

## 1 Background

1.1 In 2006, General Assembly resolved to bring together the work of six Assembly Committees through the formation of the Mission Committee with a clear mandate to reappraise the mission priorities of the denomination and how they are resourced. Since then considerable progress has been made particularly in relation to the operation of staff secretaries as a 'Mission Team' and also in identifying a series of work priorities for 2009 and 2010. These are detailed in the Mission Committee Report to General Assembly.

1.2 At General Assembly 2008, the Mission Committee introduced the notion of a denominational 'mission strategy' founded upon a series of 10-year 'outcomes'. The Mission Committee report received warm approval and small group discussions about the outcomes indicated significant enthusiasm for the broad thrust of the approach. The primary concerns expressed by members of Assembly related to the need to avoid the imposition of a strategy from the centre and for it to take greater account of issues of spirituality and worship.

1.3 During 2009, the Mission Committee led an extensive consultation with local churches, synods, other Assembly Committees and ecumenical and international partners concerning what has become known as *vision2020: planning for growth in the URC*.

1.4 Following over two years of discussion, this report sets out a framework which can both inspire and support mission planning at every level of the United Reformed Church. To be clear, *vision2020* is a framework and not a programme. It is designed to create a context through which different levels of the Church can inter-relate; it articulates a set of themes within which we can better understand and shape our programmes and plans; and it provides something of a 'routemap' that will enable us to evaluate better our journey as a Church. *vision2020* does not prescribe activity but we offer it to the denomination as a tool and resource that can be applied in almost any situation. We hope that over time *vision2020* will become a type of 'covenant' between every part of the Church that chooses to work within its parameters.

## 2 Feedback from the *vision2020* consultation

2.1 Consultation about *vision2020* took place in two phases throughout 2009. The first phase focused on local congregations and took place in the spring and summer; the second phase involved synods, other networks and ecumenical partners and started in the autumn of 2009. Local churches were asked to give their feedback on the two core ideas: the statements of our mission and purpose and local mission pledges. 538 forms were returned, which represents over a third of all local congregations. The highest number of responses came from the West Midlands, North Western, Yorkshire and Southern synods.

2.2 There was a largely positive response to the statements of our mission and purpose. Three out of every four churches indicated that they thought the current statements outlined the main areas that the Church should prioritise in the next 10 years. The majority of churches (69%) further indicated that they would find the idea of 'Local Mission Pledges' helpful and 64% agreed that such pledges would help synod and Assembly staff plan the kind of support they could offer local churches.

2.3 The consultation highlighted a significant number of churches who are clearly engaged in wide ranging mission activities already and who use their resources creatively for this purpose. We wish to affirm the wonderful work that many United Reformed Churches are engaged with and re-state our intention that *vision2020* should support and build upon these positives.

2.4 The consultation revealed a number of key issues. Significant patterns emerged in response to the statements' themes. These included concern about the lack of reference to children and young people; suggestions to enhance references to Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Bible; a range of strong views about the statement on diversity; and a sense that the statements were too wordy and that some of the language was too technical.

2.5 A number of churches questioned the quantitative nature of many of the suggested activities and in particular the notion of numerical church growth being seen as a measure of success. A number of churches also felt that the phrase 'In the next 10 years ...' which introduces each statement was unhelpful, indicating delayed action for some and an unrealistic time frame for others.

2.6 Many churches used the consultation exercise to express their sense of vulnerability and weakness. In some cases concern focused on small numbers, in others the fact that the congregation is ageing. Lack of capacity was frequently raised and it became clear to us that we did not communicate clearly enough that local churches would not be expected to do everything but to choose one or two things to 'pledge' as part of their local mission plans.

2.7 We have taken on board the issues and concerns raised and have sought to address them within the revised *vision2020* framework.

2.8 The consultation with synods focused on the link between the *vision2020* statements and the synods' own priorities, and how local mission pledges can help synods with their mission planning and enabling. Five synods felt that *vision2020* integrated well with their own plans and another six saw potential for integration but were not yet clear how this would be done in practice. Only one synod responded negatively and one did not respond at all. Some synod responses reiterated local churches' concerns about some of the statements such as the lack of emphasis on the Bible, and concern over the diversity statement. They further expressed the need to consider the implications of *vision2020* for Local Ecumenical Partnerships and for smaller churches.

2.9 Participation in the consultation on the part of Assembly Committees has been mixed. Some have engaged with the material in-depth, not least the Ministries and Education and Learning Committees, while others have given only limited feedback. However, overall the response to *vision2020* has been positive. We also invited the views of our ecumenical and international partners, but had not received any responses when this report went to press.

### **3 The theological basis for a URC mission framework**

3.1 The Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church speaks of the church's responsibility to offer itself and the world to God in worship; to receive and express the renewing life of the Holy Spirit in each place and in its total fellowship; to declare the reconciling and saving power of Jesus Christ, to live out Christ's ministry of caring, forgiving and healing love; and to bear witness to Christ's rule over the nations. Though not explicitly mentioned, it is clear that mission is fundamental to the existence of the church.

3.2 A much stronger focus on mission is visible in the *Growing Up* report, adopted by the 1999 General Assembly. The United Reformed Church was expressing its intention to focus on faithful participation in God's mission, rather than on the future of the URC as a Church. *Growing Up* attempted to reawaken the Church to the fact that it is mission-

shaped and that in the words of Emil Brunner, it ‘exists by mission as fire exists by burning’. This found further expression in the strapline of the *Catch the Vision* process in 2004: ‘called to be God’s people, transformed by the Gospel, making a difference for Christ’s sake’.

3.3 *vision2020* builds on this understanding of mission and the church’s role in it. It takes as its fundamental starting point that mission is God’s activity and entails all that God is doing to transform this world into the reign of God. It is a mission that finds its ultimate expression in Jesus and continues throughout history through the Spirit. The focus and scope of God’s mission is the transformation of all of created reality into what God intended in creation.

3.4 The Church is called, sent and empowered by God, through the Holy Spirit, to join in God’s mission of transformation. It is the Church-in-mission that is recognisably the community of the followers of Jesus.

3.5 God’s mission is to be understood as all that God is doing to transform the world into God’s reign. Therefore mission has a comprehensive character. The *Growing Up* report expressed this in the Five Marks of Mission. *vision2020* builds on these in its ten statements of mission and purpose.

3.6 If mission is God’s mission and is all that God is doing to transform this world, then mission is contextual. It is the Holy Spirit who helps us discern how God is at work in each place. It is in the power of the Holy Spirit and through constant reflection and prayer that we are enabled to give shape to the Good News in ways that address directly the lives of the people around us. This is reflected in the ten statements, in *vision2020*’s principles and approach and in the concept of the local mission pledges.

3.7 The Mission Committee and Mission Team have sought to express these principles in the Mission Creed (see Annexe 1, page 17).

## 4 Challenges and tensions

As with much theological endeavour, our engagement in mission is not without questions, challenges and apparent contradictions. These have been made explicit in a number of ways as churches, synods and committees have engaged with the *vision2020* materials. Whilst much of the *vision2020* consultation feedback can be reflected in changes to our statements and plans, there are some more fundamental tensions and challenges which cannot be easily resolved. These are challenges that we need to ‘live with’ and explore as we journey together in God’s unfolding mission. Here we highlight three:

- a) *Faithfulness or fruitfulness*  
*vision2020* aims to help the United Reformed Church plan for growth. Growth takes many forms. Every local church will be able to tell a story of how it has developed over the years, how its members have grown in faith, how it has grown part of its neighbourhood. This growth in ‘faithfulness’ is a key part of what we mean by growth. However, *vision2020* is also concerned about numerical growth, not only because of institutional survival but out of the conviction that a church defined by mission ought to long to increase its shared fellowship in Christ. The growth of communities of faith which are centres of worship of God and where the reign of God is made visible – our fruitfulness – is a key concern in mission. We are called to be both faithful and fruitful.
- b) *Qualitative or quantitative measures*  
*vision2020* seeks to enable churches to be more intentional in their mission planning and engagement. One of the weaknesses identified in the *Growing Up* process was that no clear targets were set. *vision2020* has sought to address this by adding ‘indicators’ to each of the statements of our mission and purpose. It clearly recognises, however, that key to a church’s involvement in mission is the quality of its church life and not the number of activities carried out or people

attending. Therefore, when we identify indicators to help us see where we are on the way, this is done in the recognition that these are only 'signposts on the journey towards greater corporate Christ-likeness' (Robert Warren, 2004). Our involvement in mission is as much about the being of the church as its doing.

c) *Unity and mission*

The United Reformed Church was founded on a vision of unity and many regarded it as a temporary stage on the way to the visible unity of the Christian Church. For some the fact that it still exists is a sign of its failure to live out its founding vision. Both the *Growing Up* report and *Catch the Vision* sought to forge a new identity for the church in the belief that it has something distinctive and vital to contribute. *vision2020* builds on this belief and seeks to help churches develop an identity that is strongly rooted in God's mission: we are called to be God's people, transformed by the gospel, making a difference for Christ's sake. The renewed emphasis on our identity, however, needs to be balanced with our continuing search for visible unity. Our ecumenical division falls far short of Jesus' own vision of the unity of the church, and the need for the continued witness of the United Reformed Church to the hope and goal of Christian unity remains. The aim of *vision2020* is to balance the church's commitment to the unity of all God's people with a similar commitment to share in God's mission. As with fruitfulness and faithfulness, unity and mission are not mutually exclusive goals; indeed they must be nurtured hand in hand.

## 5 Links to other URC programmes

5.1 One of the most common concerns expressed during the consultation was that churches are suffering from 'initiative overload' (although very few local churches expressed this view directly themselves). At the heart of these concerns are four initiatives: *Vision4Life*, *vision2020*, the *Marketing Campaign* and *Challenge to the Church*. Following numerous discussions with the General Secretary, Committee Convenors, working groups and Synod Moderators, a clear pattern has been established as to how these programmes relate.

5.2 The primary focus for local church activity until Advent 2011 is *Vision4Life*. We are presently in the second year of *Vision4Life* with its theme of Prayer. In December 2010 we will move into the Evangelism year during which the *Marketing Campaign* will be launched which, with its focus on evangelism, will act as a resource for and complement to *Vision4Life*. At present, the *Marketing Campaign* and *Vision4Life* steering groups are working together to ensure these initiatives are joined up.

5.3 *vision2020* is an over-arching framework within which URC mission planning at Assembly, synod and local levels can be promoted and understood over a ten year period. Whilst it will have its own branding and relevant resource materials, these will cross-reference other Assembly programmes such as *Vision4Life*, the *Marketing Campaign* and *Commitment for Life* and these resources will be designed to be tailored by synods and local churches to address their regional and local situations. (See Section 11, page 14 for more details).

5.4 There is a strong hope that *vision2020* will provide a framework and resource for synods to develop and adapt their own synod mission strategies and that local churches will use *vision2020* and Synod Mission Strategies as a stimulus for making their own local mission pledges. It is also hoped that there is a clear relationship between synod mission strategies and synod ministerial deployment planning that forms part of the *Challenge to the Church* process. (See Section 9 for more details).

## 6 *vision2020* principles and approach

6.1 *vision2020* is a ‘framework’ and as such recognises the autonomy of local churches, gathered as synods, to determine their own priorities and plans. The development of a denominational framework represents an attempt to inspire, encourage and co-ordinate and not to coerce or control. To this end, a number of principles have been – and will continue to be – important to our mission planning.

6.2 First, the *vision2020* framework must be seen as a **process rather than a document**. Whilst the different parts of the church will necessarily need to set out their aims, objectives, priorities and programmes in forms of words, the importance of our approach to planning must be as much about the process of discussing, deciding and implementing ideas as it will be about creating a finely worded document.

6.3 Secondly, in-keeping with our denominational tradition, the starting point of any mission framework must be **the local congregation**. Whilst there is a place for Assembly to suggest broad direction and for synods to encourage and guide, this must be a strategy that serves, inspires and is inspired by the local congregation.

6.4 To this end, the third principle is that *vision2020* must be **permissive rather than prescriptive**. Ultimately *vision2020* must enable all of the local plans, developed in an organic and inclusive way, the synod strategies and assembly committee priorities to find their place as part of a coherent whole. The framework is offered to inspire and to guide and not to dictate.

6.5 Finally, *vision2020* must be driven by a **clear set of values** and not become a framework for its own sake. Our Reformed tradition and nearly forty years of history suggest that our framework must be distinctive and, whilst enabling some clear decisions and plans to be made, it must also tell a story of who we are as a denomination and where we are going. We believe that the theological basis, as set out above, with the Mission Creed and the Statements of Mission Purpose, together present a sound basis from which mission planning can develop.

6.6 With these principles in mind, the diagram in Annexe 2 is one portrayal of how different processes within the United Reformed Church might operate together in order to enable a more effective approach to mission. Just as a body with many parts, effective mission planning requires the co-operation of these different parts, from Local Mission Pledges, through Synod Mission Strategies to the overarching Assembly Framework. (See Sections 8-10 for more details).

## 7 Statements of Mission Purpose

7.1 At the centre of the *vision2020* framework are a set of ten ‘statements of our mission purpose’ which describe the kind of denomination we hope the United Reformed Church will be in the future. Each statement is followed by a short paragraph of additional explanation and a series of ‘indicators’.

7.2 There has been much detailed feedback on these statements. Many of these issues have been taken on board and the revised statements appear as Annexe 3. A decision has been taken not to include a separate statement about children and young people but to ensure that reference to the importance of children and young people is woven into each theme, particularly through the ‘indicators’ (see Section 8 below).

7.3 Concerns were also raised about the relationship between the proposed statements and the Five Marks of Mission. It is the view of the Mission Committee that the two sets of statements are entirely complementary but that the more detailed set of 10 statements set out in *vision2020* will be helpful for churches in their mission planning.

7.4 In the *Hearing Your Views vision2020* consultation booklet each statement began with the phrase: ‘In ten years’ time ...’ Feedback said that this was unhelpful. We have decided to drop that introductory phrase and emphasise the following things:



## Statements of Mission Purpose

- a) Our statements of mission purpose are designed to set out a vision for the development of the United Reformed Church for the next 10 years and beyond. They arise from – and act as a complement to – the Five Marks of Mission.
- b) As statements of purpose we can see many of them working already in all aspects of the life of the United Reformed Church. In this we can rejoice. But they remain both a challenge and an inspiration as beacons on a journey we must make together over the coming decade.
- c) With the coming decade in mind, we see them as statements which can motivate and guide us until at least 2020, but recognise that the mission task is much more urgent. Unless we act immediately, the life and witness of our denomination as we know it is unlikely to thrive beyond the next decade at all.

### 8 Indicators: steps along the way

8.1 An indicator is a sign or signal that we are making progress towards our desired outcome – it is a milestone on a journey. Whilst it can be very helpful for an indicator to be measurable in some way it is not the same as a ‘target’ as a target is normally seen as an end in itself or something by which we are judged or monitored.

8.2 During the *vision2020* consultation we have been struck by the reaction to suggested indicators, not least the apparent fear of using numerical measures. In a culture of targets and league tables which has sometimes led to unnecessary bureaucracy, perverse incentives and unhappy workplaces this reaction is perhaps understandable. But there is a danger of throwing the baby out with the proverbial bathwater and not facing up to our fears. Measurable indicators can be a helpful tool for both celebration and reflection.

8.3 Another concern raised during the consultation was that churches would be expected to address every statement and it would be too much for many to bear. This is not the intention. The idea of having multiple statements and indicators is that churches can use them to help identify a small number of mission priorities which are particularly pressing or relevant to their own context. For smaller churches, the idea of having a range of indicators is that they might pick just one or two to help guide their work.

8.4 The examples of indicators set out in the table in Annexe 3 are intended to act as prompts for discussion and planning. They have been developed by members of the Mission Committee drawing on their own experiences of church life. They are divided into three groups depending upon the ‘level’ of the church at which they might be best applied. They are also separated out by the ten *vision2020* statements. But they are not designed to be used in a rigid fashion. Though we hope some churches and synods might use them as they are, the intention is that they can be adapted to suit different contexts.

### 9 Local Mission pledges

9.1 *vision2020* recognises local mission to be the most important priority for the United Reformed Church. The mission activity of our local congregations represents the cornerstone of our denominational ethos and our future hope. To this end, the *vision2020* consultation indicated significant levels of support for the notion of the *Local Mission Pledge*. Many local congregations expressed their enthusiasm for identifying one or more activities that might give direction to their mission and a number of synods indicated that they would find it helpful to gather and analyse local church priorities with a view to offering appropriate support where possible.

9.2 There was a strong feeling that *Local Mission Pledges* would be best made by local churches as part of their biennial process of *Local Mission and Ministry Review* (LMMR). Each Synod is currently implementing LMMR in its own way and it is proposed that some form of guidance, developed in consultation with synods, might be produced which suggests a unified process for LMMR and the development of *Local Mission Pledges*.

9.3 In summary:

### Local Mission Pledges

- a) Each local congregation will be encouraged to make one or more local mission pledge.
- b) A local mission pledge will be a short statement expressing the mission priority of the local church.
- c) A local mission pledge will be made as part of the biennial process of local mission and ministry review.
- d) A local mission pledge might be stimulated by one or more of the Mission Statements and Indicators set out in the *vision2020* Framework but may be adapted to suit a local mission context.
- e) Together, local mission pledges represent a process of covenanting between churches in a synod.
- f) Synods may gather and use local mission pledges to guide and direct their own mission planning.

## 10 Synod Mission Strategies

10.1 *vision2020* seeks to support and build on synod mission strategies. Feedback from the consultation with synods suggests that there is great diversity not only in the stages of development of synod mission strategies, but also in the understanding of their nature and function.

10.2 Some synods feel that their mission strategy is to encourage, enable and support local churches in their own stated mission priorities. They therefore see no need for the synod to formulate synod mission priorities. These synods suggest that the *vision2020* document might be a point of reference or complementary tool for local churches in their reflection on mission in their own context. Though this approach offers limited scope for engagement with *vision2020*, one synod reported that it uses a particular process which encourages churches to make an action plan and this could form the basis for making *Local Mission Pledges*.

10.3 Other synods are at the beginning of formulating a synod mission strategy and are using *vision2020* to help shape this process. Feedback received suggests that the ten mission statements in particular are being used to help synods identify their own mission priorities. These synods are seeking to link their work on a synod strategy with *vision2020* from the beginning to ensure integration. They see the development of *Local Mission Pledges* as a positive tool in this process.

10.4 The majority of synods have done significant work on identifying mission priorities and in some cases this has resulted in fully formulated mission strategies. Where synods have identified their own mission priorities most indicate that there are clear links between those and the statements in *vision2020*. Some have actively incorporated *vision2020* in their strategies, while others see significant potential for the

two strategies supporting one another. They are intending to integrate the concept of *Local Mission Pledges* in their work on LMMR and the revision of pastorate profiles.

10.5 It is entirely appropriate for each synod to adopt its own approach to mission planning. However, the Mission Committee believes there are already clear benefits in those synods where there is a positive and proactive commitment to integrating their own plans with the *vision2020* process.

10.6 Without wanting to suggest any form of prescription, the following box is intended to indicate how a *Synod Mission Strategy* can become an effective, joined-up mission planning tool.

### Some elements of a *Synod Mission Strategy* might include:

- a) A series of clear mission priorities for the synod with explicit reference to their relationship with the wider *vision2020* framework.
- b) A series of synod-level indicators which can be used to celebrate and reflect on progress in relation to mission priorities and might act as a 'covenant' between synods and with the wider Assembly (these indicators could simply be a 'collation' of all the *Local Mission Pledges*).
- c) A clear relationship between synod mission priorities and the priorities of local churches – as expressed through their *Local Mission Pledges*.
- d) A clear relationship between synod mission priorities and deployment planning.
- e) A clear relationship between synod mission priorities and synod personnel, programmes, training and resources.
- f) A regularly updated synod mission action plan.

## 11 Assembly Framework

11.1 Clearly the *vision2020* framework also has significant implications for the URC as a whole. At the simplest level, *vision2020* provides a framework or context for the work of the Mission Committee. As we move away from the old committee structures the themes of the statements need to guide the work of the Mission Team at Church House. This will involve Mission Committee – informed by synods and local church experiences – reshaping the Mission Team work programme and introducing new programmes of work such as Fresh Expression and the *Marketing Campaign* to support the different statements of mission purpose. In 2010, for example, it will shape the Review of Ecumenical Relations and the new *vision2020* Mission Grants Programme. It will also shape any revision of staff secretary posts. A flavour of this is given in the Mission Committee report to General Assembly.

11.2 Whilst it has been driven by the Mission Committee and has specific relevance to Assembly's Mission Department, it has often been made clear that 'mission' is not the sole domain of the Mission Committee but underlies all other aspects of denominational life. Throughout this document, references have been made to *Challenge to the Church*, synod deployment planning and *Local Mission and Ministry Reviews*. These all lie within the scope of the Ministries Committee and Department and we are beginning to work through the implications of *vision2020* in that regard. Similarly, the Education and Learning Committee have initiated conversations about the impact of *vision2020* on their work: for the *Resource Centres for Learning*, the TLS programme, for EM1/2/3 and for elders. We hope to give more of a flavour of these plans through presentations at General Assembly.



11.3 Finally, for *vision2020* to offer any coherence or inspiration to the different levels of the denomination it needs to have a strong identity and relevant resource materials. It is proposed that we maintain the *vision2020* logo, supported by the successful ‘look and feel’ of the *Hearing Your Views* booklet which itself is based upon the communications approach developed by *Vision4Life*. The URC website will also be an important ‘repository’ for stories, discussions and web-based resources in the coming decade. However, whilst maintaining the unifying logo, statements and overall approach, it is hoped that synods and local churches will themselves adopt, develop and expand *vision2020* according to their own situations.

11.4 In summary:

### The *vision2020* Assembly Framework

- a) *vision2020* is not another resource-intensive programme of Assembly activity but rather a deliberate and systematic attempt to shape – and go on re-shaping – existing and developing programmes of activity in every council and committee of church life.
- b) The Assembly Framework is the combination of the statements of mission purpose, the guiding principles and the resources produced through the Mission department to guide and steer the *vision2020* decade.
- c) It will be supported by the annual Mission Committee Workplan and the activities of the Mission Team and its programmes but its real strength will lie in how far it nurtures and enables mission planning and action in local churches and synods.
- d) A series of Assembly-level indicators can be used to celebrate and reflect on progress and might act as a denominational ‘covenant’ (these indicators could simply be a ‘collation’ of all the synod indicators).

## 12 Implementation / resources / communications

12.1 The implementation of *vision2020* needs to follow the principles set out in the sections above, not least the challenge to every council and committee of the church to work out for itself the implications of the *vision2020* statements of mission purpose for its own context.

12.2 As stated above, all of the work of the Mission Department will be gradually re-orientated around the Assembly Framework and already, for example, the variety of grants under committee oversight has been restructured as a *vision2020* Mission Grants Programme.

12.3 To this end the first priority for *vision2020* implementation will be:

- a) To work with each synod and each Assembly Committee to help them devise their own response to *vision2020*.

Beyond this, key aspects of implementation are as follows:

- b) A simple ‘feedback’ leaflet will be produced thanking those that have participated in the *vision2020* consultation and informing them of the decision of General Assembly and the *vision2020* Assembly framework.
- c) Rather than producing a single communications resource about *vision2020* a series of web-based resources will be developed depending on the needs and demands

of synods and local churches. These might include:

- further reflections and resource materials in relation to each of the statements of mission purpose;
- resources to help churches think through their *Local Mission Pledges*;
- stories and case studies from local churches and synods about how they are engaging with *vision2020*.

- d) As well as these central web-based resources, the Mission department will allocate from within its existing budget a small communications budget to each synod for it to decide how best to communicate *vision2020* amongst its own churches. Mission Committee core members and Mission Team synod links will work closely with each synod to explore how best to do this.
- e) The Mission Committee and the Ministries Committee will work together on further 'guidance' and resources for synods and local churches relating to the Local Mission and Ministry Review process and the next steps for *Challenge to the Church*.

12.4 Finally, the development and implementation of *vision2020* will be subject to regular monitoring and review by the Mission Committee with opportunities for annual review by Mission Council and evaluation at each General Assembly in the coming decade.

## Mission Committee: *vision2020*

### Resolution 1

- a) General Assembly celebrates God's calling to each and every member, local church, synod, council and committee to join in God's transformational journey of good news for all creation.
- b) General Assembly gives thanks for the mission journey of the United Reformed Church in years gone by but recognises the significant challenges ahead in our denomination and in our world.
- c) General Assembly adopts the *vision2020* framework as the primary process of mission planning and church growth for the United Reformed Church in the coming decade.

# Annexe 1

## The Mission Creed

We believe in God's mission:

beginning at creation  
with a word of possibility,  
and a promise of abundance;

breathing us into existence  
to delight in creation,  
and to tread carefully;

we are creatures of the earth,  
reflecting God's diversity,  
interconnected and interdependent.

We believe in God's mission:

bringing good news in person,  
starting where others need to begin  
and finding holiness in every encounter;

bursting through the walls of our churches,  
to reach out to the marginalised  
with unconditional love;

we are called to be a people of resurrection,  
sojourners in this generation,  
dependent on the generosity of God.

We believe in God's mission:

challenging complacency,  
and calling for action,  
through contemplative love;

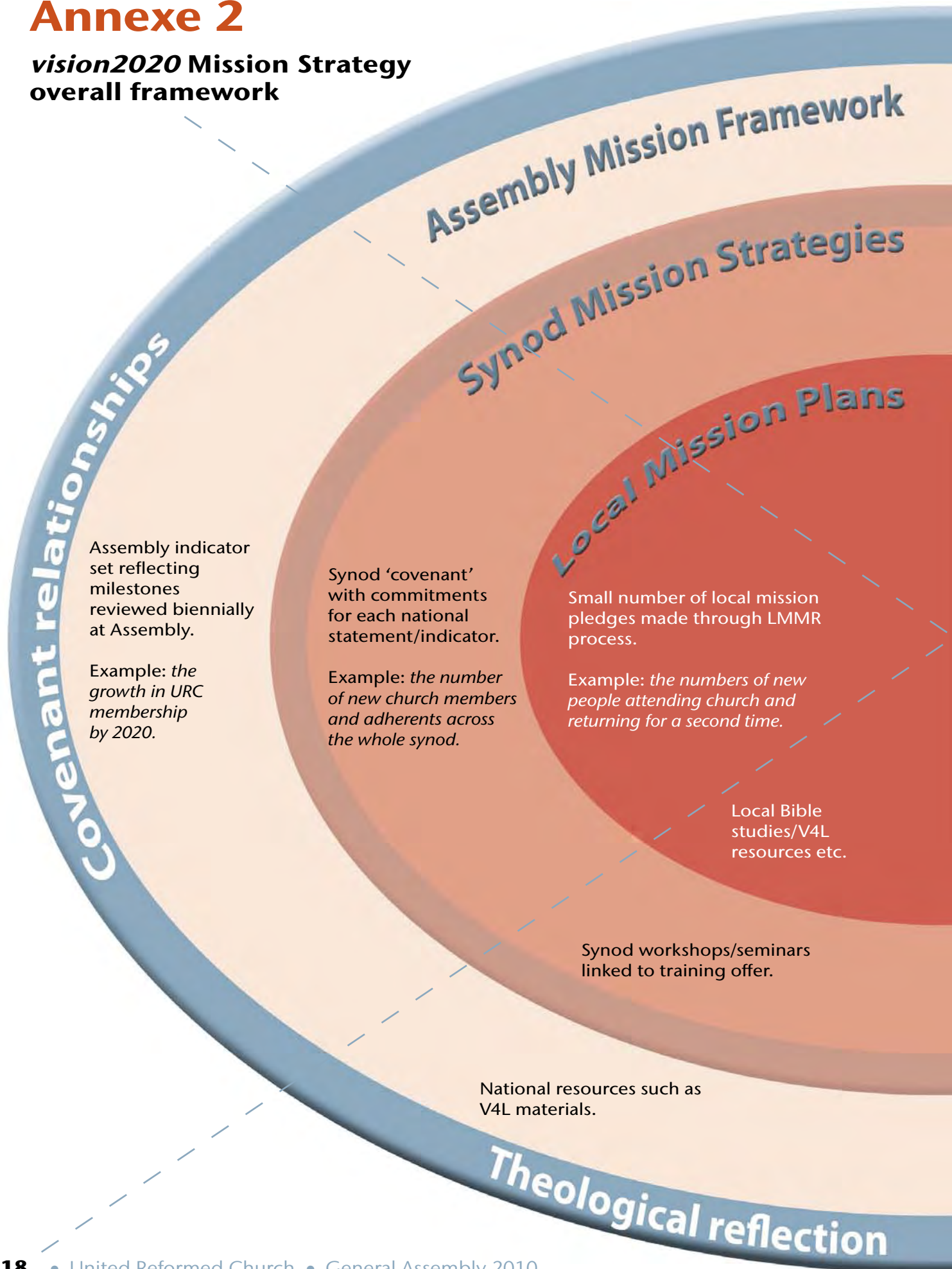
so that we might be at one  
with each other,  
and at peace with the world;

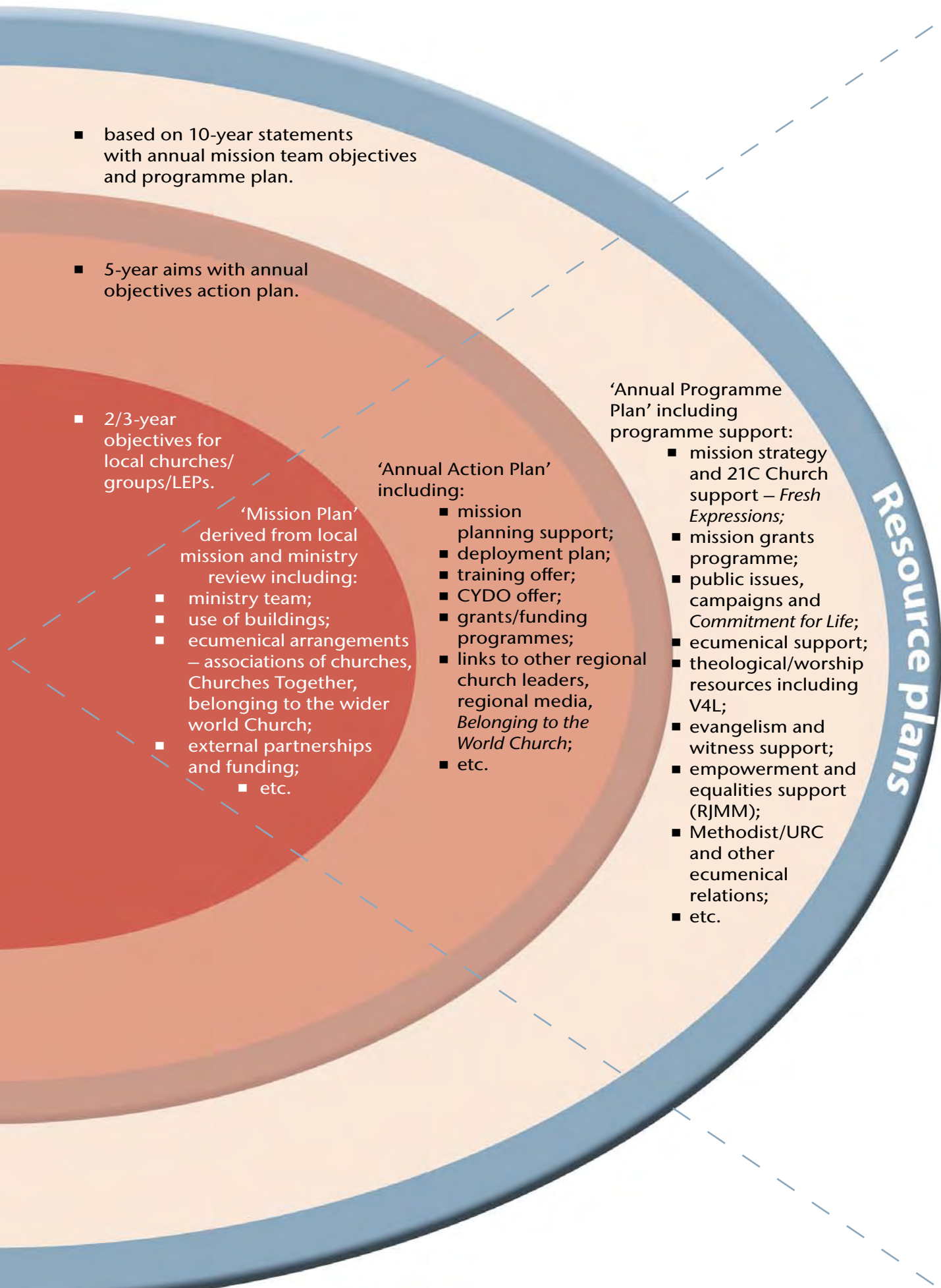
we are commissioned by God,  
Creator, Saviour, Holy Spirit,  
Source of the mission we seek to fulfil.



## Annexe 2

### vision2020 Mission Strategy overall framework





- based on 10-year statements with annual mission team objectives and programme plan.

- 5-year aims with annual objectives action plan.

- 2/3-year objectives for local churches/groups/LEPs.

‘Mission Plan’ derived from local mission and ministry review including:

- ministry team;
- use of buildings;
- ecumenical arrangements – associations of churches, Churches Together, belonging to the wider world Church;
- external partnerships and funding;
  - etc.

‘Annual Action Plan’ including:

- mission planning support;
- deployment plan;
- training offer;
- CYDO offer;
- grants/funding programmes;
- links to other regional church leaders, regional media, *Belonging to the World Church*;
- etc.

‘Annual Programme Plan’ including programme support:

- mission strategy and 21C Church support – *Fresh Expressions*;
- mission grants programme;
- public issues, campaigns and *Commitment for Life*;
- ecumenical support;
- theological/worship resources including V4L;
- evangelism and witness support;
- empowerment and equalities support (RJMM);
- Methodist/URC and other ecumenical relations;
- etc.

Resource plans



# Annexe 3

## vision2020 Statements of mission purpose and indicators

### Statement 1: Spirituality and prayer

**We will grow in our practice of prayer and spirituality, nurturing strength for our witness to Jesus Christ, and developing our discernment of where God is and what God is calling us to do by reading and studying the Bible and through the power of the Holy Spirit.**

Our faith must be at the heart of all we do. Faith is nurtured by worship and prayer, by reading and studying the Bible, by the life of our church community and by how we practice it from day to day. We must therefore seek to engage more deeply with Bible study and prayer, seek to develop worship that is engaging and joyful, seek to live faithfully and hopefully as a church community and as individuals, confident that God still talks to us and shows us how to live.

*Some suggested indicators:*

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Providing opportunities for prayer and Bible study in small groups and in a variety of styles.</li> <li>■ The number of people for whom prayer and Bible study is a natural habit – not just on Sunday.</li> <li>■ Directly involving children and young people in prayer, Bible study and leading worship.</li> <li>■ How far we see all we do as an ‘act of worship’.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How far worship, prayer and Bible study forms a part of all Synod meetings and committees.</li> <li>■ The number of churches supported and resourced to develop their spirituality and prayer.</li> <li>■ The number of churches taking part in specific initiatives to engage more deeply with spirituality and prayer e.g. <i>Vision4Life</i>.</li> <li>■ Demonstrating clear links between policies and plans and spirituality, Bible study and prayer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How far worship, prayer and Bible study forms a part of all Synod meetings and committees.</li> <li>■ The number of churches supported and resourced to develop their spirituality and prayer.</li> <li>■ The number of churches taking part in specific initiatives to engage more deeply with spirituality and prayer e.g. <i>Vision4Life</i>.</li> <li>■ Demonstrating clear links between policies and plans and spirituality, Bible study and prayer.</li> </ul>

## Statement 2: Identity

**The URC will be a Church where every local congregation will be able to say who they are, what they do and why they do it.**

One of our greatest strengths is our diversity and flexibility which allows our churches to serve so creatively and effectively across a wide variety of contexts. However, constant pragmatism can lead to a lack of identity, focus and purpose. Our identity in Jesus Christ is central to our mission. We want to encourage local churches to develop mission plans specific to their local contexts, which are owned by the membership of the church, allowing them to articulate clearly to friends, colleagues and neighbours ‘who they are, what they do, and why they do it.’

*Some suggested indicators:*

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Having a clear ‘mission plan’ understood and owned by all members.</li> <li>■ Having an up to date ‘Welcome Pack’, noticeboard and website – including resources for children.</li> <li>■ Offering a warm space, warm coffee and warm welcome to people from any background.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Number of churches with a clear mission plan – expressed through a Local Mission and Ministry Review.</li> <li>■ Provision of resources to support, enable and encourage local churches to develop their local mission plans.</li> <li>■ Demonstrating clear links between policies and plans and ‘who we are’ as a denomination.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Number of churches taking part in Vision4Life and the <i>Marketing Campaign</i> programmes exploring URC faith and mission.</li> <li>■ Demonstrable support to synods to nurture and develop their own regional and national identities.</li> <li>■ Demonstrating clear links between policies and plans and ‘who we are’ as a denomination.</li> </ul>

### Statement 3: Christian Ecumenical Partnerships

**We will be more confident in our identity, valuing the treasures of our tradition, discerning when to seek ecumenical partnerships, and when and how to seek the further unity of the Church.**

A lot has developed ecumenically since our unions in 1972, 1981 and 2000; the focus has changed from seeking further union, to forming a wide variety of partnerships – at local and national levels. Whilst our instincts remain deeply rooted in seeking further unity, we do not believe our dreams are served well by lacking in confidence, purpose and identity. Being confident in ourselves and working with others are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, empowered by the Holy Spirit, celebrating and offering our many gifts will make our partnerships stronger and may speed the way to further union.

*Some suggested indicators:*

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Sharing people, finances and buildings with other local churches, e.g. youth work.</li> <li>■ Regular opportunities for worship, prayer and reflection with other local churches for people of all ages.</li> <li>■ Hosting or supporting Christian activities and churches not part of mainstream denominations.</li> <li>■ Coming together with other churches to run local mission projects.</li> <li>■ Speaking with confidence about the gifts of our URC tradition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The number of ecumenical partnerships appropriate to the synod’s context.</li> <li>■ Opportunities provided to learn about our different traditions with Christian ecumenical partners.</li> <li>■ Activities for children and young people to meet with others from different Christian traditions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Opportunities provided to learn about our different traditions with Christian ecumenical partners.</li> <li>■ The amount of Assembly-level activity and resourcing carried out in partnership with ecumenical partners.</li> <li>■ Demonstrating clear links between our national, European and international ecumenical partnerships and the ministry and mission of our local churches.</li> </ul>

## Statement 4: Community partnerships

**We will be a Church that is more active in the life of local neighbourhoods.**

Many churches already have strong and long-standing links with their local communities – but others have become gathered congregations with little connection to the places where they meet to worship. An incarnational understanding of mission calls us to shape – and to be shaped – by the communities in which we worship and serve. We want to encourage local churches to get involved in their local neighbourhoods in new ways, being creative and taking risks in forming active partnerships with other local agencies, working with people of other faiths in the area to seek the benefit of those that live or work in the area.

*Some suggested indicators:*

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Playing an active role to run or support a local community project.</li> <li>■ The number of members actively involved in local civic and political life.</li> <li>■ Support given to members working or volunteering in local community-based organisations.</li> <li>■ Playing an active role in work with children and young people ‘outside’ the church.</li> <li>■ Having a ‘buildings’ policy’ that encourages local groups who share our values and concerns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The number of churches running some form of community project or working in partnership with other local agencies.</li> <li>■ Direct support through grants, training or other resources for community-based mission.</li> <li>■ Involvement with other regionally-based initiatives addressing wider social, economic and environmental issues, e.g. Regional Development Agencies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Direct support through grants, training or other resources for community-based mission.</li> <li>■ Involvement with other national initiatives addressing wider social, economic and environmental issues, e.g. community development networks.</li> </ul>

## Statement 5: Hospitality and diversity

**We will be a Church committed to becoming even more welcoming and hospitable, and embracing all people equally.**

Our story is one of a people from rich and diverse journeys. Differences, not similarities, are the source of our vitality and strength in our common faith in Jesus Christ. This includes our Church heritages, theologies, cultures, national heritages and life experiences. As a multicultural Church we are building on a biblical understanding of God’s mission to which the gospel calls us to living God’s Word, embodying God’s love and promoting God’s justice as we aim to include, affirm and welcome all. We will continue to live our calling of prophetic witness to holiness, hope and reconciliation, as we seek greater participation of all to reflect our rich and diverse journeys in all of our life together as a Church.

*Some suggested indicators:*

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The involvement of children and young people in all aspects of church life.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the congregation reflects the make-up of the local community.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the congregation recognises and affirms other aspects of diversity, including theological diversity.</li> <li>■ The number of members who have undertaken ‘training’ about diversity and inclusiveness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Provision of training and awareness activities about diversity and inclusiveness.</li> <li>■ The number of churches who regularly monitor their membership and eldership to ensure inclusiveness.</li> <li>■ Representation and participation of all minority and excluded groups (as spelt out by our Equal Opportunities policy and the recent Equalities Act 2010) on key councils, committees and task groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ An increase in the diversity of the denomination (measured through church annual returns).</li> <li>■ Appropriate numbers of black and minority ethnic ministers, church-related community workers, staff and candidates.</li> <li>■ Representation and participation of all minority and excluded groups (as spelt out by our Equal Opportunities policy and the recent Equalities Act 2010) on key councils, committees and task groups.</li> </ul>



## Statement 6: Evangelism

**We will be more confident to engage in evangelism, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God with friends, families and strangers, through story and action.**

We need to re-claim an understanding and practice of evangelism. Learning to tell the Christian story and our ever evolving stories of faith needs to be a regular part of church life so that disciples of all ages are equipped and encouraged to share the good news of Jesus Christ in their daily lives. Equipped with a robust and reflective knowledge of the Bible and a commitment to openness, our churches will be communities where faith is explored and the questions of the present day engaged with. The call to ‘go’ into the world and ‘make’ new disciples (Matthew 28:19) being heard and taken up with imagination and creativity inspired by the Holy Spirit.

*Some suggested indicators:*

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Planning and carrying out activities whose primary function is to share the gospel.</li> <li>■ Ensuring that worship regularly includes some form of call to faith.</li> <li>■ The number of local church activities which attract and involve children and young people from outside the church.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The number of churches drawing on synod resources for evangelism training and networking.</li> <li>■ The number of churches actively engaging with Vision4Life and the Marketing Campaign programmes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The number of churches drawing on Assembly resources for evangelism training and networking.</li> <li>■ The number of churches actively engaging with Vision4Life and the Marketing Campaign programmes.</li> </ul>

## Statement 7: Church growth

**We will be a growing Church with an increasing membership.**

The numerical decline of the United Reformed Church raises profound concerns for the denomination’s future sustainability. And yet a significant number of local congregations are growing in number – and other denominations are experiencing local growth points too. Whilst our growth must be qualitative in terms of our spirituality and fellowship (our faithfulness), we should be bold enough to seek quantitative growth too (our fruitfulness). With resources such as the *Vision4Life* evangelism year, the *Marketing Campaign* and *Fresh Expressions* at our disposal we have every reason to be hopeful that our denomination can grow again. We must also explore and embrace new forms of the emerging Church.

*Some suggested indicators:*

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The numbers of new people attending church and returning for a second time.</li> <li>■ The number of new church members.</li> <li>■ The number of children and young people who are actively involved in church life.</li> <li>■ Developing a ‘fresh expression’ or new way of doing church.</li> <li>■ An increased profile and awareness of the church in local media.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The number of new church members and adherents across the whole Synod.</li> <li>■ The number of churches supported to explore <i>Fresh Expressions</i> or new ways of doing church.</li> <li>■ The number of new ‘communities of faith’ within the synod.</li> <li>■ The number of people involved in TLS and similar programmes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The growth in URC membership by 2020.</li> <li>■ The number of people candidating to be ministers and church-related community workers.</li> <li>■ An increased profile and awareness of the URC in national media.</li> <li>■ The number of churches supported to explore <i>Fresh Expressions</i> or new ways of doing church.</li> </ul>

## Statement 8: Global partnerships

**We will be a Church that is an active partner in God’s global mission with other Churches around the world.**

We will continue our active participation in the world Church, knowing that together we will more faithfully discern God’s action and call, and that by sharing our resources we will be able to respond obediently and effectively in the costly struggle for peace with justice.

*Some suggested indicators:*

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ An active and regular link with a church overseas.</li> <li>■ Active participation in the <i>Commitment for Life</i> programme.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The number of churches involved with <i>Commitment for Life</i>.</li> <li>■ The reach and impact of the synod’s Global Partners programme.</li> <li>■ Development of a regular ‘youth exchange’ programme with a global partner.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The number of churches involved with <i>Commitment for Life</i>.</li> <li>■ The take-up of resources to enable children and young people to engage with the world church.</li> <li>■ The number of synods and churches supported to link up with global partners.</li> </ul>



## Statement 9: Justice and peace

**We will be a Church committed to peacemaking and reconciliation that keeps faith with the poor and challenges injustice.**

The kingdom of God is a realm in which compassion, justice and peace prevail. The gospel summons us as peacemakers and calls us to work against poverty and the structures that keep people oppressed. Together with our ecumenical partners we need to influence those in power and equip local congregations to take action against everything that undermines or destroys fullness of life. If the Church, local, across the UK, and international, is to be part of a movement for change in our world, it will need to discern and understand the contexts in which we live and the issues which affect us. Only by developing a sound reputation for intelligent critique and co-ordinated action will we be able to challenge unjust structures and seek economic justice from the local to the global marketplace.

*Some suggested indicators:*

<i>Local Indicators</i>	<i>Synod Indicators</i>	<i>Assembly Indicators</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Having a group which meets regularly to discuss and act on issues of justice and peace.</li> <li>■ Active participation in a particular activity or campaign addressing an issue of justice.</li> <li>■ Support to individuals – especially children and young people – who are involved in particular campaigns.</li> <li>■ Integrating justice issues within worship in a planned and regular way.</li> <li>■ Becoming a fair trade church.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The number of churches actively participating in a synod or Assembly-promoted activity or campaign addressing an issue of justice.</li> <li>■ Endorsement, implementation and monitoring of the revised ethical investment policy of the URC.</li> <li>■ The number of churches supported and equipped to address issues of justice and peace in the local community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The number of churches actively participating in a synod or Assembly-promoted activity or campaign addressing an issue of justice.</li> <li>■ The demonstrable impact of Mission Council or General Assembly resolutions on justice issues.</li> <li>■ Children and young people supported and equipped to address issues of justice and peace through involvement in Children’s Assembly, FURY etc.</li> </ul>

## Statement 10: The integrity of creation

**We will be a Church that has taken significant steps to safeguard the integrity of creation, to sustain and renew the life of the earth.**

The changing climate and its consequences for all life on planet earth cannot be over emphasised as the most significant underlying issue of our time. Being an intergenerational community of faith that trust in the God of creation past, present and to come, it is vital that the Church recognizes the reality and fear present in environmental debates and lives hopefully in the present climate. Too often the ‘prophets’ who see the truth and challenge for change are outside the Church. Our churches, reflecting faith in God the creator and sustainer of life in all its fullness, must discover the radical voice of care for the earth that is supported by the way we live.

*Some suggested indicators:*

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Carrying out an environmental audit and implementing the resulting action plan.</li> <li>■ Giving voice to the God whose life and love is expressed in all creation through worship, Bible study and prayer.</li> <li>■ Involving children and young people in activities focusing on care for the environment.</li> <li>■ Production of a piece of community artwork celebrating the Creator God.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The number of ‘eco-congregations’ or churches with clear environmental action plans.</li> <li>■ Developing and implementing plans to become an ‘eco-Synod’.</li> <li>■ The number of churches receiving training and support on issues of climate justice and environmental care.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Significant year-on-year cuts to the URC’s carbon footprint.</li> <li>■ The development of a FURY strategy responding to the challenge of climate change.</li> </ul>

