K: Ministries

The Marks of Ministry  *MC May 2019*

Meeting in May 2019, the Mission Council of the United Reformed Church adopted the following concise and comprehensive description of what the Church can reasonably expect of people who are called to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments. It was acknowledged that what this will look like in each minister will vary depending on the context, the individual, and the specific ministry to which they are called. This description replaces the ‘Seven fundamental qualifications for ministry’ adopted by General Assembly in 1982.

A Minister of Word and Sacraments in the United Reformed Church (URC) should be:

- **A faithful disciple of Jesus Christ**: caught up in the joy and wonder of God’s will and work; seeking always to live a holy life in public and in private; sustained by their own rhythm of prayer, Bible reading and worship so that they might model and encourage such life-long patterns in others with integrity; open to learning discipleship from others.

- **A person of integrity and resilience**: self-aware and committed to their own lifelong learning (especially through the URC’s provision for ministers); aware of their own limitations and thus willing to seek support; ready to deal with situations of conflict; balancing ministry’s joys and pains with the fostering of right relationships with family and friends.

- **A contextual theologian**: delighting in Scripture, rooted in the Reformed tradition, able to communicate their own faith and its implications within and beyond congregations; encouraging others to discover how these rich resources inspire and sustain faithfulness.

- **A worship leader and preacher**: able to craft and lead worship that shows appreciation for the Sacraments and the resources of many traditions and styles yet unafraid to create and advocate new forms as appropriate; passionate and effective in breaking open God’s Word in preaching; ready and able to foster skills, techniques and experience in others so that they might lead worship and preach well.

- **A pastor**: sharing with others, especially elders, in sustaining care; making time to walk in love alongside people; rejoicing and grieving with others through listening deeply and offering prayerful support; wise in knowing their limits and boundaries when more specialised help is needed; reliably dealing with issues of safeguarding and confidentiality.

- **A leader and collaborator**: identifying, developing, and enabling leadership in others, particularly elders; capable of working in, and leading, teams through collaborative and shared leadership; aware of their own leadership style and open to learning with and from others, when necessary acknowledging their own mistakes and seeking restoration;
committed and equipped to building up others in faith and witness so that the gifts and callings of all might flourish; demonstrating love for God’s people.

- **A missionary and evangelist**: passionate about and active in sharing the love of God for the world; alive to the significance of contexts and cultures in shaping mission and creative in discovering missional opportunities; empowering and equipping God’s people in mission to share the Gospel and live God’s Kingdom of justice and peace to the full.

- **A public figure**: reliable and effective in representing the Church in ecumenical, community and wider settings; committed to and equipped in speaking truth to power and challenging injustice and marginalisation wherever they may be found.

- **A communicator**: who uses written, spoken and other modes with clarity and grace to share faith and build up relationships and communities; helping others to find their voice.

- **A committed participant in the councils of the Church**: responsive to God’s call as gift and blessing to be lived out within the discipline and accountability of the denomination which trains, ordains and inducts them and the pastorates and ministries within which they serve.

- **A reformer**: wise in the dynamics and challenges of change; bold yet humble in helping individuals and congregations to discern and respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit as new chapters open in the life of the Church and others close.

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**The Ministry of Word and Sacraments**

Ministers serve in a stipendiary or non-stipendiary capacity and may work as one Minister of Word and Sacraments alongside the elders or in a team with other stipendiary or non-stipendiary colleagues. Local church ministry is exercised in single church, joint or group pastorates which may be ecumenical and/or in a team with church related community workers or local church leaders.

Ministers may also serve in:

**Special Category Ministries**

There is a need for a number of specialised ministries as part of the overall strategy of the URC. These include chaplaincies in industry, hospitals, universities and colleges of further education, ecumenical and other special posts which are outside the normal role of Minister of Word and Sacraments.

**Ministry Overseas**

The work of the Church worldwide is one, and we share in it particularly through the Council for World Mission, a partnership of 31 national churches. Following specific training ministers serve abroad, generally on limited term appointments in theological education or pastoral work in six regions: Africa, Europe, Pacific, East Asia, S.E. Asia and the Caribbean.

Details of ministry overseas are obtainable from Global and Intercultural Ministries (Mission Committee) of the United Reformed Church.
Non-stipendiary service
There are four models of non-stipendiary service:
1. 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
2. Pastoral charge of a small congregation, or service as part of a team of ministers caring for a group of churches.
3. 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 synod. (General Assembly 1995)
4. Locally ordained ministry, based in a local church or mission project, whose training is locally focused, to meet the needs of the congregation and the community it serves. (Mission Council November 2018)

Candidating and Assessment for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments
Entry qualifications
Candidates for Ministry of Word and Sacraments must be members of the URC of two years standing and need to satisfy pre-assessment criteria approved by the General Assembly.
(Assessment Procedure: Preassessment Criteria General Assembly 2016)

The following regulations apply to the age of entry to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments:
1. Training for the stipendiary Ministry of Word and Sacraments may begin from the date of a candidates 18th birthday, recognising that enquiries may be made several years earlier.
2. Ordination to the stipendiary Ministry of Word and Sacraments should take place by the age of 58, and to this end, given the present assessment and training processes, resolves that formal application for training for the stipendiary Ministry of Word and Sacraments should be received by the Synod by the date of the applicant’s 53rd birthday.

Testing a call to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments
The candidating process requires:
The commendation of the local Church Meeting and Synod before they may attend an Assessment Conference.

The Conference makes the final decision as to whether to accept the candidate for training. If accepted the candidate then proceeds as an ordinand to an approved Resource Centre for Learning.

Ordinands preparing for ministry in the United Reformed Church undergo training on courses prescribed by the General Assembly which determines the 'standards and scope of an adequate ministerial training and education' (Basis of Union 9 (5) (vi)). Throughout the training process, Resource Centres for Learning keep closely in touch with the sending synods who are responsible for pastoral care and support, and with the Assessment Board who have, if necessary, the responsibility for the discontinuance of a candidacy.
Leaving certificates
On completion of the agreed course of study and bearing in mind the need to exercise a judgement on the overall fitness of the ordinand to exercise ministry in the URC, the RCLs grant candidates a Leaving Certificate. It is then the responsibility of the Assessment Board to declare that a candidate is eligible for ordination.

The leaving certificate remains valid for three years.

No ordination or appointment can take place until the appropriate certificate has been issued by the recognised RCL and the Assessment Board has declared that eligibility has been established. It is unwise for any local pastorate or Synod to enter unconditional commitments with a student until that stage has been reached properly: this does not preclude the issue of a call to a student in the final year of a course or its being concurred by a Synod if these actions are clearly indicated as being conditional upon the issue of the certificate and the Assessment Board’s declaration of eligibility. Such conditional actions are indeed pastorally necessary for those students who are under financial pressure to begin their work and ensure the receipt of a stipend in late June or early July. The appropriate certificate must have been produced by the time of ordination.

Further information on this procedure can be obtained from the Ministries Office, United Reformed Church House, 86 Tavistock Place London WC1H 9RT

After a call has been issued, in the case of stipendiary ministry, or an appointment has been made, in the case of non-stipendiary ministry, and Synod concurrence has been granted, ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacraments within the United Reformed Church and induction to the particular pastorate or post follows and the Minister’s name is added to the Roll of Ministers of the United Reformed Church.

For this and any subsequent call , it is recognised that, following appropriate consultation, an alteration to the scoping of the pastorate may be necessary during the course of the ministry. Any suggested changes from the pastorate or the minister will be subject to the agreement of the Synod through the local Synod Pastoral Committee.

The acceptance/transfer of ordinands from another church
An application to transfer to the URC and continue training for Ministry may be approved by the ministries committee, if:
1. The applicant is a ministerial student of good standing in their own denomination;
2. the applicant’s own denomination is a member of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, the Council for World Mission or the World Communion of Reformed Churches, Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council and;
3. if necessary, suitable arrangements can be made for a non-UK applicant to study in the UK.

The procedure for transfer can be obtained from the Ministries Office, United Reformed Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT.

Transfer between stipendiary and non-stipendiary service
The General Assembly in 1990 recognised that there will be some movement either way between stipendiary and non-stipendiary service and agreed procedures accordingly. It should be noted that in 1990 Assembly agreed that it is 'advisable for ministry according to the initial training to be exercised for a reasonable period first'.

With the adoption of a new assessment process in 2007 the final decision about a transfer shall now be taken by the Assessment Board at an Assessment Conference. Any changes to a candidate's training shall be determined by the Education and Learning panel at the Assessment Conference. Further information on the procedure for transfer between stipendiary and non-stipendiary forms of service can be obtained from the Ministries Office, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT

Ministerial accompanied self-appraisal
In 1997 the Assembly approved a scheme of ministerial accompanied self-appraisal. The aims of the scheme are:

(i) to affirm ministers in their work and encourage them to follow God's calling with a renewed sense of vision.
(ii) to aid the continuing personal and professional development of ministers in ways which are of benefit to them and to the church they serve as they take stock of their ministry thus far and identify areas on which to build and areas of need which should be addressed, become realistic about strengths and weaknesses, set goals for work and personal development, identify training and personal development needs and ways of addressing them and become aware of sources of support.

The style of appraisal
Everyone will be asked to embark on the exercise of accompanied self-appraisal in the light of the promises made upon ordination (Schedule C).

The exercise should be supportive and non-threatening, but for it to be effective it is important that it is objective and acknowledges both strengths and weaknesses. For this reason, the task of appraisal will be shared with a person, an appraisal companion, who has received appropriate training in attentive listening and questioning.

This scheme is not about checking one person’s performance against some measurement of ministerial tasks. This would need such a standard to exist and in any case responsibility for
carrying out the total ministry in any one situation does not lie with the minister alone but also with the elders and other members in a local church or colleagues in a team or chaplaincy. We encourage such appraisal but believe it lies within the context of a District Visit. (General Assembly 1997)

The scheme of ministerial accompanied self-appraisal will be monitored and reviewed under the auspices of the ministries committee together with administrators from each synod.

From General Assembly 2020 it is anticipated that Pastoral Supervision will replace the Ministerial Accompanied Self Appraisal Scheme.

**Regulations regarding the eligibility of ministers from other churches to enter the URC roll of ministers**

1. **Certificate of Eligibility**

Before a local church issues a call, the Synod, in consultation with the Synod Moderator, must satisfy itself that for one of the following reasons the minister concerned is eligible, that:

   (a) the minister is a minister in good standing of the URC,

   (b) the minister is on the roll of URC personnel serving overseas, or:

   (c) the minister holds a current Certificate of Eligibility issued by the Ministries Committee of the URC.

The Ministries Committee is empowered to issue a Certificate of Eligibility for a call, on behalf of the Assembly, in the case of ministers from member churches of the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, or ministers from member churches of the Council for World Mission or the World Communion of Reformed Churches and the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council if:

   (a) they will subscribe to the Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church;

   (b) they are in good standing with their own denomination;

   (c) their course of training for the ministry was at least equivalent to that required of students for the ministry of the URC and/or that they have special gifts or qualifications which would make them of service in the ministry of the URC, and they have understood and accepted the URC responsibility towards pension provision and retirement housing.

The Ministries Committee shall have the right to require further training for our ministry before issuing a Certificate of Eligibility. Where such training is required there may be a charge on the ministerial training fund.

In the cases of ministers from churches other than those covered in paragraph two, the Ministries Committee will present any proposal to issue a Certificate of Eligibility to the General Assembly for approval.

A Certificate of Eligibility shall remain valid for three years during which time the minister must seek a call (General Assembly 1991).
2. Certificate of Limited Service

The procedure for granting a Certificate of Eligibility can be obtained from the Ministries Office, United Reformed Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT.

General Assembly authorises the Ministries Committee, through the Accreditation sub-Committee, to grant Certificates of Limited Service to ministers of other churches in order that they might serve local pastorates and posts in the United Reformed Church and receive a stipend from the Maintenance of the Ministry fund.

Before granting a Certificate of Limited Service the Accreditation sub-Committee must be satisfied that the minister:

- is from a member Church of the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, or a church overseas which is a member church of the Council for World Mission, the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council or the World Alliance of Reformed Churches
- will subscribe to the Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church
- is in good standing with their own denomination.
- has the appropriate training and experience or gifts to enable them to serve the United Reformed Church.

Such Certificates shall relate to a particular appointment and normally be valid for a limited period not exceeding 3 years.

A Certificate of Limited Service will be endorsed with the name of the pastorate or post to which an appointment has been made as soon as it is known. It is valid for no other local church. It also bears the date when the Certificate ceases to be valid.

General Assembly 2002 Resolution 33

Ministers in retirement

A definition

General Assembly 1987 gave first approval to constitutional amendments which would replace the current minister emeritus with retired minister and asked for a definition of the latter phrase. The executive, on the advice of the Thames North Synod which initiated the proposal, offers the following definition:

For the purposes of associate membership in Synods, retired ministers are those who:

(a) at the date of retirement are in stipendiary ministerial service in the URC or are in ministerial service recognised as Category C in the Year Book. or

(b) at the date of retirement are in the service of the URC as non-stipendiary ministers and have been appointed by Synod to membership of a District Council (General Assembly 1988)
Age of Retirement
The General Assembly meeting of 2012 resolved that full-time stipendiary service for Ministers and Church Related Community Worker will cease at the end of the month in which a person reaches their 68th birthday unless
(a) a commitment to extend has been agreed through current procedures before 6 July 2012; or
(b) a case has been accepted by the Accreditation Sub-committee that there are exceptional reasons why the particular piece of stipendiary service should be extended for a limited time.

Paragraph 3.7. (Reports to Assembly 1997) which describes exceptional circumstances, states as follows:
(a) a minister might be drawing near to the end of a project or piece of work and need to spend a year or two to bring it to conclusion;
(b) or a Synod might be planning a new grouping of churches in a particular area and it might be felt desirable for a minister to remain for a short while to see plans through to fruition; or a minister, coming into ministry later in life, might have just a year to go to qualify for retired ministers' housing; or a minister's spouse might have a short period to go to retirement.

Further information and the procedure for granting an extension of service can be obtained from the Ministries Office, United Reformed Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT.

Pre-retirement courses for ministers and spouses
The Ministries Committee invites ministers and their spouses to attend a pre-retirement course normally two years before the year in which the minister is due to retire.

Retired ministers housing
At the 1979 General Assembly the United Reformed Church accepted a moral obligation to provide housing for retired ministers and ministers' widows who could not otherwise be adequately housed. The relevant clauses of the resolution read as follows:

'The United Reformed Church delegates to its finance and administration department the responsibility for providing housing for retired ministers and ministers' widows and this it exercises through the United Reformed Church Retired Ministers' Housing Society Limited, an independent company operating within the finance department. The Church regards it as a matter of integrity that retired ministers and ministers' widows should be adequately housed and supports the Housing Society in its appeal for funds and its objects. The Assembly approves the appointment of a 'Retired ministers housing committee' within the finance and administration department to have oversight of matters concerned with the provision of retirement housing for ministers and ministers' widows and to manage the properties held on behalf of the United Reformed Church.
'By this action, Assembly did not institute an entitlement to retirement housing as of right. A minister who has the finance necessary to provide for retirement housing may reasonably be expected to do so. The provision of housing by the Housing Society is for those who would not otherwise be adequately housed. It is provided nevertheless, not as an act of charity but, as the Assembly resolution suggests, in recognition of the Church's obligation to those who have spent many years in its service. Further information and copies of the guidelines on retired ministers housing may be obtained from the Secretary of the URC Retired Ministers Housing Society Ltd, United Reformed Church House, 86 Tavistock Place London WC1H 9RT

Church related community work
Definition: A Church Related Community Worker (CRCW), in the broadest sense, is a community development worker who enables the church to work with its local communities, rather than someone deployed by the church to act on its behalf. In the narrower URC sense, it is also a church member who has been called by God to this particular ministry, has gone through the assessment procedure and been accepted as a candidate, satisfactorily completed the prescribed training, and appointed to a post approved by the URC. A CRCW may be stipendiary or non-stipendiary.

Using Community Development principles, CRCW's enable churches to strategically engage with, to transform and to become more relevant to their local neighbourhoods. A CRCW acquires and develops skills and attitudes which enable people to grow. These skills include the capacity to listen, often to conflicting voices; to facilitate groups to run effectively; to understand the processes of change and to interpret them for those involved; to be an efficient and effective manager; to be a reflective practitioner; and to enable others to theologially reflect upon and sustain their community presence and engagement. She or he will be a faithful disciple, an educator, a contextual theologian, a collaborator and a community builder. These skills and attitudes are learnt through life experience, through involvement in community activity, and through Christian faith and spirituality. They are greatly enhanced by training which broadens the capacity of the worker to understand the working of society, and to apply an understanding of the processes of change in a variety of situations. For this reason, the URC is concerned that accredited CRCWs have a sound understanding of community development work practice through a professional qualification.

Community development work is a long-term value-based process which aims to address imbalances in power and bring about change founded on social justice, equality and inclusion.
- It brings groups of people together to identify and work on their own issues and opportunities.
- It's about helping people take control of their own lives, building positive local relationships, developing community resources, healing and transforming lives and working towards equal opportunities, justice and peace.
- It seeks to enable the transfer of power from the powerful to the powerless and aims to tackle the causes of poverty, prejudice, inequality and discrimination.
- Its context is normally with people within local neighbourhoods who are disadvantaged, disaffected or disappointed, whether within inner cities, urban estates,
seaside towns or rural areas – community development work can happen wherever is a desire for change.

Values of Community Development Work
The Community Development process is underpinned by a set of values on which all practice is based. There are five key values that underpin all Community Development practice:

- Equality and Anti-discrimination
- Social Justice
- Collective Action
- Community Empowerment
- Working and learning together

Church Related Community Work…
- Is recognised by the United Reformed Church as a distinctive, exciting and challenging ministry and vocation.
- Shares in God’s vision of the Church as an agent of social change.
- Recognises where the Gospel is being lived out by people and communities, even if they do not use the name of God. Is not intended as a means of increasing church membership or imposing values
- Involves commitment to justice and peace and is not afraid of costly involvement with people.
- Is a challenge to both an insular Church and an uncaring society – it is not for those who want an easy life!

Further information about Church Related Community Work can be obtained from the CRCW office, United Reformed Church House, 86 Tavistock Place London WC1H 9RT. Tel. 020 7916 2020.

Assessment and accreditation of Church Related Community Workers
Criteria for assessment
Candidates for church related community work must be members of the URC of two years standing and need to satisfy the pre-assessment criteria approved by the General Assembly. (See: Criteria for Assessment General Assembly 1996).

It is not essential that they are already professionally trained community workers, but it certainly is important that they have some significant insights into community issues and opportunities.

Testing a call to the ministry of church related community work
The candidating process requires:
- The commendation of the local Church Meeting and Synod before s/he may attend the URC Assessment Conference.
• At the conference the Assessment Board will make the final decision as to whether a candidate is suitable or not to train for CRCW ministry and this is conveyed to the Synod and to the candidate by the Assessment Board
• If accepted, the candidate then proceeds to an approved course of training
• After training, the candidate will be commissioned as a Church Related Community Worker when called to an accredited post.

**Accreditation**

The Roll of United Reformed Church accredited Church Related Community Workers shall contain the names of Church Related Community Workers who:

• have gone through the assessment procedure and been accepted as a candidate;
• have satisfactorily completed the prescribed training and;
• have been commissioned and inducted into an accredited Church-in-Community project.

The Accreditations sub-committee will keep the Roll under review, removing the names of those who have not served in post for more than five years, after due consultation with the individual concerned. A note to this effect will be placed in the Year Book. Names will be restored to the Roll at the commencement of being inducted into an URC approved post. A list will also be kept of those who have been on our accredited Roll, or who are eligible for accreditation, and are still available for a post in the future. (General Assembly 1990)

**Regulations regarding the eligibility of community workers from other churches to enter the United Reformed Church's roll of accredited church related community workers**

1. Before a Church Related Community Worker is appointed to a Church-in-Community project by the United Reformed Church, the Synod must satisfy itself that for one of the following reasons the CRCW concerned is eligible:
   • The CRCW is on the Roll of United Reformed Church accredited Church Related Community Workers or on the accredited list of CRCWs.
   or
   • the community worker has a Certificate of Eligibility issued by the ministries committee of the URC.

2. The ministries committee is empowered to issue a Certificate of Eligibility, on behalf of the General Assembly, in the case of community workers from member churches of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland or churches overseas which are members of the Council of World Mission or the World Communion of Reformed Churches if:
   • they will subscribe to the Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church;
   • they are in good standing with their own denomination;
   • their course of training was at least equivalent to that for Church Related Community Workers of the URC and/or they have special gifts or qualifications which would be of service in the URC;
   • they have understood the terms of settlement for CRCWs.
3. The ministries committee shall have the right to require further training for work with the URC before issuing a Certificate of Eligibility. Where such training is required there may be a charge on the URC education & learning committee.

4. In the case of community workers from churches other than those covered by paragraph two, the ministries committee will present any proposal to issue a Certificate of Eligibility to the Assembly or Mission Council for approval.

Active Ministers and Church Related Community Workers

General Assembly 2018 defined an active minister as:
A Minister of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Worker is considered Active if they are on the United Reformed Church roll of ministers and at least one of the following applies. They are:

1. in a pastorate or post for which they are receiving a stipend (either full or part) from the United Reformed Church (e.g. deployed post, SCM post, Assembly appointment)
2. in non-stipendiary service in a recognised ministry post (e.g. model 1, 2 or 3)
3. exercising a ministry with another organisation (e.g. chaplaincy, educational establishment, ecumenical body) for which they receive a stipend, salary or serve in a voluntary capacity
4. providing recognised voluntary service on behalf of the church (e.g. Interim Moderator, serving on a synod or area committee, representing the URC on an external body)
5. not in a formal position but whose expertise and experience means that, enjoying the confidence of synod officers, they are asked to undertake pieces of work from time to time
6. frequently leading worship in a church other than where they are a member (this criterion does not apply in the case of Church Related Community Workers)

Where there is uncertainty as to whether or not a Minister of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Worker falls within any of the 6 descriptions given above the judgment shall be made by the minister’s Synod, which may delegate the responsibility to one of its committees. Any appeal against the decision of a Synod in this respect should be directed the Secretary for Ministries.

General Assembly 2018 resolution 27

Lay preachers

Our church needs and values the work of its lay preachers. There are many more churches than ministers. Lay preachers are needed to lead about one third of the services held each Sunday. The minister and the lay preacher bring experience in different fields to their conduct of worship. Lay preaching is a way of demonstrating that ministry is the work of the whole People of God.

Assembly Accreditation of lay preachers

Assembly Accreditation, introduced in the URC by Assembly Resolution in 1979 (amended 1984, 2008?) provides recognition of an individual lay preacher’s calling and work. A list of Assembly accredited preachers is kept by the Accreditation sub-committee. A lay preacher seeking
Assembly accreditation should:
(a) be a member of a United Reformed Church
(b) have been commended as a lay preacher to Synod by their Church Meeting
(c) have been accredited as a lay preacher by their Synod
(d) have completed the course of studies leading to the award of the lay preacher’s certificate of the United Reformed Church to the satisfaction of the tutors/assessors appointed or possess other equivalent qualifications.

(General Assembly 1984)

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**Date of last revision:** February 2020