ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS: CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Resolutions passed at General Assembly 1973–February 2021
Resolutions passed at Mission Council (as marked) 2019–2020
Resolutions passed at Assembly Executive (as marked) 2021–April 2022

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THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
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CONTENTS

1973 4
- World development appeal 4
- Non-violent action 4
- Security 4
- Taiwan 4
- Southern Africa 4
- Housing 4

1974 4
- World population 4
- Industrial mission 4
- Investments South Africa 4

1975 5
- Food 5
- World development appeal 5
- Ireland 5
- South Korea 5

1976 5
- Age Action Year 5
- Investment South Africa 5
- World development appeal 5
- Food 6
- Ireland 6
- Christian Aid 6

1977 6
- Ireland 6
- Sexual ethics 6
- Abortion 6
- Nuclear issues 6
- Rhodesia 6

1978 6
- Marriage 6
- Nuclear issues 6
- Racism 6
- Investment South Africa 7
- Gambling 7
- World development issues 7
- One World Week 7
- Human rights 7

1979 7
- World development appeal 7
- One World Week 7
- Nuclear weapons 7
- Investment South Africa 8
- European elections 8
- URC Housing Association 8

1980 8
- Racism 8
- Religious Education 8
- Nuclear issues 8
- Human rights 8
- World development issues 9
- Nuclear weapons 9

1981 9
- Unemployment 9
- Disabled people 9
- Racism Nationality 9
- World development issues 9
- World development appeal 9
- Nuclear weapons 9
- Public expenditure cuts 9

1982 10
- Falkland Islands 10
- Unemployment 10
- Alcohol abuse 10
- One World Week 10
- Environment 10
- Torture 10

1983 11
- Nuclear weapons 11
- Peace education 11
- Unemployment 11
- World development issues 11
- Sunday trading 11
- Poverty 11

1984 12
- Poverty 12
- Housing 12
- Rural needs 12
- Local Government 12
- Family 12
- World development appeal 12
- Peace 12

1985 12
- Nuclear freeze 12

1986 12
- Northern Ireland 12
- South Africa 13
- Social Security Benefits 13
- Faith in the City 13
- Religious Education in schools 13
- Housing Bed and Breakfast Rule 13
- Voluntary organisations 13
- Peace Strategic Defence Initiative 13
- Student vacation benefit 13

1987 13
- Welfare State 13
- Housing 13
- Racism 13

Licensing Laws 14
AIDS Special Ministry 14
1988 14
Nuclear disarmament 14
Welfare State 14
Religious Education 14
Christian Aid 14
Welfare State 14
AIDS 14
1989 14
South Africa Sanctions 14
International debt 15
Just Peace Church 15
Overseas development aid 15
Northern Ireland 15
National Health Service 15
1990 15
Community Charge 15
Central America 15
AIDS 15
Church Action on Poverty 15
Defence and arms industry 15
Housing 16
National Health Service 16
Community Care 16
1991 16
South Africa 16
Middle East situation 16
General Election 17
JPIC Process 17
Tobacco exports 17
1992 17
Commitment for Life 17
Earth Summit in Rio 17
Housing 17
Homosexuality 17
Co-operative Bank 17
Nestle products 17
1993 18
Europe - URC involvement 18
Europe - Faith and Order developments 18
Europe - Public policy 18
Poverty issues 18
Fairtrade Mark 18
VAT on fuel 18
1994 18
Amnesty 18
Arms and the arms trade 19
Student grants 19
Charter for the Church 19
Racism 19
Equal Opportunities policy 19
1995 20
Organ donations and post-mortems 20
Israel and the Occupied Territories 20
Our common life in Britain 20
National Lottery 21
Nuclear Testing 21
1996 21
Commitment for Life 21
Sanctuary 21
General Election 21
Europe 21
Hong Kong 21
Multi-racial ministry post 22
1997 22
Values in Education and the Community 22
Jubilee 2000 22
Human Sexuality 22
1998 23
Ageing 23
50th Anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights 24
Exploitation of children 24
Roots and Branches 24
1999 24
Violence against women 24
Children are Unbeatable 24
Racial Justice 24
Middle East 24
2000 25
End of life 25
Commitment for Life 25
2001 25
Jobcentre Survey 25
2002 26
End of Life issues 26
2003 26
Millennium Development Goals 26
The new warfare 26
The International Situation 26
Faith Schools 26
Faith Stance on the Global Crisis of Life 27
Refugees and Asylum Seekers 27
2004 27
Campaign to Double Aid and Make Trade Just 27
Commitment for Life 27
The Environment 27
Israeli Separation Barrier 27
2005 28

MakePovertyHistory....28
Emergency Resolution - Zimbabwe....28
Detention without trial....28
2006....28
Peacemaking: A Christian Vocation....28
2007....28
Climate Change....28
Assisted Dying....28
Listed church buildings and Lottery funding....29
2008....29
Living Wage....29
2010....29
Children in detention....29
Nestlé....29
2012....29
Addressing the social impact of poverty and inequality in the UK....29
Drones....30
The Occupy movement....30
2014....31
Foodbanks....31
2016....31
EU Referendum....31
Environmental Policy....31
Nuclear Weapons....31
Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory....32
2018....32
Migrants in the UK....32
2019 Mission Council....32
Ethical Investment – Climate Change....32
Carbon Emissions Target....32
2020 Mission Council....33
Climate Emergency....33
Single-Use Plastics....33
UK Foreign Aid Budget....33
2021 Assembly Executive....33
Conversion Therapy....33

1973

World development appeal

The Assembly urges church meetings to correspond with local Members of Parliament about the aid budget, in particular to request that HMG should give the UNCTAD target of 0.7% of Gross National Product in official aid; encourages churches to participate in the Europe '73 programme; and resolves that there should be an annual World Development Appeal, in the form of a One Per Cent appeal, made to individual members of the church and that the appeal should be organised by the Church and Society Department in consultation with CCWM and Christian Aid.

The Assembly expresses its sincere appreciation to Christian Aid for its provision of publicity and other material in connection with our One Per Cent Appeal.

Non-violent action

The Assembly commends the Report 'Non-Violent Action: a Christian Appraisal' (SCM Press) for study by church meetings, districts and provinces and encourages the Church and Society Department to explore further the methods of implementing the conclusions.

The Assembly resolves to send copies of the Report, 'Non-Violent Action: a Christian Appraisal' to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and urges HMG to implement the proposals concerning the training of the army in non-violent techniques, the training of volunteer reservists for non-violent peace-keeping operations, the increase in the number of the police and the strengthening of the role of the United Nations Organisation in mediation and peace-keeping.

Security

The Assembly commends the Report 'The Search for Security' (SCM Press) for study by Provinces.

Taiwan

The Assembly urges church meetings to acquaint their membership and local MPs with information concerning Taiwan, and encourages the Church and Society Department to continue with representations to HMG, urging initiatives to bring about an internationally supervised plebiscite in Taiwan to ascertain in what way the inhabitants wish to be governed in order that the status of the island may be legally determined.

Southern Africa

The Assembly encourages the Church and Society Department to explore further ways in which the church might express its Christian concern for Southern Africa, and to consult with the Department of World Church and Mission, and CCWM and the Investment Committee on this matter.

Housing

The Assembly expresses deep concern at the number of homeless people in this country, and calls upon its District Councils and local churches to examine the situation in their own locality, and then to take such measures there as they feel appropriate to express this concern.

1974

World population

The Assembly welcomes the appointment by HMG of a Minister responsible for Population Affairs, and the establishment of a comprehensive Family Planning Service as part of the National Health Service.

The Assembly welcomes the initiative taken by the United Nations Organisation in designating 1974 as World Population Year, and urges HMG to play a full and constructive role, with the highest possible level of participation, in the UN World Population Conference in Bucharest in August, this year.

The Assembly encourages churches and individuals to study population issues and welcomes the proposed Study Kit on Population being prepared by the Church and Society Department.

Industrial mission

The Assembly commends the Statement on the Nature and Objectives of Industrial Mission to Synods, District Councils and the churches, for information and study, and urges them to find appropriate ways of recognising and supporting ministers who are engaged in industrial mission, and to find ways in which the insights learnt from engagement in industrial mission can be shared with other members of the church.

The Assembly encourages active participation by church members in Trades Unions, Employers' Organisations and other comparable bodies.

Investments South Africa

The Assembly, whilst recognising that there are several responsible attitudes towards investment

in South Africa, recommends the Finance Department, in cooperation with other churches and ecumenical organisations, to press for improvements in labour conditions for black and coloured workers in British firms which operate in South Africa and in which we have investments.
With regard to future investment policy and bearing in mind the legal limitations the Assembly agrees that the general aim of financial advantage should be modified by positive and creative factors, enabling our investors to consider the investment of some funds in socially worthwhile projects which may not yield the highest financial return.
Recognising that more funds in the United Reformed Church are controlled regionally and locally than nationally, the Assembly urges Synods and Church Meetings to consider carefully and prayerfully how the funds at their disposal should be invested in the light of Christian social responsibility.
The Assembly sends its greetings to the Christian Institute in South Africa and assures the officers and members of our prayers and support at this testing time.

1975

Food

The Assembly, in the light of the present world food crisis, calls on:

i) all congregations and Districts to give urgent attention to the crisis by supporting the Foodshare Campaign, through study and practical and political action;
ii) all citizens to examine their life-style in the context of a world in which there are gross inequalities between rich and poor;
iii) HMG to implement the proposals set out in the Foodshare Manifesto;
iv) the Church and Society Committee to consult with appropriate bodies in the other churches with a view to the organisation of a National Day of Prayer and Fasting as one response to the World Food Crisis.

World development appeal

The Assembly asks that all churches will study the consultative document on world development to be circulated in the June Information Service with a view to sending comments to the Church and Society Department by the end of October 1975.

Ireland

The Assembly records its gratitude to those church leaders whose initiative led to a ceasefire in Ireland, trusts that the Constitutional Convention now assembling may be able to offer a way forward for all the people of Northern Ireland, and commends to the URC the report of the Consultation recently held between the representatives of the member churches of the ICC-BCC.
The Assembly asks all local churches and all members of the URC to continue in prayer for the churches and people of Ireland.

South Korea

The Assembly expresses its prayers and concern for fellow Christians in South Korea, commends the courage of the 59th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of South Korea in its prophetic Declaration, and hopes that there may be a speedy restoration of human rights in South Korea, including the release of imprisoned church workers and others.
The Assembly urges HMG to intercede with the Government of the Republic of South Korea on behalf of imprisoned church workers.

1976

Age Action Year

The Assembly commends Age Action Year 1976 to the attention of the churches and expresses the hope that churches will help to emphasise the educational aspects of the campaign.

Investment South Africa

The Assembly encourages the Church and Society Department to discuss with the Finance and Administration Department questions raised by the possibility of investing in the Homelands in South Africa and to explore ways in which our own investment policies might reflect a concern for the development of such areas.

World development appeal

The Assembly welcomes the continuance of a world development programme based on political action, education and a financial appeal; encourages the Church and Society Department to cooperate with Christian Aid and the World Development Movement in the production of literature to promote such a programme; and urges churches to play a full part in helping their members to respond to the programme through study, action and financial commitment.

The Assembly approves the allocation to Christian Aid of 90% of all monies raised for the world development appeal for overseas projects and programmes, with the remaining 10% being allocated to the World Development Movement for its development education and political action.

Food

The Assembly encourages the churches to take part in a National Food Day on September 25 1976 by arranging appropriate activities locally, if possible with other churches and with groups such as Friends of the Earth, to focus attention on the need for changes in eating habits and food production in Britain, on the plight of the millions in developing countries who suffer from permanent hunger and malnutrition, and on the need for a major reorientation of international and national economic policies to overcome poverty.

Ireland

The Assembly notes that the British Council of Churches is about to launch an appeal for Ireland for money to help with community projects and with attempts to provide constructive alternatives to violence. The Assembly commends this appeal to local churches.

Christian Aid

The Assembly expresses its complete confidence in Christian Aid and strongly commends support of it to our churches.

1977

Ireland

The Assembly commends to all congregations the British Council of Churches Appeal Fund for projects in Ireland and urges continued prayerful support for all those who work of justice, peace and reconciliation in Ireland.

Sexual ethics

The Assembly draws to the attention of elders meetings and church meetings, the Report of the Sexual Ethics Working Party and urges them to initiate discussions of these important topics and to consider the pastoral responsibilities which arise.

Abortion

The Assembly commends the discussion paper on Abortion to Districts and church meetings and urges them to send reports on such discussions to the Church and Society Department so that the Department may be able to speak more effectively for the church in any submission on future legislation.

Nuclear issues

The Assembly alerts congregations in areas where there is nuclear plant to the current debate about the potential danger involved in the development of such plant, and recommends that such congregations seek a meeting with their local Member of Parliament to discuss the issues.

Rhodesia

The Assembly welcomes the current diplomatic initiatives of the Foreign Secretary on Rhodesia as outlined to the House of Commons on April 19 1977, and expresses the hope that his discussions on the possibility of the United Kingdom and the United States co-sponsoring a conference to develop a clear timetable for achieving majority rule in 1978 will speedily lead to a just and peaceful settlement.

1978

Marriage

The Assembly approves the statement on 'The Christian View of Marriage' and the summary of United Reformed Church Practice in regard to remarriage after divorce, as set out in the Report. The Assembly requests Synods, either directly or through Districts, to initiate discussions concerning the Report on 'Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage' in order to determine in what ways the Province can assist those charged with pastoral responsibility in this field, but asks for reconsideration of the order of service of 'Prayer for release from vows' in consultation with the Doctrine and Worship Committee.

Nuclear issues

The Assembly welcomes the decision of HMG to hold an inquiry concerning the Fast Breeder Reactor and urges HMG to ensure that there are safe methods of waste disposal agreed before there is further expansion of this programme.

Racism

The Assembly endorses the Affirmation in the British Council of Churches statement on Racism and urges all members to make a public stand against racism in all its forms and in support of the reconciliation which is so integral a part of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Investment South Africa

The Assembly welcomes the EEC Code of Conduct for European firms operating in South Africa and urges HMG to ensure that there is effective monitoring of British Company performance by a Parliamentary Committee.
The Assembly, while accepting that there is a case for continued British economic participation in South Africa, recognises that there are influential and responsible people in South Africa calling for withdrawal of investments, and therefore believes it to be imperative that British firms in South Africa should do all in their power to grant genuine bargaining powers to black workers. The Assembly encourages representations on this subject to firms in which we have direct interest, at national and local level, by committees or individual shareholders.

Gambling

The Assembly records its appreciation for the work of the Churches' Council on Gambling and in particular for the distinguished service of its Secretary, the Revd Gordon Moody, and welcomes the proposal to form a Council on Gambling to include a wider membership than the churches.

World development issues

The Assembly urges HMG to accept the proposals of Third World countries in the UNCTAD negotiations for a Common Fund to stabilise commodity prices.
This Assembly seeks the support of the BCC to bring pressure upon HMG to accept the proposals of the Third World countries for the Common Fund to stabilise commodity prices as set out in recent UNCTAD negotiations. It also seeks the support of the WCC to apply pressure on other dissenting Governments to accept the proposals.

One World Week

The Assembly commends One World Week to all local congregations and urges them to take initiatives to ensure that the programme receives full ecumenical support in their areas.

Human rights

a) Assembly re-affirms its deep concern for the rights of every person under God and its distress that in many countries and sometimes our own, people are persecuted for their opinions and made prisoners for conscience sake.
b) It welcomes the involvement of the Department of Church and Society in the Forum for Human Rights now being established by the BCC and its contacts with Amnesty International and urges it to maintain its work in this field of human and Christian concern.
c) It encourages individuals and local churches to take up particular cases where such rights are infringed, to study the circumstances and to give expression to their concern through prayer and action, whereby those who suffer can be helped and those who oppress can be persuaded to turn to new patterns of open and trustful government.

1979

World development appeal

The Assembly commends the annual World Development 1% Appeal to all member churches, urging them to present it to their own membership for individual response; and agrees that 85% of all money raised should be used for overseas development programmes through cooperation with Christian Aid, and that 15% of all money raised should be used in this country to finance development education, the promotion of the Appeal and political action for world development, including support of the World Development Movement.

One World Week

The Assembly commends One World Week 1979 to the member churches, urging them to use it as an opportunity for development education and ecumenical cooperation.

Nuclear weapons

The Assembly urges HMG to continue to negotiate, as a matter of urgency, for a comprehensive test ban treaty with regard to nuclear weapons; to continue to work for mutual and balanced force reduction in Europe; to press for reductions in stock-piles of nuclear and conventional weapons; to investigate the possibilities of redirecting some of our own arms expenditures into areas of social need at home and into world development projects abroad; to set up research projects into the use of unarmed units in civil conflicts and in certain other confrontations where at present armed units are used in default of any alternative being available.
The Assembly urges Districts and Church Meetings to study the issues raised by the UN Special Session on Disarmament and draws

attention to the Information Pack on the subject (published by the Society of Friends).

Investment South Africa

a) The Assembly, recognising that the policy of constructive economic engagement with South Africa is not sufficiently effective in bringing about social, economic and political changes which are fundamental, and realising that the seriousness and urgency of the situation require more fundamental changes in such areas if an escalation of violence in Southern Africa is to be avoided, agrees that the possibility of disengagement should be considered carefully, recommends Provinces to make possible the study of the collection of Papers on Investment prepared by the Church and Society Department to summarise current research reports on the issues, and to consider the implications of the various options.
b) Assembly requests the Officers of the Assembly to write to all banks in which the URC has shares to request them to halt loans to the South African Government and its Agencies.
c) Assembly, in view of the statement made in November 1977 by the Chancellor of The Exchequer, Mr Denis Healey, giving an assurance that HMG intended to discourage investment by British industry in South Africa, urges HMG to implement such a policy, including the ending of export guarantees and credits for British exports to South Africa.

European elections

The Assembly urges its member churches to encourage their congregations to consider the important issues raised in the direct elections to the European Parliament and to play a full part in the election process.

URC Housing Association

The Assembly welcomes the proposal of the Presbyterian Housing Ltd to develop its work initially in London and the Home Counties and encourages it to work in close cooperation with the appropriate committees and agencies of the church, permits it to change its name to the 'United Reformed Church Housing Association Limited', with the understanding that being a Limited Company there would be no financial liability for the URC, and asks the Wessex, Eastern, Thames North and Southern Provinces, the Church and Society Department and the Development in New Areas and Care of Existing Church Buildings Committee each to nominate a representative to serve on its Management Committee.

1980

Racism

The Assembly urges all churches to study the question of racism, both locally and nationally, using the publications of BCC Community and Race Relations Unit, and commends to all churches the CRRU Project Fund as a practical way of contributing to the creation of a truly multi-racial society in Britain.

Religious Education

The Assembly urges local churches and, where possible, District Councils to express forcibly to LEAs the need to

a) maintain specialist RE staff in secondary schools and the option of RE as CSE 'O' and 'A' level examination subject;
b) ensure that both primary and secondary schools contain staff who have received some training in RE;
c) make provision of adequate finance, resources and timetable periods for RE (with a minimum of 5% of the timetable in secondary schools);
d) enable Advisers to make clear time commitments to the needs of RE in County Schools;
e) release teachers for full and part-time in-service training in RE to make up for any current deficiencies;
f) appoint Standing Advisory Committee on RE to consider the development of agreed syllabuses and to provide for consultation with representatives of religious bodies within their areas.

Nuclear issues

Assembly requests the Church and Society Department, in collaboration with the BCC, to pursue urgently a study of the development of nuclear energy resources, with particular reference to the recommendations of the Massachusetts Conference on Faith, Science and the Future, and with a view to encouraging discussion of this issues throughout the Councils of the church.

Human rights

Assembly urges HMG to do everything within its power to secure the inclusion of the right of conscientious objection to military service in the

European Convention on Human Rights and similarly to secure the inclusion of such a right into any Charter of Human Rights which the European Communities may adopt.

World development issues

The Assembly welcomes the publication of the Brandt Commission's report, 'North-South: A Programme for Survival', as of great importance in the search for international peace and development and urges local churches to study it and to press their MPs to ensure that its analysis of the present world situation and its recommendations for action are given urgent attention by HMG.

Nuclear weapons

The Assembly, welcoming the publication by the BCC of the document, 'The Future of the British Nuclear Deterrent', and noting the resolution passed by the BCC Assembly in November 1979, urges HMG to allow for a period of public debate before making decisions about the retention of an independent British nuclear deterrent after the present Polaris missiles have become obsolete. The Assembly further urges churches to engage in discussion of the question raised in the BCC report and resolution, with a view to communicating their views to their MPs.

1981

Unemployment

The Assembly requests that Government to review the levels and conditions of the unemployment benefits for long-term unemployed people, believing these benefits to be inadequate in their present form.

Disabled people

The Assembly, in this IYDP calls upon;

a) Church members to examine their own attitudes and responses to disabled people;
b) Local churches to consider their provision for and partnership with disabled people and to share in study and action programmes with disabled people and their organisations to effect long-term improvements in community life, in access to public buildings, in transportation systems and in public education on the needs and aspirations of disabled people.
c) that each local church should ensure wherever possible that it can provide easy access for disabled people to all its facilities.

Racism Nationality

The Assembly expresses its opposition to the British Nationality Bill and urges HMG to withdraw it, and it calls upon churches to make their views known to their MPs; to work actively to combat racism; to contribute to the Project Fund of CRRU.

World development issues

The Assembly commends the mass lobby of Parliament on May 5 1981 to all the members of the churches and urges HMG to play a constructive and positive part in the preparation and outcome of the Mexico Summit of world leaders.

World development appeal

The Assembly welcomes the growing support for the World Development 1% Appeal and asks all local churches to commend it to their members.

Nuclear weapons

The Assembly believes that

a) the continuing escalation of nuclear arms threatens the very security which the weapons are held to guarantee;
b) the development and deployment of nuclear weapons has raised new ethical questions for Christians;
c) the resources devoted to military expenditure of all kinds are desperately needed to tackle the world-wide problems of poverty, hunger, ignorance and disease;
d) the time has come for a more resolute involvement of Christians in taking new initiatives for peace.

Therefore the Assembly calls upon all Christians, and every local church, to support the World Disarmament Campaign as one way of advocating the multilateral or unilateral approach towards disarmament, by signing the petition and encouraging others to do so.

Public expenditure cuts

The Assembly receives the substance of the resolution of the Mersey Province with regard to public expenditure cuts with appreciation and sympathy but remits it to the officers of the Church and Society Department for consideration and preparation of a revised form for the urgent consideration by the Executive Committee.

1982

Falkland Islands

The Assembly endorses the resolution of the Church and Society Department dated 26 April 1982 on the Falklands dispute which was in the following terms:
'The Department

- deplores the invasion of the Falkland Islands by Argentinian armed forces,
- urges HMG to continue to seek every possible means for a diplomatic solution, particularly the use of the UN, in the hope that no further armed force is necessary,
- appreciates the difficult and dangerous duties being undertaken by the Special Task Force,
- calls upon all our churches to pray for those in positions of responsibility and leadership within the two nations of Argentina and the United Kingdom that peace may be established.'

In the light of the developing situation, the Assembly resolves in the following terms;

i) the Assembly expresses its grief at the subsequent loss of life on both sides;
ii) expresses sympathetic concern for the Falkland Islanders and prays that they may be enabled to live in freedom and security;
iii) regrets the way in which the dispute has given rise to a dangerous mood of militancy between Argentina and Britain;
iv) therefore urges HMG to continue to seek a peaceful and just solution to the dispute through the diplomatic channels of the United Nations Organisation.

The Clerk of Assembly moved, and Assembly agreed, that the resolution be sent to HMG, His Holiness the Pope; to the BCC, the Scottish Churches Council, the Council of Churches in Wales, the Irish Council of Churches; to the Churches in the Argentine and to colleagues in other countries and the media.

Unemployment

Assembly calls upon the leaders of our nation

a) openly to acknowledge that even when the recession is over, high unemployment will persist,
b) to enter upon discussion on the effects this will have on our national life, and to give urgent consideration to work sharing on a national basis,
c) to plan for a society in which a growing number of people will be without paid employment, special regard being given to hours of work, retirement policy, vocational education and retraining facilities, the level and nature of the income of those without paid employment, and how provision can best be made for the carrying out of useful work which would enhance the life of the nation.

Alcohol abuse

a) The Assembly associates itself with the BCC in calling on HMG for urgent action to prevent alcohol abuse, and, as a first step, to introduce new measures to control alcohol consumption, including greater restriction of alcohol outlets through licensing powers, stricter control of alcohol advertising, the introduction of random breath-tests, more effective enforcement of existing licensing laws, and more stringent pricing policies.
b) The Assembly urges local churches to study the literature available on alcohol abuse, and, in particular, the report "Alcohol Abuse" published by the British Council of Churches, and to consider its implications for their life and witness.

One World Week

The Assembly urges every local church to observe the annual One World Week as a focus for world development education and as an opportunity to celebrate the unity of God's world and its peoples.

Environment

The Assembly calls upon churches and church members to recognise their part in the depletion of the world's resources and to adjust their lifestyle so as to conserve, develop and re-distribute those resources for the benefit of all people.

Torture

The Assembly in obedience to the biblical teaching on the dignity of human life, declares that the use of torture by any government, group or individual, in any place, at any time, for any reason, is to be condemned and, therefore, adopts the BCC Declaration Against Torture and calls upon HMG to pursue and support the drafting and international adoption of the UN Convention Against Torture to be followed by measures to enable independent inspection of all centres of interrogation, detention and imprisonment.

1983

Nuclear weapons

The General Assembly affirms its abhorrence of war and its commitment to peacemaking as a Christian vocation central to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. In particular, the General Assembly calls upon all local churches and members:

a) to oppose the use of nuclear power for warlike purposes
b) to work for the removal of nuclear weapons from British territory and to oppose the deployment of Cruise missiles in the UK
c) to press for an end to the manufacture and purchase of nuclear armaments by the UK Government, and the cancellation of the proposed Trident D5 submarine programme.
d) to work for an early end to the international arms race by multilateral disarmament, and as a step towards this for the UK to give up immediately its own existing nuclear armaments.
e) to strengthen our Christian commitment to peace -
   i. by deepening our understanding of it
   ii. by encouraging and participating in initiatives for peace at all levels
   iii. by supporting the work of the United Nations, particularly through local UNA branches
   iv. and to support all peacemaking by constant prayer for peace.

The Assembly welcomes the publication of 'The Church and the Bomb' and its discussion by the Anglican General Synod and urges study and discussion throughout the URC of the issues raised in it.

a) The Assembly agrees that the Nuclear Weapons resolutions adopted on 25 May 1983 be sent to HMG.
b) The Assembly further requests HMG to urge all other nuclear weapons States to freeze all research into and development, production, acquisition, testing and employment of all nuclear weapons and to use the period of the freeze to work for substantial reductions in nuclear weapons and their eventual elimination by all States as first steps towards more general disarmament within an internationally agreed concept of common security.

The Assembly urges HMG to seek Godly ways of preserving a permanent peace.

Peace education

The Assembly instructs the Church and Society Department to cooperate with sister churches in Britain and Ireland and throughout the world in a global fellowship committed to prayer, education and action for peace and to this end instructs the Department to set up a United Reformed Church Peace Group, and calls upon local churches to explore and initiate programmes of peace education for their own members and for the communities they serve.

Unemployment

The Assembly urges all churches to engage in pastoral, practical and prophetic action to meet the crisis of unemployment and to provide opportunities for their members to examine their own assumptions and prejudices about work and its place in God's purpose for humanity.
In view of the unemployment situation in the country, and bearing in mind the inadequacy of part-time and voluntary schemes to counter the problems faced by young people, Assembly urges the Government to introduce, as soon as possible, measures providing for earlier retirement of men and women which would include adequate financial provision.

World development issues

The Assembly urges HMG to enter into the negotiations at the Sixth Session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development with some positive proposals to break the deadlock in North-South relations.
The Assembly urges HMG to reintroduce a development education fund to encourage national organisations and community groups to promote deeper awareness of world development issues and of the role Britain should play in the search for a more just world.

Sunday trading

The Assembly urges HMG to establish a Committee of Inquiry to take evidence from a wide range of opinion about laws governing the present restrictions on the hours of retail trading and to make careful proposals for future change.

Poverty

The Assembly calls on the churches to promote or support local initiatives to meet the needs of the poorest most vulnerable sections of the community, to support the work of Church Action

on Poverty, and to challenge local and national governments to give a higher priority to the elimination of poverty, and also higher priority to the compassionate protection from the adverse effects of the current economic conditions of those who are most vulnerable and least able to help themselves.

1984

Poverty

The Assembly views with deep concern the growing gap between the privileged and the disadvantaged in the United Kingdom and urges the churches to give priority in their evangelistic outreach to work with the poor and disadvantaged, identifying the causes of poverty and disadvantage and seeking to eliminate them.

Housing

The Assembly draws the attention of the churches to the housing crisis and urges them to study needs in their areas and to take appropriate action with a view to securing a greater level of political priority for housing.

Rural needs

The Assembly requests churches in rural areas to enter into discussion with MPs and civic leaders about the needs of their communities especially in respect of housing, employment, mobility and accessibility to public services; and to bring these needs to the notice of the wider Councils of the church.

Local Government

The Assembly considers that the proposals published for the abolition of the Greater London Council and the six Metropolitan Counties in England raise important issues about the scope and exercise of power in a democracy, the proper sharing of responsibility for the most disadvantaged inner city areas, the public provision for cultural institutions and activities, and the partnership in services between voluntary and statutory organisations. The Assembly urges churches, District Councils and Synods, particularly those in the areas most immediately affected, to study the proposals and to make their views known to their elected representatives in local and national government.

Family

The Assembly, recognising that the churches have a contribution to make in the changing circumstances of family life, encourages them to share with other bodies in organising and promoting Family Fortnight in July 1984.

World development appeal

The Assembly, conscious of the alarming signs of increasing poverty and injustice in the world, welcomes the evidence of greater support for the 1% World Development Appeal and urges the churches to continue their witness on behalf of the world's poor through their support for the Appeal and in their public education and political action.

Peace

The Assembly welcomes the Revds Pete and Maggie Peery as Peace Associates appointed by the Presbyterian Church in the USA to work with the URC and with the Peace Forum of the BCC. The Assembly urges churches to continue to study and search for appropriate ways of making peace in a nuclear age and commends in this process the resolutions of the November 1983 Assembly of the BCC.

1985

Nuclear freeze

The Assembly, recalling its resolution of 1983 supporting a nuclear freeze, urges the churches to study proposals for an international nuclear freeze and to present these proposals for endorsement by their members between 24 October 1985 and Ash Wednesday, 12 February 1986.

1986

Northern Ireland

The Assembly, recognising the complexities of the situation in Northern Ireland with its long history of violence and distrust:

a) welcomes the Church and Society Department's strengthening of contact with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and urges that the URC develops links with other denominations;
b) urges all church members to support initiatives that may lead to the healing of relationships between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland and within Northern Ireland;
c) invites churches and church members to continue to pray for reconciliation leading to a just and lasting peace in Northern Ireland.

South Africa

i) The Assembly, recognising the courageous witness of partner churches and fellow Christians in South Africa against the unjust system of apartheid, and reaffirming its own policy of progressive disengagement from the economy of South Africa agreed in 1982, calls on HMG to impose fuller sanctions against South Africa designed to hasten the end of apartheid.
ii) The Assembly calls on all church members to identify personally with the peaceful struggle against apartheid by refusing to buy or sell South African products and to inform all relevant parties (e.g. MPs and companies) of the reasons behind any action taken.
iii) The Assembly urges local churches to observe Monday June 16, the tenth anniversary of the Soweto uprising, as a day of prayer for justice in South Africa, and to support the lobby of Parliament, calling for more effective sanctions against South Africa, on Tuesday June 17.

Social Security Benefits

The Assembly, welcoming HMG's declared support for the Welfare State, calls on the Government to increase the total funds made available through Social Security benefits for low-income families and the long-term unemployed, without reducing benefits to other low income groups; and recognises the implications that follow for public expenditure priorities and the level of personal taxation.

Faith in the City

The Assembly welcomes the publication of the report of the Archbishop's Commission on Urban Priority Areas, 'Faith in the City', and encourages Provinces, Districts and local churches to study its recommendations and to consider appropriate action, ecumenically wherever possible.

Religious Education in schools

The Assembly encourages local churches and District Councils to enter into dialogue with LEAs with a view to pressing for a clearer and more urgent commitment to supporting and extending RE in the their schools and calls on all churches to make maximum use of opportunities in schools in their localities in the area of RE.

Housing Bed and Breakfast Rule

The Assembly urges HMG to rescind the regulation re-introduced on 25 November 1985 on the 4 week bed and breakfast rule. The Assembly believes that this rule of the DHSS has increased, and will continue to increase, the number of homeless and rootless young people; and considers that the moral and social implications of this state of affairs cannot be acceptable to our society.

Voluntary organisations

The Assembly, noting with grave concern the problems experienced by many voluntary organisations in obtaining funding following the abolition of the GLC and Metropolitan County Councils, calls upon HMG to take appropriate action to safeguard vulnerable initiatives and organisations, particularly those serving poor and other disadvantaged members of our society.

Peace Strategic Defence Initiative

The Assembly calls on the Church and Society Department and its Peace Advisory Group to study the Strategic Defence Initiative (Star Wars) of the United States and to prepare appropriate material to help local churches, individuals and the Assembly to assess whether it is a genuine contribution towards peace or a dangerous escalation of the arms race.

Student vacation benefit

The Assembly expresses its concern about the proposed changes in vacation benefits for students, and asks the Church and Society Department to press for the withdrawal of these changes.

1987

Welfare State

The Assembly welcomes the Church and Society Department's concern for the future of the Welfare State and invites all churches to take part in a year's programme, Welfare Alert.

Housing

The Assembly urges churches to take part in local action in support of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, or to initiate appropriate action on homelessness in the future, and, in particular, to raise local and national issues of housing and homelessness with candidates in the General Election.

Racism

The Assembly adopts the Declaration on Racism and commends it for study and action and as a future point of reference throughout the Church.

Licensing Laws

The Assembly urges HMG to undertake a comprehensive review of the liquor licensing laws and to give adequate opportunity for informed public debate and consultation before introducing or allowing changes in those laws.

AIDS Special Ministry

The Assembly, noting the support of Thames North and Southern Provinces for a 'special ministry' regarding AIDS, and the agreement of the Church and Society Department that this is appropriate to express the URC's pastoral and social concern, agrees that this special ministry in connection with AIDS be established, for three years in the first instance, with the Church and Society Department convening the support group.

1988

Nuclear disarmament

The Assembly welcomes the US/Soviet agreement to remove intermediate range nuclear weapons from Europe; notes with concern proposals to deploy new nuclear weapons to compensate for those removed under the Treaty; and calls upon HMG and other European governments to reject such deployments, to work instead for further measures of nuclear and conventional disarmament and to play a full and constructive part in the forthcoming UN Special Session on Disarmament.

Welfare State

The Assembly encourages churches to study proposals for change in the main spheres of the Welfare State (social security, health, housing, social services and education) using the questions contained in the report; to seek out and help in instances of difficulty, and at the same time request government to make specific modification of the system to deal with these situations; and to engage in public debate and appropriate action to safeguard and improve community services wherever they are threatened.

Religious Education

The Assembly, convinced that exploration of the spiritual and moral aspects of human experience is vitally important if the proposed National Curriculum is to express adequately the inherited values and the multi-cultural nature of contemporary society, urges HMG to re-affirm its commitment to RE in schools by including it among the foundation subjects in the National Curriculum.

Christian Aid

The Assembly welcomes the summary of the Statement of Commitment adopted by the Christian Aid Board and encourages churches to study the full Statement, 'To Strengthen the Poor'.

Welfare State

The General Assembly

a) views with concern current trends and policies which threaten to reduce the quality of public services, to erode the principle of universality at the heart of the Welfare State and to widen the inequalities between the rich and the poor;
b) calls upon HMG to demonstrate that it accepts and is committed to the maintenance and adequate funding of health services, education, social services and shelter as a statutory obligation and national priority based on the principle of universality which is consistent with a caring, civilised society;
c) instructs the Church and Society Department to work ecumenically to ensure that these concerns are adequately and persistently brought to the attention of the relevant government departments.

AIDS

The General Assembly, desiring to help congregations concerned in making a Christian response based on a balanced medical, theological and pastoral understanding of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), welcomes the publishing of the booklet, 'Understanding AIDS' which the Departmental Secretary, John Reardon, has jointly produced.

1989

South Africa Sanctions

The Assembly urges all churches and Christians to study the Call to Action Against Apartheid issued at the conference sponsored by the BCC on 28 February 1989 and to press HMG to adopt legal and economic measures to press the South African Government to end apartheid and begin negotiations for a new South Africa in which all the people can share in a free, democratic, non-racial government and society.

International debt

The Assembly encourages the churches to study the problems of international debt, welcomes the publication by Christian Aid of 'Banking on the Poor' and urges the churches and individual Christians to press their banks to reduce the rates of interest on some loans and write off other loans to highly indebted countries for which provision has been made in their accounts and tax relief obtained. Assembly further calls upon the Church and Society Department to inform all congregations of publications on this subject and actively to support non-governmental organisations seeking a European initiative to solve the debt crisis.

The Assembly welcomes the initiatives on international debt which HMG has already taken and urges it to continue and extend its policy of converting loans into grants and to press within the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank for adjustment policies which take into account the needs of the poor.

Just Peace Church

The Assembly encourages the Church and Society Department to develop its proposal for the URC to declare itself a Just Peace Church, to engage the churches in study and discussions of the meaning and implications of such a proposal and to bring any appropriate resolution to a future Assembly.

Overseas development aid

The General Assembly welcomes the recent increase that has taken place in the proportion of GNP devoted to overseas aid and urges HMG to adopt a timetable to ensure the achievement of the UN's recommended minimum target of 0.7% for official aid before the next General Election.

Northern Ireland

The Assembly of the URC, meeting in York in July 1989, urge the BCC to designate a Day of Prayer for Northern Ireland. Such a day to be held each year for as long as it is needed.

National Health Service

Assembly welcomes the commitment to the NHS expressed in paragraphs 16 and 17 of the Report and calls upon the Department to bring before the Assembly its reflections on the role of private medicine in relation to the current problems, especially as the matter relates to the practice of members of the URC.

1990

Community Charge

Members of General Assembly of the URC in the UK wish to inform HMG of their opposition to flat rate tax with particular reference to the Community Charge and request the government to look again at the Community Charge, taking into account people's ability to pay.

Central America

The Assembly calls upon HMG to work with other nations to secure peace with justice throughout Central America and, in particular, to press the United States Government to use its influence for peace in that region, for example, by ceasing delivery of all military-related assistance to El Salvador and promoting negotiations between the Salvadorian Government and the FMLN.

The Assembly encourages the churches to pray for the people of Central America in their continuing suffering and to help their members to understand the problems and issues of that region by engaging annually in Central America Week.

AIDS

The Assembly encourages the churches to observe World AIDS Day on 1 December 1990.

Church Action on Poverty

The Assembly welcomes the Declaration of Church Action on Poverty, Hearing the Cry of the Poor, and commends it to the churches for study, endorsement and use as a preparation for action.

Defence and arms industry

This Assembly:

Joins with HMG in welcoming changes in the political climate of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the end of the cold war, and positive prospects for meaningful disarmament measures;

Agrees with HMG that these developments will have implications for defence industries in the UK;

Notes with concern that HMG has no plans to initiate, support or finance conversion from military to civil production in these industries;

Fears that this policy of non-intervention will result in large scale unemployment and/or an increase in the arms trade

And calls upon HMG to reverse this policy and to:

a) initiate without delay a comprehensive review of defence policy

b) co-operate with the industries concerned in planning a transition to non-military production
c) invest financially in such programmes where necessary.

Housing

The General Assembly of the URC expresses its concern at the ever increasing problem of homelessness in our society, and the aggravation of the problem caused by many changes in Government policy in recent years.

i) We request that urgent consideration be given by HMG to a realistic ten-year programme to provide social housing at affordable rents, greater cooperation between the Department of the Environment, Department of Social Security and the Department of Health in formulating housing policy, and the fundamental need to formulate regional policy.
ii) We request that a larger share of capital gained from the sale of council houses be made available for Local Authority development programmes, and greater encouragement be given to Local Authorities and private owners to enable poor housing to be habitable.
iii) In the meantime as a matter of priority HMG is urged
a) to encourage the provision of publicly-funded, good quality, direct-access accommodation as part of a Local Authority programme to resettle long-term homeless people in permanent accommodation; and
b) in the forthcoming Code of Guidance to Local Authorities to strengthen responsibility for housing vulnerable young homeless people.

National Health Service

Assembly, recognising the significant under-funding of the NHS as instanced in the response of the FCFC to the White Paper 'Working for Patients'

a) encourages District Councils and local churches to take up implications of the FCFC response with local health authorities
b) supports the Secretary of State's pressure on the government to secure increased funding for the NHS
c) instructs the General Secretary to forward this resolution to the Secretary of State and the Chancellor the Exchequer.

Community Care

Assembly, recognising the increasing problems faced by people suffering from mental illness, and those with mental handicap, as they are discharged into the community

a) renews its call to all churches to consider, as a matter of urgency, ways of overcoming negative attitudes and of promoting positive care;
b) commends the leaflet Christians and Community Care published by the Church and Society Department for the BCC, and urges local churches to use it as a discussion resource leading to action;
c) encourages churches to use the experience and resources of Chaplains involved in health care.

1991

South Africa

The Assembly, hearing the courageous voice of the Rustenburg declaration, expressed to the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa, the Southern Africa Alliance of Reformed Churches and the South African Council of Churches its renewed support and prayer for the people and churches in South Africa as they seek the ending of apartheid and a just and peaceful order in that land.

Middle East situation

a) Assembly commends and encourages all who are working for a just and lasting peace to persevere in their God-given task; affirms its support for the right of all peoples to enjoy security and freedom; and urges all who effectively enforced the UN resolutions on liberating Kuwait to press for the implementation of earlier UN resolutions on Israel/Palestine, so that a just and lasting peace, with security for Israel and neighbouring states, and recognition of the rights of the Palestinians may be established under international jurisdiction.
b) Assembly supports the action of the General Secretary in pressing for a postponement of a national Thanksgiving Service following the Gulf War.
c) Assembly urges local churches and their members to take steps to inform themselves of the

geographical, demographic, historical and political as well as religious features of the Middle East and take the initiative in extending the hand of friendship to Muslim and Arab and Middle East neighbours and congregations.
d) Assembly deplores the holding of an arms fair at the NEC Birmingham at such a time and renews its call to HMG to promote the conversion of arms manufacturing plants to other uses.

General Election

Assembly urges local churches to participate fully in the programme of pre-election constituency meetings organised under the auspices of CCBI.

JPIC Process

Assembly affirms the centrality of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation process to Christian witness and church life in the 1990s, and encourages the Department to develop this theme as a stimulus to reflection and action, especially in local churches.

Tobacco exports

The Assembly calls upon the European Community to take rapid steps towards phasing out its tobacco subsidies and to encourage tobacco growers to diversify to other crops. As an immediate priority the Assembly calls upon the Community to end the subsidised export of high-tar tobacco to the Third World and Eastern Europe.

1992

Commitment for Life

Assembly welcomes and endorses the programme 'Commitment for Life' as described in Appendix I and commends it to every local church.

Earth Summit in Rio

1. Assembly commends the Prime Minister for signing the conventions on climate change and biodiversity which "commit us to binding obligations to manage our national affairs to our common international benefit;
2. urges the government to set a firm date for implementing the UN target of 0.7% of GNP in overseas aid alongside contributions to environment protection;
3. noting the Prime Minister's announcement "that the United Kingdom will convene next June a global forum of the NGO community to examine and clarify their role in the implementation of Agenda 21", urges the government to invite the churches to participate along with other NGOs;
4. encourages the Church and Society Department to persist in seeking to rouse awareness of these issues and in addressing the need for appropriate responses by the churches.

Housing

Assembly, mindful of the critical situation in the housing system and concerned at the growing number of homeless people, urges each local congregation and each Provincial Synod (or appropriate ecumenical body or URC District Council as the Synod may determine):

- to affiliate to the Churches National Housing Coalition;
- to discover, by research and by listening, the housing needs of their own area and to establish links with those in housing need;
- to consider the urgency of housing need when disposing of land or buildings;

and agrees to make representations to HMG and representative bodies of major builders, local authorities, housing associations, building societies, etc., to reform the British housing system to ensure provision of safe, secure and affordable homes for all.

Homosexuality

Assembly welcomes the willingness of the Church and Society Department to oversee publication of 'Homosexuality: A Christian View' and of further contributions to the continuing debate.

Co-operative Bank

Assembly welcomes the ethical policy statement of the Co-operative Bank. We support and encourage this development and urge the principle on all commercial and industrial undertakings.

Nestle products

The Assembly directs the Mission Council to take steps:

1. to alert Provincial Synods, District Councils and local churches to the Baby Milk Action Coalition;
2. to encourage Provincial Synods, District Councils and local churches to boycott the purchase of Nescafe and other Nestle products;
3. to write to the Managing Director of the Nestle Company at St George's House,

Croydon, Surrey CR9 1NR expressing deep concern at their policy in providing free baby food to mothers in Third World countries and instructs Church and Society to set up a working party to monitor the situation to enable the motion to be reviewed at the General Assembly 1993;
4. to consult our CWM partner churches about this and similar issues.

1993

Europe - URC involvement

a) Assembly encourages local churches to foster links with continental churches, and to seek involvement especially where civic twinnings or parish church links are being made.
b) Assembly requests Mission Council to establish a policy for our relationships with churches in continental Europe, so that our limited resources may be used to best effect.
c) Assembly welcomes the establishment of the interim Co-ordinating Group for Europe and requests Mission Council, in the course of its review of central church structures, to examine the need for a body specifically to oversee, co-ordinate and develop the church's involvement with continental Europe.
d) Assembly encourages local churches, Districts and Provinces to make use of the many people in our churches who have personal experience of working on the continent and the members of the Co-ordinating Group; and invites each Province to appoint a 'Europe link' person.

Europe - Faith and Order developments

Assembly welcomes the call of the European Protestant Assembly (Budapest 1992) for closer fellowship between historically separated denominations and encourages the Reformed, Lutheran and United churches which are linked through the Leuenberg Agreement to take the initiative in seeking deeper fellowship with Methodist and Anglican churches.

Europe - Public policy

a) Assembly encourages local churches, in the run-up to the 1994 European Parliamentary elections, to participate in local meetings with prospective candidates on social and political issues.
b) Assembly requests the Church and Society Committee, in association with CCBI, to produce briefing material on Europe-wide issues such as poverty and social division, growing racism and xenophobia, the unity and disintegration of nation-states, the environment and relations with developing countries.

Poverty issues

Assembly, concerned with the poverty, homelessness and unemployment of millions of people in our country, calls upon the government to act upon the Christian belief that the strong should help the weak, and to give precedence to increase investment in jobs, homes, health and education, with the aim of reducing the danger of the disintegration of society.
Assembly believes that people's lives should under all circumstances be valued above monetary concerns and therefore that the above should be achieved by means of higher direct taxation.
Assembly also calls upon all church meetings actively to encourage their members to lobby their MPs on this matter.

Fairtrade Mark

The General Assembly welcomes and supports the work of the Fairtrade Foundation in launching the Fairtrade mark later this year and urges church members

a) to encourage managers of local shops and supermarkets to stock CafeDirect now and Fairtrade marked products for the autumn;
b) to promote the sales of such products and
c) to encourage such sales by organising taste testings of Fairtrade marked products at meetings.

VAT on fuel

Assembly views with concern the planned imposition of VAT on domestic fuel since this is disproportionately damaging to poorer people. Therefore it calls on local churches to lobby their MPs about this unfair tax.

1994

Amnesty

Assembly endorses the call of the Church Representatives Meeting of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland to the Government to institute a not-to-be-repeated amnesty for those who fulfil the following conditions and would otherwise face possible deportation from the United Kingdom:

a) a person who has lived in the UK for at least five years; and either

b) 1) who is the parent of at least one child born here who has lived in the UK for a minimum of two years; or
2) who is self-sufficient in terms of income and housing.

AND encourages local churches and District Councils

i) to support the petition on this matter prepared by the Churches Commission on Racial Justice; and
ii) to respond favourably to any appeal for help, e.g. towards an appeal from those who fulfil the above conditions and who are threatened with deportation.

Arms and the arms trade

a) Assembly, noting that 1995 marks the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the United Nations Organisation and of the first use of nuclear weapons, and believing that the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), due for renewal in 1995, represents an important step towards the effective international control and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons, therefore calls on the Government to work for this treaty to be reaffirmed and made permanent.
b) Assembly:

i) Assembly remains concerned over the continuing excessive dependence of British manufacturing industry on the arms trade;
ii) expresses its growing concern that revelations of possible linkages between the Aid and Trade Provision and arms deals are damaging the reputation of the British aid programme; and
iii) calls on the Government to publish applications for arms export licences so that, if necessary, there can be Parliamentary and public debate before approval is given.

Student grants

a) The General Assembly of the United Reformed Church notes with concern:

i) the effective reduction of student income in recent years to the present level which is below the official poverty line;
ii) the withdrawal of state benefits to almost all students regardless of need;
iii) the intention of the Government further to reduce grants to students as outlined in the last budget.

b) Bearing in mind the Government's intention to widen the availability of Further and Higher Education, the General Assembly:

i) urges the Government (Secretaries of State for Social Security and for Education) to reconsider the level of student grants and to raise the total available so enabling all students to receive grants above the official poverty level and to cover the costs of necessary books and equipment; to all students to receive state benefit with the rest of society.
ii) encourages members of local churches, district councils and provincial synods to write to Members of Parliament expressing their concern;
iii) encourages local churches in areas of student population to seek to provide practical support to students in their locality.

Charter for the Church

Assembly welcomes and adopts the document 'Charter for the Church' and encourages those responsible for the appointment or nomination of members of all the councils of the church to become more aware of the issues and to follow its recommendations.

Racism

a) Assembly calls the URC to prayer and action so that ways are found to listen to people of different cultural backgrounds in our churches.

b) Assembly instructs the Mission Council:

1) to consider the motion from Thames North Synod on the allocation of a special multi-racial ministry;
2) to make proposals to the General Assembly of 1995 in consultation with the new Standing Committee on Equal Opportunities and the Finance Committee as to what post, if any, is needed and how it should be funded.

Equal Opportunities policy

The Assembly adopts an Equal Opportunities Policy as follows:

a) The Church affirms in its Basis of Union that 'all ministries shall be open to both men and women'. At Assembly 1987 it adopted a Declaration on Racism and in 1990 adopted a Declaration of Equal

Opportunities Policy in relation to ministers.

b) This policy is not a statement of what the Church has already achieved; it is a declaration of the way it intends to move forward at all levels and in all aspects of its life within the limitations of its resources. In particular, it is an aid to appointing the most suitable people to all positions of responsibility within the church disregarding irrelevant considerations; it does not oblige the church as employer or otherwise to make appointments of people other than those most capable of fulfilling the responsibilities.

Assembly declares:

i) The Church will behave as an 'equal opportunity organisation' and not discriminate on grounds of race, gender or disability.
ii) The Church works to combat racism, sexism and prejudice against people with disabilities and is committed to positive action rather than containing the issues.
iii) The Church is aware of possible barriers, for example to women, black people and people with disabilities, within the structures of the Church in ministry and other posts; this has to do with expectations, position, role and status.
iv) The Church will therefore establish appropriate methods of monitoring the appointment, call, representation and position of women, black people and people with disabilities in the Church and take appropriate action where necessary.

1995

Organ donations and post-mortems

Assembly,
recognising the importance of the issues relating to organ donations and post-mortems,

a) affirms its support for the Government's initiative to institute a national computer register of donors;
b) encourages district councils, local churches and families to engage in frank discussion of the issues;
c) encourages church members to take the necessary steps to become registered card-carrying organ donors;
d) encourages church members to consent to a post-mortem when a hospital seeks permission to carry out this procedure; and to this end
e) requests the Church and Society Committee to make available appropriate information and discussion material.

Israel and the Occupied Territories

Assembly

- offers encouragement to all who are working for a just and lasting peace between the peoples and nations of the Middle East and especially Israeli and Palestinian leaders;
- welcomes and supports the ecumenical statement from church leaders in Jerusalem calling for "a special judicial and political statute for Jerusalem which reflects the universal importance and significance of the city ... a symbol and a promise of the presence of God, of fraternity and peace for humankind, in particular the children of Abraham, Jews, Christians and Muslims";
- urges visitors from Britain to take advantage of the possibilities of meeting people of all faiths, especially Palestinian Christians and Messianic Jews, during their time in the 'Holy Land'.

Our common life in Britain

Assembly,

- is concerned and dismayed at the persistence of poverty and growing inequality in Britain as evidenced by the findings of the 'Inquiry into Income and Wealth' supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and by the testimonies being gathered during 'poverty hearings' arranged by Church Action on Poverty through its programme "Local People, National Voice";
- is aware of increasing personal insecurity affecting a wide range of people in work, in education and in retirement;
- welcomes the more integrated approach to a range of policy areas being taken by church bodies, individual commentators and, for example, the Commission for Social Justice chaired by Sir Gordon Borrie;
- calls on all political parties to press for a major review of the tax and benefits systems, of employment legislation and social policy with the defined aim of

reducing poverty and polarisation in our country;
- invites local churches and/or District Councils as appropriate to participate in, or if necessary to instigate, local 'poverty hearings' in co-operation with Church Action on Poverty and to report to their MPs and to the Church and Society committee.

National Lottery

Assembly urges the members and councils of the church to disassociate themselves from the Lottery:

a) by refusing to buy tickets; and
b) by declining to apply for Lottery-generated funds for church purposes.

Nuclear Testing

Assembly
in the light of its call made in 1994 for moves towards the banning of nuclear tests as part of its endorsement of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty;
strongly deplores the resumption of nuclear testing in the Pacific region by France and calls upon the French government to reverse this decision;
supports the recent appeals made on this matter by the Pacific Council of Churches, by our Council for World Mission partners and other churches in the region and by the World Council of Churches;
calls on the British government to pledge that it will not resume any nuclear testing and will use its good offices to persuade the French government to reverse this decision.

1996

Commitment for Life

Assembly acknowledges the revised programme Commitment for Life, as examined and endorsed by Mission Council, to be an authentic response of the whole United Reformed Church to God's call for justice for the poor of the world and therefore urges every local church to participate fully.

Sanctuary

Assembly, noting the concern of the Churches Commission for Racial Justice and in support of their statement, gives its full support to those in local churches and communities who feel constrained by conscience to offer sanctuary to individuals and families facing deportation, providing they are satisfied that sanctuary is a last resort and that at least one of the following applies:

a) there is a well-founded fear of persecution;
b) there is a serious threat to family life;
c) there would be a basic denial of justice and compassion.

General Election

Assembly urges every local church to participate fully in the ecumenical programme of all-party constituency meetings at the next General Election.

Europe

The General Assembly accepts the Report of the Europe Task Group, and as a policy statement on the URC's involvement with Europe adopts the following principles:

i) provinces should be the primary vehicle for developing and maintaining bilateral and local church partnerships within Europe on behalf of the United Reformed Church
ii) the Conference of European Churches, the Leuenberg Fellowship and the European Ecumenical Commission on Church and Society should be the focus and primary means of assistance for our engagement with European ecumenical questions and programmes and the institutions of the European Union and the Council of Europe; and
iii) calls upon the appropriate committees of the Church, nationally and in the provinces, to consider and to act on its recommendations (section 3), in particular concerning European visitors to Assembly, the provision of adequate funding for the URC to develop meaningful church partnerships at every level, and the provision of support for Provincial European Link Co-ordinators.

Hong Kong

The General Assembly, in the spirit of resolutions adopted in 1989, which were reaffirmed in 1992 by the Assembly Executive Committee, regarding the welfare of the peoples of Hong Kong in the period leading up to June 30, 1997, resolves:

1. to remind the British Government of its political and moral responsibility for the people of Hong Kong, with a request that the United Nations monitor the implementation of the 1984 Agreement;
2. to express its solidarity with the churches of Hong Kong, and especially the Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China (our partner in CWM) in praying for

a peaceful transfer of power which respects the dignity of all peoples;
3. to press for full British citizenship for those groups denied by the 1981 and 1985 Acts of Parliament; and to extend a welcome to those Hong Kong residents who move to these islands;
4. to welcome the introduction of the pack of material on Hong Kong from CWM and the educational materials produced by the China Forum of the CCBI Churches Commission on Mission.

Multi-racial ministry post

Assembly instructs the Overseas Exchange Sub-Committee, in consultation with the Equal Opportunities Committee, to use one of its five special ministry posts for the appointment of a multi-racial and multi-cultural development worker within the United Reformed Church for an initial period of three years.

1997

Values in Education and the Community

Assembly

1 welcomes the serious attempt made by the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) to discover what values are commonly held in different sections of society and affirms the need to continue with this exercise;
2 applauds the efforts by many teachers and governors to promote such values within the ethos of their schools and colleges as they assist the development of children and young people growing up in a society which is often hostile to such values;
3 believes that, in the "promotion of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at school" as required under the 1988 and 1992 Education Acts, moral principles must be linked with spiritual and cultural education and therefore resists the suggestion that 'values' might be taught as a separate subject on the curriculum.
4 instructs Church and Society to pass on these views to the FCFC Education Committee, the government and the SCAA.

Jubilee 2000

Assembly

Endorses and commends the 'Jubilee 2000' programme of action to every local church as a model for a workable and acceptable solution to the problem of poor country debt;
urges church members and adherents to sign – and to secure at least one additional signature for – the supporting petition being distributed in the Information Service;
notes the link already made with Jubilee 2000 and the plans for significant support of the campaign through Commitment for Life;
commends the British Government for their proposals on debt relief in recent years and urges them to press with more vigour for the adoption of such proposals within the International Monetary Fund and G7 nations, especially in relation to sub-Saharan Africa.

Human Sexuality

Assembly recognises

a) the seriousness of the issues of human sexuality and their implications for acceptable behaviour and lifestyles among Christians; and
b) the lack of agreement in the responses submitted to General Assembly by local churches, District Councils and Provincial Synods concerning aspects of the contemporary debate on human sexuality and the teaching and application of scripture;

and therefore

1 believes that these disagreements, though serious, must not be allowed to injure the unity and peace of the United Reformed Church;
2 encourages local churches, District Councils and Provincial Synods to apply with wisdom and sensitivity the pastoral practice and discipline set out in the Basis of Union and Structure of the United Reformed Church, in a way which respects the rights of personal conviction and which does not override conscientious decisions in these matters nor use such decisions as a reason for breaking the fellowship of the United Reformed Church;
3 calls on those who exercise pastoral care of members, elders and ministers in the Church to seek ways of ensuring that all those who experience rejection because of their convictions in these matters are sustained within the fellowship of the Church held together by Jesus Christ.

Assembly,
noting the requests made in a number of responses from local churches, District Councils and Provincial Synods for further time and space to reflect on these matters, asks Mission Council to arrange for further work to be done, ecumenically and in consultation with our partner churches through the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the Council for World Mission (CWM) where appropriate and possible, on

a the nature of Biblical authority for the life of the church;
b the relationship between the authority of General Assembly and the other Councils of the Church;
c the matter of ordination and human sexuality;

and also to consider ways in which the Church may be assisted in reflection on the wider issues of human sexuality. To enable this process Assembly asks Mission Council to establish a timetable for these reflective processes and ensure appropriate representation on necessary consultative groups and working parties.

Assembly

a) recognises
   1. that no candidate admitted for training can be assured of ordination until a call is issued and accepted with the concurrence of a District Council;
   2. that all decisions on candidature and on the calling of a particular minister involve seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the weighing of the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate.
b) declares concerning persons in a homosexual relationship that, during the process of further reflection and discussion set out in the previous resolution:
   1. no local church or pastorate is to be constrained to consider or accept such a person as their minister nor any District Council constrained to concur with such a call;
   2. Assembly will uphold a call to such an ordinand or minister duly issued by a local church with the concurrence of the relevant District Council(s) leading to ordination and /or induction;
   3. Assembly will also uphold the refusal of a local church to call as their minister a person who is in a homosexual relationship;
   4. in view of these options, the fact of a homosexual relationship shall not be the ground for rejecting a candidate for ministry during the process of selection, assessment, entry to a college or course and ministerial training.
c) resolves that in the case of a disagreement wherein a local church still wishes to call such a person when a District Council has refused concurrence, the relevant Synod, through an appropriate committee or commission, shall seek to secure agreement, failing which agreement the appeals procedure can be applied.
d) instructs the Ministries Committee to produce guidelines for the application of this decision in the cases of non-stipendiary ministers.

General Assembly instructs the Officers of Assembly as a matter of urgency to form a Working Group to enable sensitive care of Districts, churches and individuals who feel pain and distress as a result of the passing of Resolution 19 and asks Mission Council to review the work of the group at its next meeting.

1998

Ageing

a) Assembly welcomes and endorses the development by this joint working group of a strategy, outlined in the Book of Reports, which will:
   i) enable the Church to regard older people more appreciatively;
   ii) enable older people themselves, whether members of the church or not, to regard themselves more positively;
   iii) affirm the contributions made by older people.
b) Assembly therefore instructs the Church and Society and the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committees:
   i) to enable increased access to information on the circumstances and concerns of older people and, through ecumenical action and partnership with appropriate bodies, to encourage study, debate and action on the issues of old age and of an ageing society, with particular reference to the International Year of Older Persons designated for 1999;
   ii) to seek ways in which positive perceptions of old age and older people

may be reflected in the life and worship of the church.

c) Assembly authorises the Equal Opportunities Committee to add appropriate references to discrimination on grounds of age (youth or old age) to its policy statements.

50th Anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights

Assembly, noting that 1998 marks the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights,

a) Gives thanks for the work and witness of the UN Human Rights Commission;
b) Calls upon Her Majesty's Government
   i) to ratify the first Optional Protocol to the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, allowing individuals access to the UN Committee on Human Rights;
   ii) to ratify the second Optional Protocol to the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, committing the UK to a complete and permanent ban on capital punishment;
c) Welcomes the move of Her Majesty's Government to incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into UK legislation; and
d) Invites the Church and Society Committee to study the proposals by the InterAction Council for a Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities in the context of the debate on Human Rights and to make an appropriate submission to Her Majesty's Government.

Exploitation of children

General Assembly resolves to continue to bring pressure to bear upon Parliament to eradicate worldwide exploitation and sexual abuse of children, and to this end, encourages each synod, district council and local church to support the work of ECPAT(UK) (End Child Prostitution, Pornography and the Trafficking of children for sexual purposes).

Roots and Branches

Assembly:

a) recognises with thanksgiving and repentance that the care and stewardship of God's creation is an essential part of Christian discipleship;
b) challenges every local church to address its own responsibilities over the next two years, using the pack 'Roots and Branches';
c) in particular, instructs Church and Society in conjunction with other committees, to develop a plan for energy audits of church premises;
d) invites District Councils to consider these matters in their regular visits to churches.

1999

Violence against women

General Assembly expresses its deep alarm at a continuing public perception that there are circumstances which permit male violence against women, and therefore publicly denounces violence of any sort against women.

Children are Unbeatable

Assembly, noting the statement of aims of the 'Children are Unbeatable' Alliance, agrees that the United Reformed Church become a member of the Alliance.

Racial Justice

Assembly, noting the findings of the Enquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence:

a) urges every local congregation to mark Racial Justice Sunday (in 1999 September 12) as agreed by the Church Representatives' Meeting of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland and draws attention to the material for that Sunday published by the Churches Commission for Racial Justice;
b) acknowledging that racism exists within the church, urges the officers of local churches, District Councils and Synods to give appropriate opportunity for discussion of these matters during 1999/2000;
c) urges local churches to consider issues of racial justice arising in the communities which they are situated and to offer support to those striving for racial justice in local situations.

Middle East

Assembly, noting the continuing military action around the Gulf and the lack of progress within the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, and in renewing its concern for the region:

a) affirms that Jerusalem, as a holy city, should be accessible to the adherents of all the Abrahamic faiths and believes that

any settlement of the territorial claims of Palestinians and Israelis should honour the holiness and wholeness of the city as a shared city in terms of sovereignty and citizenship;

b) looks for a fresh start to meaningful negotiations following the General Election in Israel and developments around May 4, and invites the British government to press with its EU partners for a clear role under the auspices of the United Nations in the peace process;

c) deplores the systematic confiscation of identification cards (and consequent loss of right of residency) from increasing numbers of Palestinian Jerusalemites, and continuing human rights abuses both by Israeli and Palestinian security forces and the evidence of corruption and political infighting within the Palestinian leadership;

d) questions the assumptions on which British forces are engaged in bombing targets in Iraq and urges the British government and its EU partners, through the United Nations, to apply a more coherent and comprehensive foreign and defence policy vis-à-vis the Middle East;

e) supports the calls being made for a fundamental revision of the sanctions currently in force against Iraq and regrets the leading involvement of British companies in the construction of the Ilusu dam in Turkey;

f) welcomes the trend for pilgrimage groups to the Holy Land, including the representative URC group travelling next winter as part of the Pilgrim 2000 programme to make time for deliberate encounters with indigenous Christians; and

g) authorises the Assembly officers to send Christian greetings, together with a copy of this resolution, to the church leaders in Jerusalem, assuring them of the prayers of the United Reformed Church for them individually and collectively, especially during this period of the millennium.

2000

End of life

Assembly

a) invites Church and Society to gather a working group, including members suggested by other Assembly committees, to examine the range of issues listed in the report below and other related matters associated with the end of life, to work on some of them and to report in 2002;

b) in particular reaffirms its belief in and support for the National Health Service as a necessary expression of our common life.

Commitment for Life

Assembly

a) welcomes the growth in the number of local churches participating in Commitment for Life and the consequent increase in funds raised and associated activity, including production of worship material, a pack for children and campaigning around debt and fair trade;

b) recognises the personal effort in promoting the programme put in by advocates in each synod and the effective work of the Co-ordinator and support staff;

c) notes the fresh emphasis on the four countries with primary partners in each country;

d) agrees that the disbursement of Commitment for Life income shall remain at 75% going overseas via Christian Aid, 10% for World Development Movement, 15% for Grants and Advocacy, and that Church and Society shall continue to devote staff time to the programme;

d) therefore urges non-participating churches, large or small, to join the Commitment for Life programme.

2001

Jobcentre Survey

General Assembly notes with concern that surveys of Jobcentres undertaken by local churches show that significant proportions of jobs available to unemployed people around the country pay below the National Insurance Lower Earnings Level, below the Income Support rate for a couple with two young children, and below the threshold for access to a Stakeholder Pension.

Assembly affirms:

(a) the concept of social insurance as an important mechanism for providing people with security in unemployment, illness and old age and as a means of expressing the church's commitment to 'the common good';

(b) the view of the Churches' Enquiry on Unemployment and the Future of Work that it is possible to provide 'enough good

work for all' and that government should make this a key policy aim.

Assembly calls upon local churches to work with the Church and Society Committee to raise these issues at local and national level.

2002

End of Life issues

General Assembly, noting that the work of the group set up to look at issues relating to the end of life in response to the resolution of Assembly 2000 has completed its work, welcomes the material it has produced for use in the churches.

2003

Millennium Development Goals

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;
iv) as an integral part of the process of achieving the Millennium Development Goals, encourages continued support of the movement for cancellation of the unpayable debts of the poorest countries of the world.

The new warfare

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 work ecumenically and internationally.

The International Situation

This Assembly, noting the suffering, powerlessness and loss of dignity and hope endured by many people across the world, especially in situations of war, conflict, terror and repression, and that the responses to these situations can themselves be violent and extreme:
- Expresses its support for our partners throughout the world who are facing particular difficulties at this time;
- Welcomes the statements made by Mission Council and the Ecumenical and Church and Society committees, especially in relation to Iraq, Zimbabwe and the Middle East;
- Calls upon the Ecumenical Committee and Church and Society committees to enter into a dialogue with our partner churches in the USA on ways in which we can support one another as we witness to our nations promoting an alternative vision of peace and justice in the world today; and
- Encourages local congregations to make their own witness, promoting understanding, resisting violence and seeking justice for all God's people locally and globally.

Faith Schools

Regretting the lack of both 'faith input' and promotion of a religious worldview in some schools, Assembly:
i) welcomes the contribution to British education of schools which seek to provide an ethos and religious teaching which promote good relationships in a pluralist society;
ii) recognises that many of these schools have a religious foundation, including those schools linked with the United Reformed Church, and welcomes the example of best practice they can provide;
iii) shares the concern of many people of goodwill about teaching in a minority of so-called 'Faith Schools' likely to promote religious or racial intolerance;
iv) calls upon churches to seek links with local schools with the objective of nurturing friendship and understanding as the essence of community;

and calls upon churches to support Christian teachers, particularly those engaged in Religious Education, and encourage others to consider teaching as a vocation.

Faith Stance on the Global Crisis of Life

- World Alliance of Reformed Churches Covenanting for Justice Process
General Assembly draws the attention of the councils and appropriate committees of the church to 'Faith Stance on the Global Crisis of Life', invites them (as a matter of priority) to find space to discuss and reflect on it, and instructs the Church and Society and Ecumenical Committees to collate responses to the document for report to the 2004 General Assembly.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

(Racial Justice Committee Resolution)
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;
d) to join with other Non-Government organisations in active local and national campaigning to further the above aims.

2004

Campaign to Double Aid and Make Trade Just

General Assembly
notes with approval plans for a major mobilization to fight poverty in 2005 incorporating efforts to ensure that the finance is available to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and a concerted campaign to make trade rules work in the interest of poor nations;
pledges its support for this mobilization and for ecumenical action within it.

Commitment for Life

General Assembly
welcomes the continuing and significant growth in the number of local churches participating in Commitment for Life and the consequent increase in funds raised and campaigning activity;
recognizes the personal effort in promoting the programme put in by advocates in each synod and the effective work of the Director and Programme Assistant;
notes that although there is a continuing focus on partners, through Christian Aid, in four countries, there is an increased and growing emphasis on campaigning for economic justice;
notes the closer relationship between Commitment for Life and the International Relations office and commends to churches the new leaflet produced jointly by both programmes;
agrees that the disbursement of Commitment for Life income shall remain at 75% going to our partners via Christian Aid, 10% for World Development Movement and 15% for Grants and Advocacy;
therefore urges non-participating churches, large and small, to join the Commitment for Life programme, a mission priority of the church, and in the work for justice and peace.

The Environment

General Assembly
i) affirms its commitment to the Five Marks of Mission with their call to the people of God to be faithful stewards of God's creation and to seek to sustain and renew the life of the earth;
ii) welcomes and endorses 'An environmental policy for the United Reformed Church';
iii) commends churches that have engaged with the URC 'Roots and Branches' pack and the subsequent ecumenical 'Eco-Congregation' project; congratulates Zion United Reformed Church Northallerton and Christ Church URC/Methodist Church Ross-on-Wye on gaining the Eco-Congregation Award; and encourages other churches to follow their lead;
iv) pledges its support for Operation Noah, an initiative of the Christian Ecology Link seeking to raise awareness of, and promote action around, the issue of climate change.

Israeli Separation Barrier

General Assembly:
i) Views with deep indignation the Separation Barrier currently being constructed by the

Government of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.
ii) Believes that the Barrier is causing profound social and economic problems for the Palestinian population as well as seriously hampering efforts to find a just and long lasting peace in the region.
iii) Condemns unreservedly terrorist attacks upon innocent Israeli civilians but believes that the best way for Government of Israel to provide long-term security for its people is to engage in a peace process that will result in the end of the occupation in accordance with long-standing UN resolutions.
iv) Calls upon the UK Government to use its influence to see that construction of the barrier is halted, that existing sections are dismantled and that confiscated land is returned to Palestinians along with compensation for any damage caused.
v) Pledges itself to support the work of peace groups within Israel and the Occupied Territories and UK based advocacy groups, such as Christian Aid and EAPPI in their work in the Occupied Territories.

2005

MakePovertyHistory

As part of the United Reformed Church's renewed commitment to challenging the world's injustices under Catch the Vision, General Assembly warmly welcomes the MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY campaign and calls on all relevant councils of the church to engage fully and imaginatively with the campaign actions for the remainder of the year.

Emergency Resolution - Zimbabwe

The General Assembly of the United Reformed Church meeting in Warwick University, mindful of the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe and of its church and 'Commitment for Life' partners in that country,
- expresses its outrage at the actions being taken against the people of Zimbabwe by their own government
- reaffirms the support of the United Reformed Church for its partners in Zimbabwe and instructs the Moderator to convey the news of this to them.
- Calls upon its Ecumenical Committee and the Commitment for Life Programme to explore with all the church's partners fresh initiatives to end the injustices being committed against the Zimbabwean people.
- Calls upon Her Majesty's Government to recognise the claims of refugees and asylum seekers from Zimbabwe and to offer them shelter in the UK.

Several members spoke in support of the Resolution.
Resolution 54 was carried on a standing vote. Members of Assembly remained standing in silence, and were led in prayer by the Chaplain, as a token of solidarity with the people of Zimbabwe.

Detention without trial

(Resolution from SW Synod)
General Assembly notes with concern the actions of Her Majesty's Government in introducing 'detention without trial' for UK citizens and passport holders and calls for the rapid repeal of the relevant legislation.

2006

Peacemaking: A Christian Vocation

Assembly adopts the Report 'Peacemaking: A Christian Vocation' and commends it for study by Synods and local congregations, and as a helpful guide for church leaders who may be called upon for comment on the ethical considerations relating to war and peace.

2007

Climate Change

General Assembly
1) Notes with approval the work already underway on climate change, and reaffirms the need to build this into the whole life of the local Church;
2) Recognises that all society, including the United Reformed Church must shrink its carbon footprint;
3) Calls upon Church and Society:
(a) to determine how carbon emissions can best be monitored across the church;
(b) to develop plans in consultation with the relevant agents of the church to implement year on year cuts in carbon emissions using the expertise of such groups as Eco- Congregation, Operation Noah, Creation Challenge and the Joint Public Issues Team;
(c) to roll this out across the church, and
(d) to report annually to the Trustees;
4) Calls for the urgent development of energy sources alternative to fossil fuels;
5) Calls upon Local Churches to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, to sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Assisted Dying

General Assembly affirms the report Assisted Dying, as encapsulated in the following statements:

i) As Christians we regard all human life as being God given, and therefore precious; we believe that death is not the end and we have faith that there is a more perfect life to follow.
ii) We recognise that there is a time to die and that there are circumstances in which it will be wrong to continue to provide treatment designed to prolong life.
iii) We recognise that some palliative treatment for the terminally ill, makes the patient more comfortable and pain free, but can also hasten death. We believe this to be acceptable, as long as the primary purpose of the treatment is pain relief and comfort of the patient.
iv) We could not support legislation that would empower medical staff to intervene in ways which deliberately seek to assist a patient to die. We would therefore oppose any change in the law to permit voluntary euthanasia or assisted suicide.
v) We believe that a Living Will or Advance Directive which has been prepared by a patient of sound mind, can be helpful for carers and relatives; however we do not believe such a document should be used to facilitate a person's death.
vi) We believe that additional resources are needed to provide more uniformly available and more high quality palliative care.
vii) We recognise the valuable contribution made by carers. We express our prayerful support for those who work in, and promote hospices, and others who care, befriend and provide support for the dying.

Listed church buildings and Lottery funding

Having reconsidered its position on Lottery funding, General Assembly accepts, reluctantly, that some local churches will need to make application to the Lottery Fund to assist with the upkeep, repair and alteration of their listed church buildings and, in that respect, revises the advice contained in Resolution 20 of General Assembly 1995, which urged members and councils of the Church to disassociate themselves from the Lottery.

2008

Living Wage

General Assembly calls on all the United Reformed Church's synods and churches:

a) to support Church Action on Poverty's call for churches to pay a living wage as determined by the Living Wage Campaign;
b) to ensure that all employees have a written contract of employment;
c) to ensure that the terms and conditions of employment of employees at least comply with the minimum legal requirements stipulated.
d) to implement the equal opportunity policy developed by the United Reformed Church.
e) where contract or agency staff are employed, to engage with contractors and agencies on the payment of their employees to ensure compliance with this resolution.
f) to monitor this through the annual returns from local churches and report back to Assembly in 2010.

2010

Children in detention

(Resolution from North Western Synod)
The General Assembly of the United Reformed Church calls upon Her Majesty's Government to end the detention of children for immigration purposes and ensure that alternatives to detention should not involve the separation of children from their parents.

Nestlé

General Assembly agrees that, for investment purposes, all companies should be treated in accordance with our ethical investment policy. General Assembly resolves that if Nestlé obtains listing on the FTSE4Good Index, Mission Council be instructed to rescind the boycott on Nestlé products outlined in the Assembly 1992 resolution.

2012

Addressing the social impact of poverty and inequality in the UK

General Assembly resolves to encourage members of the United Reformed Church to "keep faith with the poor and challenge injustice" (Vision 2020) and to work to end inequality in our society by:

a) affirming the work of CRCWs and others in working with the poorest communities.
b) welcoming the moves by synods and congregations to commit to paying the

Living Wage and encouraging others to do the same (which presently equates to £7.20 per hour outside of London and £8.30 in London).

c) renewing our call for the introduction of a financial transaction tax as an innovative way of mitigating the impacts of poverty and inequality in the UK and other good causes such as climate change mitigation and adaptation and poverty alleviation overseas.

d) encouraging churches and church members to actively challenge attitudes and language which treats those in poverty as anything less than people made in the image of God and to ask JPIT to provide resources to help do this effectively both in the public and the private spheres.

e) committing the Church to speak prophetically, particularly through the work of the Joint Public Issues Team and the Close the Gap campaign.

f) supporting work to highlight injustices against the poorest, including spending decisions, unfair taxation and misrepresentation of the poorest.

Drones

General Assembly:

1. receives the report and commends it for study;
2. directs the Joint Public Issues Team to produce appropriate materials to enable our churches to reflect biblically on the issues raised;
3. reaffirms the Christian vocation of peacemaking and the crucial importance of strict adherence to international law in the deployment of military force;
4. notes the growing concern regarding the humanitarian impact of explosive weaponry in civilian areas and urges that this concern be addressed in any use of Armed Unmanned Aerial Systems (AUAS);
5. petitions the UK Government to publish as much information as possible concerning current strategy and effect of AUAS strikes alongside future plans for AUAS development and use and in particular to :

a) provide greater clarity on the role that armed unmanned aerial systems play in current military strategy, with particular reference to counter-insurgency;

b) affirm that known individuals are not targeted unless such persons are directly engaged in hostilities at the time;

c) release information on all drone strikes including number of fatalities and publish a summary of all investigations into civilian casualties;

d) in the interests of international law and joint co-operation on counter-terrorism, clearly state the UK Government's position on targeted killings and urge the United States to discontinue the practice of targeting suspected members of terrorist organisations with AUAS.

6. urges the UK government to begin to explore ways in which the international community might implement an arms control regime to reduce the threat posed by the development of systems capable of autonomous targeting and weapons delivery;
7. upholds the people of northern Pakistan and Afghanistan in prayer and welcomes opportunities for the United Reformed Church to join with ecumenical partners, academic institutions, the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Christian Council on Approaches to Defence and Disarmament in the further exploration and promotion of measures to encourage peace, justice and reconciliation in the context of violent insurgency.

The Occupy movement

(resolution from National Synod of Wales)
General Assembly resolves:

a) to listen collectively to the witness of the Occupy movement in the UK and worldwide, and especially for the Gospel resonances within what is being said, and to share our own Gospel insights to enrich and enliven this conversation through our varied communication channels;

b) to encourage the Mission Committee of the United Reformed Church to engage wherever possible with this movement and other partners in a common search for a more equitable economic system;

c) to resist all proposals for reform which target the poor, in the UK and overseas, to pay the price for the mistakes of the rich and to request the Joint Public Issues Team to monitor and respond appropriately to such policy reforms;

d) to examine ourselves prayerfully and penitentially, our investment policies and our deployment and mission strategies as the URC, to see where the critique of the Occupy movement might rightly be directed at us;

e) strongly to urge trusts, committees and local churches within the United Reformed Church to take this resolution into account

in taking decisions - both financial and otherwise.

2014

Foodbanks

General Assembly welcomes the resource pack on foodbanks produced by the Joint Public Issues Team and commends it for study and use by all churches.

2016

EU Referendum

On the 23rd June a referendum took place within the United Kingdom regarding the question of European Union membership. The majority of those who participated within this referendum voted for the UK to leave this union.
In the light of the UK's 2016 European Union membership vote, General Assembly:

- Recalls that the Gospel mandates us to respect all people, love our neighbour and offer hospitality to strangers. In light of the decision to leave the EU, and the hurt and anxiety that many people across our nations feel, it believes that the Church's responsibility now is to be a voice of love, hope, inclusion and compassion;
- Affirms the value of being a diverse and multicultural society and calls on local churches to continue to build bridges of understanding and trust with all parts of their communities;
- Celebrates the URC's Reformed European heritage and identity, and commits to ongoing ecumenical relationships with partner churches across Europe;
- Celebrates the contributions that nationals of other European countries make to the UK and commits to stand in solidarity with them at a time of uncertainty;
- Calls on local churches and members of the URC to challenge incidences of racism and hate crime and report them through the appropriate channels;
- Expresses concern and sadness about the deep inequalities within British society and calls upon URC members to lobby their elected representatives calling for a fairer society;
- Calls on all those in the URC to pray for wisdom and honesty for those involved in negotiating the terms of the UK's exit from the EU and for those who currently feel marginalised by the decision;
- Recognises that the URC is a Church in three nations and so calls upon the Synod of Scotland to engage in and contribute to the public processes and ecumenical responses specific to Scotland which may emerge;
- Encourages members of the URC to continue to engage with the ongoing political and social debate on this topic and to challenge misinformation.

Environmental Policy

1. General Assembly adopts the Environmental Policy, and encourages all committees, synods and local churches to do their best to implement it.
2. General Assembly resolves to appoint a task group until 31 July 2022 in the first instance, of four persons, to be appointed by the nominations committee and funded from the mission committee budget, to monitor the United Reformed Church's progress toward meeting its commitment to reduce its carbon footprint, reporting to the mission committee.
The task group's specific remit shall be to:

a) compile, produce or commission resources for worship and teaching related to themes contained in the Environmental Policy;
b) consider the budgetary implications of implementing the Environmental Policy;
c) commission a suitable individual or body to calculate the Church's carbon footprint, enabling a benchmark to be set against which future reductions in this footprint may be made; and
d) liaise with the United Reformed Church investment committee, and to assist the relevant bodies within the United Reformed Church regarding decisions relating to the investment of Church funds in fossil fuels.

Nuclear Weapons

General Assembly, recalling the resolution on Trident adopted by Mission Council in 2006:

a) Welcomes the current international focus on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons;
b) Remains opposed to the replacement of Trident and calls for the negotiation of a Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty to bring about the elimination of all nuclear weapons;
c) Mandates the mission committee to make this call widely known, working where possible with partner churches and organisations to achieve it;
d) Urges church members to engage with their Member of Parliament on this issue.

Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory

The three resolutions on the situation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory (brought by Thames North, Wessex and Eastern synods) went to facilitation following discussion. The new wording drawn up by the facilitation group was brought before Assembly and passed recognising disagreement. The wording is as follows:
"General Assembly instructs mission committee to explore and develop further our existing work around the issues of the Israel/Palestine situation with indigenous churches, interfaith and ecumenical partners and public authorities, including:

- dialogue and action;
- peace building;
- justice and security for all;

in order to enable synods, local churches and individuals to become more aware and to respond with informed prayer, grace and solidarity."

2018

Migrants in the UK

In the light of recent revelations about the treatment of some members of the 'Windrush generation'
and other migrants, General Assembly:

a) expresses its deep concern that the government's 'hostile environment' policies (now being referred to as the 'compliant environment') are leading to destitution, discrimination and distrust in society;
b) calls for an approach to immigration that treats every individual, whatever their status, with humanity, dignity, respect and fairness;
c) encourages church members to study the Joint Public Issues Team's new report on this subject, and consider taking the actions outlined in the report;
d) directs the mission committee to work with others to make appropriate representations to government, to make the Church's concerns known.

2019 Mission Council

Ethical Investment – Climate Change

Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, agrees that the ethical investment guidelines on climate change issues be updated to reflect the following:

It is the wish of the United Reformed Church that those responsible for investment decisions on behalf of the Church and its Trust bodies should:

a) not invest in fossil fuel companies whose total turnover is more than 10% derived from the extraction and/or supply of fossil fuels, including thermal coal, natural gas and oil
b) complete the divestment required to fulfil this decision by the time the URC General Assembly meets in 2020
c) widen their proactive role as investors, by engaging further with companies whose activities foster significant carbon emissions, for example the electricity and automotive industries, and producers of energy intensive products (e.g. cement)
d) refocus the Church's investment portfolio by scaling up investment in renewable energy and clean technologies.

Mission Council further resolves to:

e) encourage publicity of these actions and the rationale behind them, so that the URC can use its influence to advocate an end to the exploration for new oil and gas reserves, and the managed decline of fossil fuel production
f) advocate to the UK government and others for action to foster the transition to a net zero carbon economy.
g) encourage URC synods and local URC churches with investments to divest from fossil fuels, and reinvest in clean alternatives
h) support and encourage churches and church members to reduce their consumption of fossil fuels, and so participate in a just transition to a zero-carbon future
i) request the Resources Centres for Learning to ensure that those being prepared for service and leadership are cognisant of the global and spiritual context of the climate crisis.

Carbon Emissions Target

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly:

a) urges the UK government to set a target and establish policies to achieve net zero

emissions of greenhouse gases in the UK by well before 2050, and updates section 5.3(h) and 5.5(b) of the URC Environmental Policy accordingly

b) makes a corresponding commitment that as a Church we shall strive to act urgently to reduce carbon emissions across the whole of Church life in line with this target, and updates section 4.2 of the Environmental Policy to give effect to this
c) calls on URC members, local churches and synods to support these commitments in word and in deed.

2020 Mission Council

Climate Emergency

Mission Council recognises the climate emergency and challenges all councils, committees and local churches to do everything possible to make URC events and activities eco-friendly, as urged by URC Youth Assembly.

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the General Assembly for 2020 was cancelled, although some business was conducted online. Further items were carried over to the Mission Council meeting on 20-21 November.

Single-Use Plastics

1. Having recently recognised the climate emergency (Resolution 14, July 2020), Mission Council calls for all councils, committees, local churches and individuals to work towards eliminating the use of single-use plastics, given their significant environmental impact.
2. Mission Council notes with alarm the huge increase in the use of disposable items during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially single-use plastics. While there are occasions during this pandemic when it is impossible to avoid the use of single-use plastic items, their use should be kept to an absolute minimum. They should also be carefully disposed of in a way that minimises their impact on the environment.

UK Foreign Aid Budget

Mission Council:

- is concerned by reports this week that the government is preparing to break its manifesto pledge and abandon Britain's long-standing commitment to spending 0.7% of national income on international development;
- believes that a commitment to the poorest in the world should not be an optional extra but at the heart of our country's responsibilities, especially in the context of a global pandemic and a climate emergency;
- instructs the Moderators of General Assembly to make these concerns known to government in the strongest possible terms and encourages people and local churches to contact their MPs about this important issue.

2021 Assembly Executive

Conversion Therapy

Assembly Executive resolves:

a) to support and adopt the definition of conversion therapy set out in the 'Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy in the UK'
b) that the practice of conversion therapy is unethical and potentially harmful
c) to call on all church members and ministers to refuse to offer or participate in offering conversion therapy in any form
d) that no conversion therapy can take place in the name of the United Reformed Church
e) to express support for proposals to ban conversion therapy, and urge that current proposals be strengthened to ensure greater protection for potential subjects of conversion therapy.

N.B. This resolution was in opposition to practices that seek to change, modify, or suppress a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.