

Church Related Community Work as Non-Stipendiary Ministry

1. Starting points

1.1

The URC Basis of Union says of NSMs :- "their service is given within the area of a District or area Council and in a context it has approved" (para.21 on page A7 of The Manual, July 2000)

1.2

Model I - service in a congregation as part of a team. The pattern is taken from the former eldership of the Churches of Christ and is limited in scope and local in nature.

Model II – pastoral charge of a small congregation, or service as part of a team of ministers caring for a group of churches

Model III – ministers in secular employment. Service set apart to be a focus for mission in the place of work or leisure. It is related to a local church or District Council.

1.3

"identification of key issues for the development of the programme such as the accreditation of workers from other denominations and the need for recognition of ‘non-stipendiary’ Church-Related Community Workers"

Whereas the accreditation of workers from other denominations was agreed by Mission Council, there was not the "time and person power" (para. 7.2 page 16) to consider the wider implications of Diaconal Ministry, ‘para-ministries’ or non-stipendiary Church-Related Community Work at that point.

This document attempts to address the latter issue and to promote the recognition and affirmation of NS CRCWs.

2. The case for Non-Stipendiary Church-Related Community Workers

2.1

2.2

2.3 Model I.

There is a specific case for 'locally called and locally appointed' CRCWs, as has already been recognised for some non-stipendiary ministers of Word & Sacraments within Model I.

This case is particularly strong in the field of community ministry where people may have lived, worked and developed relationships with local residents for the majority of their lifetime in their neighbourhood, and who subsequently demonstrate a calling to the ministry of Church Related Community Work, but as a particular service and calling back within their specific neighbourhood.

Whereas the vast majority of CRCWs see their lifelong calling as being to the whole church, there are nevertheless one or two CRCWs who have been commissioned in recent years who have demonstrated a strong calling back to their own neighbourhoods, plus a few others who have been unable to pursue a potential calling because of the present unavailability of a particular route to exercise community ministry in their own neighbourhood.

The difference between Model 1 Minister of Word and Sacraments and "model 1" CRCWs would be that the principal focus of the former is in liturgical roles while for the latter it would be in community roles. Looking at the three Models of non-stipendiary Ministers of Word and Sacraments illustrates how there would be both similarities and differences with non-stipendiary CRCWs.

2.4 Model II.

2.5 Model III.

"The Church exists for the sake of God's world, and its ministry is focussed in the world, for the world, for God's sake. Jesus called his disciples to be light – that is, to be distinctive signs of hope and truth. He also called them to be salt and yeast – that is, to be dissolved in the world as agents of God's transforming grace and love"

(Patterns of Ministry para.2.1 page 115, URC General Assembly 1995)

Recognising accredited CRCWs who work within secular agencies as "agents of God's transforming grace and love" and as exercising a Non-Stipendiary Ministry, would affirm the mission of the Church and of the individuals concerned.

3. Some examples of Non-Stipendiary CRCWs.

For all these examples, a prerequisite is that the person described is an accredited URC CRCW who has been called, prepared, trained and is qualified for this particular ministry and office.

4. Candidating and Assessment for Non-Stipendiary Church-Related Community Workers

4.1

(The Manual, K13, July 2000) Candidates have to have their potential calling tested by a formal Assessment process. This would be presumed to apply to Non-stipendiary Church Related Community Workers as it does for stipendiary CRCWs. (see K13 of The Manual)

4.2

- "Training for the stipendiary Ministry of Word & Sacraments may begin from the date of a candidate's 18th birthday, recognising that enquiries may be made several years earlier. The normal minimum age for the commencement of training for the non-stipendiary Ministry of Word and Sacraments shall be 25"

These regulations are proposed to also pertain to NS CRCWs except for the minimum age of commencement of training which, it is proposed, should be 21 years of age, as for stipendiary CRCW candidates.

5. Training & qualifications of Non-Stipendiary Church-Related Community Workers

The calling and Commissioning of Non-Stipendiary Church-Related Community Workers

This would follow the same process as for a stipendiary CRCW (see The CRCW Handbook Section 5) which in turn observes and is similar to the protocol for calling ministers of Word & Sacraments, including District / Area involvement and concurrence.

6.1

6.2

Movement between Stipendiary and Non-Stipendiary Church-Related Community Workers

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7.2

8. Terms of Settlement for Non-Stipendiary Church-Related Community Workers

8.1

9. Support for Non-Stipendiary Church-Related Community Workers

9.1

Paper considered by Mission Council October 2003

Amended by Ministries Committee February 2004

Recommended by Mission Council in their report to General Assembly July 2004

Non-stipendiary CRCWs would be fully recognised as part of the CRCW programme and therefore be included in all the support networks and events available to accredited CRCWs via the CRCW Office.

The agreements made by all parties in The CRCW Covenant would also be deemed to be applicable to NS CRCWs, apart from those referring to The Plan for Partnership (Section 11, i & ii.). The URC Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration does not apply to NS Ministers of Word & Sacraments and neither would it therefore relate to NS CRCWs: "Ministers NOT to be included: Non-stipendiary ministers" (para.5.4.3).

This would need to be amended to also exclude Non-stipendiary CRCWs. Interest free loans are available to former non-stipendiary ministers at the time they take up the stipendiary ministry (para. 9.2.1) and The Plan would need to be amended so as to apply to non-stipendiary CRCWs at the time that they take up stipendiary ministry. "Applications to transfer from non-stipendiary to stipendiary ministry must be received by the Synod before the date of the applicant's 53rd birthday." (See K4 of The Manual) This could now include CRCWs.

The General Assembly in 1990 recognised that there will be some movement either way between stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministers, and agreed procedures accordingly. It is envisaged that these procedures would also include CRCWs (See K6 of The Manual). "Further information on the transfer between stipendiary and non-stipendiary forms of service can be obtained from Synod Offices or the Ministries office." (The Manual, K7) NS CRCWs would need the appropriate letter code alongside their name in the URC Year Book.

The minimum level of qualifications and achievement of the stated core competencies to become qualified stipendiary CRCWs would also be applicable for qualified Non-stipendiary CRCWs. The cost of this training is estimated to be comparable with the cost of training stipendiary CRCWs and the URC Training Committee are aware of the budget implications of NS candidates training for CRCW ministry.

However, this is considered to be a reasonable investment in return for increasing the sustainability of CRCW training and to address the recruitment needs for CRCWs by vacant URC accredited Churches-in Community. Since NS Church Related Community Workers would

still need to be adequately trained and qualified, a widening of the scope of this ministry should increase the demand for CRCW training places at Northern College.

Additionally, Synods may indeed contribute towards training costs if NS candidates were to be 'returning' to their sending Synod, whereas, at present, stipendiary CRCWs may be called to a post anywhere in the URC. Non-stipendiary CRCW candidates would be expected to follow the same training path as for stipendiary CRCWs. (presently by training at Northern College on the 'Faith in Living' programme.)

- "Ordination to the non-stipendiary Ministry of Word and Sacraments should take place by the age of 60, and to this end, given the present Assessment and Training processes, formal application for training for the non-stipendiary Ministry of Word and Sacraments must be received by the Synod by the date of the applicant's 55th birthday."

Additionally, the following regulations apply to the age of entry to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments. (See K4 of The Manual) Candidates for Church Related Community Work must be members of the URC of two years' standing and need to satisfy pre-assessment criteria approved by the General Assembly."

Freda is working for a local Church of England parish church as a community worker on a Church Urban Funded neighbourhood project. Using a local house as a base and rooms at the church for events, she works with local residents and church members to set up a credit union, a residents association, a luncheon club and an after-school club.

Bevan is employed full-time by the Shaftesbury Society as a community worker working with a local Methodist church. He works with and on behalf of this local church on regeneration issues in the neighbourhood and also regularly reports to the URC District about his work and potential joint mission opportunities between the URC and the Methodist Connexion.

Chantelle is on the staff of her local URC as a salaried lay person. Her salary is paid from funds raised by the local church and Synod. Her job description is that of a CRCW. She is non-stipendiary in the sense of not being a charge on the URC Ministry and Mission Fund and of course the local church pays its full M&M assessment in addition to contributing to her salary. She is in many ways parallel to the youth workers employed by many local churches, but by being recognised as a CRCW she is brought into the support and accountability networks for all CRCWs.

Pete is employed full-time by the local authority as a community development work trainer. He is also a member of his local URC and commissioned by the District as a NS CRCW, bearing a Christian witness in his 'secular workplace' and using his experiences in facilitating worship around the local churches.

Shola is employed by the local authority as a part-time teacher for 2.5 days each week. Additionally, she spends approximately 20 hours each week working as a volunteer with her local URC church as a community development worker. She is presently training and working alongside some other church members who, following the church service for Homelessness

Sunday that she organised with a home group, have now linked up with the local YMCA to provide a 'soup kitchen' facility. She also represents the church on an inter-agency group working with the local authorities to provide emergency accommodation for local homeless people.

A slight variation in the present understanding of NSM could enable our wider ecumenical agenda for church related community work to be addressed and demonstrated, both providing for, and stimulating more church related community work in other denominations. Model III of NSMs 'working in secular employment' could be extended to embrace those URC-accredited CRCWs who may work for and receive remuneration from other denominations, Christian agencies or para-church organisations as church related community workers but still retain their URC local church and District / Area membership and relationships.

They could still be recognised as URC CRCWs but as employed and paid by these other organisations. Another benefit to the Church as a whole could be that more people would be encouraged to consider this particular ministry since it could be exercised on a part-time basis alongside earning their living from another occupation, or once someone has retired from paid employment.

However, community development work does require a substantial commitment of time, expertise and energy and we propose that a minimum commitment of 10 hours per week should be expected of a NS CRCW. Recognising Non-stipendiary Church Related Community Workers would enable an involvement in District / Area Councils and in Synods. On a pragmatic level, there would hopefully be less 'wastage' in terms of the training and support investment towards CRCWs.

Accredited NS Church-Related Community Workers might well return to stipendiary ministry with accredited Church-in-Communities at a later stage since work within a secular agency could be seen more as a training and development opportunity for a particular period. Since NSMs of Word & Sacraments under Model III can have their ministry within a secular agency recognised, CRCWs who have moved from an accredited Church-in-Community to a non-URC community work agency would be able to have this non-stipendiary ministry recognised and affirmed if it is still concerned with mission, social justice and Kingdom of God values and if there is a context for the 'church-relatedness' element of the ministry within the District or Area Council.

A number of CRCWs who are not presently at a URC accredited Church-in-Community still acknowledge and wish to develop their community development work ministry and vocation, and an accepted understanding of NS CRCW would create a recognised avenue for them to remain clearly within the URC ministry of CRCW. An important basis for mission is that: The pastoring of a congregation would not be a role for a non-stipendiary CRCW.

They would of course work collaboratively with other local church leadership as do stipendiary CRCWs. Following Mission Council's approval of the Recommendations in its 1998 Report, CRCWs have been progressively integrated into the systems which apply to all Stipendiary Ministers (see recommendation 4 page 2 of the 1998 Report). Ministers of Word and Sacraments and CRCWs are not identical or interchangeable but a closer alignment of the ways in which the

two ministries are viewed as desirable where this is possible and helpful. Mission Council believes that restricting the opportunity for non-stipendiary service to Ministers of Word and Sacraments is an anomaly that should now be removed. (p11 of 1998 MC report) The Report to Mission Council (MC) about Church-Related Community Work (Cook & Day, September 1998) was concerned about, amongst other matters, the: The 1995 General Assembly of the URC agreed three models of non-stipendiary ministry as given in K4 of The Manual: