

The United Reformed Church Northern Synod  
REDUNDANT PROPERTY POLICY  
Adopted by Synod Meeting on 20 March 2010

Recently, and indeed for several years, difficulties have been found in identifying redundant property and dealing with it effectively and decisively. This paper makes suggestions on how redundant property should be identified and dealt with.

*Background to the Statutory Trusts*

Most church property is held on the statutory trusts set out in the second schedule to the United Reformed Church Act 1972 (as slightly amended by the 1981 and 2000). Part I relates to churches, halls, Sunday schools and other places of worship. Part II relates to manses and caretaker's houses.

Part I premises are to be used for *all or any of the following purposes and all proper ancillary purposes namely:-*

- (a) *The public worship of God according to the principles and usages for the time being of the United Reformed Church;*
- (b) *The instruction of children or adults; or*
- (c) *The promotion of other charitable purposes not inconsistent with the principles and usages aforesaid*

*such use to be primarily by the members of the local church or any other church which may supersede it as a result of amalgamation or regrouping.*

Part II premises are to be used for *such charitable purposes in connection with the United Reformed Church (including their use as a residence for the minister or any caretaker or other church worker or employee of the local church and also including their use for any religious or other charitable purposes not inconsistent with the principles and usages of that church).*

In each Part, paragraph 2 permits:

- (a) alteration, enlargement, improvement, rebuilding, supplementing or demolition;
- (b) mortgaging or charging;
- (c) sale and purchase and building of new property on the same trusts;
- (d) disposal under a development lease; or
- (e) letting for up to 28 years

with Synod and Church Meeting consent.

In each Part, paragraph 5 empowers the Synod to direct sale or lease, if they are resolved that *the use of the premises as aforesaid is or if continued would be no longer useful*, after recommendation by the North East District Council or a United Area following consultation with the Local Church.

### *Procedure*

The following procedure is suggested.

- 1 The question of possible redundancy is raised by the Local Church, Mission Partnership, trustees, or Pastoral Committee
- 2 Pastoral Committee (having been given blanket delegated authority to act by the North East District), or where appropriate the United Area, consults with the other parties
- 3 A provisional declaration of redundancy is made
- 4 District Council recommends disposal
- 5 Mission Executive Committee directs disposal by sale or letting as appropriate

Where the redundant property forms part of a larger set of properties, it may well be better to let, so as to retain control of the whole site. Lettings should be reviewed annually by the trustees.

### *Grounds for Finding of Redundancy*

In considering whether a property may be redundant, the following matters may be taken into account, any one of which may be sufficient basis for a finding of redundancy:

- 1 The premises are structurally unsound, unsafe, unusable, not fit for purpose, or (if a manse) do not meet the national manse standard, and it is not realistic to repair, improve, rebuild or replace them
- 2 The congregation is no longer realistically viable, in that its financial and human resources or mission potential are seriously diminished
- 3 The costs and effort of maintaining the property greatly outweigh the benefit obtained or significantly detract from the church's key mission, and this is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future
- 4 The property is surplus to requirements or not fully used or needed, and this is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future

In the case of the fourth ground, Pastoral Committee may need to consult with the Mission Partnership in terms of most effective strategic location of churches, halls, manses, etc. Clearly the question of redundancy will often go hand-in-hand with those of deployment and closure or union of churches, and will need sensitive handling.