**The Governing Document**

At General Assembly in July 2008 the position was explained and Assembly agreed resolution 55 as follows:

***Registration of Assets held for Charitable Purposes of Local Churches***

***General Assembly receives and approves the Documents entitled “The United Reformed Church Approved Document for Registration of Assets Held for Charitable Purposes of United Reformed Church Local Churches” and authorises them to be used by Local Churches when registering with the Charity Commission.***

The wording of this document has been agreed by the Charity Commissioners and

approved by General Assembly so, if it is used and the process set out in these guidance notes is followed, it is anticipated that the local churches concerned will be able to submit their applications for registration to the Charity Commission as described below and their registration will be “fast tracked”.

There are two versions of the governing document, the normal one, where the Elders are the Trustees and an alternative form for those few cases where in the past Church Meeting has set up a separate body to act as Charity Trustee. They read:

***Registration of Assets held for Charitable Purposes of Local Churches***

***Version for Local Churches where the Elders are the Trustees***

***1. Name and Assets***

*The Charity is called (“Anytown United Reformed Church Charity”) and comprises all assets*

*and funds held by and on behalf of the (“Anytown United Reformed Church”) other than*

*properties held under the trusts declared in Schedule 2 of the United Reformed Church Act*

*1972 (as amended by the United Reformed Church Acts 1981 and 2000) and those held on*

*other specifically declared trusts.*

***2. Objects***

*The object of the Charity is the advancement of the Christian faith for the benefit of the*

*public in accordance with the Scheme of Union of the United Reformed Church.*

***3. Trustees and their responsibilities***

*Those members of the Elders’ Meeting of (Anytown United Reformed Church) who are*

*qualified to serve as charity trustees are collectively the Charity Trustees of the Charity and are appointed and shall act in accordance with the procedures for the time being laid down by the Church Meeting of (Anytown United Reformed Church) which shall be in conformity with the Scheme of Union of the United Reformed Church.*

***Registration of Assets held for Charitable Purposes of Local Churches***

***Version for Local Churches where Church Meeting appoints the Trustees***

***1. Name and Assets***

*The Charity is called (“Anytown United Reformed Church Charity”) and comprises all assets*

*and funds held by and on behalf of the (“Anytown United Reformed Church”) other than*

*properties held under the trusts declared in Schedule 2 of the United Reformed Church Act*

*1972 (as amended by the United Reformed Church Acts 1981 and 2000) and those held on*

*other specifically declared trusts.*

***2. Objects***

*The object of the Charity is the advancement of the Christian faith for the benefit of the*

*public in accordance with the Scheme of Union of the United Reformed Church.*

***3. Trustees and their responsibilities***

*Those members of such body drawn from the membership as shall be appointed by the*

*Church Meeting of (Anytown United Reformed Church) who are qualified to serve as charity*

*trustees are collectively the Charity Trustees of the Charity and are appointed and shall act*

*in accordance with the procedures for the time being laid down by the Church Meeting of*

*(Anytown United Reformed Church) which shall be in conformity with the Scheme of Union*

*of the United Reformed Church.*

In the above governing documents reference is made to “the procedures for the time being laid down by the Church Meeting”. This assumes every church has a constitution or rules or standing orders by which it regulates its affairs under the broad guidelines in the Scheme of Union. The Charity Commission would not wish to see these unless a dispute were to arise at some point However, this process has brought to our attention the need for all local churches to review and update their constitutions or local rules in the light of the changes in the church in recent years. To this end a model constitution for a local church is being prepared and will

shortly be available from the General Secretary, the United Reformed Church, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT and will be placed on the URC website, for those churches which would like to make use of it.

A link will be established between the Charity Commission website and that of the URC, where it will be explained that by “Scheme of Union” we are referring to the Basis of Union and the Structure of the URC taken together.