the Supplementary Report before Assembly



Racial Justice

Mission Council at its meeting in October 2002 agreed that the Committee for Racial Justice is responsible for: enabling the United Reformed Church to understand and respond to the multi-racial/multi-cultural nature of society in order to enhance its mission; assisting the United Reformed Church to reflect on racial justice issues and to address these in its policies; identifying strategies for combating racism in all its forms in the church and society, working closely with other committees and councils of the church to implement them; helping the United Reformed Church to celebrate the diverse racial and cultural backgrounds of its membership, encouraging all members to participate meaningfully at all levels of the Church's life.

Committee Members

Convenor: Revd Andrew Prasad

Secretary: Mrs Katalina Tahaafe-Williams

Mrs Sandra Ackroyd, Revd Dr John Campbell, Mrs Vanessa Honeyghan, Revd Julie Martin,

Mrs Elaine Patrick, Mrs Helen Renner, Revd Norman Setchell, Mr Shaheen Zar

1 Introduction

1.1 The Committee welcomes the opportunity to make its second successive report to General Assembly this year. The Committee considers it a privilege to have this chance two years running and is grateful to the Equal Opportunities Committee for the initiative which led to it, and to the Assembly Arrangements Committee for enabling the process to happen.

1.2 The Committee is pleased that it now has its official remit and wishes to thank Mission Council for the commitment and support on this issue. The Committee's remit constitute the overall framework within which the Racial Justice programme operates and hence guides the report we bring to Assembly, although this year's report will focus specifically on some issues.

2 Personalia

2.1 Significant changes in the Committee's membership have taken place in 2002. We have said farewell to Mr Kofi Akumanyi and to our former Convenor, the Revd Raymond Singh. This year we welcome the Revd Andrew Prasad as the new Convenor of the Committee. We also welcome to the Committee Mrs Sandra Ackroyd, Mrs Elaine Patrick, and the Revd Norman Setchell.

2.2 The Committee records its appreciation to the Revd Raymond Singh for his valuable contribution to the work of the Committee in the past year and wishes him well in his continuing ministry. The Committee is also deeply grateful to the Assembly Nominations Committee for the prompt response in addressing the Committee's membership.

3 Priorities

3.1 Recognising that the Racial Justice programme is massive, the Committee will focus its work for this year on the following key issues:

3.1.1 Co-operation with other Assembly Committees

Through the Secretary for Racial Justice and other links, the Committee is working very closely with the Committees for Equal Opportunities, Ecumenical and International Relations, Church and Society, Youth and Children's Work, and Inter Faith Relations. The Committee looks forward to developing close working relationships with all Assembly Committees in the future.

3.1.2 Training Resources

The Committee is keen to produce training materials and resources for churches, groups and individuals to use. The Committee is currently revising existing ecumenical training materials, which it will adapt to suit specific needs in the United Reformed Church. Given the recent changes in its membership the Committee has changed its printing deadline to autumn this year.

3.1.3 Developing Youth Work

The Committee gratefully commends the Committee for Youth and Children for their great effort in securing government funding for work with young people. The Committee has received a portion of this fund to help develop empowerment initiatives and projects for ethnic minority youth in the United Reformed Church. The Committee eagerly anticipates increasing the number of young people attending the Annual Ethnic Minority Youth Conference in October.

3.1.4 Developing Multicultural Ministry

The Committee looks forward to the first United Reformed Church consultation on Multicultural Ministry in April 2003 at the Windermere Centre. The Secretary for Racial Justice is working very closely with the Director of the Windermere Centre to organise this event, and it is envisaged that this would be the beginning of a series of consultations on this issue. The Committee sees this consultation as instrumental in bringing a multicultural perspective to the process headed by the United Reformed Church General Secretary to look at the future shape of our denomination.

3.1.5 Racial Justice Advocacy (RJA)

The Committee is proud of the increasing success of the RJA. A Racial Justice Advocacy Planning Group (RJAPG) now assists the Secretary for Racial Justice in planning, strategizing and operating this crucial part of the racial justice programme. The Committee is pleased with the progress the RJAPG has made to the advocacy scheme in such a short time. Moreover, the Secretary continues to recruit advocates as she visits the synods and the Committee is grateful for the reception she has received from the eight synods she has visited so far. The Committee appeals to the synods, district councils, and churches to give practical support to

the RJ Advocacy scheme through enabling regional RJ Advocates to attend national meetings and training weekends run by the Secretary.

3.1.6 Refugees & Asylum Seekers

The Committee is concerned that misinformation and prejudice have contributed significantly to the worsening plight of refugees and asylum seekers in our society. The Committee, noting the tireless efforts by individual members and churches of the United Reformed Church to care for asylum seekers in their communities, continues to encourage all efforts from within the United Reformed Church and the wider society to give practical care and support to asylum seekers wherever possible. The Committee brings a resolution on this issue to Assembly this year.

4 RJC Events 2003

4.1 Events on the Racial Justice 2003 Calendar include **Cause for Celebration March 29; Unity in Diversity Consultation April 7-10; Ethnic Minorities Annual Conference June 7; Racial Justice Sunday September 14; Black History Month and the Ethnic Minority Youth Annual Conference both in October**. The Committee invites anyone who would like more information on any of these events to contact the Racial Justice office in Church House, Tavistock Place.

Resolution 27**Refugees & Asylum Seekers**

General Assembly, noting the strength of feeling on the issue of refugees and asylum seekers in our society today, urges all members and local churches of the United Reformed Church to:

- a) acknowledge the unequivocal call of the Bible to care for the stranger in our midst and to respond to the needs of strangers in our own neighbourhoods with compassion and practical friendship;
- b) seek to address our own attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers with honesty and in ways that reflect the quality of our faith and commitment to our caring God;
- c) seek to live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ in relation to refugees and asylum seekers through challenging the selfishness and racism that their presence has exposed, and by resisting any attempts to make this racism socially acceptable, whilst being aware that honest attempts to do so may lead to ridicule by many in British society.

1 The Committee for Racial Justice is deeply concerned about the growing tension over the issue of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in our society as a whole. The Committee is also aware that misinformation and exaggeration largely spread by the news media have successfully played on people's fears and prejudices.

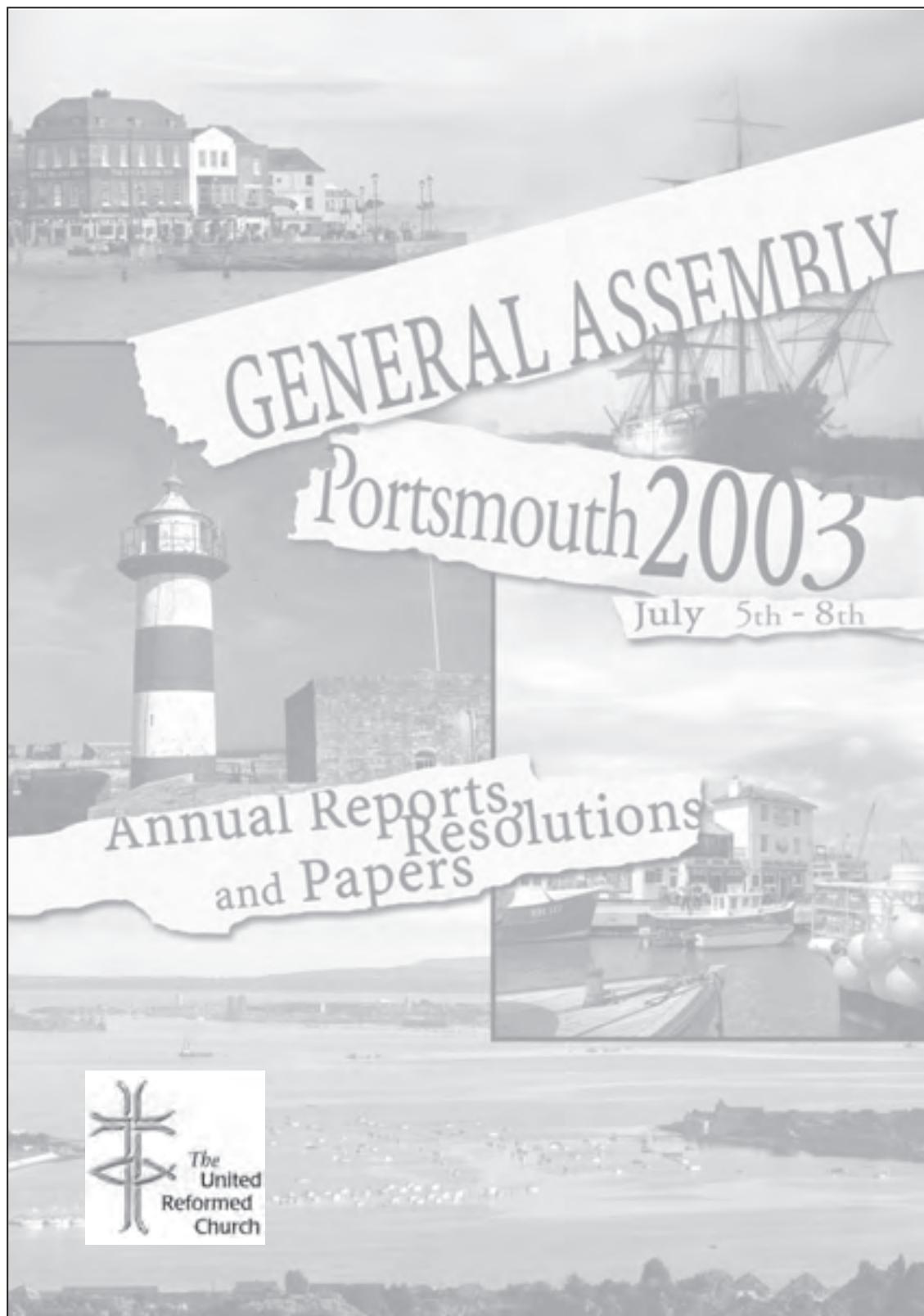
2 The Committee affirms the continuing commitment of the racial justice advocates' network to addressing this problem. However, given the rising level of concern highlighted, the Committee needs more help in both dispelling the widespread misconceptions about asylum seekers, and in providing practical support.

3 In terms of practical support for the work the Committee offers the following suggestions:

a) District Councils that do not yet have Racial Justice Advocates to nominate persons and to provide the means with which to enable them to attend the two annual meetings organized by the Racial Justice Secretary. Names and contact details to be send to the Racial Justice Office.

- b) District Councils with the help of the Racial Justice networks to work ecumenically and with Inter Faith Networks where possible to locate areas in the locality where asylum seekers may be and to identify practical and humane approaches to supporting and meeting their needs.
- c) District Councils and local churches, as far as is possible, to seek ways to enable and empower the voices of asylum seekers to be heard. (E.g. through inviting people within the racial justice network together with asylum seekers themselves to speak for themselves and share their stories at district council meetings and other church gatherings).
- 4 The Committee hopes to make available at the Portsmouth Assembly in July 2003 a publication produced by the Churches Commission for Racial Justice (CCRJ) called '*Asylum Voices*'. The Committee invites General Assembly, its Committees and other Councils of the United Reformed Church to use this publication as a resource as they engage in conversations, seeking deeper understanding on this difficult issue.

Appendices



Appendix 1

The Scottish Church Initiative for Union Proposal

1. Introduction

1.1 The Scottish Church Initiative for Union is a child of its time. It began its work in 1996 in the closing years of what has been called the ecumenical century of the Christian Church. That century saw Christians from different traditions, often bitterly and even violently divided, begin to talk to each other, work and witness together, and even re-unite after long separation. Three of the participating churches, the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church are, in their present form, the result of 20th century unions.

1.2 The Scottish Church Initiative for Union is, more precisely, the child of the Multilateral Church Conversation. This Church of Scotland initiative was inspired by the 1964 British Council of Churches Conference on Faith and Order, held in Nottingham, which had challenged the churches to "covenant together to work and pray for the inauguration of union in appropriate groupings, such as nations". In 1968 five churches accepted the Church of Scotland's invitation to begin to work towards the unity of the Christian Church – the Churches of Christ (later to become part of the United Reformed Church), the Congregational Union of Scotland, the Methodist Church, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the United Free Church. The Baptist Union of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland were observers.

1.3 For 25 years the Conversation worked at clearing the doctrinal ground through a series of reports. In 1985 it published what it hoped would be its final report in which it requested permission to proceed to the drawing up of a Basis and Plan of Union. That report, *Christian Unity – NOW is the time*, recommended to the churches that there was significant agreement on all points of doctrine and that where disagreement persisted it was not sufficient to justify continued separation. However, the Church of Scotland and others wanted more work done, especially on episcopacy. The Conversation's final report in 1992, entitled *Who goes where?*, sought a new mandate for the task that remained:

"Our task is clear. We are to discover how to bring our churches together, so that members and ministries are reconciled and mutually recognised, in order to pursue effective common witness and service within the wider jurisdiction of a united church."

1.4 The Scottish Episcopal Church, believing that it had changed in ways which would remove some of the remaining obstacles to unity, took up the challenge. In a paper entitled *Who goes forward with us?* it described the changes in its life which, it thought, would remove some of the past obstacles to union. It had developed a permanent diaconate and had agreed to ordain women to the priesthood.

Reassurances were given concerning the role of bishops. It was made clear that the Scottish Episcopal Church understood the episcopal succession of bishops as a sign, but not a guarantee, of the unity and continuity of the Church. There were moves to a more conciliar structure of church government in which bishops served in council. It was also specifically stated that there could be no union which denied the fullness of the grace of God in the worship, fellowship, evangelism, service and ministry of any of the participating churches. In the light of these changes and reassurances the Scottish Episcopal Church invited the other participating churches "to set up direct negotiations for union." The representatives on the Multilateral Conversation asked their churches to discharge them, thus bringing the Conversation to a close. This left the churches free to accept or reject the new invitation on the specific question of union.

By 1995 five of the six original participating churches had accepted the invitation to draw up a Basis and Plan of Union. Only the United Free Church declined the invitation. They were invited, along with the Roman Catholic Church, to be observers of the new Scottish Church Initiative for Union. It began its work in January 1996 with four representatives from each church and, in addition, a Convener from the Scottish Episcopal Church and a Secretary from the Church of Scotland.

The group has made every effort to share its work as it has developed, producing two interim reports on which the churches, locally and nationally were asked to comment. Group members have responded to every invitation to speak to and listen to denominational and ecumenical bodies, both local and regional, throughout the length and breadth of Scotland. The Church of Scotland set up a reflection panel for ongoing reflection throughout the period. It is difficult, however, to communicate the experience of the group members over these years, of growing mutual understanding, of discovery of unexpected common ground and of wrestling with the limits of diversity within a united Church.

2. The basic premises of the proposal

2.1 As a child of the Multilateral Conversation SCIFU inherited the years of work of doctrinal clearing of the ground and was able to start with a working assumption that there was as much significant agreement on most points of doctrine between the participating churches as was to be found within each of those churches. SCIFU was, therefore, able to base its work on the building blocks of the Conversation, and turn its attention immediately to the task it was given of preparing a Basis and Plan of Union. The following are the basic premises which have come, over the years of discussion, to under-pin the SCIFU proposal.

2.2 The first is a fresh understanding of the essential nature of Christian unity in terms of the Trinity. Past generations over this ecumenical century have rightly insisted that the Church is already one in the body of Christ and the Church is urgently called to live that reality. Jesus' prayer for his followers on the night he was betrayed "that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us" has been a key text of the ecumenical movement, often with the emphasis on the first half of the quotation. An important development in the West over the past thirty years has been a recovery of the picture of God as community rather than as isolated being – a community of love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, into which we are invited and to which we are called to witness in the life of the Church. This has given a new emphasis and depth to the words "As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us." This picture of God in terms of unity-in-relationship, unity-in-diversity, a community of love, a community without hierarchy is good news for today's Church if we have the courage to model that kind of unity and that kind of community.

2.3 The second is that the Church is made for mission. As God, the Trinity, models this community of love, so God wills that for the world. God's plan, as declared in Scripture, is to gather all creation under the Lordship of Christ and to bring everything in heaven and on earth into communion with God. And this is a God who embraces all people, freely offering love and the good news that individuals matter and matter enormously. This is urgent good news for today's Scotland where it seems "things fall apart, the centre cannot hold." Traditional patterns of work and leisure have broken down: fewer and fewer people attend Sunday worship and yet 76% of the population of Britain confess to having had a spiritual experience: the local is paramount yet we are more aware than ever of being part of a worldwide network: choice is idolised yet globalisation threatens to eliminate cultural difference and particularity: privatised lifestyles and dispersed working practices are increasingly prevalent and people have ceased to join mass organisations, yet they hanker after community. The Church, as the body of Christ, as a community of love modelled on the Trinity, is called to be an instrument of God's plan to gather all creation under the Lordship of Christ. The current divisions between (and within) the churches and the failure of their members to live in true communion with each other damage the mission of the Church.

2.4 The third is that the Church has always been called to be a pilgrim people, in continuity with the past but responsive to God's calling in changing times. The SCIFU proposal honours the treasured features of the participating churches while recognising that those features too have often been developed in response to former 'changing times'. At the same time each participating church is on pilgrimage, seeking to recognise the 'new thing' that God is doing. SCIFU seeks to bring those churches together into one pilgrimage, sharing our various treasures and resources, encouraging one another in this time of numerical decline, helping one another to travel light, trusting that if we are faithful to our calling to be one, as God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are one, then God will show us the 'new thing' he is doing through the Church for the world.

2.5 The fourth is a key emphasis on the ministry of the whole people of God. This is in continuity with the Multilateral Conversation which, in its 1990 report *Deacons for Scotland* says:

"There is a fundamental question of perspective to be settled..... It is all followers of Christ, not just the tiny minority of them who are ordained, who are charged by Christ to be salt to the world, light to all the world, yeast to leaven the whole lump of dough." (p 36)

The publication of two interim reports of work in progress, often at a tentative stage, for full consultation throughout the churches is evidence of the SCIFU commitment to listening to the voice of the whole people of God.

2.6 The SCIFU proposal speaks of mutuality in ministry, bearing in mind the corporate calling of all the baptised which is reflected in the phrase "the priesthood of all believers", the individual calling of every Christian reflected in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." (12:7), and the particular gifts which are given to some and not to others within the one body of Christ. In New Testament times the words *presbyteros* and *episcopos* and *diakonos* were used for those exercising certain ministries. Throughout the history of the Church these New Testament roles have developed and expanded in various ways in the different church traditions. The words used today among the SCIFU participating churches include elder, class leader, lay preachers, deacon, minister, priest and bishop. The SCIFU proposal gives careful attention to the various orders of ministry, as this is an area of great sensitivity, but it always returns to the basic premise that all these particular ministries are derived from the ministry entrusted to the whole Church.

2.7 The fifth is a commitment to unity in co-ordinated diversity. This comes, on the one hand, from reflection on God, the Trinity, as a communion of joyful mutual responsibility whose source is the Father, whose focus is the Son and whose energetic distribution is the Spirit. Thus the SCIFU proposal offers a sign of the unity and catholicity of the Church, while also offering the possibility of local variety yet harmony between people from different traditions and backgrounds. On the other hand, this commitment to unity is also a response to the needs of our times where choice and variety for some seem only to lead to loss of community for all. The SCIFU proposal, therefore, begins from a missionary concern for each natural local community. Time and again, it suggests that the pattern of relationship between the churches in that community and the pattern of church government, of frequency of meetings and of leadership team should depend on the local situation. However, the proposal is also committed to 'co-ordinated diversity' and therefore seeks to hold together unity and diversity, and the local and the wider Church.

A Church shaped for mission

A note on terminology

Terminology is, inevitably, a problem in any proposal for union. If existing terminology is used then it is difficult to realise that it no longer describes the same thing as before the union. It may also seem like a 'victory' for the church whose terminology it is. If more than one church uses

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the term, then it may not have quite the same meaning in those churches and so there is room for misunderstanding. On the other hand, new terminology may seem strange, clumsy and unattractive to everyone concerned and may obscure the continuity of the united Church with the streams that have formed it.

The SCIFU proposal uses largely new terminology for the various councils and existing terminology for the various orders of ministry. However, local variety of terminology is allowed for in both areas, although more in the former than the latter.

3. A Church shaped for mission: the local

3.1 The SCIFU proposal begins with the local and with a missionary concern for natural local communities. At the heart of the proposal is the **maxi-parish**, a natural geographical area of a suitable population size in which the local worshipping communities from the SCIFU participating churches will work together under one leadership body. The number of congregations in a maxi-parish will depend on the make-up and size of the natural communities. In cities, the maxi-parish might cover one part of the city, such as Pollokshields in Glasgow. In a small town, the maxi-parish might cover a whole town, such as Thurso or Kelso. A rural area such as the Morven peninsula might form one maxi-parish.

3.2 The maxi-parish will hold responsibility for initiating and co-ordinating outreach and mission to the whole community. This might include community-wide events, youth projects, community care projects and mail shots. It will be responsible for promoting good relations with those denominations not, as yet, part of the united Church. It will also be responsible for taking the initiative in relations with other faith communities and with secular bodies. Shared resources, such as a mini-bus or an office with appropriate equipment, will also be the responsibility of the maxi-parish.

3.3 The maxi-parish will support and advise the ministry team and play an important part, in consultation with both the congregational and the regional councils, in the appointment of new members of the ministry team and in the allocation of duties for that team.

3.4 Preparation for membership or confirmation of candidates from all the congregations will take place at maxi-parish level, as will the initial training and continuing development of new elders. Joint celebration of worship on special occasions, such as the reception of new members or the ordination of new elders, or a national event, will also be maxi-parish events.

3.5 The maxi-parish will make sound financial provision for its life and work by agreeing with the congregations their contribution to the costs of ministry and mission and by meeting the maxi-parish assessed contribution to the work of the wider church. It will also be responsible for keeping and having audited accounts in accordance with constitutional provision and for ensuring that the accounts of the congregations are similarly maintained.

3.6 The maxi-parish will carry out these functions through a **maxi-parish council** and a ministry team. The maxi-parish council will be made up of representatives appointed by the congregations, the number depending on size of membership, together with the members of the ministry team. The maxi-parish council will normally meet four times a year. The council may choose to delegate some matters to sub-groups, but they will remain answerable to the council. The council may choose its chairperson from within or outwith the ministry team. The initial composition of the council, and the question of who takes the chair, will be decided by a meeting of members of all the congregations when the maxi-parish is being set up. Subsequent changes will be decided by the council after consultation with the church meetings of the congregations.

3.7 The **maxi-parish ministry team** will consist of ordained and lay, stipendiary and non-stipendiary, full-time and part-time members according to the size and resources of the maxi-parish. Ministers of Word and Sacrament, and possibly others, will have primary responsibility for particular congregations. With the advice of the ministry team, the maxi-parish council will review, from time to time, the appropriate distribution of the resources of the team. The ministry team will meet regularly for consultation and mutual support. It will be for each ministry team, when first formed, to decide on whether to have a designated leader of the team or team members taking turns to lead, or a leader chosen for a particular project or discussion because of expertise or particular gifts. Any subsequent change in leadership pattern will only be made in consultation with the maxi-parish council.

3.8 Maxi-parishes may seek to broaden the ministry team by the appointment of professionally qualified youth or community workers or by requesting the services of a deacon. When a new minister of Word and Sacrament is being sought, the maxi-parish council, in full consultation with the bishop and the regional council, will set up a search committee representative of the congregations, with extra representation from those congregations most affected. The ministry team will also be consulted and the aim will be to build up a team whose complementary talents and interests enrich the parish and strengthen effective mission. A representative of the regional council will act as adviser throughout the vacancy. The bishop, with her or his particular responsibility for pastoral care and mission in the region as a whole, will have both an informal role in consultation and advice as well as a formal role in the ordination and/or induction.

3.9 Within the framework of the maxi-parish, each **congregation** (including its leadership) will be responsible for its local work and worship. There is room for considerable diversity in the life of each congregation, especially its worship life. These proposals do not recommend any less diversity than already exists both among and within the participating churches. Distinctive practices, such as lay presidency, the use of the reserved sacrament and an equal respect for infant and believer's baptism, can be accommodated provided there is a mutual recognition of ministry and provided that those leading worship carefully respect the practices of the particular congregation.

3.10 The responsibilities of the congregation will be to encourage the ministry of every member, through providing opportunities for fellowship and service, for education and training, for study of matters of faith and practice with special reference to the mission of that congregation, and for consideration of matters referred to the congregation by the maxi-parish council.

3.11 The congregation will be responsible for the pastoral care and regular visitation of homes. It will be responsible for arranging for regular worship, and for encouraging and overseeing the work of those who lead groups within the fellowship and those organisations based there.

3.12 The congregation will be responsible for appointing representatives to the maxi-parish council, for recommending to the maxi-parish council names of people wishing to be prepared for membership/confirmation and for electing its leaders, officially to be known as elders.

3.13 The congregation will also be responsible for the maintenance and development of buildings and land, and for meeting assessments, providing for local costs, advocacy of stewardship and Christian giving, and having audited accounts.

3.14 Fundamental to the life of each congregation, and in line with the SCIFU commitment to the ministry of the whole people of God, will be the **church meeting**. This meeting of all the members will meet twice a year, or more frequently according to local decision, to consider the life and work of the congregation and to share in decisions about its direction. Congregations with large memberships will need to develop ways of enabling the effective participation of everyone at the meeting. Either through this meeting, or by some other agreed means, the members will elect a group of leaders, officially known as elders, chosen for their Christian maturity and wisdom who will form the congregational council. It will be for each congregation to decide on the apportionment of the responsibilities of that congregation between the congregational council and the church meeting. Such a regular meeting of all the members is a particular treasure of the Congregational tradition and is to be found today in the United Reformed Church.

3.15 To enable each congregation to carry out its responsibilities there will be a **congregational council**. Diversity of tradition will be preserved in that each congregation will decide on the name of the body, its size and its frequency of meeting.

3.16 The maxi-parish, with its unity in co-ordinated diversity, has potentially many practical benefits. The pooling and sharing of resources will enable, in some places, the employment of specialist workers. New forms of worship can be developed while the distinctive worship styles of the various traditions can be continued in each congregation: thus the Church can both value diversity and tradition, while stepping out on pilgrimage. Smaller congregations, which cannot afford full-time ministry but which have gifts to offer to the whole church as a community of faith, can continue, in some cases sharing the building of one of the larger congregations. Again diversity, and the witness of the small, is being valued. A shared assessment of the needs of the community can be made and the Church's strategy for service and

outreach be therefore more holistic. The ministry team can overcome the current isolation of many ministers. The Methodist Church has traditionally ordered its life in groups of churches called circuits. Although in Scotland these groupings are not directly related to the natural communities because of the congregations are so widely scattered, the Methodist experience of circuit life in terms of shared resources, mutual support, and the collegiality among ministers and Local Preachers, has made a significant contribution to the SCIFU process.

4. A church shaped for mission: the regional

4.1 The mission of the Church in one community cannot be seen in isolation from other communities within the same country. The nature of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit is a community of love which is both unity-in-diversity and unity-in-relationship. The Church is called to proclaim this in its very being, regionally just as much as locally. The community rivalries and inequitable sharing of resources to be found in every church, as well as the old divisions between the churches, damage the Church's witness to the reconciling love of God. The present needs of our mobile society, where so many people live in one community and work in another, and where people move frequently, call for a co-ordinated Church response.

4.2 The SCIFU proposal envisages maxi-parishes grouped together in regions which have a natural significance, based on geography, population and local government administration. The region will be responsible for oversight of the life of the maxi-parishes and for determining and implementing overall pastoral and mission policies for the region. The office of bishop will be located at this level and his or her role in relation to the responsibilities of the region will be described in a later section.

4.3 Firstly, the region will encourage each maxi-parish in mission in its particular context while also setting it in the context of the region and its nature and needs. This will mean that the region, with its greater resources, will offer training, trained personnel, and a forum where maxi-parishes can share good practice and learn from other parishes.

4.4 Secondly, the region will provide pastoral care for the maxi-parishes, both for the ministry teams and the maxi-parish and congregational councils. It will be responsible for encouraging the development in Christian faith, life and witness of individuals and councils and for addressing difficulties. It will, therefore, be responsible for the regular, perhaps five-yearly, review of the life of the maxi-parishes.

4.5 Thirdly, the region will have a significant role, but in relationship with the maxi-parishes, in the process of selecting and nominating candidates for the ministry of Word and Sacrament and for the ministry of deacon, in approving the appointment of a minister or a deacon, and in arranging for his or her induction to a maxi-parish. The ordination of ministers and deacons will be the responsibility of the region. The region will be responsible for the continuing education of ministers, deacons and elders. The region will also be responsible for encouraging, selecting and supervising the training and use of lay preachers and for providing for their continuing development through study and fellowship.

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4.6 Fourthly, the region will determine the boundaries of the maxi-parishes and arbitrate in any dispute. The initial determination of the shape of the maxi-parishes will take place in careful consultation with the church meetings of all the congregations. Subsequent changes will be the responsibility of the region, in consultation with the maxi-parish councils affected.

4.7 Fifthly, the region will offer, from time to time, events where Christian people from a wide area can meet to work, worship and relax together and thus experience, on a larger canvas, what it means to be the body of Christ. The region will be the administrative link between the national and local levels, carrying out the supervisory tasks transmitted to it in the areas of finance, statistics and staffing. The region will be responsible for the appointment of representatives to the national council. It will also provide the forum where issues raised by any of the three levels can be discussed by all the maxi-parishes.

4.8 The region will carry out these responsibilities through **a regional council**. This will consist of representatives from each maxi-parish council and then additional representatives in relation to the parish size. All the members of the maxi-parish ministry teams and the regional office-bearers will be members of the regional council. The regional council will be responsible for ensuring that ministers of Word and Sacrament do not comprise more than half the council. Maxi-parishes sending more than one representative will be encouraged to give due attention to gender balance and to the inclusion of a young person in their representation.

4.9 The frequency of meetings, the appointment and terms of the person who chairs the council meeting, the number of office bearers required to carry out its tasks effectively, and what powers it would delegate to sub-groups will be decided by each regional council in response to the needs and nature of the area.

5. A Church shaped for mission: the national

5.1 Although the SCIFU vision of unity has grown out of the local concern for mission and for the local and regional credibility of the Church's witness to the reconciling power of God, it is clear that the Church at national level must also demonstrate that unity-in-diversity, and must enable unity at regional and local level to be effective.

5.2 SCIFU envisages **a national council**, meeting annually. Its responsibilities will be to act as the chief locus of authority in the Church, able to declare the mind of the Church in matters of life and witness. It will be the final court of appeal in matters of discipline, order and doctrine, and will settle disputes at regional level or between the regional and local levels.

5.3 It will be responsible for inspiring and encouraging the Church and directing its strategy for mission at the national level. It will establish and dissolve committees responsible for particular areas of work, will be responsible for appointments to them, and will receive reports on their work. It will consider and adopt policies and programmes for the future and, as appropriate, instruct the committees to implement the decisions taken.

5.4 It will approve the budget for the united Church and specify the sums available for the various areas of work. It will also appoint representatives and delegates to national and international ecumenical bodies, the national assemblies of other churches and such organisations as may invite representation from the united Church.

5.5 It will be the responsible employer of such staff as are required to carry out the work of the national council and its committees.

5.6 It will be responsible for reviewing, at every level, the progress in implementing the new structures for a united Church.

5.7 The membership of the national council will comprise representatives appointed by each regional council, together with an agreed number of clergy, of whom one will be the bishop. The office bearers of the national council and one representative from each standing committee will be ex officio members.

5.8 The method of nomination, selection and period of office of the chair of the council will be determined by the council at its first meeting. The ceremonial and representative functions often associated with this role require further thought prior to drawing up the Act of Union.

5.9 The bringing together of the work of the present **national committees** of the participating churches will be an important part of the uniting process.

Ministries for mission

6. Ministries for mission: the ministry of all the baptised

6.1 The ministry of the whole people of God underpins the SCIFU proposal for particular ministries in the united Church. As *Deacons for Scotland?*, the 1990 report of the Multi-lateral Church Conversation, states:

"Relatively very few of the Christians are ordained, and they are ordained in order to serve, build up and equip the whole community of the baptised for its mission It is all followers of Christ, not just the tiny minority of them who are ordained, who are charged by Christ to be salt to the world, light to all the world, yeast to leaven the whole lump of dough." (p 36 – also quoted above in 2.5)

6.2 Appendix one to the SCIFU proposal, entitled "*Servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God*" (1 Corinthians 4.1): A SCIFU reflection paper on the ministry of Word and Sacrament, shows how much broader and more inclusive the Church's understanding of ministry has become over the last half-century and how baptism has come to be recognised as the real entry into ministry.

6.3 This ministry of all the baptised is expressed corporately, as a ministry of the whole Church, sent both to preach the Gospel to all nations and to be, in the quality of its life, the product of that Gospel. The priesthood of all believers is one of the Biblical images which depicts the corporate responsibility of the Church to stand before the face of God as representative of all humanity and to speak to the human race from God.

6.4 There is, however, also the ministry given to every individual member of the Church, none being without gifts from the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 12:7). This ministry includes the worship of God both in private and in public, Christian loving service both within the family of the Church and to the community at large, and the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ through evangelism.

6.5 In the very passage in which St Paul asserts that “in each of us, the Spirit is seen to be at work for some useful purpose,” he goes on to give nine examples of gifts of the Spirit which are given, not to all Christians, but to particular individuals – ministries which are to be exercised for the sake of all. Throughout the history of the Church, as at the present, the gifts of the Spirit are generously bestowed by God and those gifts are exercised, in the vast majority of cases, by Christians who are not ordained.

6.6 Nevertheless the SCIFU proposal also recognises that the Church has never been without persons holding specific authority and responsibility (see above 2.6) and the sections which follow make proposals for those particular ministries in a united Church.

7. Ministries for mission: elders

7.1 All the participating churches recognise in their present life that there is in every local congregation a group of Christians who are mature in faith and who share with the minister of Word and Sacrament in the leadership and pastoral care of the congregation. Some are called elders, meeting together in the Kirk Session, some pastoral visitors, some class leaders, some members of the Vestry, some stewards. How these people are chosen, what authority they have, how that is recognised and for how long they remain in office varies between the church traditions, and even within one church. What is clear is that these people, separately and corporately, make a vital contribution to the life and witness of the Church.

7.2 These leaders are also the pool from which the congregation chooses its representatives to the wider Church, precisely because of their maturity in faith and their experience of local leadership and pastoral care. Because these people are such a vital part of the ministry of the church not only locally but also regionally and nationally, SCIFU proposes that they should have one name – elder – which will enable them to be recognised throughout the united Church.

7.3 Eldership is a treasured inheritance from the Presbyterian tradition in both the Church of Scotland and the United Reformed Church. It is a corporate ministry, with the minister as both leader and as part of the body. It is a ministry of leadership and pastoral care in the life of the local congregation. In the united Church, those chosen by the church meeting to form the congregational council will be regarded as elders. Local congregations may choose, locally, to call them and to call the council meeting, by a name from their present tradition. However, the representatives of the congregational council who are then chosen to serve on the maxi-parish council, and those chosen by that council to serve on the regional council, and those chosen by the regional council to serve on the national council, will be known as elders.

7.4 Eldership is not simply about function. It is a particular ministry, related to the ministries of deacons, ministers and bishops and, like them, derived from the ministry entrusted to the whole Church. Elders are chosen for their Christian maturity, which may already have shown itself in youth or children’s work, in pastoral care, in wise financial work, in thoughtful administrative skills, in authorised lay preaching, in community work, in the world of work, in the encouragement of the music of the church, in being an encourager of others. In the Church of Scotland and the United Reformed Church elders are set apart by prayer in the context of worship and thus ordained to this service. In some parts of those churches elders serve for as long as they are physically able. In other parts, they serve for an agreed term, and then, following a sabbatical period, may be chosen again for active service. However, in both churches the elder remains an elder, whether currently serving or non-serving. Christian maturity does not end with a term of service.

7.5 It will be for each congregation to decide on its pattern of eldership. All members of the congregational council will, however, be set apart with prayer in the context of worship and recognised by the whole Church as elders – although they may be known in the congregation by another name. (see 7.3 above) That setting apart will be life-long, although service on the congregational and maxi-parish councils may be termed.

7.6 As the representatives of the congregational councils work together in the maxi-parish council and in the regional and national councils, they will bring the riches of all their traditions of lay leadership with them. This will contribute to the ongoing development of the ministry of the elder.

8. Ministries for mission: deacons

Note: this section does not refer to those in both the former Congregational Church and the Church of Scotland who were called ‘deacons’ and had or have leadership or practical management roles in the local congregation. This section refers to the order of deacons in three of the churches, and the Church Related Community Workers in the United Reformed Church.

8.1 The question of how the united Church might reflect the various traditions of leadership both in the local and wider Church is a very sensitive issue because it is part of every member’s local church experience, and perhaps part of many members’ family history. The question of the place of deacons in the united Church is far less emotive. This is for several reasons. Firstly, there have been significant changes in the nature and role of deacons in all the churches during the past 40 years and so there is no long unbroken tradition to defend. Secondly, and related to the first, there is an eager ferment of new thinking in all the churches about the particular ministry of the deacon. And, thirdly, deacons work singly, fulfilling a great variety of roles within particular ministry teams and so variety need not be a problem in the united Church.

8.2 The advice of the 1990 Multilateral Conversation report *Deacons for Scotland*? was:

“The churches should not seek to reach an agreed definition of an amalgamated office of Deacon prior to union, but should agree

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to take a variety of kinds of Deacon into the united Church, in the expectation of further understanding, convergence and renewal after union.” (Introduction page x)

Deacons are, at present, ordained in three of the participating churches but the expectations of their role in the worship life of the church are very different. Nevertheless, there is today a marked convergence in what might be called ‘the spirituality of the diaconate’. All the participating churches understand deacons as being servants of the Kingdom with all its radical critique of worldly power: all understand deacons as go-betweens between the church and its surrounding communities, on the margins, outward-facing: all understand deacons as agents of change, called to a ministry of prophetic action, seeking to transform unjust structures.

8.3 The SCIFU proposal envisages that there might be a deacon in every maxi-parish team. His or her tasks will include encouraging links between the congregations and their local communities and equipping the members for their pastoral outreach, care and prayer. She or he will have a particular ministry to stir up the consciences of the whole people of God with regard to issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation, encouraging them to get politically involved with issues of justice and environmental concern at every level. The deacon will bridge the divide between worship and work, life and liturgy, by her or his own contribution in worship and by encouraging others to make those same links.

8.4 The ministry of the deacon is one strand of the woven fabric of the one ministry of the Church. The deacon will not take over the pastoral visiting, nor encroach on the particular pastoral role of the elder, but will equip and enable those whose role it is. The deacon’s role in worship will be complementary to the role of the lay preacher. The deacon will serve the whole maxi-parish, be part of the ministry team, and be available to all.

8.5 As part of the ministry team, deacons will be members of the regional council. Their selection for training, their deployment and their ordination or commissioning will be the responsibility of the region in consultation both with the local and the national as appropriate.

9. Ministries for mission: ministers of Word and Sacrament

9.1 An understanding of God as Trinity, a loving dynamism of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in relationship, informs the entire SCIFU proposal for the united Church. This understanding points to a church which will echo in its ministerial relationships the Trinitarian pattern of mutually deferential and non-hierarchical communion. This does not refer to parity of ministers, but to each particular ministry sharing in the others. It follows, for example, that the ministry of the elders is not the sole concern of the elders, nor is the ministry of Word and Sacrament the exclusive business of those so ordained. All these particular ministries are derived from the ministry given by God to the whole Church. The Church, in turn, entrusts particular ministries to those with the gifts and calling for them.

9.2 In 1972 The Multilateral Church Conversation formulated *A Scottish Consensus on the Presbyterate*, recording agreement on the seven-fold role of the Presbyter/Minister/Priest. That consensus is quoted in full and set in the context of the SCIFU group’s theological reflection on the ministry of Word and Sacrament in appendix one. The SCIFU group affirms much of that consensus, but adds, before all the other seven aspects of the role of the minister of Word and Sacrament, the role of serving the Church in leadership in mission. That role will be exercised through the maxi-parish ministry team, as well as through the particular congregation(s) for which the minister has special care, and through the regional and national councils.

9.3 Ministers of Word and Sacrament in the united Church will normally work in ministry teams and will be called to maxi-parishes, although with primary responsibility for particular congregations. The pattern of leadership within the maxi-parish ministry team will be established when the maxi-parish is first set up and will vary from parish to parish. A new flexibility will be necessary, as ministers may be called to lead worship in a tradition not their own. Working with a church meeting in every congregation may be a new experience for some ministers. Others may find the traditional relationship between the congregational council and the minister to be a somewhat different one to that to which he or she is accustomed. The principle of local diversity for congregations and maxi-parishes will demand a breadth and catholicity from ministers, but will also offer the support of a team and refreshing new ways of being the Church.

9.4 The minister of Word and Sacrament and any family, along with the rest of the ministry team, will receive pastoral care from the bishop. Advice, encouragement, spiritual counselling, and support in times of difficulty will be offered through regular meetings.

9.5 A critical question for the establishment of the united Church is the mutual recognition of the present ministers of Word and Sacrament from the four churches, and the agreement on procedures so that ordinations after union will be fully acceptable to all four traditions.

9.6 Since 1984, those churches participating in the Multilateral Church Conversation, with the exception of the Scottish Episcopal Church, have agreed a *Joint Statement on Mutual Recognition of Members and Ministries* which permits ministers of each church to “exercise all aspects of their ministries, including the celebration of the sacraments, in any of these churches, when invited to do so and in accordance with the recognised procedures of these churches.” A similar provision is now also available through Canon 15 of the Scottish Episcopal Church which permits someone who has not been episcopally ordained to celebrate the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper in a Local Ecumenical Partnership. At the point when the churches first agree to the uniting process, it is expected that this provision will be extended throughout all the participating churches as a sign and expression of the Scottish Episcopal Church’s commitment to union.

10. Ministries for mission: the bishop

10.1 Mutual responsibility for one another, personally and corporately, within the Body of Christ is the sign of a Church which is modelled on God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This interweaving, this mutuality and reciprocity within the Godhead is the basis for the patterns of ministry proposed by the SCIFU group for the united Church. These patterns are predicated on an understanding of church order as mutual co-responsibility rather than ascending levels of authority.

10.2 All the participating churches have developed, over the centuries, structures of oversight to ensure the peace and unity of the church, to facilitate its mission, to guard its faithfulness to the Gospel, and for the good ordering of its life. For example, the participating churches all recognise the personal leadership of ministers of Word and Sacrament which is then shared with those members identified in each local church as having the Christian maturity for that task. The minister also shares his or her ministry with the whole people of God among whom he or she serves.

10.3 The Scottish Episcopal Church treasures the personal leadership in ministry of the bishop in each of its dioceses. This ministry too is a ministry of personal leadership which is then shared more widely, in this case with both the ministers/priests of the diocese and with the synod. It is another strand in the woven fabric of the ministry of the whole people of God. Although the United Reformed Church, through its experience of Synod Moderators, and the Methodist Church, through its experience of District Chairs, also value personal leadership at the wider church level, it is the Episcopal Church's particular tradition which provided most of the seed-corn for the SCIFU proposal in this area. However, as in the rest of the SCIFU proposal, the united Church will seek to be open to the 'new thing' to which God is calling his people.

10.4 The focusing of oversight responsibilities in one person (whether local minister or bishop) has both benefits and dangers for the Church. Conflict resolution and trouble-shooting can often be most effective when done, confidentially, by one person with authority. A personal leader can, on occasion, give a more prophetic challenge than a council, and society is more likely to listen to a recognised church leader than a council. The SCIFU group, well aware of the dangers of the abuse of authority in the Church, whether by individuals or councils, propose a church order based on mutual co-responsibility for the faithful life and witness of the Church between those called to particular ministries and the synods and councils with whom they share those ministries. (see appendix 2 for a SCIFU reflection paper on the ministry of oversight.)

10.5 The work of the bishop, according to the SCIFU proposal, will be focused at the regional level. He or she will work closely with the office bearers of the region and share his or her authority with the regional council. The particular role of the bishop will, therefore, be closely related to the responsibilities of the regional council. (see section 4 above)

10.6 The bishop will be expected to give personal leadership and inspiration to the region's work of evangelism, fostering and nurturing communities of faith and articulating the demand for social justice for all in the name of Christ.

10.7 The SCIFU proposal sees the bishop as not only a pastor to the pastors and their families, but as extending his or her pastoral care to the maxi-parish ministry teams, and to consultations with the maxi-parish councils.

10.8 He or she will have a particular responsibility, through preaching and leadership of worship throughout the region, and through speaking and writing, to guard, transmit, proclaim and interpret the faith evangelically and prophetically in the contemporary world. A personal voice is more likely to be heard in society than a corporate one.

10.9 A significant part of the role of the bishop will be as a focus of unity for the united Church in the region. She or he will preside at all ordinations of ministers of Word and Sacrament and of deacons. Because of her or his personal knowledge of all the maxi-parishes, the bishop will have an important role, along with others, when there are vacancies in a ministry team. The bishop may also have a role in developing contacts and networks with significant regional institutions.

10.10 Administrative leadership and participation in the government of the united Church will be two more of the bishop's functions, each exercised at regional, national and possibly also international levels.

10.11 Bishops will be elected by the regional council to serve for a specified period yet to be decided. The bishops will meet collegially twice a year for mutual support, consultation and consistency of practice.

11. Conclusion

11.1 The SCIFU group, consisting of duly appointed representatives of each of the four participating churches, offers this proposal to those churches. It is the fruit of seven years' work. The group was instructed to prepare a Basis and Plan for Union. This proposal offers only a few first steps on the way to union, but the group believes it gives a sufficiently clear picture of a model of a united Church for the churches to be able to decide whether or not they wish to pursue this model of unity. The group also believe there is enough local detail for churches in a locality to begin to try to live this model of unity.

11.2 During the seven years there have, inevitably, been some changes in the membership of the group. The list of those who have served and their dates of service appears below.

11.3 The group would like to pay special tribute to Duncan McClements whose untimely death in 2001 deprived the group of a tough presbyterian visionary, a good friend and a committed ecumenist.

11.4 As the group has offered its work at each meeting to God, so now, with the words of a prayer written for the group, it offers this proposal to God.

Appendix I

*O God, Trinity of unity and love,
we hear you calling us
to leave behind the divisions of the past
and find our true unity in you.
Forgive our fears and faithlessness;
open our eyes to your future for your Church;
give us the strength and courage to turn the vision
into reality;
that together we might reveal
your redeeming love to our land.
Amen.*

12 Recommendations

This report calls on the four churches

1. **to reaffirm** their commitment to the goal of full visible unity.
2. **to welcome** the theological principles of the SCIFU report, which are an expression of that commitment.
3. **to approve** the SCIFU proposal in general terms as an appropriate model for pursuing full visible unity in Scotland, recognising that there are many stages in the process.
4. **to initiate** consultation throughout the life of the four churches, and not excluding other churches, in order to share resources and integrate structures, grasping the opportunities arising from the many changes currently occurring in all of them.
5. **to promote and facilitate** the piloting of the model locally and more widely where relations between any of the participating churches are sufficiently developed.
6. **to continue** the search for full visible unity through a new group appointed by the four churches with the remit **to complete** the unfinished business of the SCIFU proposal and prepare a Basis & Plan of Union.

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APPENDIX I***“Servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Corinthians 4.1)
A SCIFU Reflection Paper on the Ministry of Word and Sacrament***

A brief study of the history of ecumenism and proposals for Church union quickly reveals that the question of the ordained ministry, and the way in which leadership in ministry is ordered, have, over the years, proved to be the rocks on which hopes for organic unity have run aground. This has been particularly true in those conversations that have involved the Reformed, Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions and, within a Scottish context, in those discussions and negotiations for union that have brought members of the Reformed tradition – especially the Church of Scotland - and the Scottish Episcopal Church into dialogue¹. On the international ecumenical scene, the publication of the seminal text *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*² in 1982 caused great excitement but, as the responses to the text began to filter through, it became clear that some of the most difficult problems arose out of the dialogue on the ordained ministry³. The Church in Scotland was already aware that this was the case for when, in 1957, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland commended the report entitled “Relations between Anglican and Presbyterian Churches” to Presbyteries for study and discussion, the clear view was expressed that the main obstacle to unity lay in the inter-related questions of ministerial orders and intercommunion⁴. In 1984, the Anglican-Reformed International Commission reported that, “Ministry, which is properly a sign of unity and continuity, has become the most obvious symbol of division”⁵ and, in 1986, similar views became evident following the publication of the report *Christian Unity – NOW is the Time* by the Multilateral Church Conversation in Scotland. Now, sixteen years later, the Scottish Church Initiative for Union is finding that, although questions of intercommunion have been resolved, issues concerning ministers and the ordained ministry remain amongst the most difficult that it has to tackle.

The Church’s understanding and definition of ministry has evolved greatly since the first World Conference on Faith and Order (held in Lausanne in 1927) stated that ‘Entrance into the work of ministry is by an act of ordination by prayer and the laying on of hands to those gifted for the work, called by the Spirit and accepted by the Church’. Today the predominant understanding of ministry within the Church is both broader and much more inclusive than that. All the partner churches within the SCIFU conversations would agree “that ministry is the service of the whole people of God, sharing in the one ministry of Jesus Christ,

sent by the Father in the power of the Spirit to fulfil God’s mission to the world”⁶ and that, as a result, “this ministry is exercised by and through the entire membership of the Church in the course of their daily work in the world.”⁷ This paradigm shift in the theology of ministry indicates that ordination is no longer viewed as the route to ministry – baptism is, and it points towards an ecclesiology that sees baptism as the fundamental sacrament within the life of the Church. In baptism, believers are, through the power of the Holy Spirit, joined to Christ, grafted into Christ, in a mystical and spiritual union and called to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow in Christ’s way. Through baptism God “forms us into the *laos*, the people of God, who as signs and agents of God’s reign participate in God’s mission of reconciling humanity and all creation to God.”⁸ The baptised thus become “servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor 4.1).

The concepts of service and stewardship are vital to a proper understanding of the role and purpose of the Church within the mission of God. Stewardship is inextricably linked to ownership – but the steward is not the owner. To the steward is given the custody and care of that which belongs to the master. Stewardship involves trust and the steward is expected both to comply with the owner’s instructions and look well to the owner’s affairs. The church has been given stewardship of “the mysteries of God” which, in Paul’s understanding, involves secret knowledge of God’s saving purpose revealed in the mysteries of the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.⁹ These things lie beyond the scope of our unaided reason and imagination for they belong to the “secret and hidden wisdom of God” (1 Cor 2.7) yet God has chosen to make them known in the Gospel and, having done so, calls the community of the baptised, to “proclaim and prefigure the Kingdom of God... by announcing the Gospel to the world”¹⁰ – and to do so as servants of Christ.

Servanthood is not a popular model in today’s society. It is “counter-cultural” in an individualistic age where the pursuit of wealth, status, dominance and power are frequently the motivating factors of human activity - yet it is at the heart of the Gospel. Christ, whose ministry the Church is called to share, “came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10.45) and, if the Church is faithfully to prefigure the coming Kingdom of God, she must emulate that ministry of sacrificial service.

1 It is worth remembering that these issues were, by and large, the cause of the mid-17th century disputes that eventually led to the split in the Scottish Church that current discussions are seeking to heal.

2 Faith and Order Paper 111, World Council of Churches, Geneva 1982.

3 See BEM 1982-1990: *Report on the Process and Responses*, Faith and Order Paper 149 WCC, Geneva 1990 p74.

4 See *Reports to the General Assembly of 1959* Edinburgh, The Church of Scotland, 1959 p69 §2.

5 *God’s Reign & Our Unity – The Report of the Anglican-Reformed International Commission 1984* London, SPCK, 1984 p55.

6 See *Reports to the General Assembly of 2000* Edinburgh, The Church of Scotland, 2000 p17/4 §2.2.1.

7 *God’s Reign & Our Unity* p47.

8 *Anglican Ordination Rites The Berkeley Statement: ‘To Equip the Saints’* Findings of the Sixth International Anglican Liturgical Consultation Cambridge, Grove, 2002 p4.

9 See Barrett C K *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* Black, London, 1971 p100.

10 BEM p20

The followers of Christ, in taking up their cross, are called upon to abandon self-interest and follow on the road that leads, ultimately, to Calvary. Doing so, according to Kenneth Mason, plants "an anti-structural mine under the foundations of normal social relationships"¹¹ because of the Gospel's counter-cultural nature. As the SCIFU group has stated elsewhere,

*It is a Gospel of radical reversal in which the last are first and the humble exalted, the underdogs valued and the weak made strong; a Gospel with a world-view where power resides in weakness and money and might do not reign supreme.*¹²

This then is the Gospel entrusted to the "servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God", the Gospel we are called to make known through the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments. Understanding baptism as the sacrament through which the people of God are called to share in this ministry affirms, according to Louis Weil, "that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to all members so that *ministry can be understood as shared by all the people*, whether lay or ordained, each according to the nature of the gifts that the Spirit has given."¹³ Weil also argues, however, that this theology of baptism exposes the fact that, over the years, the Church's distinction between clergy and laity "has led to an implied difference of status within the liturgical assembly...contradicting the unity that baptism creates."¹⁴ His views echo those of John Macquarrie who argues that

...all have received in their baptism a vocation to follow in the way of Jesus Christ, and have received the gift of the Holy Spirit to guide and sustain them in that way...There is no sharp distinction between clergy and laity; they are, in Paul's metaphor, all members of one body, though they contribute to its life in different ways (1 Cor. 12).¹⁵

The members of the SCIFU group would want to affirm this baptismal ecclesiology for it undergirds the theology that informs all the group's proposals for the united Church – not least those relating to its ministerial relationships – a theology that understands "God as Trinity, a loving dynamism of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in a mutually deferential and non-hierarchical communion."¹⁶ However, if lay and ordained all share in a common life and ministry by virtue of their baptism and if, as Louis Weil suggests, "all the baptized are equal and integral participants in [the Church's] common life"¹⁷, we cannot ignore questions about the nature and necessity of any ordination other than the "ordination of baptism". Such questions are not new. As far back as 1969, Steven Mackie wrote

The question 'Why Ordination' is being asked pointedly by an increasing number of theological students, laymen, and younger ministers all over

the world. In discussions in Europe, North America and Asia...the view is expressed that the concept of *ordination* is no longer helpful in understanding the Church's ministry and planning its work...if it means, as the churches have hitherto taught, the conferring of a different status and a permanent function on a select group within the Church, it is both unnecessary and undesirable.¹⁸

The SCIFU group would want to deny any suggestion that there is any such difference in status between those clergy and laity but, at the same time, would want to challenge the claim that, because 'every member has a distinctive gift to offer and service to render to God', then 'every member can fulfil the particular calling of the ordained ministry of Word and Sacrament'. This, it is argued, is an 'all-too-prevalent contemporary distortion of the recovered New Testament emphasis on the ministry of the whole people of God'¹⁹. The distortion arises from a misunderstanding of the nature of ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament – for which the Church herself is largely responsible²⁰ – which the baptismal ecclesiology referred to above seeks to challenge and refute. It cannot be denied that ordination has been (and still is) frequently seen as elevating the ordained above the laity but

...understanding baptism as the foundation of the life and ministry of the church...leads us to see ordained ministers as integral members of the body of Christ, called by God and discerned by the body to be signs and animators of Christ's self-giving life and ministry to which all people are called by God and for which we are empowered by the Spirit.²¹

Within this context, the ministry of Word and Sacrament becomes a ministry of service rather than a ministry conferring status for 'the ordained ministry must always be in service of the ministry of the whole people of God'²². Having said that, it is equally important to remember that the ministry of the whole people of God has never been undifferentiated or egalitarian. Macquarrie points out that

The church, from the beginning, was a community, not just a crowd. A community is not a mere aggregate of persons, but a structured body in which there are organs for oversight and other essential functions. Paul's metaphor of the body, in which the different organs contribute, each in its special way, to the life of the whole, continues to be a profound insight into the nature of the church.²³

Within the community which is the Church, ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament is, therefore, an integral part of 'the ordering of the Church's serving'²⁴ and its purpose 'is to keep the Church faithful to its nature and calling as the people of God in worship and witness, fellowship and service'.²⁵ This echoes the agreement reached by the Multilateral Church Conversation in Scotland

11 Mason K *Priesthood and Society* Norwich, Canterbury Press, 1992 p71.

12 See 'The Scottish Church Initiative for Union: Uniting for Mission'.

13 Weil, Louis *A Theology of Worship* Cambridge MA, Cowley, 2002 p14.

14 *ibid* p19.

15 Macquarrie, John *A Guide to the Sacraments* London, SCM, 1997 p175.

16 See SCIFU – *The Final Report* §8.1

17 Weil *ibid* p19.

18 Mackie S G *Patterns of Ministry – Theological Education in a Changing World* London, Collins 1969 p 57/8.

19 See *Reports to the General Assembly of 2000* Edinburgh, The Church of Scotland 2000 p17/7 §2.3.2.2.

20 See Mackie *op. cit.* Part I Chapter 5.

21 'To Equip the Saints' p5.

22 *ibid*.

23 Macquarrie *op. cit.* p176.

24 'The Doctrine of Ordination – The Report of the Panel on Doctrine to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland of 2000' Edinburgh, 2000 p10.

in its 'Concensus on the Presbyterate' in 1972. That report acknowledged that there was 'significant agreement...on the content of the office of Presbyter' (much of which the SCIFU Group would want to affirm) and stated that,

In our Churches, people are ordained to a multiple role including the following: -

1. *Sacramental* – in all our Churches a Presbyter is the normal president of the Lord's supper and normal officiant in Baptism. In none of them does the ordained minister fulfil these roles in isolation, but in an act of worship in which other Christians have their proper ministry.
2. *"The Ministry of the Word"* – In all our Churches a Presbyter has at congregational level the major responsibility for the Ministry of the Word. In none of them is the work of preaching restricted to the ordained ministers, nor the Ministry of the Word restricted to preaching.
3. *Liturgical* – In all our Churches the ordering of the worship of the local Church is the responsibility in the first place of the Presbyters; but this responsibility as discharged includes fostering numerous other liturgical ministries, e.g., those of organists, members of choirs, lay people preaching and reading the Scriptures, office-bearers on duty at a Service.
4. *Pastoral* – In all our Churches the Presbyter has at congregational level the major responsibility for ensuring that the congregation builds itself up in love. In none of them is his (*sic*) own work of caring regarded as sufficient on its own.
5. *Pioneering* – In all our Churches, the Presbyter has not only a responsibility for the furtherance of aspects of the Christian mission already being undertaken in the congregation, but also a prophetic role of discerning what needs doing that is not being done, and of fostering new insights and new forms of service within the Church.
6. *Universal* – In all our Churches, the Presbyter is not simply an official of the local congregation, but "is both Christ's ambassador and the authorised representative of the whole people of God" (the 1969 and 1970 reports to the Methodist Conference of its Commission on the Church's Ministries in the Modern World). It is in this context that ministerial continuity – the orderly transmission of authority, within and by decree of the Church, through those already being ordained to those being ordained – can be seen as it was seen in the early Church: not as a mechanical guarantee of Apostolicity, but as one outward and visible sign, among others, of the continuance of the Church in the Apostle's faith and fellowship.
7. *Reconciliation* – In the experience of all our Churches, the Presbyterate is constantly used by God to convict those in error, to bring sinners to repentance, and to convey to the penitent the assurance of God's forgiveness. This ministry of reconciliation has to some extent taken different forms in our Churches.²⁶

The implication of this report and other documents produced subsequently is that those ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament are, in the words of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, "persons who are publicly and continually responsible for pointing to [the Church's] fundamental dependence on Jesus Christ"²⁷ – and it is only in so far as the Church is dependent upon Christ that she can be faithful to her calling. Further implications arise from this; firstly that, "ordination involves as part of its essential nature the entrusting of authority to the ordained person to act focally and representatively for the whole Church" and secondly that the ordained ministry is therefore "both a sign of unity in the Church and a means of maintaining it."²⁸ Such leadership authority is never unregulated, however, and those who exercise it are accountable in two directions for, as an aspect of the ministry of Word and Sacrament, the exercise of authority remains a ministry of service,

...derived from, and accountable to, God, exercised through the gifting and enabling of the Spirit. Moreover, the fact that service is the calling of the whole church means that those who lead do so as a part of the church, with an accountability towards the whole church.²⁹

It should also be noted that, within that accountability to the whole Church, those ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament are accountable to each other in the exercise of their ministry of leadership authority – as was the case in the earliest days of the Church (see Acts 15). This model of the ministry of Word and Sacrament reflects "the character of God as revealed in the incarnation" for,

As God in Christ deals with us in a personal way, so all ministry must have a *personal* character, providing in a specific person a focus for unity and witness to the community. As God calls us into a reconciled fellowship, so all ministry must have a *collegial* character – exercised not by one person alone but in shared responsibility with colleagues. As the Church is the body of Christ quickened by the Spirit, so the ministry must have a communal character so that every member is enabled to exercise the gifts which the Spirit gives and so that the whole community is, as far as possible, associated in the process of teaching and decision making. And as the work of Christ was that of the servant Lord who gave his life a ransom for many, so these three characteristics must combine in a ministry of service to the world for which Christ died.³⁰

The SCIFU group believes that this "mutually deferential and non-hierarchical" model of the ministry of Word and Sacrament would not only present a faithful witness to God the Divine Trinity but would also best serve the Church in her God-given task of proclaiming and prefiguring the coming Kingdom of God.

26 See 'Interim Report of the Multilateral Church Conversation in Scotland' in *Reports to the General Assembly of 1972* Edinburgh, The Church of Scotland, 1972 p611/2.

27 *BEM* p21 para 8.

28 *God's Reign & Our Unity* p55.

29 'Ordination in the Church of Scotland – The Report of the Panel on Doctrine to the General Assembly of 2001' Edinburgh, 2001 p8. NB: Although dealt with elsewhere in the SCIFU documents, it is important to note that the leadership authority exercised by 'bishops in presbytery' within the collegiality of the ministry of Word and Sacrament would be subject to exactly the same accountability.

30 *God's Reign & Our Unity* p59.

APPENDIX II

***“Keep guard over yourselves and over all the flock
of which the Holy Spirit has given you charge” (Acts 20.28)***
A SCIFU Reflection Paper on the Ministry of Oversight

Members of the Scottish Church Initiative for Union Group are only too well aware of the difficulties and tensions that surface in ecumenical discussions when questions concerning ministry and ministerial order are discussed. Within the Scottish context, these are brought into sharp focus whenever the issue of oversight (*épiscopé*) is considered and, more particularly, whenever the issue of authorising an individual to exercise the ministry of oversight on behalf of the Church, is raised. It is this subject more than any other that arouses passions, hinders progress and frequently results in stalemate in inter-denominational dialogue. Many of the reasons for this are rooted in the conflicts that raged in the 16th and 17th century Scottish Church and the denominational identities that grew out of them – not least those of the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church of Scotland.

The SCIFU Group is convinced that the Church in Scotland must endeavour to set aside the divisions and schisms of her history and seek to give tangible expression to the unity and identity that all the baptised share in Christ. In line with an indigenous Scottish voice that can be traced back through Robert Leighton of Dunblane (1611-1684) to John Forbes of Corse and the Aberdeen Doctors of the early 17th Century³¹, and along with Frederic Deane, Bishop of Aberdeen in the mid 20th Century, members of the Group share ‘a profound belief in the feasibility of a reunion of our Scottish Churches in days to come whereby no fundamental principle which we cherish would be sacrificed.’³²

Recognising the ‘fundamental principles’ that are involved has led the Group to engage seriously with the question of the place and function of Elders within a united Church as well as the proposed role and ministry of Bishops. In considering these matters, the Group has been seeking to continue the work called for by the General Assembly of the Church Scotland in 1985. That Assembly, when considering *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*³³, resolved ‘to examine the Church’s structure to see whether the communal, the collegial and especially the personal dimension of oversight are adequately discharged’, commended ‘to episcopal churches the eldership as one historical embodiment of that principle’ and undertook ‘to consider whether further development of personal

leadership in ministry at area and regional levels would be beneficial for the life of the Church and the prosecution of its mission to the world’³⁴.

In the past, some quite unjustifiable claims have been made about the nature and structure of the ministry within the Church and appeals have been made to scripture and tradition in an effort to prove the God-given nature of both presbyterian and episcopal forms of church government. Thankfully, the churches have moved a long way since the days when they glowered at each other across the battlements of their respective citadels of certainty and today most would agree that, ‘[t]he New Testament does not describe a single pattern of ministry which might serve as a blueprint or continuing norm for all future ministry in the Church.’³⁵ The results of this consensus can be seen in the mutual recognition of baptism, opportunities for intercommunion, and the acknowledgment of the validity of each other’s ordinations. The significance of these developments should not be underestimated.

The SCIFU Group has concluded that ministry at all levels within the united Church should have a personal, collegial and communal character³⁶ and that, in respect of the ministry of oversight, this would involve the retention of the ministries of both Elders and Bishops within the one ministry of Christ that is shared by the whole people of God. There is also general agreement across the Church that baptism lies at the root of all ministry³⁷ and that ‘all the baptized are equal and integral participants in [the Church’s] common life.’³⁸ This fundamental principle undergirds all aspects of the SCIFU Group’s theology of ministry for ‘just as there is no subordination of being within the triune God, nor, by extension, can there be difference of value of persons before God within the communion of the Church by virtue of our baptism in the triune name.’³⁹ It has to be acknowledged, however, that, within the Holy Trinity, there is differentiation of a relational and functional nature. There is ‘an interweaving of various mutually dependent patterns of saving activity’⁴⁰ but it is an interweaving that takes place within relationships that

31 In the mid-17th Century, writing on a moderate episcopacy, Leighton wrote, ‘Oh when shall the loud and harsh noises of our Debates be turned into the sweeter sound of united prayers for this blessed Peace, that we might cry with one heart and voice to the God of Peace, who alone can give it, *Pacem te poscimus omnes!* And if we be real supplicants for it, we should beware of being the disappointers of our own desires, and of obstructing the Blessing we pray for, and therefore should mainly study a temper receptive of it, and that is, great Meekness and Charity. And certainly whatsoever party or opinion we follow in this matter, the badge by which we must be known to be followers of Jesus Christ is this, that we *love one another*: and that Law unquestionably is of Divine right, and therefore should not be broken by bitter passion and revilings, and rooted hatreds one against another for things about which the right is in dispute betwixt us.’ *The Whole Works of the Most Reverend Father in God Robert Leighton DD* (West W, Longmans, Green & Co, London, 1870) p192. His words are equally relevant today.

32 Frederic Llewellyn Deane (1868-1952) quoted by W G Sinclair Snow in *Frederic Llewellyn Deane* (Edinburgh, Blackwood, 1953) p96.

33 Faith and Order Paper 111, World Council of Churches, Geneva 1982.

34 See *Reports to the General Assembly of 1985* p312. (Edinburgh, The Church of Scotland, 1985)

35 *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* p24

36 For an outline of the Anglican-Reformed agreement on this see, *God’s reign & Our Unity – The Report of the Anglican-Reformed International Commission 1984* p59 (London, SPCK, 1984). For an outline of the Methodist view on the Communal, Collegial and Personal aspects of the ministry of oversight see ‘*EPISKOPÉ AND EPISCOPACY*’, the report of the Faith and Order Committee of the Methodist Church to the Conference of 2000.

37 See *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant* (Methodist Publishing House & Church House, Peterborough, 2001) p45; *God’s Reign and Our Unity* p47; Torrance, T F Royal Priesthood – *A Theology of Ordained Ministry* (T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1993) p63ff; “Servants of Christ and Stewards of the mysteries of God” – A SCIFU Reflection Paper on the Ministry of Word and Sacrament.

38 Weil, Louis *A Theology of Worship* (Cambridge MA, Cowley, 2002) p14.

39 *Eucharistic Presidency – A Theological Statement by the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England* (Church House Publishing, London, 1997) p22.

40 See ‘The Scottish Church Initiative for Union: Uniting for Mission’.

are fully mutual and reciprocal:..constituted by mutual interaction, giving and receiving. The obedience of Jesus to the Father is a freely given commitment, not resigned submission or servility to a greater power. The Father's identity and role in the Trinitarian life is dependent upon loving and free acceptance on the part of the Son and the Spirit.⁴¹

This interweaving, this mutuality and reciprocity within the Godhead is the basis for the patterns of ministry proposed for the United Church which 'are predicated upon an understanding of church order as **mutual co-responsibility** rather than as ascending levels of authority'.⁴² It is **imperative** that this principle is borne in mind when questions relating to the ministry – and particularly the ministry of oversight – are being discussed.

The variety of gifts which God has bestowed upon the Church is her greatest resource in fulfilling her calling 'to be an instrument of God's plan to gather all creation under the Lordship of Christ'⁴³ – but these gifts need to be co-ordinated and their effective use enabled so that 'the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love.'⁴⁴ This co-ordinating and enabling is the function of the ministry of oversight, *episkopé*. It is

a caring for the life of a whole community, a pastoring of the pastors and a true feeding of Christ's flock in accordance with Christ's command across the ages and in unity with Christians in other places. *Episkepe* (oversight) is a requirement of the whole Church and its faithful exercise in the light of the gospel is of fundamental importance to its life.⁴⁵

The members of the SCIFU Group acknowledge that the ministry of oversight has been exercised, in different ways, within each of the partner churches and that, in all of them, the personal, collegial and communal aspects of this ministry are clearly evidenced at the local level⁴⁶. In considering proposals for the exercise of this ministry in the united Church at the regional level, it has become clear to the Group that the collegial and communal elements would be adequately expressed but that, without the ministry of oversight to be exercised by the 'bishop in presbytery', the personal element would be lacking at this level of the Church's life. It is emphasised that this personal ministry would be that of a 'Chief Pastor' and that it would not in any way be a superior, separate or higher form of ministry but would be one exercised within the communal and collegial structures of the Church⁴⁷. It should also be noted that, as an aspect of the ministry of Word and Sacrament, the exercise of the personal ministry of oversight remains a ministry of service,

...derived from, and accountable to, God, exercised through the gifting and enabling of the Spirit. Moreover, the fact that service is the calling of the whole church means that those who lead do so as a part of the church with an accountability towards the whole church.⁴⁸

Furthermore, the Group recognises that the ministry of oversight, as with all ministry, should be exercised in ways that are communal, collegial and personal for:

1. The *communal* exercise of oversight is an expression of the essential conciliarity of the Church.
2. The *collegial* exercise of oversight is an expression of fellowship (*koinonia*) in oversight. It gives an authority beyond that of the individual in oversight... It presupposes conciliarity, the communal form of oversight, complementing and upholding it.
3. The *personal* exercise of oversight gives proper place to leadership in the Church and to the special gifts and callings of individuals...The personal dimension presupposes the collegial and the communal, complementing and upholding them.⁴⁹

In proposing a personal ministry of oversight at the regional level in the united Church, the SCIFU Group acknowledges that there is much work still to be done before the Scottish Consensus on *episkopé* it called for in its Second Interim Report can be produced – and it recognises (and itself struggles with) the anxieties and fears that frequently cloud any debate on this issue in Scotland. In doing so, the Group has recognised that many of these fears are, in fact, 'ghosts of ancient feuds and controversies which in the twentieth century ought to be packed off to the charnel-house to which they rightly belong' and calls on the participating churches to seek to build a 'branch of the One Catholic and Apostolic Church in which *all* that is best in Presbyterianism and Episcopacy [and Methodism and the traditions of the United Reformed Church] will be preserved'.⁵⁰

41 *Eucharistic Presidency* p23.

42 'The Scottish Church Initiative for Union: Uniting for Mission'.

43 'The Report of the Scottish Church Initiative for Union' §2.3.

44 Ephesians 4.16 (RSV)

45 *Together in Mission and Ministry – The Porvoo Common Statement* (Church House Publishing, London 1993) §42

46 See *God's Reign & Our Unity* p58-61

47 For further details of how this would work in practice see 'The Scottish Church Initiative for Union Proposals' §10 and Appendix II and III of the Scottish Church Initiative for Union Second Interim Report (2000).

48 'Ordination in the Church of Scotland – The Report of the Panel on Doctrine to the General Assembly of 2001' (The Church of Scotland, Edinburgh, 2001) p8.

49 *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant* p56. It is worthy of note that almost all ecumenical discussions on ministry since the publication of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* in 1984 have called for this communal, collegial and personal approach to ministry. See, for example, *God's Reign & Our Unity* §92; *The Meissen Common Statement* §15.ix; *Together in Mission and Ministry* §32k.

50 Snow *op. cit.* p96.

Appendix 2

Yardley Hastings Task Group Report

Our vision is to build on what we have, to develop a vibrant, living, purposeful ministry to children and young people. This will be done by bringing people and other resources into formal partnerships.

<u>Sections</u>	<u>Appendices</u>
1 The Resolutions	I Centre Director's Job Description
2 Why the Task Group?	II Centre Chaplain Job description,
3 The Task Group's Appraisal	III Youth Secretary – additional matters
4 Possibilities considered	IV The Executive Committee
5 A developed Centre	V Budget for Development
6 Implementing the Vision	VI Budget for Closure
7 The alternative	VII How the Task Group worked
8 Conclusion	VIII Beyond the present vision

1 THE RESOLUTIONS 11-13 are in the Mission Council report page 41.**2 WHY THE TASK GROUP?**

2.1 Following the review of youth and children's work and after lengthy discussion at the 2002 General Assembly, the following resolution was agreed:

"General Assembly agrees to set up a task group to work with the Youth and Children's Work Committee, the Centre Management Committee, the local Church and the Northamptonshire District Council to appraise the National Youth Resource Centre and explore the future role of Yardley Hastings in the light of the recommendations in the review report, seeking help as necessary from Mission Council and to bring proposals for decision to the next meeting of the General Assembly."

2.2 The Group established by the General Assembly's Nominations Committee consisted of Howard Bridge, (elder from West Midlands Synod), John Humphreys (convenor, minister from Scotland Synod), Deborah McVey, (minister from Eastern Synod), John Peet (secretary, elder from Mersey Synod) and Rosemary Pullen (minister from Wessex Synod).

2.3 We have worked with the partners mentioned in the resolution of General Assembly; we have sought advice from Mission Council. Mission Council has requested that Assembly discusses this report and the future of Yardley Hastings using the procedure of placing alternative resolutions before Assembly. This we do, making it clear that we have concluded that at this time the United Reformed Church should not merely affirm but develop the contribution to youth and children's ministry and that the Centre has a major role to play.

3 THE TASK GROUP'S APPRAISAL

3.1 We were instructed to appraise the National Youth Resource Centre and make recommendations about the future role of Yardley Hastings buildings. Our conclusion is that the National Youth Resource Centre has contributed to work with children and young people and will continue to do so in a way which is VITAL for the church as it develops its understanding, exploration and practice of and ministry with children and young people:

Vision is essential in the life of the church. Much is good in ministry with children and young people but it is a challenging ministry. The Centre will be a place of vision explored and shared, it will relate directly with other places of exploration beyond the United Reformed Church, the children and young people of our denomination will lead and contribute to this exploration and visioning through those inspired by the Centre both in Yardley Hastings and in their home locality.

Investment in children's and youth ministry cannot be quantified, it is essential. The Centre we recommend will be a conscious act of investment in youth and children's ministry by our denomination and enrich the outreach of the church catholic.

Training, development and education are at the core of our recommendations. The Centre will be a place of training and development for children and young people, for those working with them in the church and beyond. The Centre will be a source of education with the specific challenge of exploring the cultures of today's youth; enabling ministers, local church leaders and others to focus on these issues.

Advocacy of children and youth ministry will be strengthened through this place of constant comings and goings. The affirmation of this resource for our denomination, the development of its co-operation with other bodies ecumenically and the constant buzz of interaction with congregations, District/Areas and Synods will enliven youth and children's ministry.

Locally delivered youth and children's work is central to the proposals of the youth and children's work review. The Centre will be pivotal in the development of local leadership, the Centre will be essential in providing encouragement and leadership across the denomination, the Centre will empower youth and children's work across the denomination and beyond.

3.2 This report points to a new and creative way forward for the National Youth Centre at Yardley Hastings with the purpose of supporting ministry with children and young people throughout the United Reformed Church.

3.3 At the heart of this vision is a team, some of whom would work mainly from Yardley Hastings, others of whom would network through Yardley Hastings.

It would include –

- Through regular contact and presence, this team would -
 - be creative in pushing forward boundaries and developing ideas for children's and youth ministry
 - share information and ideas
 - support the programme work of congregations, Districts/ Areas, Synods and the Centre
- Through placement in congregations, some of the young volunteers will stimulate and support children's and youth ministry
- Through the integration of the team and its work, churches will be able to turn to one source – a one-stop portal - for all their children's and youth work resources, information and help
- Crucial research and development in relation to youth culture could be addressed through this sharing and the work of the Centre Chaplain
- Through the Centre itself, a wide range of resources and events will be provided, including:
 - Jigsaws – for youth groups and churches to explore issues of faith and society
 - Youth events - for individuals and groups
 - Courses – to equip, train and refresh those ministering alongside children and young people
 - Support and networking – for employed youth workers
 - Support and networking – for District/ Area and Synod children's and youth workers
 - Training events – for Pilots and other groups

3.4 Much of this work will continue to unfold and develop. It will involve ecumenical cooperation and manifest a deep commitment to dynamic and relevant children's and youth work.

We believe that place is vitally important in the development of this vision. We see the need for a place where –

- staff, young people and children constantly interact
- a sense of community and a broader vision be experienced and caught
- a bridge be built with other groups and organisations
- the vision and quality material is constantly being developed and presented

We believe that Yardley Hastings already provides the ideal foundations for the development of this vision.

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4 WE CONSIDERED A RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES

The Task Group considered the following options for keeping the Centre open:

- The status quo
- A 'do it yourself' residential centre
- Working in tandem with Windermere
- An all age retreat centre
- An ecumenical project

Each had merits, but none offered sufficient justification on their own for keeping Yardley Hastings open.

5 A DEVELOPED YARDLEY HASTINGS

5.1 The Task Group is mindful of four significant issues before our denomination:

- The review of youth and children's welcomed by the 2002 Assembly places an emphasis on developing youth and children's work in the localities where children and young people live. The vision we place before Assembly will support and further this.
- We recognise that our denomination is embarking on a major examination of its life. This is billed as being a radical exploration. It is also billed as an examination which will be carried out in the foreseeable future and not be endless. We believe that to let go of a resource such as Yardley Hastings at this stage would be folly.
- The denomination's budget is tight. For this reason and because we place a time limit on the Centre proving itself, the Task Group's proposals do not involve the denomination in major expenditure, in fact there is some saving for the denomination in the budget (see Appendix V). The Task Group has identified other sources of funding to help resource the mission of the Centre.
- Our urgent need, along with other churches, to explore the theology that underpins our engagement with children and young people as emphasised in last year's review.

5.2 The Task Group, after full consideration and weighing the above range of options, agreed that the recommendation should be one of adopting a radical model. This model

- requires accountability
- demands determination to manage the children and youth service
- enables direct connection and interaction with children and young people
- offers real, tangible, meaningful service and experiences to children and young people
- Builds on the current commitment to children's and youth ministry.

5.3.1 We have concluded that at this crucial time for the United Reformed Church it is right to take a risk. This risk involves entrusting particular people with particular responsibilities and creating the support to enable them to deliver. This risk involves doing our utmost within the confines of being responsible employers to enable the Yardley Hastings campus to become a 'national youth resource centre'. To this end, and within this context, we recognise:

national to mean:

- Assembly
- A meeting place for the whole Church
- A place and a community that is in direct and reciprocal relationship with other Assembly staff, particularly with the community of Tavistock Place

youth to mean:

- Children also!
- A Centre to explore and identify the principles of children's and youth ministry
- A place to equip, train and refresh those engaged in children and youth work

resource to mean:

- People
- A place of knowledge and expertise
- A source of ideas
- A library of many materials
- A place where people turn to
- A point of contact with Assembly staff

centre to mean:

- A living vibrant community
- A place of welcome to children and young people
- A place where Assembly staff and all ages meet, share, interact and inform one another
- A place of welcome to those working with children and young people.
- A place from which personal support, encouragement, programmes and projects are delivered to congregations, District/ Areas and Synods
- A place to which people naturally turn and from which they receive a prompt and helpful response
- A one stop portal for support, guidance and information
- A place for renewal, retreat and inspiration

5.3.2 We recommend the Centre be called: "The Yardley Hastings Centre for Youth and Children's Ministry (United Reformed Church)".

5.4 Key are:

- Centre Director (Appendix I), Centre Chaplain (including the research element outlined in Appendix II),
- The Executive Committee (Appendix IV)
- The commitment of other Assembly youth and children's work staff to the Centre and especially the Youth Secretary (Appendix III) in a coordinating role.
- FURY's continuing enthusiasm and commitment
- People: it is an ecumenical and international place of encounter
- Community Team: The community team should be increased to 12, and whilst having Yardley Hastings as its base, will provide some of the services to the congregations. We envisage that at any one time 50% of the community team will be out in local Churches, with 50% working within the Centre itself. The Community Team will continue to be international. An achievable objective will be the support and development of the whole team, who will share expertise and experiences with each other.
- The Staff: their continued support and commitment
- The local Yardley Hastings Church continuing to build upon the very special relationship that has developed, which has seen the local Church grow in numbers, attracting people with gifts and expertise, primarily because of the existence of the Centre. There are many positive lessons to be learned from this relationship which should be encouraged and supported. The Task Group feels the need to record the patience shown by the local Church, which seems to stretch beyond what anyone could reasonably expect. The local Church has consistently persevered to enable the Resource Centre to work; this needs to be acknowledged.

6 IMPLEMENTING THE VISION

The Task Group commends the following plan (the timing is intentionally ambitious but worth aiming for):

6.1 **Within 4 months:**

- The Youth and Children's Work Committee appoint the Executive Committee and its Convenor (See Appendix IV paragraph 3.)
- The Centre Management Committee hands over to the Executive Committee.
- The Executive Committee and the Officers of the General Assembly work with the Youth and Children's Work Committee to end the posts of Centre Minister and Centre Manager recognising the needs and rights of employees
- The Youth and Children's Work Committee and General Assembly appoint a Centre Director
- The Moderators' meeting seeks a candidate for Minister of Yardley Hastings United Reformed Church and Chaplain to the Centre.
- The Secretary for Youth Work and the Centre Director along with the Children's Advocate, Pilots' Development Officer and the Youth and Children's Work Trainers begin to plan the contribution of the Centre to youth and children's work
- The United Reformed Church should learn to speak of and understand the next five years as an investment in children and young people, an investment in exploring youth culture and ministry and not a subsidy for a set of buildings and a few enthusiasts.
- The Youth and Children's Work Committee, the Centre Director, the Executive Committee and the General Secretariat begin to implement the vision. (These matters may not be tackled immediately, see Appendix VIII below.)

6.2 **Within 7 months:**

- The Director and Executive Committee review all practices of the Centre, including the administrative and domestic.
- Communicate widely a planned programme for the next 12 months
- The Centre Director to consult with ecumenical partners, the Council for World Mission, Time for God, education authorities, General Assembly committees and others to ensure maximum use of the premises

6.3 **Within 12 months**

- The Centre Director reports to General Assembly

6.4 **Within 36 months**

- Youth and Children's Work Committee (through Mission Council) reports to General Assembly on the implementation of these recommendations

7 THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY CEASING TO USE YARDLEY HASTINGS

7.1 The report given to the Assembly in 2002 recommends that the United Reformed Church cease to use the Centre as a resources centre for Assembly youth and children's work. The Task Group has considered and rejected this recommendation but can identify the following reasons for ceasing to use the Centre:

- The Task Group is mindful that there has been no lack of dreams during the last ten years. The vision which enabled

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- the Centre to be established was profound, but the vision has never been turned into reality in its entirety.
- It is clear that the Centre's contact with congregations has been patchy through the years. This is certainly true in its recent history, though there is evidence which indicates that even when most extensively used the Centre did not receive the support of a wide range of congregations.
- Some have argued that the Centre is not value for money and a drain on the denomination's slender resources. The argument is that on average the cost to the Church in latter years of about £300 per 'United Reformed Church' young person, attending the Centre, is too heavy a commitment for our denomination.
- Geography is often cited as an argument about the Centre. This argument could be used wherever such a centre might be located; if people want it they would go for it! (Each time we met in Yardley Hastings we came from Wessex, West Midlands, Eastern, Mersey and Scotland Synods, often by public transport, without any major difficulty). The other aspect of geography is the plain fact that it is more expensive for some people to get to than for others.
- The place has memories, some of which have been negative to the furtherance of a youth centre.
- There has not been professional leadership at the Centre. Again, let's be careful to understand this. The place is partly a hotel; there has been no professional hotel management. The Centre is a youth centre, but there has been no person qualified in youth and community work responsible for running the place and the events. This is not to say that people have not worked hard, nor that those involved have not been professional in their work and ministry.
- Refurbishment of the premises to develop a future role will cost the denomination money at a time when the denomination is seeking to cut back on costs in all areas of Church life.
- It has not worked in the last decade under a variety of leadership and with a wide range of people managing it.
- Closure would be the easiest option for the Task Group. Granted there would be costs (see Appendix VI), there would be personnel issues to work out (about which the personnel office of the United Reformed Church would need to give guidance), there would be consequences for the local congregation (about which the Church Meeting, District Council and the officers of the General Assembly would need to consult and act), but these questions could be worked through by the relevant Councils and personnel of the Church.

7.2. If alternative resolution 2B is approved by Assembly then the consequences are as follows:

- The Central Management Committee should prepare a programme to moth-ball the premises by Easter 2004
- The District Council should call and enable discussion between the Church Meeting of Yardley Hastings United Reformed Church, the Centre Management Committee and the Officers of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church about the place for Church worship and life beyond Easter Sunday 2004
- The budget for this eventuality is in Appendix V, but does not include the cost of holding events/ meetings that would have been held in the Centre.
- The Youth and Children's Work Committee should work with the Centre Management Committee and Officers of the General Assembly to effect this change, recognising the rights and needs of employees and customers.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 The Task Group established by the General Assembly is convinced that at this stage in the life of the United Reformed Church it is **vital** that we not only maintain but risk developing the role and leadership of the Yardley Hastings Centre for Youth and Children's Ministry (United Reformed Church). We thank the General Assembly for entrusting us with this task.

8.2 The Task Group is confident that its recommendation can address the challenge of working with children and young people within our Church. We base our confidence on the enthusiasm and commitment of those who have responded to the call to challenge the recommendation that the Yardley Hastings Centre should no longer be regarded as a 'national resource'. The vision is convincing and financially attainable, particularly so when the contribution from the Church is regarded as an investment, not as a subsidy. However, we do regard this as a bold step to take. We accept that this is not the best of times in which to support a radical model. We believe that should the model show itself not to be able to deliver the services, as detailed, within 3 years, nor reach its potential within 5 years, the door should be firmly closed on this recommendation. We see this period of time being a reasonable period in which to run the recommendation. This time scale also fits in very well with the review being conducted by the General Secretary.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all those with whom we have been in touch and have given of their advice. Particularly we would like to thank the staff at Tavistock Place and Yardley Hastings for their care and hospitality. To mention two people by name, we wish to record our gratitude to both Mr Tim Banks and Revd Liz Byrne for the generous and committed way in which they have worked with us to develop a vision for Yardley Hastings particularly knowing that their current posts would cease to exist. The Task Group is also very grateful for the work undertaken by the Local Action Group which has been made up of representatives of the local Church, the District Council and the Centre Management Committee. We are grateful for the supportive conversations that we have had with the Youth and Children's Work Committee. They, and the review group which reported to them, have made available the material on which their recommendations were based.

APPENDIX I**THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH****YOUTH & CHILDREN'S WORK****JOB DESCRIPTION**

JOB TITLE DIRECTOR, YARDLEY HASTINGS CENTRE FOR YOUTH & CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

ACCOUNTABLE TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY THROUGH THE YOUTH & CHILDREN'S WORK COMMITTEE AND THE DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY. THE YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S WORK SECRETARY HAS RESPONSIBILITY FOR CO-ORDINATING ALL STAFF WITHIN THE YOUTH & CHILDREN'S DEPARTMENT.

PURPOSE OF THE JOB

- To manage the Yardley Hastings Centre for Youth & Children's Ministry, Yardley Hastings. To ensure that effective and efficient use is made of this resource. To ensure that the services available at this Centre and those services provided "in-house" together with those services provided on an outreach basis serve the local churches.
- 1. To ensure that the Centre is run in accordance with the detail and spirit of the report produced by the Yardley Hastings Task Group (March 2003), to ensure that the reviews are held in accordance with that report.
- 2. To ensure that there is a diversity and sufficiency of activities to meet the needs of children and young people, that programmes are produced and developed to meet the ever-changing needs of young people.
- 3. To actively promote the Centre and its services.
- 4. To manage staff, including administrative, domestic, catering and community team members. To ensure that they are adequately supervised, appraised and supported, this to include ensuring arrangements are in hand to deal with their spiritual needs also.
- 5. To work within the youth and children's work team as a full member of that team, sharing in the planning, goal setting and duties to attain the identified objectives. This requires detailed and effective communication with other team members, together with a willingness to share in the team concept.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This is not a comprehensive list of all the tasks which may be required of the post holder. It is illustrative of the general nature and level of responsibility of the work to be undertaken.

- 1. Management.
- The Director will use their experience and expertise to ensure the business success of the Centre in a style of management that is conducive to good care practice. Staff will be enabled and empowered to promote a good quality of care to children, young people and others who use this Centre.
- The Director will ensure that appropriate programmes are developed for users of the Centre and its services, ensuring that such programmes are implemented.
- The Director will participate in the budgetary process for the Centre, specifying aims and objectives, together with areas of service to be developed and the delegation of responsibilities to staff and volunteers.
- The Director will be responsible for the effective and efficient management of the Centre's budget, balancing income against expenditure and taking early and appropriate action against predicted overspends, in consultation with the Deputy General Secretary and the Honorary Treasurer and Financial Secretary.
- The Director is responsible for the management and day to day implementation of the Health & Safety policy and procedures. The Director will carry out risk assessments and ensure that appropriate action is taken to reduce risks to a tolerable level. The Director will be aware of the Fire Policy and the Food Safety policy and procedures.
- The Director will participate in the recruitment and selection of staff in line with best practices and legal requirements.
- The Director will be responsible for the effective allocation of staffing budget hours ensuring that rotas are completed in advance and are in line with relevant legislation (e.g working hours directive)
- The Director will at all times promote good employee relations within the Centre. The Director will develop a motivated team. The Director will deal with problems involving employees at an early stage and will act as advised by the Deputy General Secretary and the Personnel Officer. The Director will be responsible for effective communication within the Centre.
- The Director will ensure that effective induction; regular (not less than monthly) supervision and annual appraisal is conducted of all staff.
- The Director will be responsible for establishing a repair and renewals programme for the Centre, internally and externally. Additionally, for establishing a capital works programme. These shall be submitted through the Deputy General Secretary for amendment/approval.
- The Director will be responsible for the development and implementation of a Quality Assurance programme and establishment and maintenance of Quality Assurance Audits.

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2. Professional.
 - The Director will promote the Centre to a high standard and will develop good relationships within the church and with outside agencies. The Director will maximise every opportunity to develop new contacts and potential service developments
 - The Director will be a full and key member of the youth and children's work team, attending meetings as appropriate and sharing duties within the team as appropriate.
 - The Director will ensure that effective communication takes place with the Chaplain, having particular regard to the spiritual support and needs of all staff and volunteers.
 - The Director will ensure that the administration within the Centre is conducted effectively and efficiently, using IT where available and appropriate.
 - The Director will keep regular contact with the Executive Committee and will attend meetings as appropriate.
 - The Director will play a leading role in identifying the training and developmental needs of staff and volunteers, promoting continuous development in the workplace. The Director will also assist in the training of staff attending training events.

3. Service Delivery

Due to the nature of the service given within and without the Centre, involving children and young people across the wide range spectrum, along with adults there is a requirement for knowledge and understanding of the differing needs of each group, each individual. Some will be vulnerable and require additional care; all will have different needs and experiences.

- The Director will promote the Christian atmosphere of the home, liaising with the Chaplain to ensure that opportunities for exploration of faith or for personal worship are available for individuals, both within and outside programmes. Also, ensure that worship is conducted on a group sharing basis through the day.
- The Director will be required to ensure that the needs of individuals attending the Centre are assessed with resources provided/developed to meet these needs.
- The Director will need to ensure that relevant programmes are developed and implemented, ensuring that feedback is obtained in order to develop/improve programmes.
- The Director will be required to ensure that all those attending the Centre are enabled and empowered to participate in decision making which is relevant to their attendance, age and the issue itself.
- The Director will ensure that the preparation, cooking and serving of food meets the Food Hygiene regulation standards and that menus are prepared which meet the diverse needs of those who come to the Centre.

4. Any other duties appropriate to the skills and experience of the post holder, as instructed by the Deputy General Secretary. However such duties will be reasonable and due discussion will take place.

Prepared by -----

Date -----

A person specification has been worked out

Appendix II

Job Title: YARDLEY HASTINGS MINISTER AND CHAPLAIN

MINISTER OF YARDLEY HASTINGS UNITED REFORMED CHURCH &

CHAPLAIN TO YARDLEY HASTINGS CENTRE FOR CHILDREN'S & YOUTH MINISTRY

This ministry is scoped as a 100% ministry. The appointment to this ministry will be made by the Church Meeting of Yardley Hastings United Reformed Church and the appointment group established through the Children's and Youth Work Committee. The post is open to any minister of Word and Sacraments eligible to seek a call within the United Reformed Church.

This ministry shall be made up of three parts:

- Minister of the Yardley Hastings United Reformed Church
- Chaplain to the Yardley Hastings Centre for Children's and Youth Ministry
- Youth Ministry Consultant

The three elements will and should overlap. Nevertheless it is vital that there is recognition of the three parts. It is important for the life and mission of the local congregation that they know when they are working with the minister, it is important that the minister has significant time with those engaged in the life and ministry of the Centre and it is essential that the denomination recognises the benefits of such research. The Minister/ Chaplain shall seek to continue the deep, special and creative relationship between Yardley Hastings United Reformed Church and the Centre. This relationship is focused in worship during the week and on Sundays, it is focused in the reciprocal support that the one gives the other (congregation/ Centre), it is focused in the many creative and supportive relationships and it is focused in the fact of the very existence of the Centre has been a major factor in the growth of the congregation and in enabling people to continue in their pilgrimage.

The Minister of Yardley Hastings United Reformed Church will be scoped as a 25 % ministry. The Minister will be called by the Church Meeting and exercise his/ her ministry in partnership with the elders, members and community of Yardley Hastings United Reformed Church. The congregation will have prepared a pastorate profile on the basis of which the suitable candidate will be sought. The Minister will be responsible to the elders and Church Meeting of Yardley Hastings United Reformed Church and will play his/ her part in the Northamptonshire District Council and the East Midlands Synod.

The Chaplain of the Yardley Hastings Centre for Children's and Youth Ministry will be scoped as a 50% ministry. The minister will exercise his/ her ministry in accordance to the requirements indicated below:

1. The Chaplain will exercise pastoral care for all those involved in the life and ministry of the Yardley Hastings Centre
2. The Chaplain will exercise care for the spiritual development of the Community Team and for those who use the Centre
3. The Chaplain will have pastoral care for those out-with the Centre, specifically for the community team on placements away from the Centre
4. The Chaplain will be available to support the Centre on a rota basis alongside other staff
5. The Chaplain will be available to lead events at the Centre on roughly the basis of one per six weeks

Youth Ministry Consultant In this part of the ministry we are responding to the invitation to the whole church expressed in the review (General Assembly Reports 2002, p200). We recognise that the invitation was delivered to the whole church, but we also recognise that to get a difficult task done it helps if the Church declares that it lies on someone's agenda. This consultancy will not solve all problems in relation to the Church's ministry with young people, but it should be so designed as to help us in this most testing of pilgrimages. Integral to the role of Chaplain will be the responsibility to act as consultant in Youth Ministry. The Task Group identifies Youth Ministry as opposed to Children's Ministry as it recognises that, already, the United Reformed Church, through the Youth and Children's Work Committee, is being served excellently by the Children's Advocate and the Pilots' Development Officer. There may be additional duties for the Secretary for Children and Youth Work, to have a consultant as is being suggested will be helpful.

There is need for further exploration. The Task Group believes that between Mission Council and the General Assembly it would be possible to explore this side to the proposed ministry in detail. The Minister would need proper support for this and would need to be linked into the work being done by other denominations, further the Task Group recognises that there may well be sources of funding which would provide support for such a ministry. The theology section of the 2002 review is the basis on which this part of the ministry is to be based. The nature of this ministry would depend on the particular skills, experience and personal gifts of the person appointed to the task. The ministry would be designed to help inform and equip the United Reformed Church in this ministry which puzzles so many in these early years of the 21st century.

The elements that of this ministry include:

- An effective support, advisory and reflection group
- Partnership wherever possible with other denominations and organisations
- A clear link to a place of study (there are excellent models of how the church as well as the individual concerned can use study in a mutually beneficial way)
- A continuity between the ministry of Chaplain and the Consultancy work
- The Task Group would seek to limit the amount of time the Minister would be away from Yardley Hastings
- This part of the minister's role should relate specifically to FURY council, FURY Assembly and other aspects to the life of FURY as may develop as a result of the 2002 review and as may be agreed with FURY Council

Support, Advice and Reflection

There is always great danger in the creation of posts which are spread over too many responsibilities and which can result in an unfocused ministry which is satisfactory neither for the minister nor for those with whom the minister is called to serve. It is, therefore, planned that there should be one reference point for the minister that brings together the totality of this ministry. This reference point is to be entrusted to a particular group which shall be known as *The Yardley Hastings Minister and Chaplain Support, Advisory and Reflection Group (SAR Group)*.

Purpose

The purpose of this SAR Group is:

- To hold this ministry together.
- To provide a focus for the Minister to reflect on the totality of this ministry, to seek advice and insight
- To provide regular opportunity focus where the minister may reflect on the direction and emphases in the total ministry and in the consultancy role in particular

Membership

The Yardley Hastings Minister and Chaplain SAR Group shall consist of:

- 2 representatives of the Yardley Hastings United Reformed Church
- 2 representatives of the Youth and Children's Work Committee
- 2 representatives of FURY Council
- 2 representatives of the overseeing body (to be clarified, possibly a college) for the consultancy side of ministry

Appendix 2

- 1 representative of the Yardley Hastings Centre Executive Committee
- 1 representative of the Northamptonshire District Council

This Support, Advisory and Reflection Group shall appoint its own Convenor and Secretary. The cost of its meetings will be from within the Centre budget. It will normally meet at the Centre at least once every two months.

Funding

The Yardley Hastings United Reformed Church will scope 25% ministry and contribute to MMF according to the principles of the East Midlands Synod.

The 50% ministry of Chaplain will be an Assembly appointment, the stipend coming through the MMF of the United Reformed Church, the expenses coming through the budget of the Yardley Hastings Centre for Children's and Youth Ministry.

The 25% Consultancy Ministry will ultimately be the financial responsibility of the Assembly for stipend and the Centre as far as expenses are concerned but the Task Group believes that there is the possibility of external funding for this work. (The Centre Treasurer shall handle the funding of the post.)

Wider responsibility

The Yardley Hastings Minister and Chaplain will be an ex officio member of the Centre Executive, and the United Reformed Church's Youth and Children's Work Committee.

Appointment process

If the Assembly accepts the recommendations of this Task Group and the District Council continues to scope Yardley Hastings United Reformed Church at 25% then the Moderators' meeting should immediately seek suitable candidates for this post, making introductions in the usual way.

The Youth and Children's Work Committee in association with those responsible for the appointment of Assembly staff will arrange for an appointment group to be available to interview candidates when one is identified by the Moderators' meeting. If a candidate is acceptable to the appointment group then the candidate can be introduced to the congregation through the interim-moderator in the normal way. If the Church meeting calls the candidate then the District Council along with the Youth and Children's Work Committee and Assembly Secretariat shall arrange for induction service to take place in Yardley Hastings.

Details and cooperation should be worked out before hand between the interim moderator and the Assembly Secretariat.

The Deputy General Secretary should be the line manager for the Minister/ Chaplain

APPENDIX III

Additional matters for the post of Youth Secretary

The Task Group has suggested the following amendments in light of the decisions about Youth Secretary made by the Mission Council in March 2003.

- The Youth Secretary shall live accessible to both Yardley Hastings and Tavistock Place
- Additional responsibility - also for co-ordinating the work of all Assembly staff working with children and young people.
- Key Tasks, amend key task number 3, to read, "As prima or primus inter pares, to co-ordinate the work of and to collaborate with the Children's Advocate, Pilots Development Officer, The Director and staff of the National Youth Resource Centre, the Assembly responsibilities of the YCWT Team, to liaise with the Chaplain."
- Additionally, to be a full active member of the Centre Executive Committee.

APPENDIX IV

Executive Committee – membership and terms of reference.

1. The Executive Committee has a key role to play in the monitoring and oversight of the Yardley Hastings Centre for Youth & Children's ministry.
2. The Executive Committee has an advisory role to play, it is not in the line management structure, but this is not to minimise its role.
3. The Executive Committee has a membership which includes representatives from the local church (3), the Secretary for Youth & Children's work, The Director of the Centre, a representative from the Youth and Children's Work Trainers (1) together with a representative from FURY council (1). Plus 3 other people chosen by the Youth and Children's Committee for their particular skill(s)/expertise. These appointments will need to live within easy reach of the Centre. Additionally, they should be people who will complement the skills of the Director of Yardley Hastings Centre, taking into account the particular skills and attributes of the Director.

4. The Convenor of this Committee will be appointed by the Youth and Children's Work Committee. However the Convenor will not be a member of the Children's and Young Persons staff group.
5. The Executive Committee will ensure that this centre has clearly as its focus the opportunities for children young people and others who use the centre and its services to explore their faith, ensuring that opportunities are readily provided for private and public worship.
6. The Executive Committee will ensure that there is a robust financial monitoring system and will have as one of its key tasks that of income and expenditure monitoring.
7. The Executive Committee should ensure that it is properly informed and aware of the services provided by the centre, both within the centre itself, together with services given to local churches and elsewhere.
8. The Executive Committee is to concern itself with ensuring that all legislative requirements are being met, be these child care, health & safety, food hygiene, employment related or whatsoever.
9. The Executive Committee is not there to make day to day decisions, nor to usurp or circumvent the role of the Director, or the Secretary for Youth and Children's Work. They are there to complement the skills of the Director and to bring a local, lay element into the planning and performance of the service.
10. The Executive Committee is there to assist the staff, by bringing ideas, views and feedback to the centre, to question and be aware of the activities and the programmes, the plans that are being considered.
11. The Executive Committee is a "sounding board" for suggestions, ideas and general "blue sky" thinking on development of services to young people within our church.
12. The Executive Committee will also concern itself with the breadth of service development within an ecumenical context.
13. The Executive Committee is to monitor the service given at the centre, to satisfy itself that the report submitted by the Task Group to general Assembly, July 2003, is still relevant and being implemented.
14. The Executive Committee is there to assist the Youth and Children's Work Committee and to bring to the attention of this committee any concerns or problems they perceive.
15. This is in no way to detract from the main role of the Executive Committee which is to work with the Secretary for Youth and Children's work, the Director of the Centre, the Chaplain and all others in ensuring that the best possible service is given to all those who use this centre and its services.

APPENDIX V

Budget for Yardley Hastings being developed for a five-year period

The following budget has been developed by the Centre Minister and the Local Action Group in support of the option preferred by the Task Group. Income is shown by activity and where possible an estimate has been made of the number of people who will benefit.

INCOME

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH		£	£
20 internal Jigsaws	(400 people)	16000	
5 Junior Youth Event	(100 people)	14000	
4 Term-time Youth Events	(80 people)	8000	
4 Week-end Youth Events	(80 people)	<u>3200</u>	
	SUBTOTAL	(660 people)	41200
3 FURY Council	(20 people)	2400	
3 Youth Committee	(10 people)	1800	
2 Other Committees	(20 people)	<u>1200</u>	
	SUBTOTAL	(50 people)	5400
20 mobile Jigsaws	(300 people)	<u>5000</u>	
	SUBTOTAL	(300 people)	5000
4 Midweek Adult Courses	(40 people)	2400	
4 Week-end Adult Courses	(40 people)	2400	
12 Evening Meetings	(120 people)	<u>900</u>	
	SUBTOTAL	(200 people)	5700
5 YCWT meetings	(17 people)	2550	
Base for Youth Workers		(10 people)	5000
5 Synod Workers Meetings	(50 people)	3000	
Young Volunteers	(5 people)	3100	
Community Team	(12 people)	5000	
Day Meetings		3000	
Pilots Groups	(140 people)	7350	
Pilots Training	(15 people)	900	
	SUBTOTAL	(249 people)	<u>29900</u>
	TOTAL	(1459 people)	87200

Appendix 2

OTHER CHRISTIAN ORGANISATIONS

General Courses	3000
2 Roots Courses	2400
Time for God	7500
CWM	<u>3720</u>
	SUBTOTAL
SCHOOLS	16620
	38400
OTHER	
Commercial Day Meetings	1850
Friends of Yardley Hastings	10000
Local Church	2340
Other	<u>8650</u>
	SUBTOTAL
	GRAND TOTAL
	<u>22840</u>
	<u>165060</u>

EXPENDITURE

Director	30000
Community Team	20000
Courses	13810
Other facilities	17350
House keeping	19400
Staffing	84000
Charitable Fund	10000
Property Maintenance	32000
Administration	9000
Marketing/development	22100
Other	<u>9500</u>
	TOTAL
	<u>267160</u>
	Less INCOME
	<u>165060</u>
	INVESTMENT required
	<u>102100</u>

URC beneficiaries approximately 1400, i.e. approximately £70 per person.

Please note the Expenditure figures do not include the cost of the Centre Chaplain.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

Office modifications and equipment	20000
Less Resource Centre donation	<u>5000</u>
	<u>15000</u>

BED OCCUPANCY

Currently 40 beds are available for visitors. A larger Community Team and the need for more office space could reduce this number to 30. In 2002, 3331 bed spaces were taken out of a capacity of 13,600, an utilisation of only about 25%. Under the preferred option capacity is reduced and utilisation increased as follows,

Weekend	1640
Capacity	2500
Utilisation	66%
Midweek	3761
Capacity	6000
Utilisation	63%
Total	5401
Capacity	8500
Utilisation	64%

APPENDIX VI**Budget for Yardley Hastings no longer being used by the Assembly**

The following budget has been developed by the Centre Minister and the Local Action Group in support of the option to close and sell the Centre. The costs are those for keeping the property up to the point of sale and agent's fees for preparing proposals for disposal. No value is shown for the proceeds of sale and no costs are shown for re-housing the local church.

It seems unlikely that approval will be given for anything other than use for residential accommodation.

The local church assumes that as they gave the old manse to the Centre they will be given use of the new manse.

To this should be added the cost of housing and running elsewhere those activities/ meetings etc that would normally have been held in the Centre.

EXPENDITURE (£)

	First <u>Year</u>	Subsequent <u>Years</u>	Final <u>Year</u>
Property costs	30000	30000	30000
Redundancy costs	10000		
Administration/management	7000	7000	7000
Agent's fees	10000		
Selling fee			10000
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	57000	37000	47000
INCOME (LOCAL CHURCH)	1500	1500	1500
COST TO DENOMINATION	55500	35500	45500

APPENDIX VII**HOW THE GROUP SET ABOUT ITS WORK**

The Group has met on 12 occasions as a whole (7 times in Tavistock Place and 5 times in Yardley Hastings, usually residentially). It has sought to work in partnership and consultation with the local Church, the District Council, the Centre Management Committee and the Youth and Children's Work Committee. It has sought comments from the whole denomination (through the letters' page of *Reform*) and has listened to as wide a range of people as possible, including Assembly staff responsible for Youth and Children's Work, staff responsible for finance and many others.

The Group has been in communication with ecumenical partners (mainly within England) and with the Council for World Mission. Whilst ecumenical partners have not been able to give specific responses in the time that the Group has had to do its work, there has been general encouragement. We believe that there is a real possibility of building on these relationships.

APPENDIX VIII**BEYOND THE PRESENT VISION**

If you are still reading thank you! The Task Group is grateful for the task set. We were disappointed that Mission Council was not persuaded, but were grateful for the opportunity to revisit how we had presented the initial report. There are two parts to this appendix. The first is to offer to the denomination insights and concerns we have gained through our work. The second is merely to offer further help.

1.1 The model presented not only demands that the right people are within the right framework, it demands commitment and support from all. It demands accountability; it demands determination to manage the children and youth service, so that the Church connects with children and young people, offering them real, tangible meaningful service and experiences; building on the current commitment to children's and youth ministry. The concept of a team has to be demonstrated and managed. All members of the team need to be on the same agenda, all working towards the identified, agreed aims and objectives.

1.2 We believe that the United Reformed Church needs to look searchingly at its approach to management and accountability. Specifically, we believe that the whole of the services for children and young people need to be co-ordinated by a Secretary for Children and Youth Work. The post holder will be professionally qualified and will have proven managerial skills and experience. The post holder will co-ordinate the work of the Children's Advocate, the Pilots Officer, the YCWTs and the Director of the Yardley Hastings Centre. We believe that any management team should relate directly to the Deputy General Secretary, thence to the Youth and Children's Work Committee, through the Secretary for Children and Youth Work. The Youth and Children's Work Committee will retain its responsibility for strategy development, for oversight and monitoring of the performance of the services to children and young people.

Appendix 2

1.3 The Task Group believes that the more robust model would be to place line management responsibility for youth and children's work with the Secretary for Youth and Children's work. However, the Task Group is mindful that this could be too big a step to take at this time, and would not wish to lose the model, because of the debates that would be necessary to adopt this management structure. The Task Group would, however, like this suggestion to be taken into consideration within the review being conducted by the General Secretary.

1.4 We believe that Yardley Hastings should be the base for all Assembly children workers and youth workers, but with many staff out-posted or travelling. We also envisage that in order to ensure effective networking continues with the wider Church, a "hot desk" will be identified in Church House, which will be available to these staff when they come into Church House. We also envisage a two way process and interchange, with the hope that occasionally full Central Church staff meetings will be held at Yardley Hastings. We consider this to be essential in order to ensure there will be no fragmentation.

1.5 We believe that the location of the Assembly Youth Office (by this we mean all youth and children's work staff currently based at Church House) to Yardley Hastings would bring together all the expertise and focus in one place. It would be the one stop portal for the whole ministry of the Church for work with children and young people. Practices to meet legislative requirements (child protection, youth justice etc.) would continue to be developed and published. Resources for working with children and young people in play, workshop and worship will continue to be developed and available. Grant applications and funding opportunities would continue to be noted and catalogued. The spin-offs from having all the resources for this work focused in one place, yet with arms which reach out to local Churches, are immeasurable.

2.1 The Task Group is very conscious that the United Reformed Church does not easily make decisions! One review says one thing and another says almost the opposite! It is easy for us as a Task Group merely to walk away.

2.2 We have a commitment to what we have recommended. We recognise there is risk. We believe it is necessary to appraise the progress that we recommend with rigour.

2.3. We therefore offer ourselves as a Task Group to undertake an appraisal of the Centre's development over the first 36 months, visiting the place and appraising it, after 4 months, 7 months, 12 months and again after 30 months in preparation for the decision that Assembly is called to make in 2006.

2.4 We would offer to do this not to impose our agenda but to give this risk taking venture a chance to prove itself!

2.5 There is no resolution, as we believe that should not be for us to propose.

Appendix 3

Students sent by Synods

NORTHERN

Stipendiary
Jan Maxwell (NEOC)

Non-Stipendiary
Margaret Johnson (NEOC), Yvonne Tracey (NEOC)

CRCW
Helen Stephenson (Northern)

NORTH-WESTERN

Stipendiary
Leoni Betts (Mansfield), John Bradbury (Westminster), Richard Bradley (Westminster), Philip Brooks (Northern), Ruth Dillon (Northern), Gillian Heald (Northern), Richard Howard (Mansfield), John Jarmany (Westminster), Lena Talbot (Northern), Marion Tugwood (Northern), Mike Walsh (Northern)

Non-stipendiary
Sheila Coop (Northern), Lindsey Cottam (Northern), Ann Hufton (Northern)

CRCW
Alison Dalton (Northern), Yvonne Hawkins (Northern)

MERSEY

Stipendiary
Kath Gartside (Northern), Peter Lyth (Queens)

Non-Stipendiary
Anne Bedford (Northern)

YORKSHIRE

Stipendiary
Peter Blackband (Northern), Murray George (Northern), Robert Sheard (Northern)

Non-stipendiary
Geoff Ellis (Northern)

EAST MIDLANDS

Stipendiary
Ed Butlin (Queens), Neil Eldridge (Northern), Marcus Hargis (Northern), Suzanne McDonald (Westminster), Jay Phelps (Westminster), Stuart Turner (Northern)

Non-stipendiary
Jenny Morgan (EMMTC), Alison Termie (EMMTC), Victor Webb (Northern)

WEST MIDLANDS

Stipendiary
Kay Cattell (Westminster), Viv Randles (Northern), Liz Shaw (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary
John Potter (WMMTC)

CRCW
Rosemary Buxton (Northern), Dennis Neville (Northern)

EASTERN

Stipendiary
Susan Challis (Westminster), Peter Clark (Westminster), David Coaker (Northern), John Cook (Westminster), Richard Eastman (Westminster), Heather Kent (Westminster), Susan McKenzie (Westminster), Jenny Yule (Westminster)

Non-stipendiary
Sam White (Westminster)

CRCW
Liz Kam (Northern)

SOUTH WESTERN

Stipendiary
Ruth Browning (Northern), Viv Henderson (SWMTC), Colin Phipps (Mansfield)

Non-stipendiary
Jennifer Kilgour (SWMTC), Peter Scott (SWMTC), Susan Way (SWMTC)

WESSEX

Stipendiary
Bridget Banks (STETS), Lucy Brierley (Westminster), Susan Hall (SURCC), Keith Morrison (Northern), David Poulton (Northern), Jon Sermon (Northern), Christopher Tolley (Northern), Barry Welch (Westminster), Robert Weston (Northern)

Non-stipendiary
Ann Bray (STETS), Clare Callanan (STETS), Gordon Connell (STETS), Colin Harley (Westminster), David Moss (STETS), Alison Toplas (STETS)

THAMES NORTH

Stipendiary
Andrew Birch (Queens), Clare Davison (Westminster), Sheena Dickson (Mansfield), John Mackerness (Westminster), Janet Sutton (Westminster)

Non-stipendiary
Pauline Main (EAMTC), Mark Woodhouse (Northern), Ann Woodhurst (SEITE)

SOUTHERN

Stipendiary
William Bowman (Westminster), Elaine Brown (Westminster), Gordon Brown (Westminster), Kirsty-Ann Burroughs (Synod), Martin Knight (Northern), Romilly Mickle (Westminster), Sara Moore (Westminster), David Morgan (Mansfield), Martyn Neads (Queens), Alan Seymour (Mansfield)

Non-stipendiary
Christine Jefferies (SEITE), Sue Powell (SEITE), Jenny Snashall (STETS), Roger Wood (STETS), Malcolm Wright (SEITE), Ernest Yu (Westminster)

WALES

Stipendiary
Kate Gray (Northern), Brian Norris (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary
Elizabeth Lowder (SMCL)

SCOTLAND

Non-stipendiary
Deborah Anderson (SURCC), Irene John (SURCC)

Appendix 4**Statistics of Students in Training**

	Students in Training				Anticipated entry into URC Service			
	Feb 2000	Feb 2001	Feb 2002	Feb 2003	2003	2004	2005	2006
STIPENDIARY								
Full Time Courses								
Mansfield College	10	10	9	6	1	2	2	1
Northern College	28	29	25	24	9	9	2	3
Queen's College	3	3	5	4	1	1	2	
Scottish United Reformed & Congregational College			3		3			
Westminster College	32	31	27	23	7	8	5	1
Part Time Courses								
NEOC		1	1	1		1		
STETS				1				1
SURCC				1		1		
SWMTC				1				1
Synod	1	2	1	2	2			
Sub total	74	76	68	66	20	24	10	9
CRCW								
Northern	7	6	5	6	1	1	1	3
NON-STIPENDIARY								
Part Time Courses								
EAMTC	6	5	5	1				1
EMMTC			2	2			2	
Northern College	14	10	6	7		4		3
NEOC	1	2	3	2		2		
SAOMC	2	0						
SEITE	1	3	3	3		2		1
STETS	4	6	8	7		3	3	1
SMCL			1	1			1	
SWMTC		1	2	3		1	1	1
Synod				2	2			
WMMTC	4	5	1	1				1
Full Time Courses								
Mansfield	2	1						
Queens	1	1						
SURCC	4	4	3					
Westminster		3	4	3		1	2	
Sub total	39	41	38	32	2	13	9	8
Total	120	123	111	104	23	38	20	20

EAMTC East Anglian Ministerial Training Course
 EMMTC East Midlands Ministry Training Course
 NEOC North East Ordination Course
 SEITE South East Institute Theological Education
 SAOMC St Albans and Oxford Ministry Course

STETS Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme
 SWMTC South West Ministry Training Course
 WMMTC West Midlands Ministry Training Course
 SURCC Scottish United Reformed and Congregational College
 SMCL St Michael's College Llandaff

Appendix 5

Reports from Colleges

MANSFIELD COLLEGE

1.1 With the Ministerial Training Course having weathered some significant changes in staff in previous years, we are pleased to report that in the 2002/03 academic year we have welcomed a period of relative stability. The only newcomer among staff was the Revd Erna Stevenson who has filled the honorary post of Chaplain to Ordinands that had been vacant since the Revd Dr Susan Durber relinquished it the year previously. The Director, the Revd Dr Walter Houston, and the Assistant Director, the Revd Julian Templeton, have established a good working relationship and have overseen, with colleagues at Regent's Park College, a complete revision of the pastoral studies programme. To date the new programme that began in September has been well received by Mansfield ordinands. It is composed of five strands: worship and preaching, pastoral work, mission and discipleship, spirituality and personal development, and denominational requirements. Each strand and each module has a detailed and specific aim and objectives. Both ordinands and staff have found that in keeping these aims and objectives to the forefront of each module the content, and subsequently the benefit, of individual classes has improved. The advantages to Mansfield ordinands of the combined pastoral studies programme with Regent's Park College come in the form of larger class sizes, enrichment of United Reformed Church and Congregational Federation ecclesiologies by Baptist perspectives, and access to Regent's Park College teaching expertise. The specific denominational requirements of the United Reformed Church and Congregational Federation are taught separately

1.2 The stability of staff, the welcome addition of Erna Stevenson as Chaplain to Ordinands, and the good reception of the new pastoral training programme has been mirrored by a more cohesive and mutually supportive ordinand community. This has been particularly in evidence during the Hilary Term when Revd Julian Templeton was Acting Director of Ministerial Training whilst Walter Houston was on sabbatical. The cohesion and mutual supportiveness of the ordinands has been paralleled by an increase in the interaction of ordinands with the majority of students within Mansfield studying non-theological subjects. This informal mixing of ordinands with informed and intelligent students of varying subjects with varying beliefs results at times in a real testing of the ordinands' faith and vocation. The ministerial training staff believe that this is an entirely healthy situation and is in line with the vision of former Principal John Marsh when the college began to expand in 1955. We believe this is part of the unique ministerial formation experience that Mansfield offers along with its tutorial method of theological learning and its access to the vast learning resources of the University of Oxford.

1.3 All but one of our ordinands are matriculated to the University and are currently studying for the Bachelor of Theology degree. They are tutored in college by Walter Houston in Old Testament, Ms Lynda Patterson in New Testament whilst the Revd Dr John Muddiman is on sabbatical, and Ms Peggy Morgan in World Religions. Staff at Regent's Park College tutor ordinands in Pastoral Theology, Christian Doctrine and Ethics. Other subjects are taught to ordinands by tutors from a range of Christian denominations drawn from the wider university. We welcomed Dr Diana Walford as the new Principal of Mansfield College following the retirement of David Marquand. She has already made her mark on her leadership of the college and has shown interest in and commitment to Mansfield's work of ministerial education and training.

1.4 We farewelled three of our leaving ordinands at the end of the last academic year: Michael Hopkins to Twyford and 'Commitment for Life', Angela Steele to Larkhall and Rush Hill, Bath, and Christopher Hucker to a pastorate in the United Church of Christ, USA. Over the summer vacation two of our ordinands participated in the World Church programme, one visiting Ghana and the other Jamaica. The difference in perspective and the broadening of horizons occasioned by these visits greatly enriched the ordinands' vision of the Church and strengthened their call to ministry. Another of our ordinands will be visiting Korea over the coming summer and we similarly look forward to the enrichment that experience will bring.

1.5 At the beginning of the present academic year we received just one new ordinand, bringing our present total of ordinands to 9, including our exchange student from Bern. This includes the one 'vacant' year when there was no intake of ordinands. It is our hope and belief that we will begin to increase our ordinand numbers again as the church recognises the unique environment Mansfield offers for ministerial education and training and entrusts to us candidates who will flourish in such an environment.

1.6 We are pleased to report that the two United Reformed Church Ministers and one other studying part-time for the Master of Theology in Applied Theology will be joined next year by some new applicants to the course. We welcome applications to this course from United Reformed Church Ministers and others who have good degrees in theology.

1.7 Please pray for the ministerial training course, its staff and its ordinands, for the consolidation of its ministerial training, the enrichment of its worship and spiritual life, the strengthening of its community, and the appreciation of its distinctive contribution to equip those called by God to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments in the United Reformed Church.

NORTHERN COLLEGE (UNITED REFORMED AND CONGREGATIONAL)

2.1 At the start of the 2002-3 session student numbers were similar to the preceding year when we experienced a significant decrease. Given the large numbers who will leave at the end of this and next year's session the College faces the prospect of a drastic reduction in its student community due to the small number of candidates now coming forward to prepare for ministries within the United Reformed Church. In the process of three years the College has moved from a position of strength to one fearful of the future. And we are not alone.

2.2 The present financial situation caused us to drop our plans to increase college staffing with the appointment of a Tutor in Old Testament studies. We are grateful to those who have helped on a short-term basis with teaching in this field, not least Roger Tomes, a former member of the college staff. In the long term, our biblical studies provision will now be enhanced by the Partnership appointment of an Old Testament Fellow.

2.3 While we have encountered the usual frustrations in the Partnership for Theological Education, most noticeably due to the refusal of planning permission for the favoured site of the proposed Learning Resources Centre, a number of noteworthy developments have occurred:

2.3.1 We continue to serve the needs of the churches by offering them expertise in lay education and the in-service preparation of their ministers. Further diversification by the Partnership involves the start of a new part-time MA course for teachers in Autumn 2003

2.3.2 In the light of recent racial hostilities in some Lancashire multi-ethnic towns, the Partnership held a very successful course in Oldham exploring the theme of Christianity and Islam.

2.3.3 Following the success of *Encircling Prayer* we are compiling a second volume of worship resources written by Partnership staff and students.

2.4 All last year's leavers received calls to churches. The following settlements have taken place:

Graham Adams (SM)	Lees Street Congregational, Openshaw (half-time with post graduate research)
Dill Brace (SM)	Ely Pastorate: Grand Avenue/ Saintwell/Ely Methodist, South Wales District, URC
Jane Campbell (NSM)	Lincoln District, URC
Helga Cornell (SM)	Sefton Road URC, Morecambe, Lancaster District, URC
Meryl Court (NSM)	Trinity and Bricket Wood, St Albans District, URC.
Nick Mark (SM)	Felixstowe and Saxmundham, in the Ipswich and Colchester District, URC.
Cat Morrison (SM)	Dudley and Langley Green in the Worcester and Hereford District, URC
Heather Pollard (SM)	Aireworth Group (URC/Baptist), Bradford District, URC
John Saunders (CRCW)	Penhill, Swindon NE District, SW Synod URC
Lena Talbot (NSM)	Re ridge Fold, NE Lancaster District, URC
Mike Thomason (SM)	Bolton West Pastorate URC, NW Manchester District, URC

Lesley Whiting (CRCW) South Leeds Group, Leeds
District, URC

We bade them farewell at our ecumenical Valedictory Service when the guest preacher was the Revd Roberta Rominger, Moderator of the United Reformed Church Thames North synod.

2.5 We continue to feel very much part of the world church. Several students have spent time abroad, mostly in Third World countries. Some churches and District Councils have been hearing about their adventures and what they have learned. Most visits were from one month to three months in length: Kate Gartside visited a L'Arche community in India; David Howarth visited Moravian Settlements in Cape Town, South Africa; Ruth Dillon, Chris Tolley and Robert Weston visited Jamaica; Martin Knight visited Zimbabwe, and Kate Gray spent the year in Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa. If you would like to read about their visits, a report is available from the college, or they might be willing to come to speak at church events. We also benefit considerably from the presence of the Revd. Li Hau Tiong from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. Hau Tiong is with us for two years completing doctoral studies.

2.6 The staff continue to pursue research interests in their respective fields. David Peel's *Reforming Theology: Explorations in the Theological Traditions of the United Reformed Church* started as his sabbatical project in 1998. During his sabbatical this session he has completed an extensive survey of the theology of Lesslie Newbigin, as well as written an extended essay on 'Ministry for Mission'. Jan Berry is pursuing research for a PhD at Glasgow University into women's liturgies and rituals of transition. Lesley Husselbee is completing an MPhil in theological education. John Parry, meanwhile, has conducted research on Jihad, mission education in CWM related theological colleges and Sikhism in the Diaspora. He is also an External Examiner at the University of Edinburgh and Birmingham. Meanwhile, the staff also continue to make their contribution to the wider church. Lesley Husselbee has worked with Lay Preachers and contributed to a CME reading party. Jan Berry shared leading worship at CWM's 'Window on the World' last summer, contributed material for the new United Reformed Church Service Book and to 'Roots' and is a theological consultant for TLS. John Parry is a member of the United Reformed Church Training Committee and is about to become Convenor of the Interfaith Committee and Chaplain of FURY. David Peel has recently finished a term on the Doctrine and Worship Committee.

2.7 Lesley Husselbee has worked enthusiastically on the CRCW programme which has now received validation by the England Standards Board (for Standards in Community and Development Work Training). We now intend to develop third level community work modules so that many of our future CRCWs will leave college with degrees (the community work requirement for Scotland if not England) like most of their stipendiary ministry colleagues.

2.8 Under the supervision of the Mona Powell Fellowship bursaries were awarded to Graham Adams (Congregational Federation) and Doug Gay (United Reformed Church) to help fund their PhD work.

2.9 The Friends of Northern College have held successful reunions of former students of the Yorkshire, Paton and Lancashire colleges, and they will host the usual gathering at this year's Assembly in Portsmouth.

THE QUEEN'S FOUNDATION FOR ECUMENICAL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

3.1 The Queen's Foundation, comprising the Queen's College, The West Midlands Ministerial Training Course and the Research Centre, continues to operate a unified centre for theological learning education and ministerial training. As a Foundation we are dedicated to excellence in theological education and formation for ministry in partnership with our sponsoring churches – the Church of England, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church. We believe that our ecumenical and theological diversity, together with our setting within the multi ethnic and multi faith city of Birmingham, provides a rich and challenging resource for students to explore the distinctiveness of their own tradition and identity, as well as fostering lively dialogue and deep respect for the traditions of others.

3.2 We are delighted that the Reverend Elizabeth Welch has taken over as President of Governors. Elizabeth's regular informal visits to the Foundation to talk with Staff and students have been much appreciated and provide an important link between the Governing body and the ongoing life of the Foundation.

3.3 **Students** - This year we have approximately 165 students studying at the Foundation. There are 63 students at the Queen's College with 43 full-time students, 61 students on the WMMTC, and 41 studying with the Research Centre. Of these, 14 are affiliated with the United Reformed Church, with 7 specifically training for ordained ministry, 6 as clergy doing in-service studies and 1 lay student.

3.4 As in previous years our Foundation life has been enriched by student exchange visits and by the presence of a number of research students from overseas. Stephen Samuel from Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary was with us in the first term and Matshedesho Molale a Methodist minister from South Africa is with us for the whole year. Catherine Beasley and Rita King from the College and Janet Waterfield from the WMMTC went to South Africa in the summer to do placements there. Last term Chandrika Perera lived at TTS and Karen Jobson at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey attending the Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies. We also welcomed Maggie and Theo Singaram and David and Sherin Joy and their family, to live in the community, Charles and David both working with the Research Centre.

3.5 **Staff** - We are looking forward to welcoming David Hewlett as principal of the Foundation at the end of April. David comes to us from the South West Ministerial Training Course. He has a particular concern that we develop the Foundation as a centre of excellence and a resource for the whole church in Black and Asian theology. He is committed also to an honest embracing of the reality of difference within the Foundation, so that we do not merely learn to live with it, nor seek to conform the other to ourselves, but, to use David's own words, 'that we welcome the space opened up between the other and self in which the spirit of God is at work to lead both to new places'.

3.6 As a Foundation we have been delighted to welcome Stephen and Judith Burns into the community. Coming from the North East, Stephen has taken up the post of Tutor in Liturgy for the Foundation. He brings a wealth of interest and expertise with him, and we are

already beginning to benefit from his presence. We are also pleased to be able to announce the appointment of Tony McClelland as the next Senior Methodist Tutor. Tony is a Methodist minister of some experience both in circuit and theological education, at present serving on the staff of the Northern Ordination Course. Again, Tony will bring much to our common life as he also provides the link between Queen's and the Methodist connexion.

3.7 **Research** - The Research Centre currently has 35 students, registered with the University in association with the Foundation, studying for postgraduate degrees. Staff research also continues in the course of the busy life of the Foundation. Anthony Reddie, our Research Fellow, launched his new book 'Nobodies to Somebodies: A Practical Theology for Education and Liberation' on 3rd March, with a discussion, hosted by the Research Centre. Several other staff are due to publish books over the coming months.

3.8 The MA/PDATS programme continues to grow and this year has seen the introduction of two new areas for study, Christian Education and Mission. We continue to welcome ministers of all denominations coming to take opportunities provided in the Foundation for supervision, not to mention the excellent library facilities.

3.9 **Worship and Spirituality** - Visiting president and preachers at Foundation services, in their sharing of our journey, enhance our spirituality and deepen and challenge our faith. Worship, together as a Foundation, and separately as College and Course communities, lies at the heart of our life. During this term we have welcomed The Revd Ian White, president of the Methodist Conference and The Revd John Waller, General Moderator of the United Reformed Church to Chapel. Both of them willingly spent time with students of their respective denomination and faced challenging questions from them. Their visits brought us encouragement and lots of food for thought.

3.10 Recent guests to the College Community Meeting have included The Revd Dr Rob Frost, speaking on 'New Age Spirituality' and Mrs Margaret Sentamu who guided our thoughts on 'Self-Awareness and Spirituality.'

3.11 Patterns of community life in College and Course are changing rapidly and we are aware of the constant need to evaluate our corporate spiritual life. Worship in an ecumenical community is inevitably a source of some tension and debate, but at the same time deeply enriching.

3.12 **Buildings and Facilities** - We have an ongoing programme to upgrade our facilities. Over the summer some important work was done on our main teaching room – the Wakefield Room and we plan to develop the Handsworth Room over the summer to accommodate a growing number of students. With the help of The Friends of Queens we were able to buy a new set of (more comfortable) chairs for the Chapel. We hope to upgrade our IT facilities soon. We continue to give attention to issues of Health and Safety.

3.13 **Conclusion** - We continue to value our ongoing links with the United Reformed Church. We are always delighted to receive visits from members of our partner churches.

SCOTTISH UNITED REFORMED AND CONGREGATIONAL COLLEGE

4.1 The College Community - We welcomed as ordinands in training this year, Mrs Deborah Anderson and Dr Irene John; both are women with excellent academic backgrounds – Deborah in mediæval Hebrew exegesis and Irene in Christianity and non-Western indigenous religions. We are looking forward to them being joined in September of this year by Mr Angus Paddison who is currently completing a PhD in New Testament and Mr Craig Jesson, who graduated recently in Human Resource Management. Early this year, we anticipate that Pastor Jack Muir will take up further training as a number of his colleagues in the former Scottish Congregational Church pastorate have done.

4.2 The popularity and quality of Scottish universities as research institutions brings us indirectly a real bonus. Over the last three years, we have had with us Ms Sarah Hall, a United Reformed Church ordinand undertaking a PhD at Edinburgh University around issues in Bible study work. As she completes her doctorate and returns to Mansfield and London to undertake her internship, we wish her well and express our appreciation of her contribution to the life of the College and of the United Reformed Church synod. We have been glad to learn that Ms Suzanne McDonald, an ordinand at Westminster College, will be coming to Scotland to take a PhD at St Andrews University and we look forward to having and being a link for her.

4.3 The Revd George Sykes, college tutor, is retiring from pastoral charge at Newburgh United Reformed Church, but we are glad that his retirement does not extend to his college work.

4.4 Continuing Ministerial Education - Our core mission is to provide training for ministry, but we are more than conscious that such training can never be confined to that small (but significant) part which occurs prior to taking up service. We are committed to lifelong learning as an ideal and as a practice and would wish to play a full part in responding to needs for continuing ministerial education and other such needs.

4.5 We believe that we have particular strengths around such areas as

- 4.5.1 Management and organisational development
- 4.5.2 Adult learning
- 4.5.3 Community development
- 4.5.6 Equality and inclusiveness issues
- 4.5.7 Oral approaches, e.g. storytelling
- 4.5.8 National identities and culture
- 4.5.9 Spirituality.

4.6 If the Church is to be a learning community, then its theological colleges and other learning resources ought to be at the heart of its life. We look forward to playing our part in that.

4.7 Scottish Churches' Open College - The impending closure of Scottish Churches' Open College is a matter for much sadness and regret. This was a brave and creative approach to doing theological education, particularly for lay people, both within the churches and beyond. Its courses brought together students and others from a number of denominations to learn together and to take back that cross-fertilisation into their churches.

4.8 The dissolution was precipitated by a significant and progressive reduction in grant from the Board of Parish Education of the Church of Scotland, the main funder who

was also at the core of the SCOC organisational structure. It is necessary to recognise both the shared vision that brought SCOC into being and the particular contribution of the Church of Scotland financially, organisationally and in terms of enrolling students. Equally, one must be conscious of the immense pressures that there are at present on budgets in all church denominations. An ecumenical endeavour, which is so heavily dependent upon a sole funder, has inevitably an inherent and fundamental weakness. The realities of church life in Scotland however make this a recurrent feature of many such projects.

4.9 One has to be concerned therefore not only at the loss of a significant development in liberal lay theological education in Scotland but also for the loss of a place of ecumenical partnership. It may be therefore that there are significant lessons to be learned, not only about how we do education collaboratively, but also about how we work ecumenically on other fronts.

4.10 This College was not formally a partner in SCOC, though General Assembly will be aware that its synod of Scotland was a member. We were associated with its life in a number of ways, however. In particular, we had recognised SCOC as a resource for ministerial training, especially where a distance learning route was required. We had hoped that some of the modules might also have been attractive in the context of continuing ministerial education. We are actively exploring issues with a number of potential partners.

4.11 Other Partnerships - We have had valuable discussions with our colleagues in Northern College around a number of common issues and with a view to improved collaboration. As these continue, it is significant that 2003 will bring us a "shared" ordinand, undertaking part of his programme in Scotland and part in Manchester. Both institutions have experience in the field of community work and are exploring potential collaboration.

4.12 We are glad also to have had conversation with the United Reformed Church's Windermere Centre, again to explore shared interests and that this has resulted in our contributing two extended workshops to their programme.

4.13 It is clear that, while institutions may be separate legal and organisational entities, collaborative partnerships have to be forged and fostered.

4.14 The College retreat - This year's retreat for the college community was on the theme of *Music and silence*.

4.15 The College annual service - We are delighted that the preacher this year is the Revd John Waller, Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church. One student, the Revd Susan Kirkbride (transferring from non-stipendiary to stipendiary ministry) has completed her course (including the degree of Master of Theology) and will receive the college certificate.

4.16 Theological staff of United Reformed Church recognised colleges - The College is hosting this year's annual gathering of theological staff with Dr Andrew Ross, formerly of Edinburgh University and Lisa Curtice, Director of Scottish Consortium on Learning Disabilities as the key speakers.

WESTMINSTER COLLEGE

5.1 The Cambridge Theological Federation - On Tuesday 8 October, in the University Church of Great St Mary's, the Cambridge Theological Federation celebrated its commitment to ecumenical education. A new governing structure, with a single Council, is responsible for the Federation. Westminster College is now an access point to one of the largest theological faculties in England, with 300 full and part-time students and 30 staff. It provides a range of courses, validated by Cambridge University, Anglia Polytechnic University, and the University of Wales at Bangor. Students from the United Reformed Church can also enter the Federation through the East Anglia Ministerial Training Scheme. All students have access to the libraries and teaching resources of all the partner institutions. The Federation have asked Westminster's John Proctor to carry out a thorough review of our curriculum and its objectives, with a view to keeping it addressed towards the changing needs of churches and students. We need to prepare people for the Church which is coming into being rather than train them to do what has always been done.

5.2 Our existing courses demand personal and pastoral development as well as extending thinking skills. Where a course does not supply an applied element, relating theological thinking to the work of the local church, we require it as an addition. Over and above all this every student going forward for ordination to stipendiary ministry in the United Reformed Church must satisfactorily complete a year of pastoral placement, with weekly reflection in college on their experience. The Federation is a place where people meet to learn. They come from all over the world, with different backgrounds and a wide age range. What brings them in the first place may be a need for specific study, such as the course in Jewish-Christian relations, or detailed work on New Testament theology. Some are ordained, some seeking ordination, some with different vocations, all are on the journey of faith. All of these people could, and do, study alone at home in the various places where they live. There is added value in coming together to learn alongside and from each other. We meet not to be conformed but to be transformed by the renewal of our minds (Romans 12:2). Those experienced in education will know that we learn most when our assumptions are challenged by new friends and new contexts. This is costly in both personal and financial terms but essential in preparing people for the challenges of ministry today.

5.3 The wider Church - Within Westminster itself we have been glad to provide hospitality for Continuing Ministerial Education. Minister come to us for a short period to draw on the teaching and library resources of the college and our community has benefited from their experience. We also have at least one minister on sabbatical each term, often with their spouse. In the past year this has brought personal experience of ministry in the United States and New Zealand to enrich our community. Add to this the ministers from Ghana and Hungary who came on church scholarships and the richness of our fellowship becomes evident. Our own students take advantage of the programmes and scholarships on offer to see the Church at work elsewhere in the world. In the last year visits have been made to the United States and Fiji.

5.4 The Buildings - The college building is not only the place where United Reformed Church students meet but also a focal point for the Federation classes and meetings. We are as likely to have a class of students, the majority of whom come from Ridley, as we are to find our students setting off there for a class. All this puts pressure on our staff and buildings. Security is a constant anxiety. Like a local congregation we can find our agenda dominated by institutional considerations – who left the door unlocked, was this room booked, who is going to clean up this mess, why is the water coming through the roof again? These questions can soon distort the agenda, so that solving institutional problems becomes more significant than the purposes for which the institution exists. The college is an enormous asset to the whole Church, well beyond the United Reformed Church. Like all assets it needs to be maintained, but it also needs to be made to work. We would like to find new ways of making it work for the United Reformed Church as a centre of theological education. For some years we have been extending our work beyond the walls of the college and bringing new groups of people and new functions to Cambridge. We are considering how we might further improve our conference provision.

5.5 Both as a space and because of its contents the Library is one of the chief glories of Westminster. Not all of that glory has been properly publicised. Although the majority of the collection is listed in the on-line catalogue there are still rare books in the college and United Reformed Church History Society collection which do not appear there. In the past year we have made great strides in cataloguing but there is still a long way to go. This is slow and detailed work. The advantage it brings lies not only in making ourselves known as a place of excellence but also enabling us to eliminate duplicates. This relieves the pressure to find space for new books and resources. Some duplicate historic material on English Presbyterianism has been accepted by New College, Edinburgh, to extend their collections. Westminster is not a wealthy institution but, as I have said before, it is a rich one.

5.6 Celebration - At our Commemoration of Benefactors in 2002 our preacher was Norman Shanks of the Iona Community and the lecture, part of the series of Reid Lectures, was given by Professor Miroslav Volf from Yale Divinity School. We gave thanks also for the gifts of our leavers, who were: Jayne Bazeley (Roding District: Newham Group) Connie Bonner (Annan), Andy Coyne (Sunderland), Tim Jackson (Vicars Cross, Farndon and Caldy Valley, Chester), Lynn Fowkes (Brentwood and Ingatstone), Janet Llewellyn, Deborah McVey, Lis Mullen (Windermere), Paula Parish West (Erewah Valley) and Heather Whyte (Rodborough and Painswick).

Appendix 6

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

FINANCIAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2002

These accounts show the confirmed income, expenditure, assets and liabilities of those trusts, companies and other funds administered for the benefit of the United Reformed Church under the overall authority of the General Assembly, including the operations of the United Reformed Church Retired Ministers' Housing Society. They do not include funds administered by, or on behalf of, synods, districts or local churches.

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Note: These accounts do not include the "Review of activities" which normally forms part of a charity's annual report and accounts. The information which would be included in such a review is incorporated in the back of Annex 2 Reports to the General Assembly.

For readers unfamiliar with financial statements there is an explanatory note on the front of most pages describing the content in simple terms.

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

The United Reformed Church

88 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT

Assembly Officers

Moderator of the General Assembly (2002-2003) - Revd John Waller

General Secretary - Revd Dr David Cornes

Clerk of the General Assembly - Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith (up to July 2002)

Clerk of the General Assembly - Revd James Breslin (as from July 2002)

Chairman of the Assembly Arrangements Committee - Revd Alasdair Pratt (up to July 2002)

Chairman of the Assembly Arrangements Committee - Mr William McVey (as from July 2002)

Deputy General Secretary - Revd John Waller (up to 31st August 2002)

Deputy General Secretary - Revd Ray Adams (as from 1st September 2002)

Honorary Treasurer - Mr Graham Stacy TCA (up to 31st December 2002)

Honorary Treasurer - Mr Eric Clifton (as from 1st January 2003)

Other Officers

Moderator Elect - Revd Alasdair Pratt

Immediate Past Moderator - Revd Elizabeth Welch

Trustees

Mission Council Advisory Group

Moderator (convener) - Immediate Past Moderator

Moderator Elect, 2 convener of Assembly standing committees, Treasurer, 3 members of Mission Council, General Secretary and in attendance the Deputy General Secretary (secretary)

United Reformed Church Trust

Chairman of the Board of Directors - Dr Brian Woodhall

The other Directors are listed in the Book of Annual Reports to the General Assembly

Bankers

HSBC Bank plc

Holborn Branch - 51 Holborn
London EC1N 2HH

Investment Manager

HSBC Asset Management (Europe) Limited

10 Lower Thames Street
London EC3R 5AE

Legal Advisers

Dawsons

2 New Square, Lincoln's Inn
London WC2A 3RZ

Towys, Needham & Co

Kingsgate 2nd Floor, 51-53 Southgate Street
Manchester M2 0DP

Auditors

RSM Robson Rhodes

Bryant's Court, Soden Hill
Hempstead, Herts HP2 4TN

Actuaries

Aon Limited

Carnegie House, Peterborough Road
Harlow, Middlesex, HAT 2AT

Governance

The United Reformed Church is exempted from the need to register as a charity by the combined effects of section 46(4)(a) of the Charities Act 1993 and para 4(2)(c) of the Charities (Exception from registration) Regulations 1996 as amended by statutory instruments during 2001 and 2002.

The governing body of the United Reformed Church is the General Assembly. The authority under which General Assembly acts is given by the United Reformed Church Acts 1972, 1981 and 2000. These Acts of Parliament together with sections A - C of the Manual of the United Reformed Church contain the foundation documents of the Church. Each year General Assembly appoints members to Mission Council, other than those for which General Assembly has delegated its power of appointment to the Synods with regard to those members appointed to represent the Synods. The names of members of Mission Council are listed in the Book of Annual Reports to General Assembly. The purpose of Mission Council is to enable the Church, in its General Assembly, to take a more comprehensive view of the activity and policy of the Church, to decide more carefully about priorities and to encourage the outreach of the Church to the community.

The Finance Committee is responsible for the detailed examination of the financial statements and for recommending their adoption to General Assembly.

ACCOUNTS page 2

REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**RESULTS FOR 2002**

The results for 2002 are set out in more detail in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 7. This shows that there was, overall, a decrease in funds in the year of £1,445,000. The breakdown of this decrease compared with the decrease for the previous year is as follows:

	2002	2001
Net incoming (outgoing) resources for the year on		
Ministry and Mission Fund and other funds covered		
By our annual budget	804,000	289,000
Restricted funds	728,000	651,000
Capital funds	37,000	474,000
(Decrease) in market value of investments	(3,009,000)	12,197,000
	£(1,445,000)	£(982,000)

Comments on each of the amounts making up the total decrease are set out below.

Ministry & Mission Fund and other funds covered by our annual budget - £804,000 incoming resources

The 2002 actual amounts are compared with 2001 and also with the 2002 Budget on pages 24 and 25.

The total of £804,000 net incoming resources for 2002 was over £1 million better than the amount of £717,000 budgeted shown in the 2002 budget. However, this difference comprises four major items, all of which are of a very different character and significance.

- Ministry cost of £15,575,000 was £129,000 higher than budget. This excess was made up of £64,000 caused by the overall number of full-time and part-time ministers being higher than budgeted and a £51,000 increase in pension fund contributions.
- Investment income of £314,000 was £3,154,000 below budget. The largest part of this difference was due to the reduced amount available for investment and the need to finance operating cash deficits. A part of this reduction is due to interest rates having fallen.
- Legacies and donations amounted to £977,000 compared with a budget of £500,000. We do not include any items for legacies in the budget as in recent years they have fluctuated widely. However, we rely on income from this source to help to compensate, over time, for budget deficits and other adverse events. During 2002 we were also fortunate to receive a one-off cash donation of £171,000 from Memorial Hall Trust.
- Profit on sale of properties amounted to £425,000. This is potentially the most confusing figure in the accounts. £361,000 of this profit arose from the sale of three houses vacated by former Assembly appointed ministers. However, of the net proceeds of sale of about £1.9 million, roughly half had to be reinvested in houses for incoming Assembly appointed ministers. The remainder was used as part of the £1.6 million required for the purchase of houses for retired ministers during the year.

Restricted funds - net incoming resources £728,000

Restricted funds are funds which can only be spent on specific purposes. The net incoming resources of £728,000 for the year comprise increases and decreases on different funds. The detailed changes on each fund or group of funds are shown on pages 10 and 11, but the salient amounts are also set out on pages 4 and 5 together with comments on the more significant items.

REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE CONTINUED**Capital funds – increase in resources £37,000**

This increase is almost entirely due to a legacy received in favour of one of the 'other funds', which makes grants to ministers to assist with school fees and the purchase of school uniforms and equipment. It should be noted that this is a capital amount, which has to be invested, with the increase here, the investment being available for making grants.

Decrease in market value of investments - £5,009,300

A large proportion of our investments is represented by units in the United Reformed Church Trust Investment Pool which during 2002 held approximately 70% of its funds in UK equities. Over the year the Pool's holdings in UK equities declined in value by about 21.4% but this would have been 20.5% had the United Reformed Church's ethical investment policy not restricted the investment in certain shares and other securities of companies whose main activities are in the sectors of the manufacture of alcoholic drinks, the manufacturing of tobacco products, the provision of gambling facilities, the manufacture of armaments. During the year there was a comparative decline in the FTSE 100 share index of 22.5%.

The total decrease in value of our investments over the three years 2000 to 2002 has amounted to £6,762,000. This should be viewed in the context of rises in value of £7,097,000 during the three preceding years. Investment gains and losses are shown in the five year summary on page 22. The change in investment values in 2002 broken down by fund is shown in the Movement on funds summary on page 10.

RESERVES

The statement on page 11 shows the disposition of the various United Reformed Church funds totalling £42.57 million at 31st December 2002.

The only unrestricted funds were held in the Ministry & Mission Fund and amounted to £11,627,000, of which nearly £4.7 million was invested in fixed assets. The Finance Committee considers that the balance of unrestricted funds amounting to approximately £6.9 million is adequate to support the Church's ongoing activities, representing about four months of unrestricted fund expenditure.

A description of restricted and capital funds is set out on pages 4 and 5.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The Mission Council Advisory Group continues to assess the major risks which the United Reformed Church faces and has confirmed that systems have been established to enable regular reports to be produced so that the necessary steps can be taken to manage these risks. The main risks the Church faces can be categorised as:

- Governance risks
- External risks
- Financial risks
- Operational risks
- Compliance with law and regulation

CONCLUSION

Those wanting more information or explanations about any aspect of the Church's finances are encouraged to address their enquiry to the Treasurer or Financial Secretary at the General Assembly or any other time.

Signed on behalf of the Finance Committee

E. C. Chilton
Convener

16 Apr 12 01

ACCOUNTS page 4**DESCRIPTION OF FUNDS**

The major funds or groups of funds which are included in the United Reformed Church annual accounts are shown in summary on pages 10 and 11. Descriptions of these funds are set out below, with the total amount of each fund as at 31st December 2002 and the income and expenditure for 2002 shown in each heading.

Ministry and Mission Fund: £12,028,000

Income	£21,117,000
Expenditure	£20,313,000

This is the generic fund of the Church through which the bulk of our income and expenditure (covered by the annual Budget presented to General Assembly) is passed.

Maintenance of the Ministry Fund: £528,000**Ministerial Training Fund: £122,000**

Both of these are capital funds which are invested to provide income towards the costs of Maintenance of the Ministry and Ministerial Training. Each year's income is taken up in the Ministry and Mission Fund which is responsible for meeting these costs.

Westminster College Funds: £1,960,000

Income	£66,000
Expenditure	£94,000

About sixteen accounts make up this group of funds, all of which are associated, in some way, with Westminster College. In addition to the College general fund, there are library funds, prize funds, scholarship funds and other funds with a more specific use.

Church Buildings Fund: £2,547,000

Income	£96,000
Expenditure	£98,000

This fund may be used in the upkeep and repair of the buildings of the local churches of the United Reformed Church and the maintenance of the services therein, in the improvement and extension of the buildings of such churches, and in the provision and erection of buildings for use for the purposes of such churches or as residences for ministers of the United Reformed Church.

The Retired Ministers' Housing Fund and the United Reformed Church Retired Ministers' Housing Society: £14,679,000

Income	£1,600,000
Expenditure	£101,000

The whole of these funds is used by the Retired Ministers' Housing Committee in providing accommodation for ministers and ministers' widowers in their retirement. Income in 2002 included the transfer of 16 retirement houses from Memorial Hall Trust. Most of the remaining income arises from the profit on the sale of houses, the proceeds from which are re-invested in further house purchases.

The Welfare Fund: £253,000

Income	£19,000
Expenditure	£79,000

This fund can be used to relieve cases of need among ministers of the United Reformed Church, their spouses and other dependants. The main uses have been to provide a grant on the death of a minister to the surviving spouse, and to provide a grant at Christmas time to most of the widowers of United Reformed Church ministers (about whom we know). Medical assistance grants are now paid from this account, including counselling costs.

DESCRIPTION OF FUNDS CONTINUED

The Retired Ministers' Aid Fund: £803,000

Income	£98,000
Expenditure	£60,000
Income	£249,000
Expenditure	£539,000

These funds are used to supplement the pensions paid to ministers and ministers' widowers, principally by upgrading the pensions of former ministers of the Congregational Church and the Churches of Christ and the widowers of such ministers to a level of 95% of the pension that would have been paid if the minister's service had been to the former Presbyterian Church.

World Church and Mission Funds: £1,532,000

Income	£55,000
Expenditure	£246,000

These funds had been building up over a number of years. The Ecumenical Committee developed plans, which are now being implemented under the "Belonging to the World Church" programme to use the funds where the terms of the trust permit.

The Windermere Centre Fund: £346,000

Income	£ nil
Expenditure	£ nil

The Yardley Hastings Fund: £590,000

Income	£ nil
Expenditure	£ nil

These funds were raised to develop the Windermere Centre and the Yardley Hastings Centre and are mainly invested in those properties. The annual income and costs of these centres are shown through the World Church and Mission Fund.

Commitment for Life Fund: £163,000

Income	£53,000
Expenditure	£56,200

This programme involves substantial sums of money being collected through the Church and Society office and disbursed for various purposes. The balance held at the year end represents monies received which had not yet been allocated.

Other Funds: £3,670,000

Being: Capital funds £2,545,000

Income	£37,000
Expenditure	£ nil

Restricted funds £1,124,000

Income	£171,000
Expenditure	£138,000

There are some fifty other funds in the care of the United Reformed Church Trust, covering many different activities relating to the Church centrally and some to the wider parts of the United Reformed Church.

Appendix 6

ACCOUNTS page 6

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2002

2001 £'000	Notes (pages 13 - 18)	2002 £'000
FIXED ASSETS		
Long-term assets	2	
Houses for retired ministers		19,240
Houses for serving ministers		4,450
Other properties		2,240
Rental properties		10,025
Cars and equipment		337
		20,581
Long-term investments	4	15,489
Levies	5	589
		47,450
Current assets		
Stock	3	81
Debentures	4	971
Short-term investments	5	159
Bank balances and money on call		1,350
		1,774
Less: Current liabilities	6	1,317
Net current liabilities		446
		47,717
TOTAL NET ASSETS		
		47,717
UNRESTRICTED FUNDS		
Unrestricted income funds		11,927
Restricted income funds		25,057
Capital funds		5,633
		42,517
TOTAL FUNDS (see pages 10 & 11)		
		42,517

This page shows the combined total assets and liabilities of all the funds administered centrally for the benefit of the wider Church. It includes, in particular, the assets and liabilities of the United Reformed Church Retired Ministers' Housing Society Limited.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2002

2001	2002		
Total funds £'000	Total funds £'000	Income funds £'000	Capital funds £'000
INCOME			
1,928	18,687	18,587	-
913	757	314	113
612	694	694	-
1,141	968	956	12
1,931	1,942	1,941	1
988	1,051	1,025	25
23,514	24,098	21,117	37
Total income (see page 8)			
EXPENDITURE			
15,985	16,354	15,374	580
2,003	1,840	1,711	89
2,244	2,268	2,131	138
1,867	2,066	1,911	155
22,095	22,529	20,313	416
Total expenditure (see page 9)			
Net incoming resources			
1,415	1,569	8,94	7,38
-	-	87	(51)
Net incoming resources	1,569	8,94	7,38
Net realised and unrealised			
losses on investments	(3,809)	-1,038	-1,111
Net (decrease)/increase in funds in the year	(1,440)	29	877
44,239	43,257	1,564	7,38
Balances brought forward at 31st January			
43,257	42,317	11,927	5,133
Balances carried forward at 31st December			

This page shows the total of the income and expenditure accounts of all funds administered entirely on behalf of the whole Church in advance of religious and charitable work. The total for 2001 is divided between "Unrestricted income funds" which are available for the general purposes of the Church,

"Restricted income funds" which may be spent for specific purposes only

and "Capital funds" which cannot be spent. The column headed

"Investment" covers the income and expenditure concerned by the budget carried on pages 24 and 25

Appendix 6

ACCOUNTS page 8

ANALYSIS OF INCOME

2001	2002	Income Funds		Capital
Total	Total	Unrestricted	Restricted	Funds
Funds	funds	£'000	£'000	£'000
MINISTRY AND MISSION FUND CONTRIBUTIONS				
Synods				
1,075	1,127			
1,620	1,682			
1,135	1,167			
1,192	1,228			
1,159	1,198			
1,362	1,400			
1,538	1,587			
1,155	1,189			
1,092	2,030			
2,040	2,177			
2,611	2,701			
624	649			
536	552			
17,928	18,687	18,687	0	0
INVESTMENT INCOME				
723	669	245	424	
190	98	68	30	
913	757	314	443	0
GRANTS RECEIVABLE				
350	350			
262	344			
612	694	694	0	0
LEGACIES				
For				
222	642			
420	101			
499	225	14	177	34
1,141	969	656	278	34
OTHER INCOME				
126	0			
490	525			
-				
1,236	1,231	271	960	
79	98	57	45	
	87	21	67	
1,931	1,942	541	1,597	3
988	1,051	475	624	
23,514	24,098	21,117	1,944	77
TOTAL INCOME				

This page shows the breakdown of the main headings of income given in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 7

AO 100 NIS page 1

ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE

2001 Total funds £'000	2002			
	Total funds £'000	Income Unrestricted £'000	Income Restricted £'000	Capital funds £'000
MINISTRY				
14,585	14,937	14,835	103	
468	505	503	2	
690	676	674	2	
242	235	233	2	
15,285	16,354	15,875	524	
TRAINING				
1,235	1,133	1,132	1	
204	225	224	1	
166	161	160	1	
188	174	173	1	
83	45	44	1	
127	99	98	1	
2,003	1,840	1,741	80	
OTHER MISSION ACTIVITIES				
630	442	313	128	
448	548	366	212	
45	47	47		
78	91	91		
488	562	492		
88	91	91		
47	78	78		
48	74	74		
159	132	132		
128	120	120		
63	64	64		
22	19	19		
3,244	2,266	1,734	532	
SUPPORT ACTIVITIES				
219	308	168		
252	266	219		
270	341	287	54	
219	232	232		
69	74	64	10	
48	45	45		
238	247	247		
356	403	313	91	
191	150	108	42	
1,267	2,066	1,544	123	
22,099	22,529	20,341	2,218	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE				

This page shows the breakdown of the main headings of expenditure shown in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 7.

Appendix 6

ACCOUNTS page 30

**MOVEMENT ON FUNDS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2002**

Fund	Classification (see note 1(iii))	Balance 1st Jan 2002 £'000	Income £'000	Expenditure £'000	Transfers £'000	Investment value change £'000	Balance 31st Dec 2002 £'000
Ministry and Mission Fund	Capital Unrestricted	401	21,117	(20,313)	189	(948)	11,627
Maintenance of the Ministry Fund	Capital Unrestricted	636				(108)	528
Ministers' Training Fund	Capital Unrestricted	117				(25)	122
Westminster College Funds	Capital Restricted	1,058	66	(94)	3	(125)	972
Church Buildings Fund	Capital Restricted	184	90	(98)	2	(23)	181
Retired Ministers' Housing Funds	Capital Restricted	2,387	1,128	(58)	(179)	2,337	
Retired Ministers' Housing Society	Capital Restricted	11,604	332	(347)			11,793
Welfare Fund	Capital Restricted	240	19	(78)	(95)	(42)	159
Retired Ministers' And Fund	Capital Restricted	247	98	(65)	1	(127)	90
Retired Ministers' Fund	Capital Restricted	13	249	(519)	20	(758)	11
World Church and Mission Funds	Capital Restricted	247	55	(246)		(38)	209
Windermere Centre Fund	Capital Restricted	346				748	
Yardley Hastings Fund	Capital Restricted	0	590			590	
Commitment for Life Fund	Capital Restricted	0	48	(54)		0	16
Other Funds	Capital Restricted	2,784	37	(2,783)	25	(278)	2,813
Totals (see page 7)		43,757	24,098	(22,529)	8	(3,000)	42,317
Comprising:							
	Capital	6,241	57	0	0	(645)	5,633
	Restricted	25,931	2,944	(2,216)	(189)	(1,416)	25,057
	Unrestricted	11,581	21,117	(20,313)	189	(948)	11,627

This page and the following page 71 are intended to be used as reference sources rather than to be read through at one go. This page shows the breakdown of the main totals in the Statement of financial position on page 7 by major class or group of funds.

**DISPOSITION OF FUNDS
AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2002**

Balance 31st Dec 2002 £'000	Property £'000	Cars and equipment £'000	Investments £'000	Loans £'000	Net current liabilities £'000	Inter- fund balances £'000	Fund
401	401						
11,627	4,396	267	5,001	131	(102)	1,875	Ministry and Mission Fund
528			529				Maintenance of the Ministry Fund
0							
122			122				Ministerial Training Fund
0							
935	125		610				Westminster College Funds
1,627	169	47	469		162	(257)	Church Building Fund
184	184						
2,563	53		125	433		1,782	
359	359						Retired Ministers Housing Funds
2,827	1,732					794	Retired Ministers' Housing Society
0							Wellace Fund
11,794	17,134				(205)	(5,158)	
196			196				
34		17		26		11	
145		143					Retired Ministers' Aid Fund
1,600		650				16	
11		11					Retired Ministers' Fund
3,731		3,701				31	
209		189				20	World Church and Miss. Funds
823		719				104	
0							Wardmore Centre Fund
146	297	71				17	
0							Yardley Hastings Fund
590	492	11				87	
0							General Fund for Relief
16						16	21st Fund
2,543		2,029				523	Other Funds
1,137	48	945				144	
42,314	26,025	357	15,489	589	(114)	0	Total (see page 6)
5,633	1,267	0	3,823	0	0	545	Capital
25,057	20,363	89	6,005	459	(41)	(2,418)	Restricted
11,627	4,396	267	5,001	131	(102)	1,875	Unrestricted

This page shows the breakdown of the assets and liabilities in the Balance Sheet on page 6 by major fund or category of fund.

ACCOUNTS page 12

**CASHFLOW STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2002**

2001 £'000	2002 £'000
Reconciliation of net incoming resources shown in the Statement of Financial Activities to the actual cash inflow from general activities	
1,415	Net incoming resources before revaluations and investment asset disposals (see page 7)
18	Decrease (increase) in stock
(257)	(Increase) Decrease in debtors
747	Increase (Decrease) in creditors
(471)	Decrease in sums held for synods and congregations
(988)	Profit on sale of properties
488	Depreciation
45	Amortisation of gifts
1201	Interest added to loans
(1,120)	Dividends of property received
(200)	Cash entitlement received
15	Cash payments from entitlement
(525)	Net cash outflow from general activities
<hr/>	<hr/>

CASHFLOW STATEMENT

(525)	Net cash outflow from general activities (above)	(1,241)
Capital expenditure		
12,304	Payments to acquire tangible fixed assets	(3,137)
1,804	Receipts from sales of tangible fixed assets	2,256
(357)	Payments to acquire long term investments	(891)
1,428	Receipts from sales of long term investments	2,712
(193)	Loans and advances made to congregations and ministers	(600)
228	Loans repaid by congregations and ministers	181
1,587		974
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
171	Management of liquid resources	124
Financing		
496	Additions to capital endowment	(17)
(155)	Payments from capital endowment	57
474		57
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
(446)	(Decrease)Increase in Cash	(872)
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Reconciliation of net cash flow to movement in net cash funds		
(446)	(Decrease)Increase in cash and net cash funds in the period	872
2,533	Bank balances and money on call at 1st January	1,088
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
1,088	Bank balances and money on call at 31st December	1,088

This is a simplified 'technical' statement which some may prefer to pass over quickly. Not all income or expenditure results in an immediate cash receipt or payment. This page shows the difference between incoming resources to the cash and some deferrals and accruals. It then shows how cash has been spent or received or released from the sale of properties or investments during the year to increase/decrease bank balances by £72,000.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

NOTE 1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES

These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention, as modified by the inclusion of listed investments and investment properties at market value. With the exception of some formal descriptions in the Statement of Financial Activities and Cashflow Statement where the Finance Committee considers these useful to be more helpful, the accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice - 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities' (Revised SORP 2000) issued in October 2000, and with applicable United Kingdom Accounting Standards. Financial Reporting Standard 17 'Retirement Benefits' will not apply in full until the year ending 31st December 2005, in the meantime the standard requires disclosure of specific financial information which is set out in notes 9 and 10. Financial Reporting Standard 18 'Accounting Policies' has also been adopted. It did not cause any changes in policy, as after a careful review the Finance Committee is satisfied that the current accounting policies are the most appropriate for the Church. The policies at accounting policies adopted in the preparation of the financial statements are as follows:

(i) Scope

The accounts show the combined income, expenditure, assets and liabilities of those trusts, companies and other funds administered for the benefit of the United Reformed Church under the overall authority of the General Assembly. They do not include funds administered by or on behalf of synods, districts or local churches.

(ii) Classification of funds

Restricted income funds may be spent generally for furthering the religious and charitable work of the Church. Restricted income funds are funds whose use is restricted to specific purposes according to the terms on which the funds were received. However, if the purpose is one that forms part of the Church's regular expenditure and the income of the funds could therefore be fully spent each year, the restriction has no practical effect and funds with such restrictions are treated as unrestricted.

Capital funds are permanent endowments which are required to be retained but the income from those funds can be spent for the benefit of the Church subject, in certain cases, to specific restrictions contained in the original endowment.

The main funds included in these accounts and their classification are listed on page 10. A brief description of these funds is given on pages 4 and 5.

(iii) Income

Income is brought into account as soon as it becomes receivable. Gifts in kind are measured within twelve months at market value, at the date of the gift.

When a synod remits more than its agreed contribution to the Ministry and Mission Fund in any year the excess is carried forward to the following year as a payment in advance.

(iv) Pensions

The Church operates a defined benefit pension scheme. The assets of the scheme are managed independently of the Church. Pension costs are assessed in accordance with the advice of an independent qualified actuary. Contributions for the regular ongoing cost of pensions are such that the regular pension cost is a substantially level percentage of the current and expected future pensionable payroll.

(v) Tangible fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets are stated at original cost less depreciation calculated at the following percentages on cost:

Buildings	2.5% p.a.
Car, computers and photocopiers	35% p.v.
Other furniture and equipment	19% p.v.

Since 1st January 2001 all buildings have been depreciated at 2.5% p.a. Prior to this buildings having an estimated useful life of 10 years or more were not depreciated. As in previous years the value of land is not depreciated.

(vi) Investments

Listed securities, investment properties and units in the United Reformed Church Trust Investment Pool are included at market value at the Balance Sheet date. Unlisted securities are stated at cost or, in the case of gifts, market value at the date of receipt. For gilt-edged securities purchased within ten years of maturity at a cost in excess of 10% above par value, the excess is amortised over the period to maturity.

This page contains information about the way the accounts have been prepared

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NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS CONTINUED

NOTE 1 (continued)

(vii) Stock

Stock which consists mainly of books in the bookshop is stated at the lower of cost and net realisable value.

(viii) Westminster College

With the exception of certain improvements and additions since 1982, the buildings of Westminster College are not included in the Balance Sheet since the College was originally a gift to the Church, the value of which cannot readily be ascertained.

(ix) Rounding of figures to the nearest thousand

Each figure in the accounts, including totals, is shown to the nearest thousand. This may result in the addition of some columns of rounded figures being slightly different from the rounded total shown.

NOTE 2 TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Houses for retired ministers	Houses for serving ministers	Other properties	Cars and equipment	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cost					
At 1st January 2002	17,559	4,833	2,365	1,433	25,727
Additions during year	3,536	260	-	175	3,771
Disposals during year	(1,471)	(10,911)	-	(171)	(11,312)
At 31st December 2002	19,588	4,090	2,365	1,432	25,415
Depreciation					
At 1st January 2002	471	127	60	70	1,428
Charge during year	29*	56	50	73	141
Written back on disposal	(125)	(23)	-	(158)	(107)
At 31st December 2002	742	160	110	72	1,254
Net book value					
At 31st December 2002	19,246	3,930	2,249	1,357	24,354
At 31st December 2001	16,588	4,506	2,360	1,377	24,031

Rents for retired ministers' housing are set at levels estimated to cover maintenance costs only. Total rents received in 2002 were £253,651 (2001 - £258,941) and maintenance costs were £67,700 (2001 - £68,600).

At 31st December 2002 348 (2001 - 328) houses were owned for letting, retired ministers and 22 (2001 - 25) houses for serving ministers.

Other properties include United Reformed Church House, the Yardley Hastings and Windermere Centres, and building costs capitalised at Westminster College since 1983.

NOTE 3 LOANS

	2002	2001
	£'000	£'000
Loans comprise		
To churches	157	574
To ministers	157	151
	<u>319</u>	<u>728</u>

Loans to ministers are generally interest free. Loans to churches bear interest at rates between 3% and 6.2%, except for certain loans which are interest free for an initial period of two years.

(See page and the following for a high level qualitative interpretation of what follows except

at the financial statements. The notes and 16 on previous pages are incorporated by

reference to the Reporting Standard 17)

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS CONTINUED

NOTE 4 DEBTORS

	2002 £'000	2001 £'000
Debtors comprise:		
Tax recoverable	48	44
Prepayments and accrued income	371	1,072
Other debtors	552	472
£'000	671	1,594

NOTE 5 INVESTMENTS

	2002 £'000	2001 £'000
Long term investments		
Investments held for the longer term comprise:		
Units in the Investment Pool at market value (see note 14)	14,192	17,125
Other listed securities at market value	109	1,856
Other unlisted securities at cost	224	74
Investment properties	1,054	1,019
£'000	15,489	20,334

All investments are PTLK companies or properties. Investment properties are professionally valued every five years. The last profession valuation was carried out on 31st December 2001, by Messrs D N Williamson (FRICS, MCIArb), R H Cobb (FRICS), and S G Archer (FRICS).

The Finance Committee has considered the values as at 31st December 2002 and made changes as required.

	2002 £'000	2001 £'000
Short term investments		
Short term investments comprise:		
Money market term deposits	150	154
£'000	150	154

NOTE 6 CURRENT LIABILITIES - amounts falling due within one year

	2002 £'000	2001 £'000
Current Liabilities comprise:		
Sums held for syndics and congregations	997	1,055
Advances contributions to the Ministry and Mission Fund	158	171
Other creditors	1,904	2,548
£'000	3,059	4,174

NOTE 7 AUDITORS' REMUNERATION

	2002 £'000	2001 £'000
Auditors' remuneration	11	11

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NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS CONTINUED**NOTE 8 STIPEND AND SALARY COSTS**

During the year the following stipend and salary costs were incurred

	2002 £'000	2001 £'000
Ministers and Church Related Community Workers 798 (2001 716)		
Gross stipends	12,709	12,455
Social Security costs	1,970	1,667
Pension contributions	1,123	1,403
	<u>15,603</u>	<u>14,924</u>
Law staff 101 (2001 98)		
Gross salaries	5,676	5,524
Social Security costs	137	127
Pension contributions	117	291
	<u>5,910</u>	<u>5,742</u>

The numbers shown represent the average for the year, and staff working for part of the year are included at the appropriate proportion calculated on a full time equivalent basis. There were no Ministers, Church Related Community Workers or employees whose emoluments, excluding employer pension contributions, exceeded £50,000 during 2002 or 2001.

In addition a great amount of time, the value of which it is impossible to reflect in these financial statements is donated by thousands of volunteers throughout the United Kingdom.

Individuals acting in a trustee capacity for the various United Reformed Church trusts received no compensation in respect of their services as trustee other than the reimbursement of travel expenses totalling £800 during the year ended 31st December 2002.

NOTE 9 THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS' PENSION FUND

Pensions for most ministers are provided by The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund. The Fund is a defined benefit pension scheme and the assets are invested and managed by an independent trustee.

During 2002 the Church contributed 12.4% (2001 12.4%) of basic stipend in respect of members. Triennial actuarial valuations of the pension scheme are performed by a qualified actuary. The most recent formal actuarial review of the defined benefit pension scheme was at 1st January 2000. The valuation indicated that there was a surplus on the long term valuation basis of £2.4 million. At that date the funding level was 105% and the scheme assets were valued at £55 million. The valuation used the attired gap method and assumed that the rate of return achieved by the Fund will exceed the rate of stipend increase by 2%.

The additional disclosures which follow are given in preparation for Financial Reporting Standard 17 "Retirement Benefits", being adopted. The figures have been calculated by projecting to 31st December 2002 the surpluses determined in the actuarial valuation as at 1st January 2000. The projection allows for the different financial assumptions which apply under Financial Reporting Standard 17, the actual investment returns that have applied since the date of the last valuation, the contributions that have been paid and the actual rates of stipend increases. The disclosures relate only to the defined benefit scheme in accordance with the transitional rules of FRS 17.

Supplementary pensions disclosures under FRS 17**(a) Contributions**

The defined benefit scheme is funded and is not contracted-out of the state scheme. The employer's contribution rate has been fixed at 12.4% of pensionable pay until 31st December 2003. During 2002 the Church contributed £1,374,000. Members have contributed at the rate of 3.24% of pensionable pay throughout the accounting period.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (CONTINUED)

NOTE 9 (continued)

b) Assumptions

The major assumptions used by the actuary in assessing scheme liabilities on a FRS 17 basis were:

	At 31st December	
	2002	2001
	% p.a.	% p.a.
Rate of increase in pensionable salaries	3.3	4.1
Rate of increase in Limited RPI pensions in payment (capped at 5%)	2.3	2.0
Discount rate (pre-retirement)	5.5	5.0
Discount rate (post-settlement)	5.5	5.0
RPI inflation assumption	2.3	2.0

c) FRS 17 Balance Sheet revaluation

	2002		2001	
	Long term	Value as at	Long term	Value as at
	expected	31st Dec	expected	31st Dec
Equities				
Government bonds	7.70%	28,515	7.10%	28,191
Cash	4.00%	27,972	5.00%	25,804
Market value of assets		57,261		65,145
Present value of scheme liabilities		(64,999)		(64,795)
Actuarial (deficit) surplus in the scheme fund		(7,728)		344

d) Movements during the year

	2002
	£'000
Surplus in scheme at the beginning of the year	354
Movement in the year	
Current service cost	(1,869)
Contributions	1,423
Past service cost	0
Other finance income	105
Actuarial loss	(7,728)
Deficit in scheme at the end of the year	(7,728)

e) Income and expenditure funds - information for disclosure only

	2002
	£'000
Analysis of the amount charged	
Current service cost	1,869
Past service cost	0
Settlement cost	0
Total operating charge	1,869
Analysis of the amount credited to other finance income	
Expected return on pension scheme assets	1,950
Interest on pension scheme liabilities	(5,815)
Net return	105
Analysis of amount recognised in Funds	
Actual return less expected return on pension scheme assets	(8,148)
Experience gains and losses arising on scheme liabilities	689
Changes in assumptions underlying the present value of the scheme liabilities	(2,011)
Actuarial loss recognised in Funds	(7,728)

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NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS CONTINUED**NOTE 10 THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH (HOME STAFF) PENSION SCHEME**

The United Reformed Church contributes into the staff pension scheme known as the "Home Staff" pension scheme which is operated as a defined benefit scheme. The United Reformed Church is not the only participating employer in the scheme and it is unable to determine its share of the underlying assets and liabilities.

During 2002 the United Reformed Church contributed 10% (2001 - 10%) of basic salary in respect of members of the "Home Staff" scheme. Members contributed at the rate of 5% of pensionable salary throughout the accounting period.

Actuarial actuarial valuations of the Home Staff pension scheme are performed by a professionally qualified actuary. The most recent formal actuarial review of the defined benefit pension scheme was on 30th September 2001. The valuation indicated that there was a surplus on the long term valuation basis of £254,000.

NOTE 11 ASSETS HELD IN TRUST FOR OTHERS

At 31st December 2002 the United Reformed Church Trust held investments with a market value of approximately £14 million (2001 - £19 million) on behalf of synods, churches and trusts. The Trust also held property and other assets. All of these assets are held to the order of the synods, churches and trusts concerned and are not shown in these accounts (see notes 10 and 11).

NOTE 12 COMMITMENTS

At 31st December 2002 there were, in respect of the purchase of properties, commitments of £366,000 (2001 - £758,000) and contractual liabilities of £209,000 (2001 - £nil). There were also commitments to make grants of £1,348,200 (£259,000).

NOTE 13 INTERESTS IN TRUSTS

The Church receives income from a number of trusts. The most significant are described below.

Memorial Hall Trust - In 1994 this trust disposed of its interest in the building standing on the site of the former Memorial Hall. The proceeds of sale are now invested and the income, after meeting trust expenses as distributed to the United Reformed Church and non-sponsoring Congregational churches. The United Reformed Church's interest in these distributions is 70%.

New College London Trust - This trust holds assets relating to the former New College London on behalf of the United Reformed Church and non-sponsoring Congregational churches. The United Reformed Church's interest amounts to approximately 82%. In 2002 the Church received income of £344,000 (2001 - £262,000) from this trust, which has been spent on ministerial training.

The Chestnut Foundation supports Westminster College by paying the stipend and expenses of one of the lecturers, by contributing to the college budget and by providing financial support for ministers taking post-ordination training and lay training.

NOTE 14 UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST INVESTMENT POOL

The United Reformed Church Trust operates an Investment Pool for funds it holds as trustee and for funds of other trusts and churches. The financial statement of the Pool is shown on page 19. Of the total investment in the Pool, valued at £27.9 million (2001 - £36.4 million), only £14.1 million (2001 - £12.6 million) is held for general funds and is dealt with in these accounts (see note 5).

The Charax Commissioners have indicated that the Pool should be restricted to the investment of funds belonging to the United Reformed Church Trust as trustee. Therefore the United Reformed Church Trust has taken the decision not to operate an independent investment Pool and furthermore to transfer the management of the Church's own investment funds from HSBC Asset Management (Europe) Limited to CCLA Investment Management Limited. Other trusts and churches who currently have investments in the Investment Pool will be approached individually so that they have opportunity to decide upon their own investment policy. It is hoped that these transactions will be finalised by the end of 2003.

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST INVESTMENT POOL
SUMMARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2002

CAPITAL	2002		2001		
	1000 Units	£'000	1000 Units	£'000	
Units in issue at 1st January 2002	574,527	10,786	603,177	13,607	
Units issued in the year	15,192	806	19,671	1,354	
Units carried forward in the year	159,585	13,501	148,320	13,183	
Management fees		661		771	
Decrease in value of investments during the year		(5,747)		(5,148)	
Units in issue at 31st December 2002	530,044	10,375	548,527	12,459	
to central funds	208,151	14,101	277,582	17,904	
to other funds	321,894	13,274	270,940	14,781	
	530,044	10,375	548,527	12,459	
REPRESENTED BY					
	Cost £'000	Market value £'000		Cost £'000	Market value £'000
Investments					
British Government gilts	6,594	6,787		8,117	8,137
Other British fixed interest stock	1,000	1,000		843	840
British equities	21,958	19,534		22,524	23,407
	29,552	27,321		31,484	24,474
Cash and short term deposits			529		1,079
Trade (customers) debtors			(322)		(835)
	27,874			30,386	
Net asset value per unit		5.26 pence			6.11 pence
During the year distributions were made in respect of all income received as follows					
	Rate per unit		Rate per unit		
3 months ended	pence	£'000	pence	£'000	
31st March	0.08	430	0.08	289	
30th June	0.06	299	0.06	348	
30th September	0.07	378	0.07	427	
31st December	0.05	181	0.04	289	
	0.24	1,289		1.22	1,473

The policy for accounting for income is as follows:

(a) Income receivable from fixed interest securities is credited to income on a daily basis.

(b) Credit for dividends receivable from listed equity investments is taken when the security is first quoted ex-dividend.

Investments made on behalf of the United Reformed Church Trust are held by HSBC Asset Management (throughout United Kingdom) the holdings are designated for the Trustee in the Manager's nominee company, Global Investor Services a division of HSBC Bank plc. The Trustee is advised of all changes in investment. Quarterly scaled fees of investments held are issued by HSBC and recorded to records maintained by the United Reformed Church on behalf of the Trustee.

ACCOUNTS page 20

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE FINANCIAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

The Finance Committee is responsible for ensuring that accounts are prepared for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of those trusts, companies and other funds which are administered for the benefit of the United Reformed Church under the overall authority of the General Assembly, the Church and of its financial activities during the year. In preparing these financial statements the Finance Committee has:

- selected suitable accounting policies and applied them consistently;
- made judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- followed applicable United Kingdom Accounting Standards and the SORP "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" with the exception of some limited descriptions in the Statement of Financial Activities and Cashflow Statement where the Finance Committee considers those used to be more helpful; and
- prepared the financial statements on the going concern basis.

The Finance Committee is responsible for ensuring that proper accounting records are maintained which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Church and enable it to ensure that the financial statements comply with generally accepted accounting practice. The Finance Committee is also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS

We confirm on behalf of the Finance Committee our approval of the accounts as set out on pages 6 to 19.

W R P ADAMS
Deputy General Secretary

L C CHILTON
Treasurer

AVIS REANEY
Financial Secretary

9th April 2003

The above statements are formal statements which are included in the accounts of all companies and major charities

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

We have audited the financial statements on pages 6 to 19. This report is made solely to the Church as a body, in accordance with the terms of our engagement. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we may state to the Church's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Church and the Church's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Respective responsibilities of the Finance Committee and auditors

The responsibilities of the Finance Committee for preparing the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards are set out in the Statement of Responsibilities on page 20.

Our responsibility is to audit the financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Auditing Standards.

We report to you our opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view. We also report to you if, in our opinion, the Report of the Finance Committee is not consistent with the financial statements if the Church has not kept proper accounting records, or if we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

We read the information contained in the Financial Report and consider whether it is consistent with the audited financial statements. We consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the financial statements. Our responsibilities do not extend to any information outside the Financial Report.

Basis of audit opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with United Kingdom Auditing Standards issued by the Auditing Practices Board. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgments made by the Finance Committee in the preparation of the financial statements and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the circumstances of the Church, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

We planned and performed our audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which we considered necessary in order to provide us with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity, or error. In forming our opinion we also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the financial statements.

Opinion

In our opinion the financial statements give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Church as at 31st December 2012 and of its incoming resources and application of resources in the year then ended.

BSM Robson Rhodes
Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors

9th April 2013
Hazel Hempstead

The audit report by BSM Robson Rhodes set out above is in the standard form prescribed by auditors, which does not require any statement which they might be duty bound to draw to the attention of readers.

FIVE YEAR SUMMARY

	1998 £'000	1999 £'000	2000 £'000	2001 £'000	2002 £'000
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS					
Income					
Ministry and Mission Fund contributions	16,712	16,629	17,363	17,978	18,687
Investment income	1,114	1,117	978	915	757
Grants receivable	982	715	660	612	694
Leagues	1,869	285	982	1,111	998
Other income	733	1,207	1,154	2,919	2,962
	<u>21,333</u>	<u>18,973</u>	<u>21,136</u>	<u>23,514</u>	<u>23,098</u>
Expenditure					
Ministry	13,749	14,192	15,115	15,985	16,354
Additional pension contributions	1,008	750	-	-	-
Travel	1,256	1,491	1,855	2,063	1,840
Other Mission activities	1,954	2,281	2,719	2,214	2,268
Support activities	1,403	1,434	1,928	1,867	2,766
	<u>19,364</u>	<u>20,158</u>	<u>21,916</u>	<u>22,099</u>	<u>22,529</u>
Net incoming/outgoing resources	1,949	(185)	(789)	1,415	1,569
Investment gains/(losses)	1,913	2,687	(1,356)	(2,397)	(3,129)
Net increase/(decrease) in funds	<u>5,862</u>	<u>2,502</u>	<u>(2,135)</u>	<u>1,982</u>	<u>(1,440)</u>
CASH FLOW STATEMENTS					
Cash required for investment in					
Houses for retired ministers	673	295	455	1,132	1,525
Other properties	334	394	159	229	1,482
Cars and equipment	145	195	90	138	118
Loans to churches and ministers	127	32	190	131	115
	<u>1,275</u>	<u>825</u>	<u>614</u>	<u>1,460</u>	<u>840</u>
Source of cash					
Net incoming/outgoing resources for the year (see above)	1,949	(185)	(789)	1,415	1,569
Adjustment for items not resulting in a cash movement and for endowments	(3,295)	(228)	(1,255)	(1,979)	(1,743)
	<u>1,920</u>	<u>(315)</u>	<u>(1,135)</u>	<u>(1,523)</u>	<u>(1,134)</u>
Net increase in capital endowment	90	1	15	475	57
Net decrease in investments	165	654	2,284	1,970	1,814
Decrease (increase) in bank balances	(600)	706	655	446	7872
	<u>1,275</u>	<u>825</u>	<u>614</u>	<u>1,460</u>	<u>840</u>

FIVE YEAR SUMMARY CONTINUED

	1998 £'000	1999 £'000	2000 £'000	2001 £'000	2002 £'000
BALANCE SHEETS					
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets					
Houses for rented ministers	15,350	15,928	14,756	16,568	14,246
Houses for serving ministers	3,519	3,741	3,936	4,706	4,530
Other properties	1,924	2,208	2,236	2,700	2,249
Cars and equipment	363	431	376	377	357
	19,766	20,906	20,931	21,051	20,781
Long term investments	22,058	25,949	23,854	20,171	18,489
Loans to Churches and ministers	698	758	692	685	589
	42,462	46,615	45,477	41,975	42,360
Net current assets/(liabilities)					
Current assets					
Debtors and stocks	1,037	1,056	1,789	1,616	1,081
Short term investments and deposits	3,642	2,129	147	154	159
Bank balances and money at call	1,089	983	1,533	1,088	1,960
	6,768	4,168	3,460	2,851	3,174
Less current liabilities	5,997	3,895	3,798	4,074	3,317
	2,771	2,262	(758)	(1,213)	(144)
Total net assets	44,573	46,875	44,739	43,757	42,317
Funds					
Unrestricted income funds	11,919	12,551	12,202	11,583	11,627
Restricted income funds	26,594	27,912	26,573	25,934	25,057
Capital funds	5,860	6,412	6,104	6,241	5,615
Total funds	44,573	46,875	44,739	43,757	42,317

NON-FINANCIAL STATISTICS

	91,000	91,000	92,000	90,700	88,000
Members	530	694	725	725	695
Supernumerary ministers	193	176	171	159	161
Non-supernumerary ministers	1,736	1,726	1,753	1,745	1,719
Clutches	769	---	870	857	852
Retired ministers	4178	4187	4187	4159	4112
Ministry and Mission contribution per member					

Information on this page and the preceding page is concerned mainly or low level of detail with the financial results. However, it shows some interesting trends and brings out features that do not show so clearly on a single set of accounts.

DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2004

	Actual 2001	Actual 2002	Budget 2002	Budget 2003	Draft Budget 2004
EXPENDITURE					
MINISTRY					
Local and special ministries and CRCW's	14,493	14,855	14,716	15,007	15,610
Service mediators - stipends and expenses	468	505	498	513	533
Ministries committee	242	255	232	239	252
	15,203	15,578	15,246	15,849	16,395
TRAINING					
College training for stipendary ministry	1,081	1,053	1,150	1,113	1,145
Other training for stipendary ministry	294	225	187	201	220
Training for non-stipendary ministry	156	161	98	140	147
Central cost of Youth and Children's Work trainers	188	178	259	249	268
Local training costs	85	45	100	98	110
Training committee	127	99	120	127	114
	1,840	1,760	1,917	1,930	2,004
OTHER MISSION ACTIVITIES					
Grants	901	714	108	317	301
Ecumenical committee and international	248	308	107	295	268
Council for World Mission	45	47	59	56	59
Church and Society committee	78	91	96	81	88
Equal Justice programme	18	74	61	83	85
Life and Witness committee	88	91	123	160	109
Wanderlust Centre	47	78	45	40	40
Youth and Children's Work committee	159	132	181	192	172
Yardley Business	128	129	156	100	125
Pilots Development	63	64	70	72	80
Other committees	21	17	11	15	16
	1,274	1,354	1,359	1,346	1,326
SUPPORT ACTIVITIES					
General Assembly and Missions Council	219	308	233	204	235
Communication and Editorial	257	266	303	320	290
Finance office	234	287	295	323	348
Central secretariat	219	232	202	225	279
Professional fees	63	64	81	92	97
Computer network	48	45	48	55	56
URC House costs	238	247	216	217	214
Depreciation on buildings	88	90	9	75	10
General church costs	131	195	176	112	107
	1,498	1,644	1,514	1,607	1,597
TOTAL EXPENDITURE					
	19,776	20,313	20,216	20,751	21,317

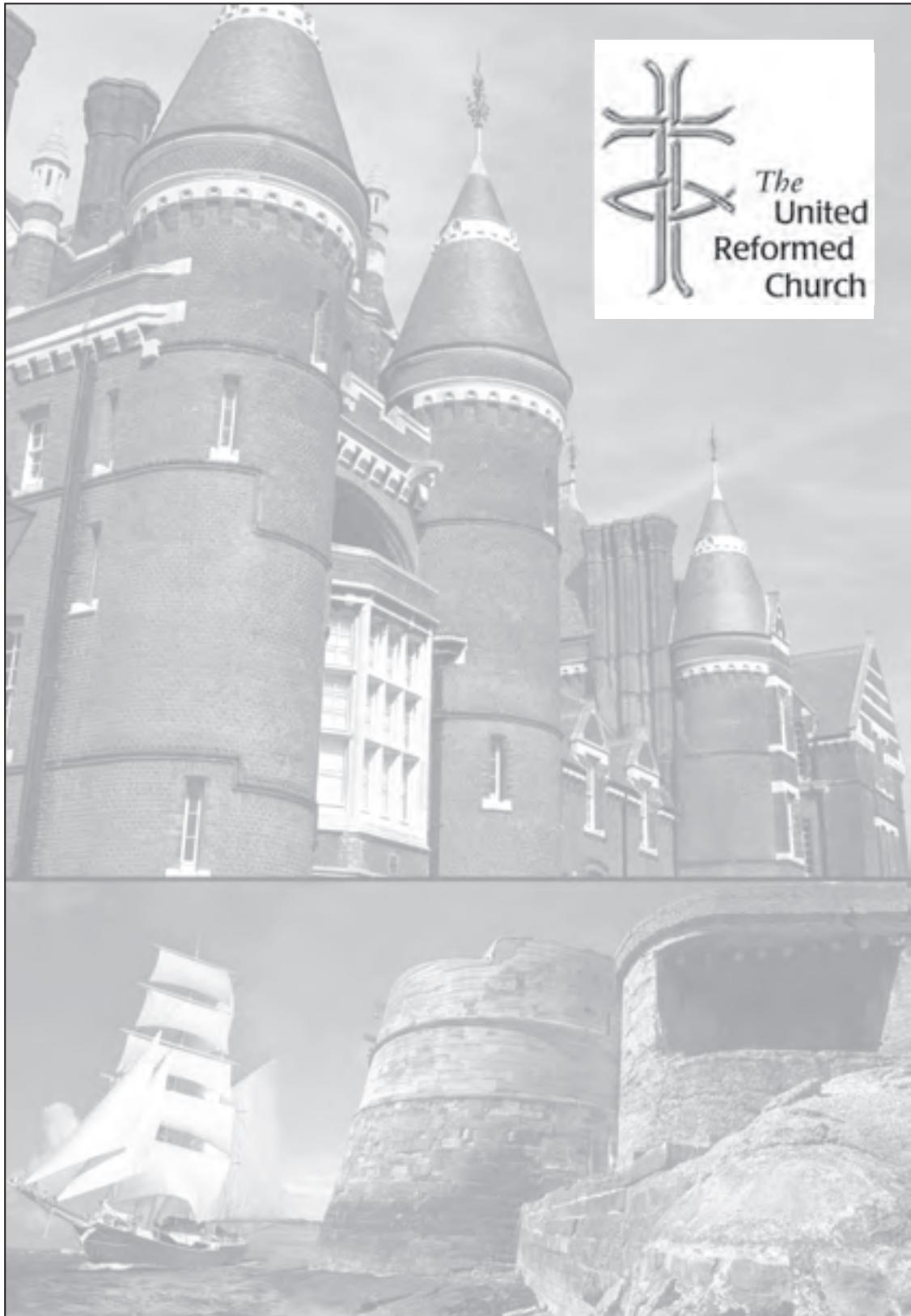
DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2004

	Actual 2001	Actual 2002	Budget 2002	Budget 2003	Draft Budget 2004
INCOME					
MINISTRY AND MISSION FUND CONTRIBUTIONS	17,928	18,687	18,750	19,454	20,077
INVESTMENT INCOME					
Dividends	277	215	279	257	186
Bucess	86	68	200	50	0
	363	283	479	307	186
GRANTS RECEIVABLE					
Memorial Hall Trust	350	350	250	280	280
New College Endow Trust	262	344	280	300	290
	612	694	530	580	570
LEGACIES					
	272	656	0	0	0
OTHER INCOME					
CWM Mission Support programme	126	0	0	0	0
Donations	50	321	50	50	50
Study	18	21	10	10	10
	191	342	60	60	60
PROFIT ON SALE OF PROPERTIES					
	747	423			
TOTAL INCOME	20,666	24,117	19,978	20,501	20,887
NET INCOMING/OUTGOING RESOURCE	289	804	(237)	1350	(430)



The
United
Reformed
Church

Information



1 Twenty seven members attended the Annual Meeting held jointly with the Baptist Historical Society at Dr Williams's Library on Saturday 21 September. The Lecturer was the Revd Basil Amey on 'The Free Church Federal Council: a retrospective view'. The Revd Geoffrey Roper, current Secretary of the Free Churches Group within Churches Together in England followed with an explanation of how the successor body operates. After lunch members were given an introductory talk about Dr Williams's by David Powell, Special Cataloguer in the Congregational Library, and were able to look at interesting archival material, as well as touring the Library itself.

2 Reorganisation of the Society's holdings continued. The Secretary acted as courier for material destined for Bristol, Cardiff and Leeds. Mr and Mrs Richard Potts assisted in the sorting and listing of the photographic collection and with their deposit of the remaining Yorkshire records, the task laid on the Society in 1997 to distribute material to the locality of origin was completed. The sale of surplus Communion tokens has been supervised by Mr Jeffrey Gardiner, another United Reformed Church member, all proceeds being devoted to Society's Library. Extensive conservation work must begin soon and there will be costs associated with the storage of the national Presbyterian records that remain in the Society's care.

3 Cataloguing of the Library, which will make it accessible 'on line', via the Cambridge University Library, has proceeded slowly but surely with the assistance of Dr Marian Foster, the recently retired Librarian of the Cambridge Theological Federation. The teamwork of the Chairman and Administrator in identifying duplicate stock ensured that a complete set of the Presbyterian Messenger and another of the Record of the national Synod/Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in/of England were donated to New College, Edinburgh. Other duplicates were sold to interested individuals or libraries.

4 Visitors are always welcome and should contact the Administrator, Mrs M Thompson at Westminster College, Cambridge CB3 0AA / 01223 741300 / mt212@cam.ac.uk (not Wednesdays). For those interested in the antecedents of Dissent, a short pamphlet, *Pilgrim Roots*, gives some directions for a tour of significant sites. The Manuscript copy of the *Westminster Confession* was the centre piece of a lecture given in a College context, but one which led to the Council's decision to make a microfilm copy for use by scholars.

5 The Society's Journal completed another volume (6) in July. Articles covered issues of conscience, gender, culture and society, together with celebration of significant dates and ministries. The Editor, Clyde Binfield, succeeded Elaine Kay as Society President at the Annual Meeting.

6 The first General Assembly to be held north of the Border provided an opportunity to learn about Independency in Scotland, in a lunch-time talk by the Revd Dr W D McNaughton on 'Early Congregationalism and St Andrews'.

7 Copies of congregational histories are always useful additions to the Society's collection. Churches may take out corporate membership at the same rate (£13) as individuals and there is a reduction for students.

URC Musicians' Guild

1 WHAT does it DO? In its branches that follow the general area pattern of United Reformed Church Synods, regular events for training, interest and worship are held, to which members give loyal support and many others attend also. Although the WHAT question about the Guild is common, more vital is, WHY?

2 The United Reformed Church inherited from its formation stock a vital use and appreciation of music in worship. Bodies very similar to the present Guild served the churches in the constituent denominations making the United Reformed Church and this Guild succeed them. A common practice of worship world wide, Christian or otherwise, is having people sing and play instruments to honour and glorify God.

3 Something so fundamental as music needs to be nurtured and encouraged – as indeed do other arts and skills used in worship. We have all heard this, "Nothing but the best is good enough for God." Now to that end some will employ trained specialists to 'do the job' which other people observe. Our way is participation by as many people as possible 'doing the job together' – characteristic of the Free Church tradition: the reason WHY we have a URC Musicians' Guild is to encourage that in our churches.

4 Therefore, the Guild is not limited to or by organists, choirmasters, choir singers, or professional instrumentalists of any kind (though it has an obvious duty to offer support to them wherever they help in the life of churches and their worship) but it is for YOU, for example, if you are concerned to help your church's worship rise towards the high expectations that most people think are worthy of an offering to God. 'WORSHIP' derives from 'WORTH-SHIP'.

5 After a long wait for a permanent appointment, the Guild has a new Honorary General Secretary: Mrs Christine James (56 Back Street, Ashwell, Baldock, Herts SG7 5PE) was elected at AGM last October. Christine is a mother, has a week-day job, enjoys singing, plays and arranges for others to play the organ at Ashwell United Reformed Church, is Church Secretary and is not short of 'outside' interests, yet agreed so to serve. The 400 plus members of the Guild are most appreciative and other people will be also.

6 John Harding ('Rainbow's End' 150 Humber Doucy Lane, Ipswich IP4 3NU) co-ordinates the Guild's Organ Advisory Service for the United Reformed Church, at present heavily committed to an organ survey listing as many instruments as possible possessed in the United Reformed Church, on the basis of information returned on the quite simple request forms sent through Synod networks to EVERY United Reformed Church. Checks on this wherever possible would be very helpful and avoid a lot of 'chasing' for outstanding replies.

7 It costs only £4 annually to be a Guild member (£10 for corporate membership, which could be a whole church) and for that one is sent, three times a year, the excellent Guild Review magazine (edited by John Mansfield) and full information about what the local branch intends to DO – answering that commonest question with which this page began! The membership Secretary and Treasurer is Jim Nevill (38 Stambourne Way, West Wickham, Kent BR4 9NF) and he would be delighted to hear from more people waiting to join.

Schools related to the United Reformed Church

1 Representatives of the schools met in London for the annual business meeting in July 2002, and a group of sixth-formers, staff, and governors from the schools met in Torre Pellice for a week-end in October 2002.

2 The fellowship and stimulus of the occasion was immense. The schools are indebted for this to the generous hospitality provided by Principal Elio Canale of the Collegio Valdese, to the co-ordination undertaken by the Headmaster and Chaplain of Caterham School, and to the careful continuity provided by Mr A J Earl.

Caterham School

Caterham has had another successful year of consolidation, particularly enjoying the completion of the Boarding refurbishment programme.

The number of pupils who are United Reformed Church Ministers' children is slowly growing. We feel this is a key area of our Foundation, which is at the heart of the School.

Examination results continue to improve with the best ever at GCSE and A level and a 92% rate of University candidates getting to the University of their first choice.

The new Director of Music and Head of Drama have had a significant impact on our Performing Arts provision.

In sport, two girls have just been selected to represent England in the U19 World Cup in Baltimore, USA.

On the European front some thirty pupils, staff and governors from our schools, spent an excellent four days in October as the guests of the Collegio Valdese, where the theme of 'Building Bridges' encompassed links with Corrymeela in Ireland, Taizé in France, and Agape, nearby in the Alps, as well as examining the roots of the Waldensian Church. Future linkages between individual schools and Torre Pellice are envisaged.

A new school strategic plan has been prepared and the School hope to have a building master plan in place in the immediate future.

Eltham College

'Christian principles' are the first two words in Eltham's 'mission statement', and I am pleased to be able to report that pupils, staff, and governors remain committed to supporting the Christian ethos.

2003 sees the centenary of the construction and dedication of the College Chapel, and in July a service is planned to celebrate the 100 years of worship within this building. Contractors have been working carefully around the school activities to complete interior refurbishments, particularly to all the wood panels and pews. The PTA have generously contributed to the provision of soft furnishings, while we hope that the Congregational and General Charitable Trust will be able to help with a grant towards the upgrading of the electricity supply. The Chapel remains a potent symbol of our heritage, and while there are fewer missionaries who seek education for their children in England, it is important that the current pupils are made aware of the principles which impelled many of the school's earliest parents to send their sons to SSM and Eltham College.

The Community Service Programme now involves all students throughout their Lower Sixth year, helping at various venues and with different groups within the local community, and many maintain these contacts into the Upper Sixth and beyond. The Charities Committee are equally active raising funds for national charities like Children-in-Need, and local ones like the Sharks Swimming Club for the Disabled, who use the Eric Liddell Sports Centre at Eltham in the evenings.

We are reaching a critical moment in the future of boarding provision at Eltham. Rather like Walthamstow Hall before us, we have found it almost impossible to maintain a regular supply of boarders on such a small scale. The boarding house's *raison d'être*, missionaries' sons, has almost dried up, and at home there has been little interest, even in weekly boarding. Interest now only comes from Asia where students are attracted to a location near London, and a chance to improve their English: this is not a recipe for a contented and homogeneous community. Our Governors will have to consider the future of boarding as a matter of urgency.

On a different note, the Seven Schools Conference, 'Building Bridges', at Torre Pellice was a most positive and thought provoking event, enjoyed by

Headmaster, Chaplain and two of our Sixth Formers. Our link with Collegio Valdese is strong, and we hope that we shall be able to explore the possibility of trips in both directions by staff and pupils from all our schools in the future.

Silcoates School

With just over 700 pupils we have reached the numerical target set during the transition to full co-education.

The A level statistics of greatest importance are that our Sixth Formers achieved the highest ever average grade per subject and that all but one of them (ie all who chose to) have proceeded into Higher Education. The GCSE candidates did very well and we have an unprecedentedly large number of students in this year's Lower Sixth. In the public examinations Silcoates bucked the national trend in two respects. At GCSE the boys outshone the girls – only just, but they did. At A level the subject with the greatest number of candidates was mathematics, nine of the sixteen students achieving grade A.

The extra-curricular life of the school continues to be rich and varied – and not only during term time. Take last Easter Holidays: only two and a half weeks including Easter itself. Nevertheless, Silcoates was out and about and busy. The 1st XV went to Rome for a week – played three, won three, watched the Italy v England international, flew back on the same plane as the England squad, reunion with Martin Johnson, lots of autographs. The Eternal City was also visited by the Sixth Form Historians – special subject Mussolini. The U12 A and B teams played in the North of England tournament in Blackpool, A beating B at an intermediate stage and losing to the eventual winners. There were Duke of Edinburgh's Award expeditions and cabin-cruising on the Norfolk Broads. Members of staff spent some days building the ingenious set for Little Shop of Horrors and rehearsing the cast. Prospective parents taken round on Monday 8 April were impressed to see a GCSE Art class in progress.

Our two feeder schools, Sunny Hill House and St Hilda's, are flourishing. The Early Years extension at Sunny Hill House, completed on time and within budget, is a splendid addition, much admired and enjoyed. The Gateway nursery at St Hilda's, opened in the spring, is also very attractive and a great asset to that school.

Walthamstow Hall

The year 2002 was a significant turning point in the life of Walthamstow Hall, with the retirement of Mrs Jackie Lang, after nearly nineteen years' service, and the closure of boarding in the summer term.

Mrs Lang's retirement was marked by a number of splendid events to celebrate the contribution she had made to the life of the school as headmistress and pupil, and as GSA president in 1997.

The end of boarding was received with some sadness, but also a determination to preserve the Christian values and strong sense of community that have always characterised the school.

Mrs Jill Milner, an Oxford English graduate, joined the school in September 2002 from her post as Acting Deputy Head at Tonbridge Girls' Grammar School. Mrs Milner is a practising Christian with three children of her own and wide experience in the maintained sector and GSA day and boarding schools.

In August the school was pleased to maintain its tradition of high academic achievement, with news of excellent public examination results, despite what the media came to label the 'Advanced Level fiasco'.

Advanced Level candidates in 2002 achieved 60.8% passes at grades A and B, with the average number of subjects per candidate reaching 3.5, not including General Studies. This represents a steady increase in the number of subjects examined at A2, from under 3 in 1998, and reflects the breadth of education encouraged at Walthamstow Hall.

At GCSE 60% of candidates achieved passes at grades A and A*, a school record, with candidates taking at least 10 subjects, and the majority taking 12.

Beyond the academic curriculum, girls distinguished themselves in the fields of Music and Sport, as well as excelling in business as winners of the Young Enterprise area final competition.

In March, senior girls gave a memorable performance of Arthur Miller's The Crucible in the Ship Theatre, a joint production with Tonbridge and Judd boys' schools. In the summer term, the Junior School mounted an equally polished production of Twelfth Night featuring twin sisters.

The summer term also saw an acclaimed concert of music, including Mozart's piano concerto number 23, as well as various choral and orchestral pieces. As usual the school acted as host to the Sevenoaks Festival in the summer term, continuing the tradition of cultural pursuits.

In September twenty of our lacrosse players were selected to play in Kent teams and the school's ski team was chosen to represent Kent at the National Championships of the Schools' Ski Association.

All these achievements and the continuing of links with schools in Rheinbach, Pointose and Torre Pellice show the importance that the school attaches to education beyond the classroom.

The school raised several thousand pounds for Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital, Breast Cancer Awareness and Water Aid, as well as continuing to support the Peckham Settlement through fundraising and the annual 'Peckham Party'.

The Friends and Parents' Association organised a superb Fireworks party and a highly successful Christmas Fair, which raised a record sum.

In the summer holidays work began on the redevelopment of the old boarding area to create the new Erasmus Centre, providing state-of-the-art teaching rooms and facilities for Languages and Humanities departments. In the autumn term, the new music centre at the Junior School (formerly the old stable block) came into use to expand opportunities for music making. These symbolise the school's ability to evolve and embrace innovation in the context of the traditional, for they use redeveloped buildings to house new thinking.

This ability to adapt to meet future challenges, whilst holding firm to the Christian principles on which the school is founded, will equip us for the latest exciting phase in our 165 year history.

Wentworth College

The school was inspected by the Independent Schools' Inspectorate in October 2002 and we have now received their report. We are very pleased with what the Inspectors have written about us – and we agree with them that Wentworth is a 'happy and successful school where all pupils enjoy an education of very good quality based on very good teaching'. The report concludes that the high standard of education offered ensures that 'in all subjects pupils' standards of attainment exceed national levels in relation to their age, prior achievement and perceived capabilities'. The 'quality of teaching and learning is very good, pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work are excellent and the atmosphere in the school is warm and caring. Pupils respond well to the ethos of the school and are committed in their work and enthusiastic in their sport and leisure activities. Pupils are well care for, receive effective pastoral support, guidance and welfare and enjoy their life in the school'. The Summary Report, prospectus and current newsletter may be obtained from the School Office and further information about the school is available on our website, www.wentworthcollege.org.uk.

The Advent Service last term was held at Richmond Hill United Reformed Church, led by the Revd Jane Weedon and the Minister, the Revd Dr Donald Norwood. As always, it was well supported by Governors, parents and the congregation. The Revd Jane Weedon has taken over the Chaplaincy at Wentworth College, following the move by the Revd Frank Cochrane to his new pastorate in Southampton.

Taunton School

On the academic front we were delighted with our A Level results: a 97% pass rate, of which 68% were A/B, was significantly up on last year's performance and the best we have ever achieved. Nineteen pupils achieved 3A grades or more – a record number for the School. The GCSE results, 93% pass rate, were on a par with previous years.

However schools such as Taunton are very much about the all-round personal development of the pupils, as the following highlights from our extensive extra-curricular programme indicate.

The School Equestrian team followed on from their success last year in winning the National Schools' Show Jumping at Hickstead by coming second in the National Schools' One Day event at Ardingly. They were only just beaten into second place by Millfield.

The girls' U15 Hockey team reached the final 16 of the English Hockey Association Cup but unfortunately lost to Norton HC, Worcester, 4-2.

All three Ten Tors Teams (35, 45 and 55 miles) completed the expedition. Matthew Llewellyn-Jones (F4), who suffers from cerebral palsy, participated in the Jubilee Challenge. He was the first walker home on his 13.5km route.

Kate Pengelly (F5) represented the England U17 Rounders Team.

Emma Patterson (flute), Rachel Marsh (clarinet), Matthew Bray (clarinet) and Jess Tratt (saxophone) – all F4 – were offered places with the Somerset County Band. Emily Duggan (violin – F3) was offered a place with the Somerset County Youth Orchestra.

The boys had a highly successful hockey tour to South Africa. Their record was: P14 W4 D1 L9 top sides. Goals: For 32 Against 36 – an indication of how close matches were. The players visited Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, East London, Cape Town and Robben Island as well as doing some whale watching and bungy jumping.

Wesley Hosie (F3) won the British Open U15 Wake Boarding Title and also the National U15 Title.

Charlotte King (F50) was selected for Bristol City Ladies Football Team. She is likely to be our first former pupil to become a professional footballer.

It has thus been a year of continued success, in which the number of pupils in the School passed the 1,000 mark. The last time we were at that level was in 1991 – and that was when we passed through it the other way.

Silence and Retreats Network

Core Group members:

Convener: Revd David Bunney

Mr Mark Argent, Revd Meriel Chippindale, Mrs Glenys Cockerell, Mr Alan Fox

Revd Gill Jackson, Revd Brenda Stephenson

1 The task of the Silence and Retreats Network is to encourage members of the United Reformed Church in their use of silence both in public worship in our churches and in private devotions and the use of retreats. We seek to provide a point of contact both nationally and in each District and Synod from which members can begin to explore and to deepen their experience of spirituality, to the benefit of Church life and individual understanding of the presence of things holy.

2 The Convener represents the United Reformed Church on the executive committee of the Retreat Association, sharing with almost all the major Christian denominations. The work of the Network comes within the remit of the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee, and we are also represented on the CTE Spirituality Co-ordinating Group. We are thus engaged in preparing for the forthcoming national conference of the Retreat Association at Swanwick in May, 2004.

3 We have continued to draw interest from all part of the United Reformed Church, from both ordained and lay-people. There is now a Link Person in each Synod, and we hope soon to have a representative in each District too. An increasing number of those involved with the Network are trained Spiritual Directors, giving service both within and beyond our own denomination in quiet days, retreats and training; such activities are increasingly

becoming an expected part of the student curriculum, in Continuing Ministerial Education and individually. One retired minister, Revd Keith Green, sits on the editorial board of 'Retreats', whilst under Alan Fox's editorship our thrice-yearly newsletter 'Windows' gains increasing acknowledgement.

4 The Core Group members and Synod links meet in conference each Spring at the Windermere Centre for the exchange of news and experiences and also for a short time of retreat. Particular thanks is due to the Revd Gill Jackson for her careful and thorough work in regard to membership records and subscriptions. Gaining just one member from each of our Districts in the coming year would enrich the worshipping life of our churches enormously!

5 The world has given us much to pray about in the past twelve months, and doubtless will do so again in the coming year. The remarkable catch-phrase use by the Retreat Association for last year's National Quiet Day (Stop! In the name of God!) has found repeated relevance in recent history, drawing added attention both to the need and the opportunities to withdraw and to pray. In the maelstrom of this world's so-called progress, it is even more important that we should find and hold on to 'the peace which the world cannot give'. We are part of your Church and we exist to help its members to do just that.

Women's World Day of Prayer

1 Our service this year, held on Friday the 7th of March, was written by the women of the Lebanon with the theme 'Holy Spirit, Fill Us'. A theme that reflected the longed for peace and harmony much sought after in their country. The words 'Come, ever-present Spirit of Truth, fill us and work through us' that had been written by the Lebanon's committee, were repeated throughout the Service. The prayers, readings and music, helped us all to feel the deep need of the people.

2 Lebanon is one of the smallest countries in the Middle East, less than half the size of Wales. A beautiful fertile country, it was once described as the 'Paris' of the East. Bordered by Syria and Israel, it has seen many problems in the last two decades, life in the country is still hard as the people try to rebuild after the long civil war. An ancient Bible land; its name appears 75 times in the Bible, the people are proud of their Christian tradition.

3 The services were well attended with over 350,000 orders of service used at the many different services held throughout, England, Northern Ireland and Wales. Especially translated service sheets are produced for the Welsh speaking churches. Services were held in churches, cathedrals, hospitals, nursing homes, halls and schools, where the special children's service sheets, along with the teachers

notes are used at assemblies. Day conferences and preparation days have also increased with over 50 booked from Autumn 2003 to early Spring 2004.

4 This year the National Committee will share the great joy of hosting the International World Day of Prayer meeting at Swanwick in August. Delegates from all over the world will come together to share in fellowship and experiences of the World Day of Prayer. It will be wonderful to meet the people with whom you share this day year after year in another part of the world. Every first Friday in March throughout the day somewhere in the world the service is being held. From the first at day break in the Islands of Tonga, to the last on St Lawrence Island, off the coast of Alaska.

5 The service for 2004 has been prepared by the women of Panama, with the theme 'In Faith, Women Shape the Future'.

6 More information about the services and conferences along with the service material can be obtained from the office, Women's World Day of Prayer, Commercial Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 2RR.
Telephone/Fax 01892 541411
E-mail office@wwdp-natcomm.org

