

**MINUTES OF THE MISSION COUNCIL OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH, MEETING  
AT THE HAYES CONFERENCE CENTRE, SWANWICK  
NOVEMBER 25<sup>TH</sup> – 27<sup>TH</sup> 2011**

The Council Meeting was constituted with worship led by Revd Rachel Poolman and Revd Dr James Coleman, chaplains to the Moderators, Mrs Val Morrison and Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe.

Friday November 25<sup>th</sup>

**SESSION 1**

Moderator, Mrs Val Morrison took the chair.

**Apologies:**

**Apologies were received from:**

Ms Michelle Marcano, Head of HR; Mrs Adella Pritchard, W Midlands rep; Mrs Rhona Dunn, Northern rep;  
Rev Dr Roger

## 11/29 MATTER ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

ZI. The General Secretary, Rev Roberta Rominger, spoke to paper A. The Mission Council Independent Review Group meeting over the summer had agreed that the campaign should go forward on the condition that certain requirements were fulfilled. These included an "Internal Launch +1" which would be synod based with members of the Steering Group available to attend and take a lead. 471 churches were currently exploring. The launch date of the ZI campaign would be May 9<sup>th</sup> 2012. She reported with sadness that Denese Chikwendu had resigned from her post as campaign co ordinator. She paid tribute to Denese's passion and energy.

She also reported the recent resignation of Michelle Marcano as director of Human Resources. There was concern that two black women should both resign from posts at Church House within a short period and an investigation group had been appointed to address this.

The General Secretary responded to questions relating to timescale, costs likely to be incurred by local churches, the number of churches currently 'exploring', the shortage of 'companions', and the role of Mission Committee in ongoing oversight of the work of the Steering Group.

The Report of the Independent Review Group, circulated in September, was received by Mission Council. The Moderator thanked the members of the group for the work they had undertaken in a short space of time. Revd Roy Lowes paid tribute to the difficult work of the General Secretary during the past months. Mission Council affirmed his comments with applause.

## 11/30 REVIEW OF THE ROLE OF THE SYNOD MODERATOR.

Revd Dr Stephen Orchard, convener of the review group, presented a progress report, Paper C. Responses to the review group's survey indicated that there was much support for the role of Moderator in the URC. The group was seeking a way forward to enable more efficient working within the existing structures of the church. They would welcome further comments, to be sent either to Dr. Orchard or Sue Bush. The moderator thanked the group for the work to date.

## SESSION 2.

Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe took the chair.

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## **11/31 MISSION COMMITTEE**

### **1. Nestle.**

Revd Ed Cox introduced Papers B4 and B5.

In line with the resolution at the 2010 Assembly, as Nestle had attained

Ghana had taken a resolution to its Assembly to '*sever partnerships with churches that ordain homosexuals*'. After representations from the United Reformed Church and others, the Assembly Council had amended the resolution to read, '*The General Assembly Council has agreed that instead of severing relations with partner*

**Saturday Nov 26th**

**SESSION 4**

Morning worship was led by the chaplains.

Moderator Mrs Val Morrison took the chair. She thanked those who had responded to the Friday evening discussion question and reported that some groups had asked for time for further discussion. If time allowed, this would be arranged.

**11/34 LONDON 2012 – OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES**

Ms Frances Brienen, Secretary for Mission, updated Mission Council on preparations for the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The URC belonged to the "More than Gold" partnership which sought to link sport with faith through outreach, hospitality and service. She introduced Revd Dougie Burnett from Bristol and Revd Ashley Evans from Newham who explained what their churches had planned in response to Olympic themes and to support residents in the area around the main Olympic site. There was still time for local churches to consider how they could use the Olympic season to engage with their communities. The Moderator thanked Dougie and Ashley for their presentations and encouraged people to think how they could be involved.

**11/35 MINISTRIES**

1. Timescale regarding papers for Assessment.

Revd Craig

eligible for EM3 funding. A suggestion was made that the Disciplinary Process should be the sanction for a person who was unwilling to take up the required training. Ms Thomas said that this had not been considered by the Committee.

**The resolution was resolved by consensus.**

## **2. Requirement in Education for Ministry Phase 3**

Revd John Smith C201Tf(Educ)9(at)7(o)1Ds@003Tj/TT11Tf0.2//C211Tf0Tc2.4650Td0/C2erEduc



- a) Requests the HSTG to prepare materials for local churches which will promote wider knowledge and understanding of the 2007 G A Commitment on human sexuality.
- b) Requests Synods to create opportunities for preparation that are appropriate to their situation;
- c) Asks the Assembly Arrangements Committee to consult widely in deciding how best to present this particular matter in the Assembly agenda.

There was lengthy discussion. Many thought that materials provided in advance of Assembly would be useful to aid



premises (or to request the trustees of other premises, the use of which their church shares) to apply for the approval of those premises for the registration of Civil Partnerships.

The debate centred on the procedure to be followed and the wisdom of offering three resolutions to Assembly, two of which contradicted resolutions made in 2007. It would be necessary to count votes although there was no reason why consensus procedures could not be used for the discussion session. It would be helpful to see the final wording of Government legislation before coming to a decision regarding exactly what should be put to Assembly.

**The clerk proposed withdrawal of the proposed resolutions. Mission Council agreed by consensus.**

## **11/43 ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE**

Dr David Robinson presented Paper J. Four options were proposed for the circulation of the Assembly Reports and Record, and he invited Mission Council to come to a mind. A number of strong views were expressed: the importance of accessibility to the information to be discussed in a user friendly format; the proposal of an invitation to opt in for the receipt of hard copies; a plea that Ministers as well as church secretaries needed access to the Reports; the difficulty in preparing material for an **the a Report**; A



By a show of orange cards Mission Council showed it was “broadly happy” with Mr Ellis’s plan.

#### **4. Budget 2012 and Implications PAPERS K & K1**

Mr Ellis presented the financial report. Against declining income but relatively static expenditure, he presented the budget for 2012 showing a proposed deficit of £1m.

**Mission Council accepts the budget for 2012 set out in Paper K1, noting a substantial projected deficit and the need to reduce this in 2013.**

**Resolved by majority vote.**

Many constructive comments were received: concern over minister numbers; stipends; the costs of the Church’s central programmes and governance; and the need to make large cuts in the budget for 2013.

#### **4. Synod contributions to support the Ministers Pension Fund.**

Mr Ellis thanked the Synods for the way they had agreed to make generous payments into the Ministers Pension Fund for the triennium 2010 12. It

A number of helpful comments were made: a request for a clear definition of harassment; the need for theological underpinning; links with the Safe church material; and the need for training those who would need to administer the procedures. Elizabeth thanked all who had contributed and undertook to liaise with the Sexual Ethics Advisory Group to ensure clarity regarding safe church issues.

She introduced Paper L1 in which the Equal Opportunities Committee requested an additional two members to assist in the managing of their work load. After discussion no agreement was reached and the question was remaindered.

## **SESSION 8.**

Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe took the chair.

Questions were offered to the groups for discussion. (Appendix 2). Mission Council discussed in groups.

Evening worship was conducted by the chaplains.

## **Sunday November 27<sup>th</sup>**

### **SESSION 9**

Mission Council celebrated Holy Communion, led by the Moderators and their chaplains. Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe preached the sermon.

### **11/46 RESOLUTION FROM MERSEY SYNOD**

Revd Howard Sharpe spoke to Paper P. He suggested that many churches felt a sense of overload as they learned about the various programmes and initiatives underway within the church. On behalf of his Synod, he proposed:

**Mission Council agrees to take time to reflect on the number of denominational initiatives it is authorising and the way these are rolled out to Synods and local churches.**

Following some supportive comments, the General Secretary agreed that MCAG would give the matter further thought.

### **11/47 PROCEDURAL RESOLUTION**

Revd David Tatem, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, spoke briefly to the resolution which would enable work already in progress, to continue:

**Mission Council delegates to the Methodist/URC Liaison Group the authority to approve the final wording of the Model Constitution for Methodist/URC United Areas.**

**Resolved by Consensus**

## **SESSION 10**

Moderator Mrs Val Morrison took the chair.

She clarified that Staff Secretaries were free to speak at Mission Council but not to vote.

### **11/48 SYNOD RESOLUTION FROM WESSEX SYNOD**

The resolution on Paper P was presented by Revd Clare Downing. It was instigated by the Wessex Youth & Children's Committee believing that secure ID should be available and would be an asset.



2. Requests Mission Council Advisory Group to develop an appropriate process for Mission Council to bring recommendations to the 2012 Assembly for the shape of the 2013 budget in the light of these outlines and other relevant factors.

Resolved by consensus.

The business was concluded.

#### **Announcements**

Revd Fiona Thomas gave notice of a conference at Mansfield College March 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> 2012.

Revd Kevin Watson thanked Moderators, conveners and all concerned for the way in which potentially divisive business has been led and executed. The Holy Spirit had moved.

#### **Mrs Morrison thanked all who had completed their service on Mission Council**

Ms Michelle Marcano, Head of HR; Revd Peter Noble, Wales Synod Moderator; Mrs Adella Pritchard, West Midlands Rep; Mr Bill Robson, West Midlands rep; Revd Kay Alberg, Yorkshire rep; Revd Peter Crutchley Jones, Wales rep; Victoria Paulding, FURY Moderator. Revd Derrick Dzandu Hedidor thanked Revd John Marsh and his musical team for their contribution to the worship; Mission Council responded with applause.

(c) one person who, although not a member of any Synod Panel, is a member of the United Reformed Church with legal, tribunal or other appropriate professional experience.

S/he shall also appoint in the same manner one person to act as reserve to the second Synod Appointee."

AA.1.5.3 No change required.

AA.1.5.4 Delete the current paragraph (now covered at AA.1.5.1) and substitute the following:

**"In the event that one of the Synod Appointees is obliged to withdraw during the Caution Stage, the reserve appointed from the same Panel may, subject to the approval of the Moderator of the Synod following consultation with such officers of the Synod as s/he considers appropriate, take over his/her position and, jointly with the other Synod Appointee, continue with the enquiry, join in issuing Cautions (if considered necessary) and bring the Caution Stage to its conclusion. Should the Moderator of the Synod, following such consultation as stated above, consider that this would not be appropriate in any particular**

- B.3.2** Replace the words "**believes that there is or may be a disciplinary issue in respect of any Minister**" with "**(i) believes that there is or may be a disciplinary issue involving Gross Misconduct in respect of any Minister or (ii) resolves (where a case has already passed through the Caution Stage) to act on a recommendation from the Synod Appointees to call in a Mandated Group,....**"
- B.3.4** After the words "**justify the calling in of**" insert the words "**the Synod Appointees under the provisions of Section AA or**".

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Questions for Group Discussion (11/44)**

1. Do you agree that the URC 2013 expenditure must be reduced?
2. What information do you need from un to explain the situation to congregations where you are to help them to respond to this challenge?
3. What advice do you have for the committees as they review their future budget, including how they may work together on this?
4. What advice do you have for MCAG as it develops this process?
5. Are there any other options we can explore for reducing the gap between income and expenditure?