

# Book of Reports 2021



*The*  
United  
Reformed  
Church





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# Contents

Introduction .....	2
<b>Mission Council</b> .....	4
Report on the work of Mission Council 2020-2021.....	4
Appendix Two .....	9
Appendix Three .....	18
Church closures .....	22
Synod Moderators' report .....	24
<b>Committee papers index</b> .....	31
Business Committee .....	32
Children's and Youth Work .....	33
Future of Pilots.....	33
URC committees and online meeting.....	47
Communications .....	49
Better, kinder, safer: improving what we can do digitally.....	49
Digital charter.....	59
Education and Learning .....	62
The new URC learning hub .....	62
The way forward .....	64
Locally recognised worship leader .....	67
Equalities .....	71
Report of ongoing work.....	71
Action towards an anti-racist church .....	74
Finance .....	79
General Report 2020-2021 .....	79
URC Pension schemes.....	84
URC Future Pensions.....	90
Stipendiary Ministry target numbers.....	112
Ministries .....	116
General Report.....	116
URC Disciplinary Policy .....	125
House for Duty for ministers.....	133
Schedule E .....	137
Mission .....	140
Report to General Assembly .....	140
Israel Palestine Report.....	155
URC 50 <sup>th</sup> Jubilee .....	162
The future of Walking the Way.....	166
Nominations .....	171
Report to General Assembly 2021.....	171
Eastern Synod Moderator.....	191
Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee.....	192
MIND.....	194
Ministerial Disciplinary Process .....	194
Framework for Assembly .....	208
Procedure for dealing with cases of incapacity .....	220
Safeguarding Advisory Group (SAG).....	224
Annual safeguarding report 2020 .....	224
Additions to URC Structure .....	233
Safeguarding Advisory Group .....	237
Safeguarding Policy Statement .....	240
Safeguarding Training Framework.....	245
Criminal Record Check .....	254
West Midlands Synod resolution .....	257
<b>Information papers index</b> .....	262
URC History Society.....	263
Schools.....	266
<b>Resolutions index</b> .....	269
Resolutions.....	270
Standing Orders .....	283

**Online papers:** [bit.ly/GA-Papers](https://bit.ly/GA-Papers)

June 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

**General Assembly  
Friday 9 to Monday 12 July 2021**

It is three years since the General Assembly last met in a form in which it could discuss, debate and discern together. Last year, Assembly met virtually for worship, and to induct officers of the Assembly, but not to make decisions; a brief meeting of Mission Council acting in its stead.

Then, it seemed an impossibility that General Assembly might function in a digital conferencing format. How little did we realise that by the time this year came around we would still be facing decisions about how to meet, but also that handling a meeting the size of the Assembly in a digital format would begin to feel quite normal.

It has been a time of immense change in all our lives, and in the life of the church. It is not only a time of great change, but a liminal moment: a moment when different futures become possible. It is a moment of the now and the not yet, when as I write, I do not know the precise context the pandemic will shape for us by the time we meet. Our faith speaks powerfully into liminal moments and moments of change and transition. They are moments that the Holy Spirit can be experienced as at work in profound ways.

Scripture is full of liminal moments, from the call of Abraham and Sarah to set out to where they did not know on the back of a promise that sounded most unlikely, to the Israelites wandering in the desert for 40 years, to a manger bed in a politically unstable part of the world leading the Christ child to become a refugee, to the call of disciples to fish for people, to the transfiguration of Christ on a mountain top leaving those with him transformed, to the ultimate transformations of death and the new life, of cross and resurrection – our faith is full of God at work in the midst of liminal moments.

As we gather for the Assembly, peering into our cameras and waving at one another through the ether, we know in our bones that nothing will ever be quite the same again, just as we also know the power of the allure of the familiar. We cannot guess at the shape we will be as a Church in five years time, never mind ten, never mind the church we will hand to the care of the generations who come after us.

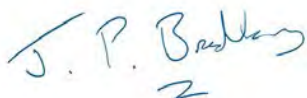
And yet, in the midst of that uncertainty, we know that Christ calls us to be his disciples, to follow the promptings of the Spirit, and to live and proclaim good news for the whole of creation. We know that God does not abandon God's people, but reshapes and restores them in ways the human mind can barely fathom.

This General Assembly is, in its way, a vital one in our life together. A moment in which we gather, in this liminal moment, and wait upon the movement of the Spirit. We have significant matters to discern. We will set off on a review of the life of the United Reformed Church, we will consider matters that might seem mundane, like pensions, but that will vitally shape the context for our work in the decades to come. We will have the opportunity to consider the initiating of new pieces of ministry for this digital age. In all this we will debate, discuss, discern and determine as we wait upon the movement of the Holy Spirit and as we are reshaped and restored to become a renewed church for a renewed moment in history.

My prayer is that, scattered in community, we will unite together the many and various gifts of the Spirit that we bring; we will be attentive to one another in love; that in one another's words we will discern the Word Christ is speaking to us. As you read this book of reports, I invite you to pray – that through the words on these pages, you will hear something of the call of God, that when we gather, our discernment may be rich and fertile.

The 'top table' of Assembly, along with the tech team will be gathered at Westminster College in Cambridge (where we hope the internet connection remains stable!) to enable us to better facilitate the smooth running of the Assembly. We will all be together, however, through the work of the Spirit. I pray that you will find in our scattered gathering, your faith nurtured, and your discipleship fed, as we are re-formed as the body of Christ, hearing and proclaiming good news for the world.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J. P. Bradbury" with a small flourish underneath.

John Bradbury  
General Secretary

# Mission Council Report

## Report on the work of Mission Council, 2020-21

### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	General Secretary: <a href="mailto:john.bradbury@urc.org.uk">john.bradbury@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Partly for information; partly for decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p><b>Resolution 01</b></p> <p>1. <b>General Assembly gives final approval to the proposal that: There shall be one Moderator of General Assembly, serving for one year. This Moderator may be a minister (of word and sacraments or CRCW) or an Elder. Each synod may nominate one minister and one Elder each year, but only one Moderator will be elected.</b></p> <p><b>Resolution 02</b></p> <p>2. <b>General Assembly gives final approval to the proposal that: The name of Mission Council shall be changed to Assembly Executive.</b></p> <p>Other resolutions come in the appendices and in the reports of MIND (Papers R) and the Safeguarding Advisory Group (Papers T) both of which are advisory groups of the Mission Council but are reporting separately.</p>

### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To report on the work of Mission Council in the last two years.
<b>Main points</b>	There are many. Most of those that require Assembly decision appear in the various appendices.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Mission Council papers from November 2018, May and November 2019 and March 2020, available on the URC website.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The committees and synods of the Church.



## Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	The first resolution above would involve a modest saving on the costs of Assembly and on Moderatorial expenses.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	The Methodist Church and Church of England are represented on Mission Council, and thus contribute helpfully to its work.

## Introduction

1. Mission Council oversees, prepares and sifts business between meetings of Assembly. It tries to keep a proper focus on the Church's main concerns, so that all our work will further the mission of the gospel. It also carries delegated power to deal on Assembly's behalf with matters that require prompt attention.
2. Mission Council must often deal with detail and practicalities, so that specific matters may progress without undue delay. It also attends to overview and vision, so that the presentation of business at Assembly may enable Assembly 'to take a more comprehensive view of the activity and policy of the Church'. In order for Mission Council to be alert to the needs, concerns, opportunities and hopes of the whole body of the URC, people from the synods of the Church make up most of its membership.
3. Mission Council has met twice since it met in place of the meeting of the General Assembly in July 2020. Its meetings in March and November were both conducted virtually, under the standing orders for virtual meetings adopted by the Mission Council in July 2020. It has been possible to inhabit much of the ethos of consensus decision making but impossible to adopt it fully because of the difficulty of 'reading the room' in a Zoom meeting which extends over a number of different screens. All business has therefore required a two-thirds majority to ensure that the settled mind of the meeting has been determined.
4. Preparatory papers for these meetings of Mission Council are available on the URC website. There are confirmed minutes of the November meeting, and unconfirmed minutes of the March meeting.

## General Assembly and Mission Council

5. Mission Council addressed several matters that were either considered at a previous Assembly or that relate directly to the business of this 2021 Assembly, as follows:
6. The 2018 Assembly received a lengthy commissioned report from its Task Group on General Assembly, and took various decisions about arrangements for Assembly in the period 2020 to 2030. Some of these decisions required changes to the Structure of the URC and they were therefore referred to synods, none of which objected. Mission Council then confirmed these changes in May 2019 as decisions of the Church.
7. Mission Council in May 2019 also agreed two further changes that would affect the Structure of the URC. These have since been referred to synods, none of which objected. They will require final approval at General Assembly if they are to

become decisions of the Church and this is the first meeting of the General Assembly since then. The following resolutions are therefore brought:

**8.1 General Assembly gives final approval to the proposal that:**

**There shall be one Moderator of General Assembly, serving for one year. This Moderator may be a minister (of word and sacraments or CRCW) or an Elder. Each synod may nominate one minister and one Elder each year, but only one Moderator will be elected.**

**8.2 General Assembly gives final approval to the proposal that:**

**The name of Mission Council shall be changed to Assembly Executive.**

The main reasons for these two proposals are listed in the May 2019 Mission Council reports, Paper N1, sections 1.5 and 2.12-13 respectively, on pp72-76.

## **Projects and tasks**

9. A number of major projects and tasks have been considered at Mission Council, often more than once, as work evolved from one stage to another. Several of these pieces of work are included elsewhere in the Assembly reports, so they need just a mention here rather than lengthy exposition. They all, however, claimed time and care in Mission Council, which was concerned to develop them as wisely and effectively as possible.
10. Mission Council received regular reports on Walking the Way, with its focus on missional discipleship. The Walking the Way steering group offer to this Assembly proposals on the future of its work.
11. Mission Council committed the United Reformed Church to a journey towards being an anti-racist Church and invited the Mission Committee to explore initiatives to address barriers within our structures, theology and relationships to this end. A significant resolution comes from the Equalities Committee to this General Assembly in the light of that commitment.
12. Mission Council has received regular updates on the question of the pension fund deficit and future pension arrangements. It considered this at length during group work. Significant resolutions come to this General Assembly as a result of a large amount of work and wide consultation.
13. The work of the Risk Process Review Panel was presented, and a new and comprehensive risk matrix for the life of the church was examined. Key risks included the potential for us to be unable to people our extensive structures at General Assembly level.
14. Mission Council initiated a process of review of the life of the United Reformed Church, its structures, resources and work to fit us to respond to the call of God in the generations to come.
15. Mission Council invited proposal to be brought to make the Daily Devotions, and the Daily Devotions Sunday service a permanent feature of the life of the United Reformed Church. This is subject to resolution the detail of which can be found in an appendix to this report.



## Arrangements in Church life

16. Mission Council made a number of changes to arrangements that shape the life of the Church in one way or another. Some key changes were:
- a) Adopting a Breast-Feeding Policy for local churches to adopt.
  - b) Adopting a 'Green Charter' for the Education and Learning work of the Church (which included a 'carbon calculator' available on the web with the November Mission Council papers).
  - c) Adopting updated guidelines on conduct and behaviour of Minister of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Workers and Elders.
  - d) Updated the terms of reference of the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee
  - e) Determined the make-up of review panels when reappointment processes for the Principal of Westminster College arise.
  - f) Initiated a consultation on achieving 'integration' within our Education and Learning work.
  - g) Adopted a revised Ministerial Capability Process.
  - h) Determined that the training for non-stipendiary CRCW's would be individually determined by the Education and Learning Committee working with the relevant RCL.
  - i) Adopted processes for becoming a Worship Leader or a Lay Preacher.
  - j) Revised the Discipleship Development strategy and the development fund policy.

## People and posts

17. Mission Council heard that it had not been possible, after two recruitment rounds, to appoint to the role of Deputy General Secretary for Discipleship. It was reported to the March Mission Council that particular issues around safeguarding were taking up large amounts of the time of the General Secretary, and that the officers of the General Assembly had therefore arranged to second the Revd Adrian Bulley, Synod Clerk for the national Synod of Wales, to act as assistant General Secretary for 50% of his time, with particular responsibility for safeguarding, from January to July 2021. We are very grateful to Adrian and the Synod of Wales for making this possible.
18. We are pleased to report that an appointment group, following a further recruitment round and interviewing, has appointed the Revd Adrian Bulley, who will begin in September 2021.
19. The Revd Dr David Pickering was called to local ministry from the Synod of Scotland, creating a vacancy for the Moderator role in that synod at short notice. It had been a challenging time for the synod for several reasons. The Officers of the Assembly determined, in consultation with the Synod Executive, that it would be helpful and appropriate to appoint someone for a shorter period of time than usual, to exercise what might be described as some 'interim ministry'. Following an abbreviated appointment process, where a group consisting of representatives of the synod and the Assembly Officers met with the Revd Paul Whittle, Mission Council appointed Paul to serve as Moderator of the National Synod of Scotland from January 2021.
20. The Revd George Watt has been appointed to succeed the Revd Andrew Prasad following his retirement in June 2021 as Moderator of the Thames North Synod.

We are grateful that Andrew was willing to extend his period of service by a few months to help see the synod through the worst of the pandemic.

21. Following a call to return to local pastorate ministry for the Revd Jacky Embrey, there was a vacancy for the role of Moderator of Mersey Synod. Mission Council was pleased to appoint the Revd Geoff Felton, whose name was brought following the normal recruitment process.
22. Following Paul Whittle's move to become Synod Moderator for the National Synod of Scotland, the Revd Lythan Nevard has been nominated, following the normal recruitment process, as Moderator of the Eastern Synod. General Assembly will be asked to make this appointment.
23. Various nominations to committee and representative roles were agreed by Mission Council on behalf of Assembly and are reported by the Nominations Committee in this Book of Reports.

### **Public issues**

24. In March, Mission Council adopted a statement calling on all councils, committees, local churches and individuals within the URC to work towards the elimination of single-use plastics and calling for their use to be kept to an absolute minimum during the pandemic.

### **Leadership, worship and admin**

25. Throughout the last year Mission Council has been wisely and carefully led by the Moderators of General Assembly, the Revd Clare Downing and Mr Peter Pay, supported in pastorally and in worship by their chaplain, the Revd Helen Everard.
26. Administration for our meetings has been handled by Sam Bircham, who serves as PA to the General Secretary. Her care and concern with the effective running of Mission Council has been much appreciated.

# Mission Council –

## Appendix Two

### A Minister for Digital Worship post

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The General Secretary: <a href="mailto:john.bradbury@urc.org.uk">john.bradbury@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p><b>Resolution 03</b></p> <p>1. <b>General Assembly resolves to create a General Assembly ‘Minister for Digital Worship’ post, full-time, for an ordained minister of Word and Sacraments under the terms of the Plan for Partnership and to fund appropriate administrative and digital editing support. As General Assembly post it will be for an initial term of seven years, with the possibility of renewal.</b></p> <p><b>Resolution 04</b></p> <p>2. <b>General Assembly instructs the General Secretariat, through consultation with the Human Resource Advisory Group, to finalise a Job Description and Person Specification for the role.</b></p>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To create a ministerial post for someone to specialise in ‘Digital Ministry’, with the express aim of making the ‘Daily Devotions’ and the ‘Daily Devotions Sunday Service’ a permanent feature of the life of the United Reformed Church and to explore ways of extending worship and discipleship development digitally.
<b>Main points</b>	To create a General Assembly Digital Ministries post, funded according to the Plan for Partnership, for an initial seven-year term with associated administrative and digital editing support.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Mission Council Paper M1.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The Ministries Department, the Walking the Way Project Manager, the General Secretariat, the Finance Committee, Mission Council.

### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	A stipend would come from the M&M fund as per the Plan for Partnership, and it is estimated that the total on-costs for expenses and administrative support would be £30,000pa. A manse may need to be provided, or a housing allowance, depending on the circumstances of a post-holder.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	

The Daily Devotions have become a treasured part of the life of the United Reformed Church.

It emerged as a personal initiative of the Revd Andy Braunston, and the United Reformed Church owes Andy a debt of thanks for his vision and commitment to this piece of work. Around 4,000 people receive the Daily Devotions every day, and about 1,500 people are accessing the Daily Devotions Sunday Service. The Sunday service began at the start of lockdown in 2020, and has become a key means by which many members of the United Reformed Church have been able to continue worshipping whilst in-person worship is suspended.

As lockdown extended, the pressure of time became such that it was increasingly difficult for Andy to maintain the level of output. While a wide range of people from the diversity of the life of the United Reformed Church write devotions and lead worship, the editing is time-consuming. The General Secretariat has made available some resources to allow for some of the editing work to be contracted out.

We propose that it is time to consider making the Daily Devotions and Daily Devotions Sunday Service an integral part of the life of the United Reformed Church in an on-going fashion, and to make a full-time appointment of a minister to serve in a post to explore how these exciting initiatives can be extended to serve the development of worship, discipleship and mission for individuals and congregations of the United Reformed Church.

There are a variety of ways in which the Daily Devotions and the Sunday service might be extended. For example, the Daily Devotions could become Bible study material for local use in small groups. A Zoom Bible study group based on the material might also be possible - creating a sense of community in a disconnected world. Through digital means, pastoral support might be possible for those for whom the Daily Devotions have become their primary experience of church. The recordings of each Daily Devotion have recently been added to a range of podcast providers, making it easier for people to access them. These podcasts could be promoted and developed further allowing people within and without the URC to make use of them.

The Daily Devotions Sunday Worship could serve the wider life of the United Reformed Church in a future where we anticipate the closure of many congregations following the pandemic. There are a variety of ways in which it could be developed and used, including:

- for the housebound

- for those who wish to supplement, for whatever reason, local church worship
- for those who have moved away from a URC and wish to continue in some sort of fellowship with us (maybe as a supplement to their local non-URC or maybe instead of a local expression of church)
- where a church finds it hard to get pulpit supply but can operate either a DVD player / memory stick / CD player into the church's sound / AV system
- those whose church has closed but wish to form a fellowship group
- those in the 'Wider Fold'.

The emphasis has deliberately been on the low-tech end of the possibilities that technology offers us, particularly with the thought to support those who find engaging with complex new technology challenging, but who can click a link, play a podcast, or listen to a CD that someone has burnt for them. The services could, however, be offered in a video format making them a more attractive pulpit supply resource for some more technically enabled churches who struggle to find worship leaders.

As a ministry engaged with worship and preaching, and with a sacramental aspect through digital celebrations of Holy Communion, along with a discipleship development and potential pastoral aspect, it is appropriate that this role be for an ordained minister. For some, it is possible that the minister appointed may come to feel like 'their minister', and it may be that forms of pastoral support and experiencing fellowship become possible in digital form.

This is a piece of ministry that would have something of a feel of emerging feel to it – it will need to develop according to the possibilities inherent within the wider context and that present themselves. As such, it will be important for the role-holder to take time to explore the context of the work – in this case, a wide digital community – to explore the possible ways in which the ministry may develop and Christian community be fostered. There is an expectation that the role-holder would need to be alert to the diversity of the United Reformed Church culturally and theologically, and ensure that diversity is represented in the worship and discipleship development offered. This is not, at the moment, a proposal to form a new 'digital congregation' rooted around the Daily Devotions Sunday Service, but it is possible the work could lead in this direction (which would require further resolutions of the General Assembly). It is likely, however, that for some, this form of digital ministry would be their primary connection with the United Reformed Church.

It would be possible to view this role as only about maintaining the daily devotions and the Sunday Service as they have been. In that case, it could probably be a part-time role. But there are exciting possibilities to explore a far wider and deeper range of digital resources for the life of the United Reformed Church if the post is full-time. A full-time post would also give us the opportunity to support the work of the Worship Resources Advisory Group more deeply, who currently are served by the Revd Elizabeth Gray-King, who will retire later this year (and whose roll will not be replaced). The post-holder would be able to act as staff-secretary to this group, which will assist in keeping strong relationships between worship resources for physical congregations alongside resources appropriate within the digital context.

To ensure the best use of a minister's time, the role would need supporting in terms of administration and digital editing. We estimate that this might be a 30% role for someone, and that this may be able to be lodged within the Communications Team at Church House (and thus potentially extend the support the communications team can

offer in terms of digital editing more generally). On top of the stipend, national insurance and pension contributions (which would be as for any minister) we estimate the local expenses of a minister to be around £10,000 (council tax, water rates, mileage, IT costs etc – this is the recommended figure that Ministries use for SCM applications). The costs of administrative and digital editing support for a 30% post would be £14,200 (including on-costs). If a housing allowance were offered instead of a manse, this would reduce the local expenses, but give an added expense in terms of the housing allowance itself. The Finance Committee are satisfied that we can realistically fund this piece of work in this way.

We are aware that there is currently no established protocol for the establishment of pieces of ministry which serve the wider United Reformed Church, lodged at the level of the General Assembly. The Special Category Ministry programme is designed to supplement the ministry of synods and requires the ministry to be located in a specific synod. Individual committees have long established staff secretary posts at Church House which may be filled by ministers. Mission Council and General Assembly have previously adopted recommendations of the Human Resources Advisory Group about the staffing structure at Church House and which posts are for ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament, which are lay posts (though we have some ministers serving in 'lay' posts) and which are open to minister or lay people. The Ministries Committee takes an overall strategic view of the ministries of the church and how they best serve the church. There is a clear determination by the General Assembly that only it may create posts for ministers working within the General Assembly level of church life. There are clearly some discrepancies and ambiguities in the current situation, but it is felt inappropriate to delay the progress of a flourishing piece of work whilst those procedural ambiguities are resolved. The General Secretariat, however, commits to reviewing these ambiguities and bringing potential ways to clarify the situation to a future Mission Council or General Assembly.

A draft Job Description and Person Specification is attached. We are inviting Assembly to empower the General Secretariat to finalise these, in consultation with the Human Resources Advisory Group, before the post would be advertised. The post-holder would be accountable to the Deputy General Secretary for Discipleship, and whilst it is envisaged it would be based remotely from Church House, the minister would be a part of the Discipleship staff team and where appropriate, be able to relate to and serve the committees of the General Assembly when their specialism was helpful. The role would also relate into the Mission Department, particularly relating to wider ongoing reflection on digital ministries being enabled by the Walking the Way Project Manager. We would expect, following good practice, that there would be a small management group for the role, chaired by the line manager. Frequent evaluation and appraisal of the ministry would be integral to the management of the role. A small support group would be formed to support the minister and the development of the ministry.





## Job Description

<b>Job Title</b>	Minister for Digital Worship
<b>Area / Department</b>	Discipleship Department
<b>Reporting to</b>	The Deputy General Secretary Discipleship
<b>Direct Reports</b>	None – administrative support will be provided
<b>Location</b>	This role could be fulfilled from anywhere within the UK. Occasional travel to Church House, London, will be necessary.
<b>Travel</b>	Occasional travel in UK
<b>Working Hours</b>	As per the Plan for Partnership
<b>Salary Band</b>	Stipend as per the Plan for Partnership

**Job Summary:** To develop a range of digital worship and ministry for the United Reformed Church, continuing and extending the Daily Devotions and Daily Devotions Sunday Service format. To explore how new forms of Discipleship Development for individuals and congregations might be fostered to supplement the Daily Devotions initiative. To support the work of the Worship Resource Reference Group in ensuring that the United Reformed Church makes easily available a wide range of quality worship resources for the work of the whole church.

**Background:** This ministry is being created to continue and extend the Daily Devotions and Daily Devotions Sunday Service initiative. These have been hugely popular and successful, and daily over 4,000 people receive the daily devotion. The Sunday Service is engaged with around 1,500 times at the moment, and it is expected that this resource could be developed for the housebound, those unable to connect directly with a local congregation, or for congregations who are lacking adequate leadership in worship. It is hoped that this piece of ministry will explore new ways in which individuals and congregations may deepen their experience of worship and discipleship through the use of digital media. The expectation is that this is making use of the low-tech end of digital media, to enable as wide an appropriation of the ministry as possible including amongst demographics who are hesitant about technology.

## Principal responsibilities and duties

### Daily Devotions

1. To source a wide range of authors for daily devotions that reflect the diversity of the United Reformed Church.
2. To ensure appropriate editing and dissemination of the Daily Devotions.
3. To publicise the daily devotions widely.
4. To explore the means by which material from the daily devotions can be utilised to form the basis of wider discipleship development materials.
5. To keep up to date appropriate databases for the dissemination of material that is GDPR compliant.

### Daily Devotions Sunday Service

6. To source a wide range of worship leaders to prepare and deliver acts of worship, reflecting the full diversity of the United Reformed Church.
7. To ensure that worship is reflective of the URC's commitment to being a multicultural church with an intercultural habit, and to being an intergenerational church.
8. To regularly lead worship for the Daily Devotions Sunday Service.
9. To develop the possibility of filmed versions of Sunday worship with a view to this being appropriate for congregations to use within the context of local fellowship.
10. To promote and appropriately disseminate the Daily Devotions Sunday Service.

### Developing Digital Ministries

11. To keep abreast of developments within digital ministry, and to network appropriate for the exchange of best practice.
12. To explore ways in which digital ministry might extend to discipleship development experiences and resources for individuals and congregations.
13. To explore and develop appropriate means of using digital means to offer fellowship and pastoral support with those for whom the Daily Devotions Sunday service is their primary experience of the church.

### Supporting appropriate worship and liturgical materials for the United Reformed Church

14. To act as Secretary of the Worship Resources Reference Group.
15. To be aware of developments in worship and liturgy and enable the dissemination of appropriate material to the wider United Reformed Church.
16. To assist in the development of new worship and liturgical resources for the United Reformed Church where appropriate.

### Working with Committees [and volunteers]

*This section lists the type and level of interaction that this role has with committees and other groups. It will vary from time to time and as directed by the [insert role].*

1. The Worship Resources Advisory Group.
  2. Any relevant General Assembly Committees as and when necessary.
  3. With a wide variety of volunteer writers and supporters of the Daily Devotions.
  4. With a wide variety of worship leaders for the Daily Devotions Sunday Service.
- 

### **Expected Standards**

*This section refers to the way in which the job is done rather than the duties / responsibilities.*

1. Communicate effectively with colleagues and internal and external contacts.
2. Actively foster an environment which nurtures equality and cherishes diversity.
3. Act in ways that protect own and others' health, safety and security.
4. Work collaboratively to develop a customer service culture which fosters continuous improvement.
5. Take responsibility for own personal development and support the development of others to enhance their skills and knowledge.
6. Promote, monitor and maintain best practice in data protection principles and practice.
7. Actively promote, manage and maintain best practice in Safeguarding.

*This job description reflects the overall scope and responsibilities of the role. However, it is not an exhaustive list, and the job holder is expected to undertake any other reasonable duties that might be requested. All jobs change or evolve over time in order to meet organizational or departmental needs, and this job description will therefore be subject to periodic review and change if required.*

## Person specification

**Job Title: Minister for Digital Ministries**

Requirements	Essential	Desirable	Measurement
Education and qualifications	1. A degree in theology or equivalent.		Application Form
Experience and Knowledge	2. Experience of local pastorate ministry. 3. Experience of digital ministries. 4. Excellent working knowledge of worship and liturgy in the Reformed Tradition. 5. Excellent working knowledge of the diversity of the United Reformed Church. 6. An understanding of the principles of safeguarding in a digital context. 7. An understanding of faith within society and the public square.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience of digital ministries beyond the local.</li> <li>• Experience of assisting new forms of ministry and Christian communities to emerge.</li> </ul>	Application Form, presentation and Interview
Skills and Abilities	8. Excellence in worship leading and preaching. 9. Effective use of digital technologies. 10. A working knowledge and understanding of digital editing. 11. Effective pastoral skills. 12. Proven abilities in enabling discipleship development. 13. Excellence in crafting resources for worship and liturgy. 14. The ability to manage work to tight deadlines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellence in audio-visual digital formats.</li> <li>• Experience in managing volunteers.</li> </ul>	Application Form, presentation and Interview.

	15. An ability to minister contextually and be a reflective practitioner.		
Other	16. DBS enhanced disclosure.		

# Mission Council report:

## Appendix Three

### Assembly 2018 Resolution 5: report on responses

#### Responses to General Assembly 2018 Resolution 5 – New Ordination Promises for Elders

##### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Dr John Bradbury <a href="mailto:john.bradbury@urc.org.uk">john.bradbury@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p><b>Resolution 05</b>  <b>General Assembly gives final approval to its resolution to add a further question to Schedule B [of the Basis of Union] for elders as follows:</b>  <b>Q: Do you promise as an elder of the United Reformed Church to seek its well-being, unity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always so far as you are able to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church?</b>  <b>A: By the grace of God I do, and all these things I profess and promise in the power of the Holy Spirit.</b></p>

##### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To inform Assembly of the responses from synods and Local Church Meetings to the consultation on the proposed new ordination promise for Elders, in order that Assembly may consider giving final approval to this addition.
<b>Main points</b>	The response was overwhelmingly positive.
<b>Previous documents</b>	General Assembly 2018 Resolution 5.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Local Churches and synods.

##### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	None.
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<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	The proposed changes will raise the profile of our commitment to the unity of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church through making this integral to the ministry of Elders.
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1. From the approximately 1,350 local congregations of the United Reformed Church, 187 churches responded to the consultation on the proposed change to the ordination promises for Elders accepted by the General Assembly in 2018. Many more congregations may well have considered this, but as not responding to the consultation is in effect to agree with the proposed change, many may not have felt the need to write formally to the General Secretary to express this.
2. Of the 187 Church Meetings to respond formally, only 32 opposed the change or expressed reservations. Of these, about three-quarters of the reservations expressed were about the promise to 'cherish love towards all other churches'. This promise mirrors one that Ministers make at ordination. The concern is whether 'all other churches' is too ill defined, and might include groups who call themselves churches which we might not consider such.
3. The General Secretary and the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations have prepared a paper which sets out the position of the United Reformed Church regarding how we understand the statement and our relationships with other churches. This is appended to this report, and we believe allays the fears expressed by the few churches expressing reservations.
4. A tiny number of churches objected on what might be termed 'congregationalist' grounds, that Elders only serve the local church. But from the inception of the URC, it has been the constitutional practice that Elders serve the wider councils of the Church, and through the synod all congregations are represented in the wider councils of the Church. Whilst not every Elder will personally serve in this way, this is nonetheless an expression of how the URC lives together, and the way we form the family of the Church. We would invite congregations who responded in that way to understand the promise in the light of these foundational commitments we made to one another at the formation of the denomination.
5. The proposed changes have been viewed positively by the overwhelming majority of churches who responded. None of the synods, and only a tiny number of Church Meetings, objected, and we hope their objection is met in the statement below. A constitutional change only falls if more than one third of synods or Local Churches object. This piece of business is therefore returned to the Assembly, where its final approval and adoption may be considered.

## Appendix: Response from the (former) General Secretary and Secretary for Ecumenical Relations to questions raised in the consultation:

### A response to concerns about the new form of elders' promises

1. This response specifically considers the proposal that the commitment made by elders should include 'love towards all other churches'.
2. A first point to note is that the words have been in the ordination and induction promises for URC ministers for several decades, and therefore are not new. Elders already commit to share with the minister in the oversight and leadership of the local church. Part of that oversight and leadership is the way we relate to other churches.
3. What do we mean by 'all other churches'? The simple answer is 'all those groups that we would recognise as churches'. If we recognise another group as really being a church, then part of our commitment and witness as URC is that we do all we can to love them and build bridges with them. If we don't recognise another group as really being a church, we wouldn't have the same commitment to them.
4. So, the churches with which we are linked in national and international fellowships of churches, such as Churches Together in England, are our main partners. We ought to cherish love towards them, even though not all of them are from our tradition and would not do everything in a way we would ourselves.
5. There are some groups which do not belong to Churches Together or anything like that, but we would still recognise as genuine churches – churches who understand God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who expect to discover and discern God's word in the Bible, who love Jesus and seek to live by his commands. It would be hoped that URC ministers and elders could cherish love towards these fellowships too.
6. Then there are other groups that would not fit well into a fellowship like Churches Together in England, and probably would not want to belong, like Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons. These groups surely have some good people among them, but they would answer some big questions, like, 'Who is Jesus?' or 'How do we know God?' in ways that don't really reflect the faith that has carried the Church through 2,000 years. In general, we would not expect to find ways of working with them, and they probably would not want to work with us anyway.
7. As we think about this broader view of church, and think about groups that might not fall under that category, it is also helpful to look at the full wording of the promise. In particular, notice how the promise refers to *the one holy, catholic and apostolic church*.

*Q: Do you promise as an elder of the United Reformed Church to seek its wellbeing, unity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always so far as you are able to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church?*

8. Those groups which would profess a very different faith to our own may not see themselves as being part of a larger Christian family – *the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church* – and so would not for us fall under what we would define as church. The promise is specifically referring to churches which could feel part of *the one holy, catholic and apostolic Church*.
9. Finally, when we respond to the question, we do so *by the grace of God and in the power of the Holy Spirit*. We are therefore not relying on our own discernment, gifts and strength but on those of the trinitarian God.

John Proctor and Philip Brooks – November 2018

# Church closures

## **Synod 1 – Northern Synod**

Berwick-upon-Tweed United Reformed Church, 1 December 2020

Crookham United Reformed Church, Cornhill-on-Tweed, 29 November 2020

## **Synod 3 – Mersey Synod**

St. Andrew's United Reformed Church, Handbridge, Chester, 31 August 2020

St. George's United Reformed Church, Little Sutton, Ellesmere Port, 31 August 2020

Stoneycroft United Reformed Church, Stoneycroft, Liverpool, 19 July 2020

## **Synod 4 – Yorkshire Synod**

East Hull United Reformed Church, Hull, 20 September 2020

Greasbrough United Church, Rotherham, 4 February 2021

## **Synod 5 – East Midlands Synod**

Lutterworth United Reformed Church, Lutterworth, Leics., 31 March 2021

## **Synod 6 – West Midlands Synod**

Church of St Nicholas, Warndon, Worcester, 30 September 2020

Dudley United Reformed Church, 31 December 2020

St. Columba's United Reformed Church, Coventry, 31 December 2020

## **Synod 7 – Eastern Synod**

David Livingstone United Reformed Church, Harlow, 10 May 2020

Great Baddow United Reformed Church, Chelmsford, 31 July 2020

Long Melford United Reformed Church, Suffolk, 20 March 2021

Princes Street United Reformed Church, Norwich, 25 October 2020

Wickhambrook United Reformed Church, Suffolk, 1 February 2021

## **Synod 8 – South Western Synod**

Christchurch, Estover, 31 March 2021

Kingskerswell United Reformed Church, Kingskerswell, 14 November 2020

Lakeway United Church, North Tawton, 31 March 2021

## **Synod 9 – Wessex Synod**

Worplesdon United Reformed Church, Rickford, Worplesdon, 14 November 2020

## **Synod 10 – Thames North Synod**

Christchurch at Whetstone United Reformed Church, Whetstone, 31 July 2020

Regent Square at Lumen United Reformed Church, London, 10 July 2020

St Anne's and St Andrew's, West Kilburn, London, 19 July 2020

Colnbrook and Poyle United Church, Colnbrook, 30 March 2021

**Synod 11 – Southern Synod**

Gomshall United Reformed Church, Dorking, Surrey, 27 September 2020  
St Mark's United Reformed Church, Hastings, 26 July 2020

**Synod 12 – Synod of Wales**

The Church in the Park, Old Colwyn, 12 April 2020  
Cefn-y-bedd United Reformed Church, Cilmery, Builth Wells, 28 July 2020

**Synod 13 – Synod of Scotland**

Avonbridge United Reformed Church, Wallacestone, Falkirk, 1 October 2020

# Synod Moderators' report

## Wisdom in liminal times

### Synod Moderators

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Ruth Whitehead <a href="mailto:moderator@urcsouthwest.org.uk">moderator@urcsouthwest.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Discussion. Discussion questions for the whole denomination, especially in local pastorates.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	In these very difficult times, the report is offered to the General Assembly and to local churches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to explore the idea of liminal (between) times</li> <li>• to help to navigate a way forward for the church</li> <li>• to give local churches courage and hope for the future</li> <li>• to find renewed trust in God's future.</li> </ul>
<b>Main points</b>	In liminal times we need to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be prepared to wait</li> <li>• Deepen our communal discernment</li> <li>• Shape our institutional memory</li> <li>• Clarify our purpose</li> <li>• See the way forward emerge.</li> </ul>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Previous Synod Moderators' reports to General Assembly.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Synod Moderators and some ministers in local churches.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	No direct impact from this report.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	The thinking of this report could be explored in local pastorates with ecumenical partners.



When the Synod Moderators' report for General Assembly 2020 was being finalised, we were just beginning to hear of Covid-19 cases spreading in the UK. There was a discussion about whether we should mention this in the report or not, as we wondered whether it would still seem relevant by then. With hindsight, the pandemic was the defining event of 2020. It has seemed to many of us to be like a lens, magnifying and highlighting the faults and fissures that already existed in the URC, and also showing up with clarity the strength of faith which still exists.

There can be little doubt that the virus has meant that we cannot carry on doing the same things in the same way. For some churches this has accelerated a move towards closure. For others, new technology has been embraced at a speed we could not have anticipated. For all churches there has been plenty of time to reflect on how we are meant to exist and serve and glorify God in 2021 and beyond. The decay of the old order and the emergence of the new is happening at dizzying speed. These are what are sometimes called 'liminal times' – when old securities are ebbing away and new structures have not yet emerged. Liminal times are disorientating, difficult and downright scary.

Richard Rohr, a Franciscan spiritual writer, describes liminal space in this way. ...a unique position where human beings hate to be but where the biblical God is always leading them. It is when you have left the tried and true, but have not yet been able to replace it with anything else. It is when you are finally out of the way. It is when you are between your old comfort zone and any possible new answer. If you are not trained in how to entrust and wait, you will run...anything to flee this terrible cloud of unknowing.

The Bible is full of stories of liminal times – of people who wander in the desert to find the presence of God and the place where they must settle – Abraham and Sarah, Moses and Miriam, God's people returning from Babylon ... all waited and wandered and wondered, until God's way into the future was clear to them. We cannot hear the story of the life of Jesus without recognising, as the second order of communion in 'Worship from the URC' states, that God gave us Jesus 'To be born and to grow up in difficult times when there was little peace'.

Our celebrations of Easter would not be complete without Holy Saturday – when the world holds its breath between death on Good Friday and resurrection on Easter Sunday.

A liminal time is not a time for problem-solving or frantic activity. But that doesn't mean there is nothing for us to do.

Susan Beaumont, a Baptist minister in the US and consultant in religious organisational life, states that:

During liminal seasons it is important to revisit and shape the important vocational questions of the congregation: Who are we? Who are we here to serve? What is God calling us to do or become? What are our most important priorities and how might our priorities be shifting in this season?

As we recognise and live through liminal times we can return to the question of who we are in many ways, and perhaps as we prepare for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the URC in 2022 it is a particularly good time to remind ourselves who we were then,

what our lasting principles of faith are, and what those principles teach us about the church we need to be in 2022 and beyond.

If we are to navigate these liminal times, Susan Beaumont points out that we will need to:

1. Hold steady and be **prepared to wait** for the way forward to emerge. This is not a time for problem-solving. But this doesn't mean we do nothing – in the meantime we can.
2. **Deepen our communal discernment** about what God would have us do.
3. Shape our institutional memory, telling our story.
4. **Clarify our purpose**, asking who we are, who we serve, and what God is calling us to be next.
5. Be ready to **see the way forward emerge** out of the chaos of the passing of the old ways.

The following stories are anonymised because in a sense they could be many people's stories, many churches will 'see' themselves in these stories of churches and ministers in our synods making 'sense' of who, where and what they are.

### Lived examples

Being prepared to wait

1. During the days of the first lockdown, one minister seized the opportunity to work alongside a village support group to deliver food and prescriptions for the most vulnerable residents. From this grew a five-minute doorstep Bible study, the three-minute prayer, as well as regular telephone conversations on the doorstep with those who struggle with mobility issues.

There has been a broader recognition of God being present within the community and indeed in the world around us. Lives have changed as people have reconnected and strengthened their faith in God and recognised God walking beside them.

2. Another church has struggled during this time. Lack of technological capacity or up-to-date devices / software among older members meant online worship wouldn't work or would be exclusive. They have managed only two services in church since last March. Some have been very appreciative of receiving worship material by email / post, and the Secretary has mentioned that it has been good to have more space to reflect at home, rather than attend services in church where she has various responsibilities to think about. The Elders lacked technological capacity to hold virtual Elders' Meetings earlier on but the last three Elders' Meetings have been held virtually.

Church is about the people rather than the buildings, and buildings can become a burden. However, not only older church members have missed meeting together for public worship; the twice weekly coffee mornings have been much missed by customers who don't attend church and have been struggling with loneliness.

More positively, the number of people requesting the fortnightly Prayer Chain has increased significantly. Elders have grown in the ministry of pastoral care, keeping in contact regularly by phone. This has been particularly appreciated by those living alone.

### **Deepening our communal discernment**

1. For one minister, a 'mixed economy' approach makes most sense in future, where physical presence and buildings are required in some instances. Buildings are less important to those who have digital capacity, and some could be let go to release space and finance for more pioneer ministries engaging with the unchurched, and reaching out to communities through projects including food banks, debt advice etc (ideally carried out ecumenically).

The balance between the pastoral and the missional is difficult to strike. In the past, the church has almost definitely focused too much on the pastoral and been more inward-looking. However, there remains a place for the more traditional pastoral model of church, typically associated with a building, alongside a pioneering missional approach. If this could be linked with release of funds for new pioneer ministries / CRCW work in the area, that might be an encouragement.

2. The churches who have faced their own liminal times were prepared to struggle, embrace change and flourish. They have been the ones who have set time aside to pray, to tell the story of the church and the community in which they are set. Context has always been paramount. It has been important and necessary for the local church to identify and root itself in scripture. Are we like any of the 'early' churches? Are we rural, suburban or urban? Who is our community and mission field? How do we relate to them? Do we need a building of our own to be a Christian presence here? Can we share a base – the local pub, the library, the health centre, online church?

### **Shaping our institutional memory**

1. There has been lots of talking, sharing, story-telling and honesty, acknowledging pain, fear and vulnerability. Praying that God will hold us through the change, and the Holy Spirit will guide us. Having the courage and willingness to hear how others see us and being willing to connect in new ways.

Relationships and trust matter and must form the bedrock of how we approach others. Our language needs to be understood and not jargon-filled, and we have to honour the stories of others and be willing to journey alongside them. How do we see ourselves, how do others see us - particularly the local community? Use biblical stories to root us in exploring this – Jesus crossing the sea of Galilee. The challenge of crossing that sea, storms, being blown off course. What was the land of the Gerasenes like, what was their culture? How do we feel that moving to something and somewhere that feels challenging and uncomfortable teaches us connection with life on the margins and shows us Jesus' scandalous table fellowship?

### **Clarifying our purpose**

1. For one church, the whole experience of the last year has brought to a head the need to look carefully at the leadership team and the need for new blood and to look very carefully about what they do in the future. The leadership team is,

therefore, inviting new people to the next meeting to talk about the future way forward for the church.

2. The café which is our main form of community outreach has been closed for most of the year, and its future is a little bit in doubt. Worship has been on podcasts and they will need to continue; meetings have been on Zoom and Teams including Boys Brigade, and that needs to be looked at going forward. We continue to seek what God is calling us to do in the 'new normal'.
3. One online synod meeting grew into a two week 'Festival of Tents', a virtual fortnight-long Greenbelt-style Festival with music, talks, prayers, discussion, interviews with open Q&A sessions afterwards. A lasting legacy of that has been 9am prayers via Zoom every weekday, using a variety of liturgies – building a community of prayer online in a daily rhythm which has come to mean so much to us during the varying degrees of pandemic restrictions.

### Seeing the way forward emerge

1. A united Church had been warned by their circuit that they were reducing the number of stipendiary ministers, and that when their minister retired in 2021 he would not be replaced – there was simply not enough money in the circuit funds to pay a Methodist minister or to afford the M&M payments expected if a URC minister was in post. The church was facing the prospect of receiving very part-time cover from a minister who would not live in the village.

At the same time, a Baptist regional minister was in touch with a couple who were feeling called by God to missional listening in the town – but property is much more expensive than they had hoped. The church and circuit are now exploring whether the couple can live in the manse in the town, engage in missional listening, and help the church to move from a model of the faithful few looked after by the minister to become a church reaching out to their town with love and hope. Some of the church members have warmed to this immediately, but others are struggling to see what they will 'receive' from having the couple living in the manse who won't even lead worship for them every week.

2. One minister observes: in the pain of it all, that time between Good Friday and Easter Day – that liminal time – was an uncomfortable and challenging place, but a legitimate place to be. In all the situations we faced together, our Good Friday lasted some considerable time and the dawn of Easter Day when it came, although exciting and energising, we were left as the women at the tomb as recorded in Mark's gospel; "*So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid*". The fear we faced was what we now do with this transformed situation. It was for a while, as if we had been disabled by the enormity of the transformation itself, hence the terror and amazement.

### Questions for discussion in local churches

1. Being prepared to wait  
If liminal spaces are places where we have left what we know and haven't arrived at something new, who or what does God give us to rely on in these times?

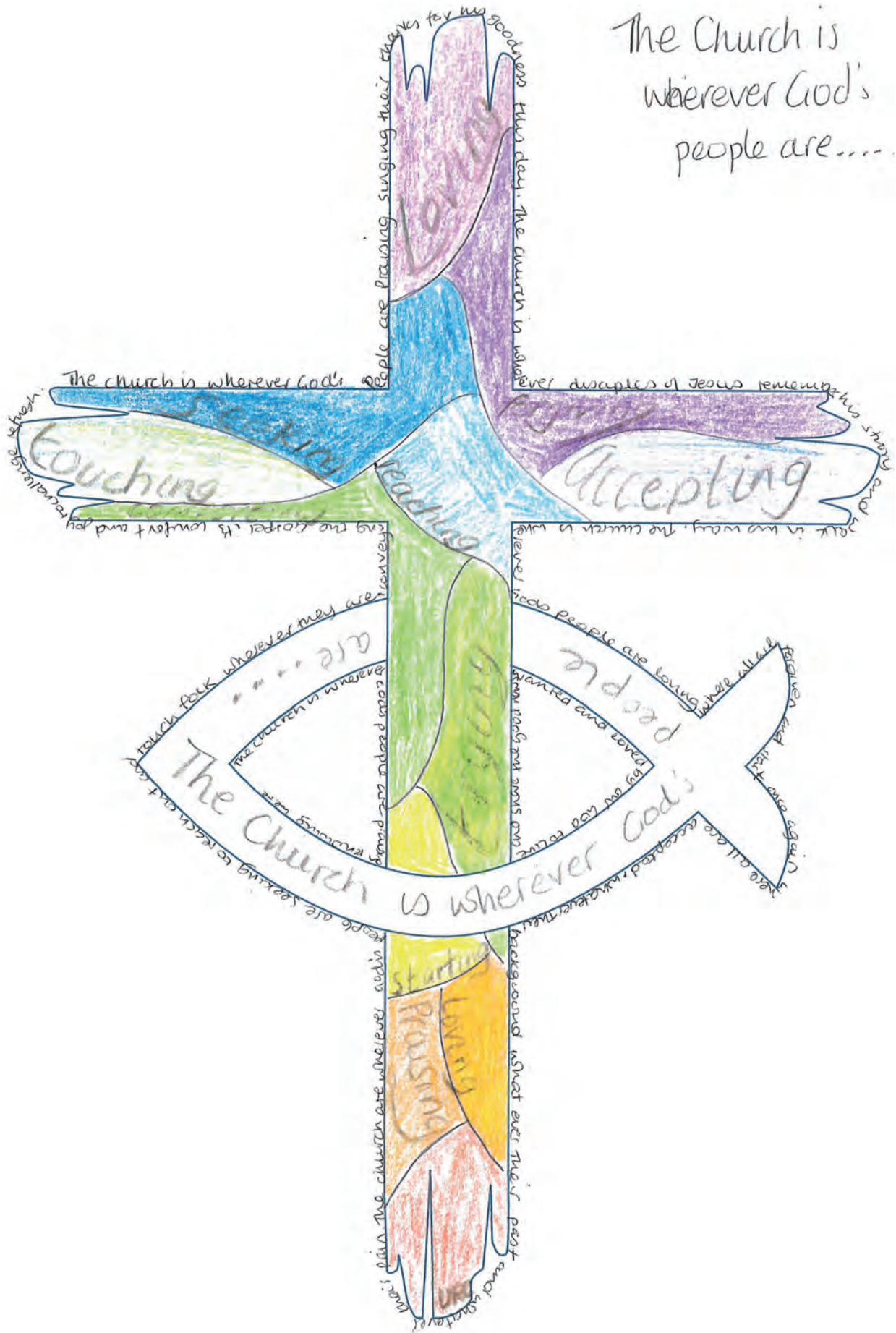
2. Deepening our communal discernment  
What do you think God is saying to you in these liminal times? How can you share those things with others to discern what God is saying to your church?
3. Shaping our institutional memory  
Were there particular scripture readings that kept you going in the last 18 months and if so, can you say what it was about them that strengthened you?
4. Clarifying our purpose  
Who missed us while our building was empty? Have we done new things which build God's kingdom? What is the essential work God has given this church?
5. Seeing the way forward emerge  
As you move from what has been to what will emerge, what will you take with you and what will you leave behind (practical things like buildings, but also habits, attitudes and stories)? Are there new partnerships to which you are now being called?

**Personalia**

Since the last General Assembly report, Andrew Prasad has retired and David Pickering and Jackie Embrey have each returned to ministry in a local pastorate. We have welcomed Bridget Banks, George Watt and Geoff Felton, and with Paul Whittle's move to the National Synod of Scotland, we look forward to welcoming Lythan Nevard as a new colleague in Eastern Synod.



The Church is  
wherever God's  
people are....



## Committee papers index

<b>Committee papers index</b> .....	31
Business Committee .....	32
Children's and Youth Work .....	33
Future of Pilots.....	33
URC committees and online meeting.....	47
Communications .....	49
Better, kinder, safer: improving what we can do digitally.....	49
Digital charter.....	59
Education and Learning .....	62
The new URC learning hub .....	62
The way forward .....	64
Locally recognised worship leader .....	67
Equalities .....	71
Report of ongoing work.....	71
Action towards an anti-racist church .....	74
Finance .....	79
General Report 2020-2021 .....	79
URC Pension schemes.....	84
URC Future Pensions.....	90
Stipendiary Ministry target numbers.....	112
Ministries .....	116
General Report.....	116
URC Disciplinary Policy .....	125
House for Duty for ministers.....	133
Schedule E .....	137
Mission .....	140
Report to General Assembly .....	140
Israel Palestine Report.....	155
URC 50 <sup>th</sup> Jubilee .....	162
The future of Walking the Way.....	166
Nominations .....	171
Report to General Assembly 2021.....	171
Eastern Synod Moderator.....	191
Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee.....	192
MIND.....	194
Ministerial Disciplinary Process .....	194
Framework for Assembly .....	208
Procedure for dealing with cases of incapacity .....	220
Safeguarding Advisory Group (SAG).....	224
Annual safeguarding report 2020 .....	224
Additions to URC Structure .....	233
Safeguarding Advisory Group .....	237
Safeguarding Policy Statement .....	240
Safeguarding Training Framework.....	245
Criminal Record Check .....	254
West Midlands Synod resolution .....	257





# Paper A1

## Mission Council Advisory Groups

Business Committee (by private members resolution from the Clerk and Convenor of the Business Committee)

### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Michael Hopkins <a href="mailto:michael.hopkins@urc.org.uk">michael.hopkins@urc.org.uk</a> Adrian Bulley <a href="mailto:adrian.bulley@urc.org.uk">adrian.bulley@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Resolution 06</b> <b>General Assembly resolves that from the close of General Assembly 2021, all Mission Council Advisory Groups shall become Advisory Groups of the General Assembly, and instructs the Business Committee to reflect further on whether further work and / or greater clarity is needed on the differences between Standing Committees and Advisory Groups.</b>

### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To clarify reporting lines and initiate further work on the differences between Advisory Groups and Standing Committees.
<b>Main points</b>	The changing pattern of meetings would leave Advisory Groups only able to report to the once a year meeting of Assembly Executive. In order for their work to be effective, they now need to be able to bring business to the Assembly. This raises questions about the differences between Advisory Groups and Committees, and so some further work is called for.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	N/A
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	N/A

### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	N/A
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	N/A

# Paper B1

## URC Children and the future of Pilots

### Children's and Youth Work Committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Paul Robinson, Convenor: <a href="mailto:paul@pjr-robinson.co.uk">paul@pjr-robinson.co.uk</a> Sam Richards, Head of Children's and Youth Work: <a href="mailto:sam.richards@urc.org.uk">sam.richards@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Resolutions.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p><b>Resolution 07</b></p> <p>1. <b>General Assembly celebrates the work of Pilots over the past 85 years, its association with URC, and affirms our current local Pilots Companies.</b></p> <p><b>Resolution 08</b></p> <p>2. <b>General Assembly approves and encourages Children's and Youth Work Committee in the creation of 'URC Children' as an umbrella to support the rich diversity of Pilots and all other expressions of children's work in local churches.</b></p> <p><b>Resolution 09</b></p> <p>3. <b>General Assembly instructs Children's and Youth Work Committee to cease using staff time and funding on work exclusively for Pilots, and instructs the committee to support Pilots sub-committee to explore options for the future, including the care of local Companies and Friends On Faith Adventures Groups, in the light of this.</b></p>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	A proposal to develop URC Children as a network, resource and support structure for all work in the URC with those aged 0-11, including Pilots.
<b>Main points</b>	CYWC are implementing their five-year strategy, which this year focusses on 5-11s. CYWC commissioned a Task Group to review Pilots, and this paper and its resolutions are their response to its recommendations.

<p><b>Previous relevant documents</b></p>	<p>General Assembly 2018 CYWC Report                  November 2018 Mission Council:                  B1 – Children's and Youth Work Committee – Executive summary of CYWC review report                  B2 – Children's and Youth Work Committee – Children's and youth work review report 2018                  B3 – Children's and Youth Work Committee – CYWC outline strategy                  May 2019 Mission Council: B1 –CYWC Update                  November 2019 Mission Council: B1 CYWC Update including new constitution for Pilots</p>
<p><b>Consultation has taken place with...</b></p>	<p>Pilots Subcommittee, Synod Pilots Officers, local Pilots Companies, URC Youth Executive, C&amp;YW staff, CYDO+ team, wider URC Children's and Youth Work network, and the wider URC.</p>

**Summary of impact**

<p><b>Financial</b></p>	<p>The existing CYWC budget and staffing levels would be redeployed to support the wide diversity of children's work. Pilots Subcommittee to determine the redistribution of restricted funds.</p>
<p><b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b></p>	

**Background**

<sup>5</sup> 'A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. <sup>6</sup> Some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture. <sup>7</sup> Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. <sup>8</sup> Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold.' As he said this, he called out, 'Let anyone with ears to hear listen!' Luke 8: 5-8, NRVSA

In November 2018, Mission Council received a review of URC Children's and Youth Work, and the accompanying five-year strategy in response to the findings and recommendations.

This stated:

- Children's and Youth Work Committee should review its work through the lens of this mission and strategy annually and seek to deploy resources accordingly. The staffing level and budget should remain at their present level for on-going work, and the current short-term posts be reviewed to support the longer-term focus.
- 'There needs to be a clear and realistic vision for the Children's and Youth Work of the church, which needs to be seen in the light of wider societal needs. New ways of helping children and young people on the road of discipleship are needed, and an emphasis on mission alongside ministry.' (General Secretariat)

The five-year strategy 2019–2024 (see Appendix One for a summary) approved by Mission Council included:

1. Re-unite all the parts of children's and youth work
  - Clear vision and focus – every part to see where it fits in this
  - Connect URCSF, BB, GB, Pilots, Crossfire, Messy Church etc – cross fertilisation
  - Integrated diary of events across whole URC (CYDOs as QA process for this)
  - Integrated flow between age ranges – cross over, shared identity
  - Connect with other areas of URC to impact positively the lives of children and young people (JPIT, CRCW, FCG).

AND

2. Develop accessible go-to resource bank with links to URC people
  - Develop website – accessible, easily searchable etc
  - Develop resources and links to existing wider resources
  - Provide links to URC people and churches that have recent relevant experience in each area
  - Create network of 'this works for us' advocates.

Following the strategic plan, 2021 is the year for CYWC to focus on its work with regards to 5-11 year olds.

Pilots is the organisation and programme for 5-18 year olds supported by the URC. It was founded 85 years ago by London Missionary Society, and was ecumenical and international at its height. Over recent years, the number of local Pilots Companies has declined, and only the URC now supports this organisation which retains its own funds (approximately £40K) and structures, identity and traditions as well as a rich history.

With regards to Pilots the 2018 Review stated:

- Pilots remains the URC programme for children and young people aged 5 to 18. It is run by dedicated volunteers in local churches and PMC / PPB with limited support from Church House and synod staff. It forms a strong community of people within the URC passionate about sharing faith with children through a regular fun club. It has a proven track record of engaging children and young people with no church background, and discipling them through sustained relationships over a number of years, as well as supporting children from church families in their faith and connection with church.
- Existing Pilots Companies believe it is most effective with 5 to 10s and least effective with 15 to 18s.
- There has been a serious decline in number of companies and number of children and young people. Companies appear to close due to lack of leaders, rather than lack of Pilots. Churches setting up new children's work rarely consider Pilots due to lack of knowledge and understanding about it, its old-fashioned image, and unappealing name.
- Pilots is currently rather costly in terms of staff and committee time, and resources produced, in relation to the number of children and young people benefiting. The relationship to URC Youth is unclear.
- It remains a significant means by which some churches engage with families in the local community. 'Pilots is the best thing our church has ever done.'
- Pilots has a place within the 'mixed economy' of children's and youth work in the URC.

## The current situation

“<sup>4</sup>For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. <sup>6</sup>We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us”. Romans 12:4-6a NRSVA

URC local churches are engaged in a wide variety and joyful diversity of work with children. Among the many different expressions of children's work captured on the Annual Church Return for 2019 are Junior Church (433), Messy Church (242), Parade Service (208), Girls' Brigade (66), Boys' Brigade (74), Guides (all age ranges 216), Scouts (all age ranges 143), Toddler Group (421), Afterschool Club (26), Mid-week Club (49), Holiday Club (161), Youth Club (134) and over 200 churches with activities classified as 'other'.

There are currently 32 affiliated Pilots Companies, and ten registered Friends On Faith Adventures (FOFA) groups, the new programme offered by Pilots from 2019. The URC recorded 13,108 children worshipping (in services, Messy Church or Pilots), and a further 29,533 children associated with the life of the church. Children here means under 18. There are a total of 346 Pilots (75 deckhands aged 5-6, 170 adventurers aged 7-10, 83 voyagers aged 11-14 and 18 navigators aged 15-17), 2.6% of the total in worship, or 0.8% of the total number of children in worship or associated with the URC. Pilots has experienced further decline since the 2018 review, has two fewer synods with volunteer Pilots Officers, and despite restructuring, has struggled to recruit committee members or a Pilots Advocate.

Pilots is uniquely resourced by the URC through dedicated staffing as well as support from the wider Children's and Youth Work staff team, being over 25% of total staff time. Pilots management, publications and expenses are allocated approximately £10k-£12k from CYWC budget (10% of non-staff budget). Pilots is uniquely positioned within the URC as a Subcommittee of CYWC, with direct representation on CYWC and the C&YW Resources Group, and direct representation on URC Youth Executive. Pilots alone commissions promotional and programme materials, events, training and other resources from URC C&YW.

The direction of travel of Pilots since the review has been towards much closer integration with CYWC and wider URC children's and youth work, for example: the Pilots Worship Resource is now a section within the annual theme books; the Overseas Voyage resource this year will be replaced by a joint resource with Commitment for Life; Pilots Publications Board has become part of a new CYWC Resources Group and the Pilots Management Committee has become the Pilots Subcommittee of CYWC.

## Task Group

Pilots subcommittee was presented with a paper in October 2020, encouraging them to consider the future. Engaging with the London Missionary Society history in the light of the Legacies of Slavery report and issues of empire and creating Overseas Voyage materials reflecting complex historical and contemporary contexts for children without specialist input was becoming increasingly difficult, alongside the declining numbers of Companies. A joint session with CYWC led to an agreement to set up a Task Group to review Pilots in relation to the URC.

This task group set up by the CYWC consisting of representatives from Pilots and the wider URC was given a remit to identify:

- Key gifts and graces from Pilots that we wish to continue to receive
- A way forward that can allow existing good work in local churches to flourish
- A way forward that moves towards one C&YW structure, allowing the church to receive the best of the gifts of the staff team
- To keep in mind the desire of the United Reformed Church to prioritise missional discipleship
- To consult widely with existing Pilots Companies, URC Youth, the CYDO+ team, Synod Pilots Officers, CYWC staff and others.

The task group designed an appreciative inquiry-framed questionnaire, distributed to Pilots companies and those involved with historic Pilots companies; the wider URC and people across the denomination were encouraged to participate and to share their views. The group also met individually with some of the key stakeholders, including Pilots Subcommittee, CYDO+ team and Staff team members. They also listened to the silence, to what remained unsaid. They submitted an interim report in January, and a final report with recommendations in April to CYWC for consideration in May. The final report is available on request from [children.youth@urc.org.uk](mailto:children.youth@urc.org.uk).

This paper and its resolutions is CYWC's response to the work of the Task Group and their recommendations. The report concluded:

*“Whereas URC Youth has developed a strong and inclusive identity for young people and young adults aged 11-25 in the URC, including Pilots, there is no equivalent for URC Children aged 0-10. There is a strong desire within the URC for an ‘in house brand’ and sense of identity. Other areas of work with children currently have no representation within the structures or ways of participating in Assembly level thinking and planning, development of resources, training, events and strategy.*

*There is a desire to share many of the resources and strengths of Pilots more widely, but a recognition that most local churches not already a part of Pilots are extremely unlikely to affiliate in the future. There is a desire to find new ways of supporting more local churches to enable children and young people to play their part in the mission of God through sustained discipleship.*

*There is a concern that Pilots structures are not fit for purpose for twenty first century expectations around accountability and liability for a national organisation with affiliated groups as it operates with inherited systems and sometimes unclear relationships with local churches in relation to policies such as safeguarding.*

#### **Recommendations to CYWC from the Task Group:**

1. **The creation of the URC Children umbrella to encapsulate all work with children in the United Reformed Church.** This to be developed to offer a strong sense of belonging to the denomination and sense of identity that naturally moves into URC Youth. Therefore children and young people are seen as fully involved in the life of the URC, rather than in separate sub groups.
2. **Existing Pilots Companies do fantastic work locally and that work is to be celebrated, encouraged and supported, within the new URC Children.**
3. **The URC as a denomination ceases to invest exclusively in Pilots in terms of staff time and funding.** This could result in either:



- a) *Pilots continues as an independent organisation, to which local URC churches may affiliate (in the same way as some relate to Girls' Brigade or Boys' Brigade) and takes its funds, resources and materials from the URC.*
  - b) *Or: The structure, affiliation and resourcing of the singular national organisation of Pilots would cease and Pilots Subcommittee should determine how to dispose of its existing funding and resources and windup. Local churches may continue to run groups and activities under the title of Pilots/FOFA within the wider framework of URC Children (in the same way that some have continued to run local FURY groups within the wider framework of URC Youth).*
  - c) *Or: further options yet to be considered.*
4. **The URC investigates the liability and responsibilities involved in offering any affiliated programme or other resource to local churches.** *Does the denomination / organisation carry safeguarding, health and safety and other responsibility and risk in combination with or in addition to the local church? The Pilots review has uncovered the issue of Pilots companies that are not formally connected to local URC churches and therefore outside normal accountability within our structures. Closer liaison between Safeguarding and Children's and Youth Work should be explored.*
5. **The future development of children's work within the URC is seen in part as a living legacy of Pilots.** *Ways that Pilots have supported leaders have given us some examples of good practice that could be expanded to support leaders of all types of work with children aged 0-10 (including toddler groups, Messy Church, Sunday School / Junior Church etc) such as the awarding of long service recognition and the creation of a newsletter. New developments (which are not cost effective exclusively for Pilots) such as the development of an online, searchable bank for resources for local churches to adapt to their setting; the development of a forum for sharing resources; the development of a denomination-wide training offer can be enabled through the released staff time and funding. A new consultative group can be created of leaders involved in a wide variety and diversity of work with children that reflects on local church experience and informs the development of future resources and events to support URC Children (including but no longer exclusively Pilots)."*

CYWC received this report and its recommendations in May 2021. This report confirmed CYWC's commitment to serve the whole of the URC, and the metaphor of an umbrella used at General Assembly 2018 (see Appendix Two). The recommendations also align with the five-year strategy. In response CYWC believe that God is leading and stirring us to respond to the Task Group's recommendations by bringing these three resolutions to General Assembly to help further discern God's will and seek approval to continue to pursue these ideas.

## URC children

'With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? <sup>31</sup> It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; <sup>32</sup> yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.' Mark 4: 30-32 NRSVA



The 2018 review highlighted the importance of a sense of belonging and identity for both the children and those working with them. The primary place of belonging is in the local group or activity and the local church; however, a sense of being part of something bigger is also important. If the local is the cloche or greenhouse for young seedlings and tender plants, then the denomination is the garden, a supportive environment in which they can become established and naturalised. Larger events and gatherings, and opportunities to develop relationships with peers in other places are all important factors in faith development, supporting the ongoing discipleship.



Following the review in 2018, CYWC commissioned a logo for URC Children. It has been used on publications to indicate that they are for use by those working with 0-11s.

More recent resources such as the annual theme books (One Body, Common Ground and Heroes and Villains), the weekly Families on Faith Adventures @ Home, the Advent Hope & Joy boxes and the Walking Together Towards Easter packs have increased a sense of URC identity within children's ministry amongst local churches. The Lundie Award has increased the profile of children as missional disciples. The development of online training in response to Covid-19 restrictions has enabled children's workers and volunteers to gather regardless of geographic location, for example for our Faith with Under Fives conference in 2020.

CYWC sees the opportunity created by redeploying staffing and budget currently used exclusively to support Pilots as the means to creating a new umbrella identity for 0-11s which includes all children associated with the life of the URC (in the same way that URC Youth includes all aged 11-25). The overlap of age ranges is deliberate to facilitate transition and support local churches in their local arrangements of groups, often by school year rather than date of birth. URC Children would include local Pilots Companies and FOFA Groups but give opportunities to develop support for and work with a wide diversity of children's work such as toddler groups, Messy Church, junior church and so on. This is both the development of the direction of travel set by the review, and the creation of something new. It is an opportunity to increase our vision for children's work, to broaden our definitions and to be more inclusive. CYWC believes the creation of URC Children is an opportunity to serve children better as a denomination.

According to the Annual Church Returns 2019, we have 273 paid workers and 8,419 volunteers in local churches working with those under 26. Part of establishing URC Children would be the creation of forums to enable their voices, needs and views to be heard by CYWC, and the URC as a whole. It would also include the creation of an accessible resource bank to serve all those engaging with children and young people.

Annual Church Returns 2019 also state we have 9,230 children aged under 11 worshipping regularly in our churches and a further 21,994 associated with the life of the church. As with the general trend of URC church statistics and wider UK church statistics, these figures are declining. This is a key time to increase support for children. Part of this development would be the creation of forums to enable the voices of children, their needs and views to be heard by CYWC, and the URC as a whole.

The redistribution of staff time, CYDO+ team allocations and budget would enable the development of other opportunities to create a strong URC Children identity through such activities as events, trips and camps or residential: opportunities to gather together and be part of something larger. It would create opportunities to respond to the ideas and dreams of children, and support them in their discipleship and leadership.

The establishment of URC Children would support URC Youth by providing a natural sense of progression in identity. The Children and Youth Friendly Church scheme and the Lundie Memorial Award are examples of other work under CYWC that span the full age-range of 0-25, and will help to connect URC Children and URC Youth. We realise that URC Youth faces many challenges in engaging with the breadth of those aged 11-25 associated with the church, and do not underestimate the size of the task or the time such a development will take to become established. The releasing of resources and staff time to enable this is vital. The hope is that URC Children will offer a supportive environment for local churches in their engagement with children in, through and beyond the church through provision of resources, training, events and opportunities, as well as advocacy for children within the URC.

### **Future of Pilots**

Pilots has been an important part of the children's and youth work of the URC since its inception. Many people expressed their personal appreciation for their own time as a Pilot and its role in their faith development. Those currently involved in running Pilots Companies remain passionate. The URC owes Pilots a huge debt of thanks and recognises the contribution of Big Days Out, amongst other things to the life of the denomination. CYWC strongly desires to see local Pilots companies continue, and their work celebrated, encouraged and supported within URC Children and URC Youth.

The realities of the decline of Pilots mean that it no longer seems appropriate for the URC to sustain the structures and resourcing currently dedicated to Pilots. If General Assembly agrees to this next step, then CYWC will support and work closely with Pilots Subcommittee as they explore different options for the future. All options should include the continuation of local Pilots Companies. Synod Pilots Officers have already expressed a desire to actively explore a range of options including those mentioned by the Task Group, as well as exploring the potential to partner with other parachurch organisations.

God of the histories we inherit and the histories we inhabit,  
we give you thanks for the vision that launched Pilots and the unstinting  
dedication that has navigated its 85 year journey so far.  
Thank you for its creation of communities spanning the generations and  
across the globe,  
for its enlivening of our congregations and cherishing of so many,  
for its sharing and its teaching of faithfulness,  
for all the children and young adults blessed by Pilots and blessing others  
through Pilots.

In deep appreciation we honour those who have worked, and who work still, in  
our local Pilots' companies.

We rejoice in the astounding series of days out, when Pilots and friends have  
gathered from near and far.

We give thanks for the gifts of committee members, writers and creators shaping  
programmes and resources that reveal your world and the Church.

God of the histories we inherit and the histories we inhabit,  
hear our prayers at these times of great change and great possibility.

Hear us as we confess that there are legacies to reckon with even as we  
celebrate this part of our missionary heritage.

Hear us as we dwell upon success and upon sadness, upon vision and upon decline.

Grant us your Spirit's wisdom as we debate and make decisions.

Give us grace to listen with care to one another.

Give us hearts ablaze with passion for your gospel.

Give us commitment unstinting to share with, listen to and encourage all your children.

We pray in Christ's name, who also navigated the calm and the storm, and brought his friends safely through.

Amen.

(Neil Thorogood)

### **Affiliations and accountability**

CYWC appreciates the work of the Task Group in highlighting the issues around Pilots affiliation of local Companies to the denomination. CYWC will work to address those issues raised in the fourth recommendation from the Task Group as a matter of urgency and will report to Mission Council in November 2021 on this.

### **Next steps**

In 2021, it is the 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Pilots by the London Missionary Society. Pilots wishes to mark this across the month of November, and CYWC will support them in this.

Launching URC Children, if approved by General Assembly, will involve a number of steps:

- a) Staff roles will need to be reviewed and job descriptions changed. It is hoped this could be achieved by early 2022, redeploying staff time to develop URC Children.
- b) General Assembly 2022 will be marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the URC. It would be an appropriate time to formally launch URC Children – by then, plans for how to implement the key ideas expressed above should be developed and actionable.
- c) CYWC to create the desired resource bank facility to include appropriate resources for all those working with children, ideally in time for the formal launch of URC Children. URC Communications will be delivering an accessible resource area as part of the building of the new URC website and it is hoped that this will be able to incorporate children's and youth work.
- d) Recent developments, such as FOFA and Families on Faith Adventures @ Home, would be reviewed as part of the overall future offer for URC Children, along with other resources.

Proposed resolutions:

1. General Assembly celebrates the work of Pilots over the past 85 years, its association with URC, and affirms our current local Pilots Companies.
2. General Assembly approves and encourages Children's and Youth Work Committee in the creation of 'URC Children' as an umbrella to support the rich diversity of Pilots and all other expressions of children's work in local churches.

3. General Assembly instructs Children's and Youth Work Committee to cease using staff time and funding on work exclusively for Pilots, and instructs the committee to support Pilots Subcommittee to explore options for the future, including the care of local Companies and Friends On Faith Adventures Groups, in the light of this.

# Appendix One

## **Fan into Flames: CYWC Strategy 2019-2024**

- Already have the glowing embers – need to encourage, rekindle
- Tradition is not worshipping the ashes but tending the flame.

URC aim: thriving local congregations with inclusive, intercultural and intergenerational ethos which are growing those inside and reaching those outside.

Purpose for CYWC: **children and young people playing their part in the mission of God**

Strategy: support and strengthen local congregations in five key areas:

- FAITH – sharing spiritual resources
- COMMUNITY – sharing relational resources
- IDENTITY – sharing stories, events, connections
- ENGAGEMENT – sharing in the life of the local context
- GROWTH – sharing new, creative, risky change (to develop potential).

Five-year strategy: key tasks

1. Re-unite all the parts of C&YW.
2. Initiate deliberate culture change – non-competitive intergenerational whole life missional discipleship throughout whole church.
3. Focus on churches with 'no' children and young people.
4. Focus on under 5s, then 5-11s, then 11-18s, then 18+.
5. Reshape CYDO programme – all synods and Church House as learning community and team.
6. Reshape Pilots – including project with Messy Church.
7. Develop accessible go-to resource bank with links to URC people.
8. Develop communication – reinvest in face2face.
9. Celebrate!!

## Appendix Two

### Introduction to CYWC report to General Assembly 2018

The remit of the Children's and Youth Work Committee is to support, encourage and promote work with children, young people and young adults (0-25 years old) at all levels of the church.

Imagine a brightly coloured golfing umbrella – that's how we see ourselves:

- A colourful canopy for the breadth and diversity of activity undertaken with children, young people and young adults, providing an environment to foster flourishing
- A spoked network of connectivity and communication between local churches, synods and the committee, providing a structure and programme
- A handle to enable the whole to be carried and represented by staff and committee to the URC and beyond
- A sharp end to drive developments forward (and fend off threats)
- A moving mechanism to enable responsive change
- The whole providing a sense of denominational identity for children, young people and young adults
- The sheer joy of dancing and singing in the rain with the prospect of puddles to jump in!

## Appendix Three

<b>URC ANNUAL CHURCH RETURNS</b>	<b>2020</b> (31.12.2019)	<b>2019</b> (31.12.2018)	<b>2018</b> (31.12.2017)	<b>2012</b> (31.12.2011)	<b>2010</b> (31.12.2009)	<b>2008</b> (31.12.2007)
Number of churches	1,331	1,355	1,383	<b>1,512</b>	<b>1,545</b>	<b>1,587</b>
Members	43,208	44,788	46,881	<b>61,627</b>	<b>66,746</b>	<b>70,508</b>
Regular attenders	13,734	14,456	16,092	20,596	21,334	21,336
Average Congregation Children <18	4,495					
Average Congregation Main Service – Adult	44,099					
Average congregation	48,594	50,035	53,379	61,725	65,802	70,711

A – Children worshipping at main service	13,108	13,791	14,188	15,504	14,735	17,142
B – Children associated with the life of the church	29,533	32,844	30,784	44,771	53,279	67,691
<b>Pilots Company (32 current)</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>Junior Church</b>	433	413				
<b>Messy Church</b>	242	240				
<b>Parade Service</b>	208	204				
<b>Girls' Brigade</b>	66	67	64	58		
<b>Boys' Brigade</b>	74	73	71	85		
<b>Guides / Brownies / Rainbows</b>	216	232	250	263/365/251		
<b>Scouts / Cubs / Beavers</b>	143	143	158	158/168/163		
<b>Toddler Group</b>	421	442	427	531		
<b>Afterschool Club</b>	26	41	33	61		
<b>Mid-week Club</b>	49	78	62	82		
<b>Holiday Club</b>	161	172	151	184		
<b>Youth Club</b>	134	136	127	144		
<b>Other</b>	218	253	289	388		
Worshippers 4 and under	3,297	3,304				
Worshippers 5-10	5,933	6,381				
Worshippers 11-18	2,938	3,194				
Worshippers 19-25	841	912				



Associated 4 and under	8,522	9,263				
Associated 5-10	13,472	14,872				
Associated 11-18	7,207	7,904				
Associated 19-25	765	805				
Baptisms Infants	1,211	1,247				
Dedications Infants	185	208				
Volunteers working with under 25	8,419	8,952				
Paid Workers working with under 25	273	253				

# Paper B2

## URC committees and online meeting

### Children's and Youth Work Committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Reuben Watt, URC Youth Moderator: <a href="mailto:urcyamoderator@urc.org.uk">urcyamoderator@urc.org.uk</a> Sam Richards, Head of Children's and Youth Work: <a href="mailto:sam.richards@urc.org.uk">sam.richards@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Resolutions.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p><b>Resolution 10</b></p> <p>1. <b>General Assembly requests all General Assembly committees and task groups to have at least one meeting each year entirely online and not during normal working hours (9-5 Monday to Friday).</b></p> <p><b>Resolution 11</b></p> <p>2. <b>General Assembly also encourages all General Assembly committees and task groups to have the ability for people to join online for all meetings, with 50% of meetings each year to be held outside of normal working hours (9-5 Monday to Friday).</b></p> <p><b>Resolution 12</b></p> <p>3. <b>General Assembly also invites all councils of the Church at a Synod and local church level to consider these resolutions to see where they can implement them into their structures.</b></p>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Making committee meetings more accessible to all.
<b>Main points</b>	Need to make consistent use of online meeting capability and ensure meeting times are accessible for those with work and other commitments.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	URC Youth.

**Summary of impact**

<b>Financial</b>	Anticipated reduction in meeting costs (and environmental impact).
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	

Back at a Mission Council in 2020, a comment was raised regarding committees within the United Reformed Church, with a concern for the lack of people to fill the roles on our many committees. This is a huge shame, as the URC is filled with people who have many different gifts and talents waiting to be utilised. These are the people that we need to be getting involved in our structures; however, many of them work or study and so cannot currently attend committee meetings. Many members of URC Youth, who would be an asset to a committee, have had to decline their nomination due to the times or locations of the meetings, which is why we bring this resolution.

We realise this resolution will require a big culture shift for many. However, if those who are working or are studying know they can attend at least one meeting a year, then they may be more likely to say yes to the invitation to join a committee or task group.

Throughout the last year, we have seen how easy it is to have a meeting of all different sizes and topics online, and we hope that with this resolution, it will continue. Not only will it make it more accessible for those that work and study like previously stated, it will also make a huge environmental impact. This links to the resolution that was taken to General Assembly in 2020 for the URC to recognise the climate emergency and to challenge all councils, committees and local churches to do everything possible to make URC events and activities eco-friendly.

- General Assembly requests all General Assembly committees and task groups to have at least one meeting each year entirely online and not during normal working hours (9-5 Monday to Friday).
- General Assembly also encourages all General Assembly committees and task groups to have the ability for people to join online for all meetings, with 50% of meetings each year are held outside of normal working hours (9-5 Monday to Friday).
- General Assembly also invites all councils of the Church at a synod and local church level to consider these resolutions to see where they can implement them into their structures.

These resolutions are brought from URC Youth Executive for consideration at General Assembly. Unfortunately, because Youth Assembly was unable to meet for business this year, these resolutions were not able to be approved there, but nonetheless reflect the voice of young people in the URC. Children's and Youth Work Committee are pleased to support these resolutions coming to General Assembly through them.

# Paper C1

## Better, kinder, safer: improving what we can do digitally

### Communications Committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Peter Stevenson (Convenor) <a href="mailto:revdpete@btinternet.com">revdpete@btinternet.com</a> Andy Jackson (Head of Communications) <a href="mailto:andy.jackson@urc.org.uk">andy.jackson@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To update the General Assembly on the work of the Communications Committee; to agree best practice for all who produce and manage websites and social media channels for the life and work of the URC.
<b>Main points</b>	An update of the work of the Communications Team in 2020 and 2021.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Papers C1 and C2, Mission Council, March 2020; Communications Committee report, General Assembly 2020; Papers C1, C2 and C3, Mission Council, March 2021.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Consultation has taken place with the Communications Committee, Publishing Board, General Secretariat, Finance, teams at United Reformed Church House, Synod Moderators, members and friends of the URC on social media.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	<i>Reform</i> subsidy and staffing costs reduced; bookshop revenues increasing.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Increased engagement inside and outside the URC through the website, social media channels, new and updated printed and digital resources, with families through the sale and distribution of Lent and Advent kits; coronavirus advice and information guides on many subjects; research, development and production of a new URC website.

The communications department exists to promote effective communication and celebration of the Gospel in and beyond the URC by:

- Giving voice to good news
- Facilitating regional / national communications
- Supporting the communications of Church House departments and General Assembly
- Resourcing the local churches.

### Coronavirus advice and information guides

When the first lockdown as announced in March 2020, no-one knew just how devastating the impact of coronavirus would be.

Communications had just begun to roll out a programme of new information guides about how to use social media channels when church buildings closed. More help was needed fast, with all aspects of communications as churches quickly adapted to engage with dispersed congregations.

The Revds John Proctor and Steve Faber quickly worked to publish advice about what churches could and couldn't do, and the URC owes Steve a huge amount of thanks for turning hurried, mixed and complex government advice into clear and understandable counsel from the URC.

Steve later went on to write and compile *Ready for the New Normal* and *Emerging Into the New Normal* with others, which were very well received not only in the URC, but by ecumenical and interfaith partners. The Muslim Council of Britain and others recommended the document because it was one of the first comprehensive guides produced by a mainstream faith organisation.



Other advice and information guides followed, along with a range of downloadable items and goods to purchase for the reopening of church buildings. The Communications Team was agile and speedy in the way it designed and delivered all sorts of digital and physical resources for the church, and Peter and I would like to thank them all for their contributions in 2020 and this year.

### Community Awards

The 2020 Community Awards were postponed when it became clear that visits to projects were not going to take place, not only because it was unsafe to do so but also because many projects that submitted an entry were closed because the church buildings were.

Projects that were shortlisted in 2020 were allowed to transfer their shortlisting to the 2021 or 2022 awards.

Thanks to the generosity of Congregational Insurance, the sponsor of the awards, funds for the prizes were carried over



to 2021. At the time of writing, it is hoped that awards for 2020 and 2021 will be presented at the General Assembly.

## Digital Content Officer

Catherine Kelliher joined the team on the day when the Prime Minister announced the first national lockdown. Catherine has worked in digital content for Scope, Action Against Hunger, Barking and Dagenham and Islington Councils, The Fostering Network and Christian Aid.

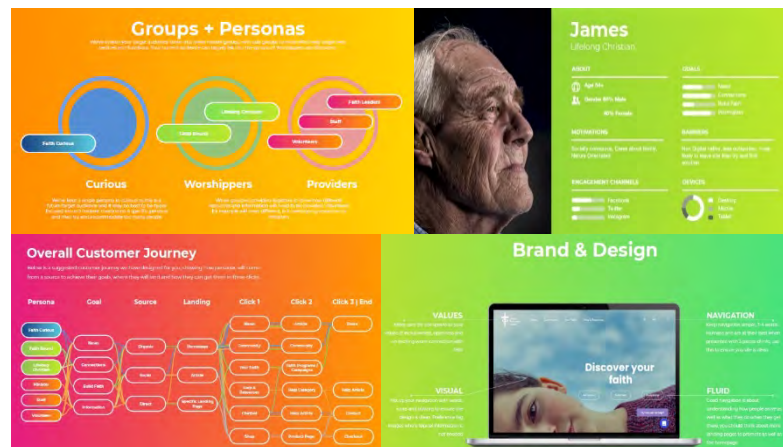
Her remit is to help with the launch of the new URC website, a presentation about which will be made at Mission Council, to produce and improve digital content (eg the dropdown menus on the coronavirus advice page) and to help with social media and other digital projects.

## New URC website

In 2020, work began to transform the URC website, [www.urc.org.uk](http://www.urc.org.uk).

An audit of content took place revealing that just 72 of the 5,000+ pages on the website accounted for more than 70% of the 616,000 visits in 2020.

Mission Council, staff, other URC groups and an online focus group have been involved with the research and development, as will all staff who create and publish content on URC websites and social media channels. A draft version of the new website should be available for the General Assembly.



## Advent and Lent kits

The Head of Communications had a long-held idea about a kit to engage with families. Many churches have families that use the church, but there is a lack of resources that bridge the gap between the Christian purpose of the building and the people and groups that use them.

Thanks to the wonderful work by the Children's and Youth Work and CYDO+ teams, *Advent Hope & Joy* was launched on 9 October, and ten days later close to 2,000 had been sold. We thought we might sell 300!

In total, 2,157 kits were assembled and despatched from Church House, given to families to tell them that their local URC remembers them, cares for them and wants to connect with them.

Over the six weeks from the start of Advent to Epiphany, six aspects of the Christmas story were explored. Each week had an envelope packed with ideas for quick to complex activities.



Each box included a copy of the new *Colours of Christmas* story book, an A3 colouring sheet and Christmas story 'spot the difference' puzzle, weekly activity envelopes, colouring pencils, a gold pen, labels, a cookie cutter, a tea light candle, JPIT action postcards, a wooden star and crown, a Walking the Way foot and cord, a stained glass window to decorate and display, craft ideas, reflective activities and prayer practices. Because these kits sold out so quickly, all of the elements and suppliers were added to the URC website. Families on Faith Adventures@Home online resources for deeper faith-focussed engagement were also added to the website.

## Lent

After the success of Advent, and with Lent just around the corner, another collaboration between Children's and Youth, Communications, Education and Learning and Ministries resulted in Walking towards Easter together, a kit containing an A3 poster, a journal book containing daily reflections and stories, stickers and a recipe booklet. In all, 5,000 have been sold, although 255 were given to armed service and higher education chaplains.



## Digital Mission Council and General Assembly

After the URC's March Mission Council was cancelled, the Mission Council followed by the General Assembly met via Zoom on 10-11 July. There was some doubt about whether the work of both meetings could be done digitally, but both meetings were successful.

Feedback from those meetings resulted in changes to the November and March meetings of the Mission Council, and to the meeting of the General Assembly. Our thanks to all who contributed in the run up to, and during, the meetings, especially those who acted as Zoom co-hosts and Affinity Events.



## House style

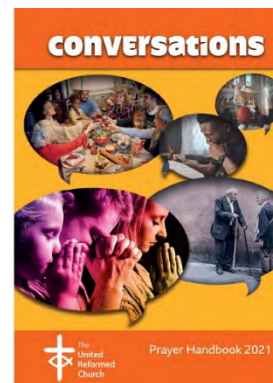
The URC's new House Style was confirmed by the committee and can be found at [www.urc.org.uk/house-style](http://www.urc.org.uk/house-style). The committee encourages all in the URC to use it.



## Prayer Handbook

The *2021 Prayer Handbook, Conversations*, the second prayer handbook to be edited by Karen Campbell and the Revd Ian Fosten, added prayers for everyday and extraordinary situations to the regular prayers that follow the pattern of lectionary-based Bible readings. The feedback has again been exceptionally positive.

The *2022 Prayer Handbook* will reflect on the meaning of jubilee in our biblical texts and has the theme '*Jubilee: Free to live...*' Contributors have been invited to consider the ways in which jubilee is experienced in everyday life through the knowledge of God, and the relationships that are shared with God.



## Graphics

In 2020 the team produced, amongst other items:

- Further improvements to the *URC Yearbook*, making it even easier to use
- The 2021 Prayer Handbook, *Conversations*, edited by Karen Campbell and Ian Fosten, and a Lectern (large print) edition of the handbook
- The design of the URC Information Guides
- The coronavirus advice guides
- The *What We Believe* series for the Faith and Order Committee
- A new range of URC certificates
- A Christmas card from the General Secretariat
- RMHS newsletters and handbook
- Infant feeding sign
- A new range of Enquirer's Conference resources
- *Common Ground*, the URC Children's and Youth resource for 2020
- *They've asked me to be* series – written by Gill Nichol and relevant URC bodies, such as the Faith and Order Committee and CRCW Coordinator. These explain a variety of paid and voluntary roles in the URC. These are free to download from [www.urc.org.uk/ask](http://www.urc.org.uk/ask). Other suggestions are always welcome
- Child Friendly Church certificates, plaques and leaflets
- Legacy of Slavery resources and web pages
- Walking the Way materials
- The Advent Hope & Joy kit
- Coronavirus resources for churches
- The *URC Yearbook* – a major collaboration with Ministries
- Updates to The Manual
- Digitisation of older *Books of Reports and Assembly Records*
- Safeguarding newsletters and *Good Practice 5* appendices
- Commitment for Life Prayer Partners
- Flexible Framework Toolkit for Churches Together in England – a new resource for churches looking to form LEPs
- Local Preacher pin badges
- Pilots' resource about Fiji
- General Assembly resources
- A redesign of *Old Grey Prayers* by the late Bernard Thorogood
- Zoom backgrounds and advice guides
- A digital palm cross, which became one of the most shared pieces of content from the URC Facebook page and website

- Wooden paperweight
- Community Awards resources and leaflets.



## Future work

Different versions of the *Worship from the United Reformed Church Parts 1 & 2* are being considered, as are cards to media outlets to help get our name right, prayer request and welcome cards, 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary materials, 2022 diaries, and marketing materials for *Reform* distributors, as well as the usual support for Mission Council and the General Assembly.

## Social media

The growth in Facebook and Instagram, in terms of those who Like or Follow the URC channels, has helped to get our key messages and campaigns to even more people. The reach of Twitter has decreased slightly by 3%, which indicates it is at its peak for the URC, and the type of content shared on the channel will be reviewed in the digital and communications strategies.

### Facebook: [www.facebook.com/TheUnitedReformedChurch](https://www.facebook.com/TheUnitedReformedChurch)

Likes (1 January to 31 December): there were 3,040 people who have liked our Facebook page, up from 2,247 last year. Reach, the number of people who saw content from the URC's page or about the URC, was 1,075,548, an increase of 4% on 2020.



### Twitter: [www.twitter.com/UnitedReformed](https://www.twitter.com/UnitedReformed)

There are 4,426 people following the URC on Twitter and our tweets were seen 809,100 times. These Twitter impressions (the number of times a tweet appears in a user's timeline) are slightly down on 2020.

### Instagram: [www.instagram.com/unitedreformed](https://www.instagram.com/unitedreformed)

This was launched in 2019 and currently has 734 followers, up from 396 in the last year's report. The content is usually the same as that shared on Facebook and Twitter, but there will be greater definition of the content for this channel as the digital and communications strategies are developed.

## Communications and media relations

The URC Social Media Guidelines have been revised to encourage online conversations that reflect the values of the URC. These apply to all content posted on social media accounts at all levels of the Church, including all using the name, logo and brand of the URC.

The Digital Charter and Social Media Guidelines are subject to resolution.

The new Digital Charter is a voluntary pledge encouraging people and churches to make to help make all United Reformed Church's social media channels, and the web in general, a positive place for respectful conversations to happen.

Sadly, this doesn't always happen which is why we would like the General Assembly to adopt these guidelines so that should any members, ministers or friends of the URC receive online abuse, action can be taken.



## News Update email

At the start of 2020, there were 2,531 subscribers, which increased to more than 6,550 by the end of the year, thanks to NU being classed as a work-based email and ministers and office holders being added. Anyone can unsubscribe, as always, but few people have since being added to the list. NU is sent out every month and has news from around the URC. To subscribe and to find out how to contribute, visit [urc.org.uk/nu](http://urc.org.uk/nu) or email [press.office@urc.org.uk](mailto:press.office@urc.org.uk).

## Reputation management

There were a number of reputation management cases, ranging from a community incident, access to a graveyard, the closing of churches and church halls, and historical sex offences.

All reputation management files continue to be kept up-to-date digitally and retention periods are being investigated by the Church House Management Group and the URC's legal adviser.

## Press releases

A number of press releases were issued in 2020, now targeted to media channels – magazines, newspapers, digital, radio and TV stations – rather than sending all releases to all channels regardless of content. This gives what we share to the media a greater impact.

The subjects included URC Youth climate emergency action at Mission Council; our new General Secretary; Church Without Walls accepted as a new URC congregation; Church leaders urging the UK government to help deter the annexation of West Bank; URC leaders saying we must be 'anti-racist' following the killing of George Floyd; UK pension funds investing billions in nuclear weapons; our Moderators saying Dominic Cummings should 'consider his position'; the URC Moderators' shock and sadness at reactions to BBC Friday prayers broadcasts on local radio, to name a few.



## Songs of Praise

The Revd John Bradbury was interviewed for *Songs of Praise* in August for the episode about the Pilgrim Fathers, in which Steve Tomkins also appeared. Our thanks for Palmers Green URC and the Revds Melanie Smith and Mark Meatcher for letting us use the church for the filming.



Soon after that episode aired, *Songs of Praise* visited the Victorian village of Saltaire near Bradford, the vision of Christian industrialist Sir Titus Salt. The programme looked at how he was motivated by his faith to build what is now Saltaire United Reformed Church, the Grade-I listed church that was damaged by storm Dennis in 2020. The programme also interviewed the Christian architect in charge of the restoration, and a member of the congregation who kneels in prayer outside the church each week.

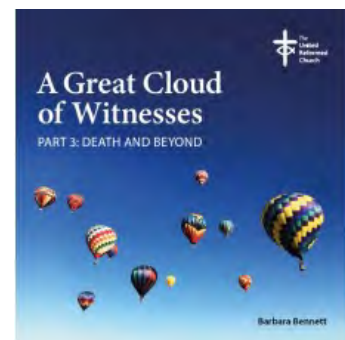
## Publishing Board

The Publishing Board, a sub-committee of the Communications Committee, is chaired by the Revd Heather Whyte.

The board's remit is to assess publishing proposals from URC writers and unsolicited manuscripts and synopses and to decide if they are publishable in line with the URC's publications policy (Paper C1, Mission Council 2016).

The Board has been involved with the following:

- *Constance: Pioneer, Pastor, Preacher* – a collection of essays about Constance Coltman, the first woman to be ordained into Trinitarian Christian ministry, edited by the Revd Janet Wootton. This is now available from [www.urcshop.co.uk](http://www.urcshop.co.uk), generously supported by the Council for World Mission
- Publications to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Reformed Church. The Revds David Cornick and Robert Pope are writing one book, Steve Tomkins, Editor of *Reform*, is writing another, and the Revd Anne Sardeson is looking at a book about the music and hymnody of the URC. There is also a joint publication with the Congregational Federation, which also celebrates its anniversary in 2022, a series of positive reflections that reflect back but also looks forward, and contributions from URC members and ministers are welcome. The Revd Peter Brain is co-editing the book.
- *A Great Cloud of Witnesses Part 3, Death and Beyond* by the Revd Barbara Bennett, which was published in January
- *Hook* – A five-week course of spiritual journeying based on the film 'Hook', reflections by the Revd Heather Whyte.



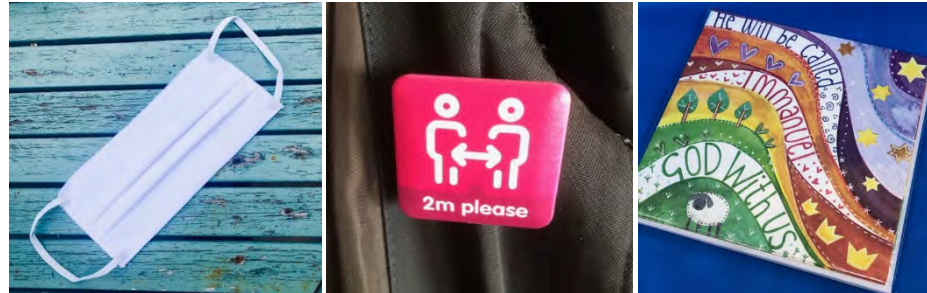
## Bookshop

The URC Bookshop had another good year, with figures close to the £70,000 turnover mark.

The final figures will be confirmed once the work by the auditors on the 2020 accounts has finished.

In 2020, coronavirus products were introduced, including Keep 2m apart badges,

Clean hands badges, floor tape, floor signs, vinyl and roller banners, reusable stickers and other resources for churches. These complemented the wide range of free

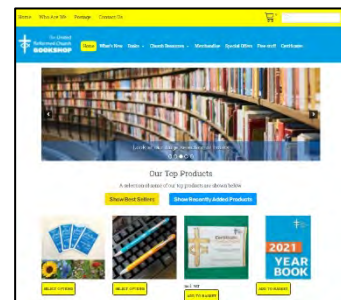


downloadable resources for churches on the URC website.

Christmas cards and other festive items were popular last year with the sending of cards boosted by the pandemic. Steve Tomkins' book *The Journey to the Mayflower* was also a good seller for the bookshop, as were goods designed by Caroline Flint of Heartistic – art with a heart. Caroline is the daughter of Linda Mead, the URC's former Commitment for Life programme officer.

## New URC Bookshop website

Because most spring and autumn Synod meetings were cancelled or changed to digital meetings, the bookshop website, [www.urcshop.co.uk](http://www.urcshop.co.uk) took many more orders for diaries, prayer handbooks and other resources usually sold at Synods. The age of the website (six years) showed and so a new bookshop website was launched in April.



## Christian Resources Exhibition

As part of an ongoing arrangement with the organisers of the Christian Resources Exhibition, the URC offers advertising in *Reform* in exchange for a presence at the national Christian Resources Exhibition (CRE).

The spring show took place in March at the Arthur Rank Centre at Stoneleigh, just before the first lockdown and the Esher show was cancelled.

The stand was extremely popular, and many staff and volunteers helped throughout the show. Our thanks to them.

The national CRE will take place on 12 to 14 October 2021, at Sandown Park in Esher, Surrey, and the CRE South West will now take place from 23 to 24 February 2022 at Westpoint, Exeter.



## Reform

*Reform* has kept going smoothly throughout the continued pandemic, despite several challenges. Because many copies of *Reform* are usually distributed through churches, the team and subscription management company had to reorganise the delivery system and get the magazines directly to subscribers.

This had an impact on the magazine's finances during a time when it was trying to reduce costs.

Some late cancellations of interviews and articles were also caused by coronavirus, but the gaps were plugged. Advertising also fell soon after lockdown started, but picked up again from September. Income has reduced as a result, but it is hoped an increase in revenue this year will make up for that unexpected loss.



Free access to the digital edition of the magazine was given soon after the first lockdown started, and more than 1,850 visits were made. Digital subscriptions reached their highest ever point in 2020 accounting for 10% of subscribers.

The result is that *Reform* has been one of the ways that the Communications Team has helped different parts of the URC stay in touch and reflect on the situation we find ourselves in, and we have been glad to hear how this is appreciated. Articles discussing the challenges and opportunities of online church seem to have particularly engaged readers.

In October the subscriptions will be brought back in house, which will halve the costs of database management and subscriptions renewals compared to using a third-party company.

The magazine has also stopped using plastic wrapping. Subscriptions have gone down by a few percentage points as they have in previous years.

## iChurch

iChurch is the low-cost website platform for churches to set up and maintain websites quickly and easily. Dan Morrell and Reuben Watt have been helping iChurch web managers with technical queries, as well as offering training, support via email and on Facebook.

The billing remains at £9.99 per month, cheaper than many other church website providers, and the basic website set-up cost is £150. Visit [www.interactivechurch.org.uk](http://www.interactivechurch.org.uk) for details.





# Paper C2

## Digital Charter and Social Media guidelines

### Communications Committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Peter Stevenson (Convenor) <a href="mailto:revdpete@btinternet.com">revdpete@btinternet.com</a> Andy Jackson (Head of Communications) <a href="mailto:andy.jackson@urc.org.uk">andy.jackson@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	N/A
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Resolution 14</b> <b>General Assembly commends the new Digital Charter and updated Social Media Guidelines to all who engage with the Church digitally.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To agree best practice for all who produce and manage websites and social media channels for the life and work of the URC.
<b>Main points</b>	To be an example of a denomination that can be safe, respectful and dignified at all times, even when there are differences of opinion.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Papers C1 and C2, Mission Council, March 2020; Communications Committee report, General Assembly 2020; Papers C1, C2 and C3, Mission Council, March 2021.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Consultation has taken place with Safeguarding, URC Youth, the Communications Committee and teams at United Reformed Church House.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Safer engagement inside and outside the URC through the website and social media channels.

#### Digital Charter

This is a voluntary pledge to encourage everyone engaging with the United Reformed Church digitally, on all channels and at all levels, that the digital environment is a positive place for conversations to happen, and that those conversations should be positive, safe, respectful and dignified.

The conversations we have on our social media accounts can positively help change someone's newsfeed (what they see on social media).

Whether you're a member of clergy or a churchgoer, we all have different views and areas of interests that affect what we find interesting and engage with online. Comments made and posts shared online have the potential to go viral in this country and around the world very quickly.

We want people to enjoy online conversations and be safe and respectful. There are a number of ways the digital world can be as fruitful as when we speak in person.

- **Safeguarding** – social media and the internet needs to be a safe place for all. If you have any concerns about the wellbeing of children, young people or vulnerable adults, please contact your local safeguarding coordinator, or your Synod Safeguarding Officer.
- **Honesty and truth** – check what you post is fair and factual.
- **Considerate** – the world and its diversity can be both interesting and challenging. We are not going to agree with everyone, nor will everyone agree us. But let's be constructive in how we engage online.
- **Welcome** – let's be welcoming in the language we use, and not use words that exclude others or use those that people outside the Church might not relate to.
- **Inspiration** – use social media in way that engages and attracts others to our faith. After all, we represent Christ.
- **Community** – as one Church, we have many brothers and sisters. Let's treat those around us as such.
- **Agree** to the United Reformed Church's social media guidelines.

### **Social media guidelines**

**These guidelines for social media have been updated and written to provide encouragement and guidance for the appropriate use of social media. Its aim is to encourage online conversations that reflect the values of the United Reformed Church (URC).**

When used well, social media is an effective tool in communicating the Gospel, our work as Christians, and the life of the URC. It is interactive, immediate and offers the opportunity for forming and deepening relationships locally and globally.

The URC has national social media accounts on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

These guidelines are written specifically for all users who engage with the URC's national social media channels, those run by its 13 synods (Northern, North Western, Mersey, Yorkshire, East Midlands, West Midlands, Eastern, South Western, Wessex, Thames North, Southern, the National Synods of Wales and Scotland), those managed by our local congregations, those that use the URC name, logo and brand, and those that purport to portray, represent or advance the purposes of the URC.

By engaging with URC national social media accounts, you agree to:

- **Be safe.** The safety of children, young people and adults at risk must be maintained. The URC has an online safety policy. If you have any concerns, ask your local church safeguarding coordinator, or your Synod Safeguarding Officer
- **Be respectful.** Never make any comments, create or share posts that could be considered discriminatory in any way, defamatory or amount to harassment
- **Be kind.** As said in Mark 12:31, treat people how you would wish to be treated. If making a criticism or critique, consider your words, tone, and how you would speak in person. If receiving criticism or critique, make a judgement call between an expressed view and an abusive comment
- **Be honest.** Be credible, fair and honest
- **Take responsibility.** You are accountable for the things you say, do and write. If you're not sure, don't post it
- **Be a good ambassador.** Personal and professional life can easily become blurred online. You are a representative of the URC, and for Christ. Think before you post. If managing an account that includes the URC name or logo, eg a church, think about appointing at least two people to monitor and manage your social media account
- **Credit others.** Acknowledge the work of others by giving credit where it is due. Many things, like pictures, are subject to copyright, and permission to use needs to be sought. The Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI) website is an excellent source of information on copyright law. Take care in what you publish, and question the source of any content you are considering posting
- **Follow the rules.** Social media platforms have their own terms and conditions. Abide by them and report anything you believe breaks the policies of the respective company by using the method it has outlined.

### **How will we respond to people who breach our social media community guidelines?**

In relation to the national social media accounts, the URC communications team may take action towards any post deemed unsuitable, offensive or inflammatory. This may include deleting comments, blocking users, or reporting comments as inappropriate.

### **Who do I speak to for further advice?**

If you have a safeguarding concern, please follow these policies and procedures, or use the contacts above.

# Paper D1

## The new URC Learning Hub

### Education and Learning Committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Secretary for Education and Learning: <a href="mailto:jenny.mills@urc.org.uk">jenny.mills@urc.org.uk</a> Instructional Designer: <a href="mailto:anne.hewling@urc.org.uk">anne.hewling@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	None.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Update on the URC Learning Hub.
<b>Main points</b>	The URC Learning Hub is the new home for all the URC blended learning and self-access online learning programmes.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Education and Learning report Mission Council 15 to 17 March 2021 Paper D1 (4).
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Stepwise and those using the previous URACLE storage space.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	Already covered in budget: eLearn Design for hosting and tech support; minor increase only as it consolidates two previous spaces for resource storage and access.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Is Moodle based and a universally understood resource space.

1. The URC Learning Hub is the new home for all the URC blended learning and self-access online learning programmes. It is an updated and expanded version of the platform that has successfully delivered the Stepwise programme over the last couple of years.
2. The system is based on software used by many educational institutions, including the URC Resource Centres for Learning. The move to the new Hub is a response to new technical options, user expectations, and accessibility requirements. Also, the need for a more flexible system than URACLE, and one that is easily adjustable to changing needs (expansion or reduction) and is thus futureproof.

3. The system is currently managed within Education and Learning by the Instructional Designer who has overall responsibility for maintenance of the Hub and liaison with our specialist external technical support provider: eLearn Design.
4. Access to the Hub is available to all URC members. Access is usually granted through registration for particular programmes, eg Stepwise, or the Church Leadership Programme. However, anyone within the URC can apply for access, and within the Hub they will find some courses and programmes which offer open-access, self-paced content, eg foundation level Safeguarding. Other programmes are delivered by a combination of self-access online materials and in person group work and are available via a simple sign-up process, eg Stepwise. materials that are purely informational, reports and other resources that are not part of a blended or self-contained self-access programme, will not be stored in the Hub, although certain resources for the EM2 continuing education programme and core training materials used by Training and Development Officers will be located there.
5. Details of all programmes housed in the Hub are available in the Hub, and will be available on the URC website, and on request from Education and Learning. It is anticipated that most people will enrol in the Hub by enrolling in one of the programmes it houses. Programmes currently in the Hub, and / or under development are:
  - Stepwise – Faith-filled Life
  - Stepwise – Faith-fuelled Leadership
  - Stepwise – Faith-filled Confidence
  - Stepwise – Faith-filled Community
  - Stepwise – Faith-filled Worship
  - Church Leadership Programme
  - Exploring Eldership
  - Safeguarding.
6. Each programme within the Hub has a co-ordinator who is the contact point for that programme within the Hub.
7. Programme Co-ordinators:
  - enrol participants into the specific programme for which they have responsibility
  - monitor enrolment and, where necessary, mark completion (possibly issuing a completion certificate if required)
  - highlight and chase non-completion
  - may unenroll participants (eg if they withdraw from a specific programme), although main Hub registration will endure until a participant is no longer in URC, or otherwise no longer in a position to use the Hub resources.

Co-ordinators will also advise participants on straightforward login enquiries, eg lost passwords, but will refer complicated user queries to ID, along with queries about content, and requests from users or authors for site changes or development.
8. Proposals to effect substantial changes to uploaded content, or to develop new programmes will be actioned through the Secretary for Education and Learning.

# Paper D2

## The Way Forward: one year on Education and Learning Committee

### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Mr Alan Yates <a href="mailto:alan.yates@urc.org.uk">alan.yates@urc.org.uk</a> The Revd Jenny Mills <a href="mailto:jenny.mills@urc.org.uk">jenny.mills@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	None.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Review of the strategy for the Education and Learning committee agreed by GA 2020.
<b>Main points</b>	Much of the strategy has been completed or is in process. The paper identifies the remaining priorities.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	The Way Forward presented by the Education and Learning Committee, Mission Council, July 2020.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	N/A

### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	None specific to this review process.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None specific to this review process.



## **The Way Forward: one year on**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Way Forward paper presented to General Assembly in 2020 highlighted the significant and valuable ongoing work of Education and Learning (E&L). It proposed a number of new tasks to enable the work of E&L to be more fitting and consistent with the denomination in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. As such, the strategy did not represent a major shift, but a development which built on the existing strengths.
- 1.2 In particular, the paper continued to endorse that the key goal of the Education and Learning Committee, that was agreed through Resolution 51 at General Assembly 2005, is:

*‘to cultivate a church committed to life-long learning where there is integrated education and training offered to the whole people of God’.*

- 1.3 Seven core sets of tasks were identified, and summarised in a high-level plan.

### **2. Assessment**

- 2.1 Significant progress has been made for each of these tasks. The assessment is shown in Table 1, together with any further steps that have been identified.

### **3. Conclusion**

- 3.1 In pursuing this agenda we have not found that any significant elements have been omitted from the original plans. Additionally, what we have learnt in the process will enable us to ‘flesh out’ the 2005 goal, particularly as our understanding of what the denomination expects from ‘integrated’ education and learning improves.

**Table 1 – Assessment of the Way Forward strategy for Education and Learning**

PRIORITIES	CORE TASKS	NEXT STEPS (as of May 20)	WHEN (initial tasks)	ASSESSMENT	FURTHER STEPS (as of May 21)
<b>Current work</b>	EM1/2/3, Stepwise, RCL support, Discipleship Development Strategy (DDS)	Ensure resourcing, both of existing work and the new strategic projects, is sufficient and priorities are set. Maintain momentum on Stepwise. Identify next steps for DDS	Ongoing	Ongoing work was well resourced. EM3 funding increased for 2021. Handover to new Secretary was effective (despite Covid-19), with thanks to previous Secretary for detailed notes. Stepwise development as planned; shift to on-line working smooth and effective. Stepwise offered as possible pathway for training Locally Recognised Worship Leaders. DDS updated and simplified. DD Funding simplified and extended. EM2 revised to meet current needs.	Review resourcing of EM3 prior to retirement of project officer and absorbing her workload into current team's work. Establish DDF process. Review Stepwise resourcing following initial completion of all streams, build in continuing development and begin evaluation process. Establish new URC Learning Hub to house online learning opportunities. Develop process and policy for LRWL (with Ministries).
<b>Carbon neutrality</b>	Green Charter, carbon tracker, carbon offsetting, meeting venue assessment (together with other committees)	Finalise and publish Green Charter, develop carbon tracker, develop proposals for carbon offsetting	31/12/2020	Green Charter finalised and approved. Carbon tracker developed and tested, but not used as no face-to-face meetings have been held since January 2020.	Develop proposals for carbon offsetting. Develop meeting venue assessment process with other core users.
<b>Walking the Way</b>	Support WtW Steering Group	Integrate WtW and DDS. Identify how E&L might enhance our support of WtW.	30/09/2020	WtW project officer fully involved in the revision of the DDS and DDF. Supported the review of WtW.	Take guidance from WtW on how E&L can help to embed better discipleship within the denomination.
<b>Defining integration</b>	Define what 'success' looks like, Involve Synods and RCLs, Identify integration drivers and barriers	Define what successful integration looks like	31/12/2020	Major denomination-wide consultation initiated to define integration from an E&L perspective.	Prepare proposals to better integrate E&L in line with the consultation
<b>RCL collaboration</b>	Establish where further collaboration is valuable, evaluate ecumenical and governance needs, prepare change plans	Develop a vision of how the RCLs could develop in the future	31/12/2020	The RCLs submitted contributions to the integration consultation. The RCLs are continuing to develop informal 'joined-up' ways of working. Increased communication between E and L, Ministries and RCL Principals.	Formal collaboration proposals for the RCLs will be developed as part of the Integration Consultation process. Continued encouragement for 'organic' collaboration. Introduction of AALP training through RCLs, review and offer funding.
<b>Key partners</b>	Working with Ministries and C&YW Committees, Synods and Ecumenical partners	Develop more effective collaboration within Discipleship dept. and continue meetings with relevant Synod teams	31/12/2020	Joined-up working with Ministries and CYW is now well developed, as evidenced by joint papers and joint initiatives including the development of the Worship Leader and Lay Preacher pathways and the Lent Packs.	Consider ways in which Synods (especially with their people responsible for E&L) can be better integrated with the E&L and the RCLs, will be (considered as) part of the integration Consultation.
<b>Ways of working</b>	Use of video conferencing, Style and frequency of meetings, Committee size and composition, budgetary management	Finalise E&L approach to virtual meetings and its impact on meetings schedule. Develop proposals for committee size and composition.	30/09/2020	Video conferenced meetings now in place and working well. Frequency and style of meetings (post Covid) agreed with only one face-to-face meeting each year. Committee size number reduced from 25 to 18.	Work is ongoing to look at the budget and the balance of E & L spending patterns.

# Paper D-H1

## The process for becoming a Locally Recognised Worship Leader or an Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher

Education and Learning and Ministries Committees

### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Alan Yates <a href="mailto:alan.yates@urc.org.uk">alan.yates@urc.org.uk</a> Paul Whittle <a href="mailto:moderator@urcscotland.org.uk">moderator@urcscotland.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	For information.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Following on from paper H1 and H2 at Mission Council March 2021, this paper details the process for those who wish to become a Locally Recognised Worship Leader or Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher.
<b>Main points</b>	Appendix 1 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sets out the different processes for Locally Recognised Worship Leader or Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher.</li> <li>2. Puts in place measures to ensure best practice for supporting those who wish to become a Locally Recognised Worship Leader or an Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher.</li> </ol>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper H1 (Mission Council March 2021) Paper H2 (Mission Council March 2021).
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Lay Preaching Commissioners / Advocates.

### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	None.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None.

## Introduction

1. The Education and Learning and Ministries Committees reassured Mission Council at its meeting in March 2021 that a third paper would be brought to General Assembly detailing the process for embarking on learning and training to become a Locally Recognised Worship Leader (LRWL) or Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher (AALP).
2. Whilst recognising worship leading and lay preaching as a ministry, the major addition to the previous process is the introduction of an application form, a church meeting reference form, the minister reference form and a personal reference form, as well as a DBS check, to be completed prior to the start of training. This is in keeping with a safer recruitment process for other roles.
3. The process in Appendix One outlines the expected routes for becoming a Locally Recognised Worship Leader or an Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher.

## Appendix One

### The process to become a Locally Recognised Worship Leader

1. The candidate approaches their minister / interim moderator to indicate they are interested in worship leading and / or lay preaching.
2. The candidate contacts the Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner.
3. The Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner sends out
  - a) The application form
  - b) Minister's reference form (or IM or Elder)
  - c) Church Meeting reference form
  - d) One other personal reference form
  - e) An outline of the process.
4. The Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner receives the application and additional paperwork. If all in order for LRWL:
  - 4.1 The Lay Preaching Commissioner passes the name of the candidate onto the Synod Training Officer (or equivalent) and puts in place a mentor to reflect with them and offer support.
  - 4.2 A DBS is sought through the local church and checked by the Ministries Office.
  - 4.3 The Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner brings the name of the candidate to the appropriate Synod Committee them to undertake either:
    - 4.3.1 a) Stepwise Faith Filled life and Faith Filled Worship,
    - b) a portfolioor
    - 4.3.2 an approved synod course.
5. The candidate embarks on
  - a) Stepwise (Faith Filled Life and Faith Filled Worship) or

- b) relevant synod course for Locally Recognised Worship Leaders.
6. On completion of the course for LRWL:
- 6.1 The Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner brings the name of the candidate to the appropriate committee, having checked they have completed all the necessary steps for completion including a final presentation or 1,000-word essay from a list of topics and an assessed service.
  - 6.2 The Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner will inform the Ministries Office, who will send the relevant documentation to the candidate and to the Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner for completion.
  - 6.3 The Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner organises with the candidate and the minister / interim moderator a commissioning service marking their start as an LRWL.

### **The process to become an Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher**

1. The candidate approaches their minister / interim moderator to indicate they are interested in worship leading and / or lay preaching.
2. The candidate contacts the Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner.
3. The Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner sends out:
  - f) the application form
  - g) Minister's reference form (or IM or Elder)
  - h) Church Meeting reference form
  - i) One other personal reference form
  - j) An outline of the process.
4. The Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner receives the application and additional paperwork. If all in order for AALP:
  - a) The Lay Preaching commissioner sends the forms outlined in 3. for AALP to the Ministries Office for the candidate to be enrolled into the appropriate RCL
  - b) A DBS is sought through the local church and checked by the Ministries Office
  - c) The synod offers a mentor arrange by the Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner / advocate
    - a) Reflect with them on their course
    - b) Be present when they lead worship (parts of worship) and feed back to them
    - c) Reflect on extracts from journal with student to help them develop as reflective practitioners
  - d) The candidate attends the course entitled 'You're Welcome – exploring the Ethos and History of the URC'
  - e) The candidate can apply to Education and Learning for funding for Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers.
  - f) The Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner liaises with RCL about safeguarding, funerals and sacraments training either already provided to the student, or the synod may prefer to offer such training if they already have training planned

- g) The candidate selects the modules as outlined in paper H2 Mission Council (March 2021).
- 5. The candidate embarks on the Assembly Accredited Lay Preaching Course at the nominated RCL.
- 6. On completion of the course for an AALP:
  - a) The RCL informs the Ministries Office who will send the relevant documentation to the candidate and to the Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner for completion
  - b) The Ministries office will check that the Disclosure certificate is in order and issue the Accreditation Certificate and badge to the Lay preaching Commissioner and the annual Education and Learning training grant letter to the candidate
  - c) The Lay Preaching Commissioner organises with the candidates and their minister / local church a Service of Accreditation. The service of Accreditation can be for a group of Lay Preachers.



# Paper E1

## Report of ongoing work

### Equalities Committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Anne Lewitt: <a href="mailto:aelewitt@gmail.com">aelewitt@gmail.com</a> David Salsbury: <a href="mailto:david.salsbury@urc.org.uk">david.salsbury@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	For information and discussion.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To share with General Assembly a summary of the committee's work since it last reported in 2020.
<b>Main points</b>	To promote a culture of inclusion and equalities within the life of the URC and to challenge practices which are exclusive of the diversity within the denomination.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	<a href="http://urc.org.uk/our-work/equalities.html">urc.org.uk/our-work/equalities.html</a>
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries (Mission), other General Assembly committees through linked observers; URC Youth Executive.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	None.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	

## 1. Purpose and remit

- 1.1 The Equalities Committee exists to encourage and facilitate the development of equalities throughout the United Reformed Church. It has a very wide remit: to remind the URC that equality is enshrined in its theology, life and work; and also, where necessary, to challenge the practice of the URC to that end. Further, the committee also aims to promote the URC's contribution to equality in the wider life of society.
- 1.2 With such a remit, it is essential for the Equalities Committee to collaborate with other committees, groups and individuals, both within and beyond the URC, in order to share ideas and best practice, and to support positive initiatives.

- 1.3 We continue to be encouraged by the evidence that issues of equality and diversity are taken seriously by many within the URC. We have, however, also been concerned to hear of instances where it seems that equality is not being actively pursued or understood, and we seek ways to develop greater awareness in these circumstances.

## **2. Committee membership and meetings**

- 2.1 Having been interested in the potential of virtual meetings, or meetings where some members are able to be present and contribute virtually, our committee meetings this year have allowed us to experience this more fully. All have been held as scheduled online, and members have been able to attend from home. We are experimenting with meeting at different times during the week, to make it possible for people with different needs and availability to be present and contribute.
- 2.2 The committee has been strengthened by the addition of four new members this year, allowing us to benefit from a greater range of experience and perspective. This also makes it possible to liaise with more committees and other parts of the church's structure and work.

## **3. Online meetings and inclusion**

- 3.1 Conducting meetings online – whether committee meetings, huge meetings of General Assembly and Mission Council, or small meetings of local church elders – has been a feature for many this year. It seems that this will continue, as virtual, or partially virtual meetings will still provide advantages for some, in terms of travel, health, or other personal circumstances. Similar points could be made about worship, although the committee has not looked explicitly at that.
- 3.2 As we have all grappled with the practicalities, and gradually worked out some best practice, it has become clear that there are issues of equal access and opportunity which are implicit not just in the fact that a meeting is online, but also in the details of its conduct. Barriers to inclusion are different in an online context, and different considerations and techniques are required. The committee has considered this at every meeting this year and held an extra meeting specially to look at some concerns. We considered producing guidelines, but felt that with many already around, that wouldn't be helpful at present.
- 3.3 As with any other equalities issue, it is vital to be aware of who is being (or feeling) excluded, and why. This may only become apparent with experience. Over the months it is obvious that some people have felt excluded, or much less comfortable, as meetings have moved online. Conversely, others have been enabled to join in with things they were unable to before. As we move on now to a new stage, it is vital that we continue to ask, 'who is uncomfortable, and who is feeling excluded – and what can we do about it'? Else we risk leaving certain groups of people behind.

## **4. Diverse gender identities and pastoral care**

- 4.1 Issues of gender identity continue to be a source of great concern for the committee, as it is clear that more understanding and affirmation of trans people, within the church and beyond it, is long overdue. Copies of the booklet 'Diverse Gender Identities and Pastoral Care', produced originally by the Church of

Scotland, have been obtained to send to all serving ministers and CRCWs. This mailing was delayed by the temporary closure of Church House, but should be complete before General Assembly. We hope that the format of the booklet will encourage and enable conversations within local congregations, with an emphasis on pastoral care.

## **5. Diversity within the church's committee structure**

- 5.1 The General assembly in 2018 asked us to seek ways to support the work of the nominations committee to encourage diversity in appointments, and to further equalities within the life of the church. A member of our committee now attends meetings of the nominations committee, but this issue remains a continuing challenge, which has only been exacerbated by the nature of the committee structure, which appears to us to be unsustainable due to the number of committee members required. This situation has been deeply frustrating to those attempting to enable greater diversity, but hopefully it will be improved following the General Secretary's review. Meanwhile, we will continue to work with the nominations committee to do what we can.

## **6. Collaborative working**

- 6.1 We were pleased to see the Children's and Youth Work inclusive infant feeding policy approved, having ourselves been involved in initiating some of the work – an example of useful and productive collaboration. We were also particularly happy to see that department's work on 'Marks of an inclusive, intercultural and intergenerational church', as it ties in so closely with our concerns.

## **7. Supporting the URC's commitment to anti-racism**

- 7.1 Having seen and commented on the anti-racism resolution from Mission Committee which went to Mission Council in November 2020, we were pleased to see it passed. We spent some time discussing the points raised in the paper, and hoped that further work would arise from it. We do, however, have concerns that the words may not be followed by adequate action, and have heard of racist attitudes that are alive and well within the URC. As part of our commitment to anti-racism we bring a resolution which we hope will lead to the URC taking affirmative action in addressing the underrepresentation of black and ethnic minority people who serve the church in Assembly-appointed posts.

# Paper E2

## Affirmative action towards an anti-racist church

Equalities Committee

### Basic information

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<b>Action required</b>	Decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p>General Assembly instructs the equalities committee to form a small group to:</p> <p><b>Resolution 15</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explore how the URC might implement a policy of ‘affirmative action’ to address the persistent underrepresentation of Black and ethnic minority people in Assembly-appointed posts (see table in appendix one).</li> </ol> <p><b>Resolution 16</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Specifically explore the possibilities and practicalities of a recruitment policy which actively engages with, and addresses, the current racial imbalance in Assembly-appointed posts.</li> </ol> <p><b>Resolution 17</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Explore the possibilities and practicalities, including any related costs, of an experience and skills development programme equipping participants for Assembly-appointed posts.</li> </ol> <p><b>Resolution 18</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. To bring recommendations arising from the work of the small group to General Assembly 2022.</li> </ol>

### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To act on the commitment to becoming an actively anti-racist Church by addressing the racial imbalance in Assembly-appointed posts and other positions of influence in the URC.
<b>Main points</b>	The formation of a small group under the Equalities Committee remit to explore possibilities for practical action addressing the underrepresentation of people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds in senior positions in the Church. Equalities Committee to bring recommendations arising from the group’s work to General Assembly 2022.

<p><b>Previous relevant documents</b></p>	<p>Mission Council Resolution G2, Nov 2020 – Towards being an anti-racist church – is the main document to which this paper directly responds.                  Previous relevant resolutions include:                  1994: Commitment to listen to the voices of people of different cultural backgrounds, and adoption of an Equal Opportunities Policy;                  2005: URC declared itself a Multicultural Church, welcoming all cultures and ethnicities in worship, witness and service;                  2012: Multicultural Church, Intercultural Habit – building on the earlier ‘Multicultural Church’ understanding.</p>
<p><b>Consultation has taken place with...</b></p>	<p>General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary (Mission), Mission Committee (convenor), URC Racial Justice Networks (Racial Justice Advocates; Cascades of Grace); Black URC ministers, the Synod Moderators, ecumenical partners including Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, Churches Together in England, the Racial Justice Advocacy Forum, the Methodist Church.</p>

**Summary of impact**

<p><b>Financial</b></p>	<p>Any (small group meeting) costs will be covered by the Global and Intercultural Ministries budget</p>
<p><b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b></p>	<p>The URC is represented in various ecumenical bodies where the topic of anti-racism and anti-racist initiatives and practices are high on the agenda for all members.</p>

In its nearly 50-year history, the United Reformed Church has only ever had white individuals serve in its General Secretariat. It has had only one person from an ethnic minority background as a Moderator of General Assembly. There has been only one person from an ethnic minority background serve as a Synod Moderator. The Synod Moderators gathering will soon revert to being a completely white space. This imbalance is mirrored in the convenorship of Assembly committees. What does this picture say about our Church? What message does it convey to black and ethnic minority members – and white members – of the URC? What does it say to wider society, to our global partners, and to the world, about who we are and how we operate?

Some people may ponder whether these dynamics are simply coincidence – the people who have been appointed through the Church’s appointment processes are the people whom God has equipped and called to serve; but why would God equip and call only white individuals? Why would the God who has repeatedly opened our eyes to issues of racial justice, equity and equality, prompting the URC to adopt numerous resolutions relating to racial justice, also choose for the URC to be distinctly monochrome in its leadership? By what rationale would the God who has inspired people of all cultures and colours to find belonging in the URC, who has inspired us to declare ourselves ‘a multicultural Church with an intercultural habit’, also say to our black and ethnic minority members ‘so far, but no farther’?

God undoubtedly calls and equips, but the processes which discern and appoint are undeniably human. Even with our best efforts we, and our processes, remain imperfect and fallible. Consciously and subconsciously, we recognise and replicate what we understand to be the norm. Systems, processes and groups established and populated by white people will almost certainly reproduce systems, processes and groups populated by white people – unless something actively intervenes to break the cycle. That intervention is what is being proposed here.

Mission Council Resolution G2, November 2020, committed the URC to journey from ‘not racist’ to being actively *anti-racist*. The resolution speaks of ‘identifying barriers within all parts of [the URC’s] life – including local, synod and Assembly structures, leadership and processes’. It goes on to task the Mission Committee to ‘explore and develop initiatives to address the barriers within our structures, theology and relationships, and to develop resources to equip and empower the United Reformed Church to begin the process of education and change in all parts of its life.’ The resolution was adopted with 100% support, and has been welcomed by a wide breadth of URC members. Even so, many voices – both black and ethnic minority and white voices – question, ‘Haven’t we been here before?’ and ‘Doesn’t this just repeat previous commitments which have not been acted upon?’ There is a real sense that this time, we **MUST** make it count!

The issue of underrepresentation of black and ethnic minority people in Assembly-appointed posts – commonly perceived as being positions of senior leadership and influence in our Church – is glaringly apparent. It has caused untold pain over many years for a significant part of our body. For many of our members, it casts a heavy shadow across our Church, and stands as a barrier to unhindered healthy relationships. It needs to be actively and courageously addressed. The measures proposed here represent a hugely important early step in living out our anti-racist commitment. It tells those who have been hurting for too long that their pain has been seen, and that we are serious about seeking to engender change.

This resolution proposes ‘affirmative action’. It requests the creation of a small group tasked with exploring practical measures to actively address the racial imbalance in Assembly-appointed posts. It requests attention, specifically addressing, but not limited to, recruitment policies and the development of a programme to equip participants, both ordained and lay, with the experience and skills needed for senior leadership roles – whether in the General Secretariat, Assembly appointments, or as Assembly committee convenors. What is being proposed will undoubtedly make some members feel uncomfortable, but that ‘discomfort’ needs to be held against the backdrop of pain with which others have been living for decades. This work is not just urgent, but overdue.

The United Reformed Church is not alone in its wrestling with these issues. We are part of various ecumenical bodies and we are engaging with partners from different Church traditions – all of whom sense that we are in a Kairos moment regarding racial injustice. We are working towards practical responses – to be made together and in our separate denominations – to effect the changes to which we believe the Church is called.

Whilst the URC’s work towards becoming an anti-racist Church was delegated to the Mission Committee, it seemed appropriate for consideration of the specific issues highlighted in this paper to be undertaken by the equalities committee. In practice, this work will undoubtedly involve consultation and collaboration across the breadth of our Church. This seems quite fitting, given the following assertion in the preamble of the



anti-racist Church resolution: this commitment is neither an initiative nor a project, but a pledge for our future existence as one body with many parts – valuing the presence and gifts of all our [members] equally, and affirming each individual as being equally made in the image of God.

# Appendix One

## Assembly-appointed posts as agreed at GA July 2014 – updated General Assembly July 2018

To avoid confusion, it is helpful to note that people are appointed to Assembly-appointed posts in three ways. They may be appointed by Assembly itself; they may be appointed by Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly; and, in most cases they may be confirmed by appointing groups, as authorised in resolution 16 of the 2010 Assembly:

“General Assembly agrees that the power to appoint Assembly staff members, other than officers of Assembly and Synod Moderators, shall be delegated to appointing groups duly appointed so long as appropriate processes and employment and related criteria have been met. All such appointments shall have effect from the date determined by the appointing group and shall be reported to the next meeting of Mission Council or General Assembly.”

	Minister of Word and Sacraments of the URC	Member of the URC	Minister of Word and Sacraments of the URC; or of a church belonging to WCRC; or DECC; or CWM	Member of the URC; or member of a church belonging to WCRC; or DECC; or CWM	Member of the URC; or member of a church belonging to WCRC; DECC; CWM; ACTS; CTE; Cytun; FCG; or CTBI
General Secretary	✓				
Deputy General Secretary Discipleship				✓	
Deputy General Secretary Mission				✓	
Deputy General Secretary Administration and Resources					✓
Head of Children's and Youth Work Development					✓
Secretary for Church and Society					✓
Church Related Community Worker Development Worker(S)					✓
Head of Communications					✓
Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations		✓			
Secretary for Education and Learning					✓
Secretary for Ministries	✓				
Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministry					✓
Editor, Reform					✓
National Rural Officer					✓
Synod Moderators	✓				
Principal of Westminster College				✓	
Members of Westminster College Senatus					✓

ACTS - Action of Churches Together in Scotland  
 CTBI – Churches Together in Britain and Ireland  
 CTE - Churches Together in England  
 Cytun - Churches Together in Wales

CWM – Council for World Mission  
 DECC – Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council  
 FCG - Free Churches Group  
 WCRC – World Communion of Reformed Churches

Officers of Assembly: the serving moderators of General Assembly, the General Secretary, the Clerk, the Treasurer, and the Convener of the Assembly arrangements committee

Source: Appendix to Paper 'O' – HRAG report to Mission Council Nov 2018

# Paper G1

## General Report 2020 to 2021

### Finance Committee

#### Basic information

Contact name and email address	Ian Hardie, Treasurer: <a href="mailto:ianzhardie@googlemail.com">ianzhardie@googlemail.com</a> John Piper, Deputy Treasurer: <a href="mailto:john.piper30@ntlworld.com">john.piper30@ntlworld.com</a>
Action required	For information.
Draft resolution(s)	<b>None.</b>

#### Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To report on the central budgets and other finance related areas of work over the past year.
Main points	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Despite the pandemic, central budgeted funds were in financial surplus in 2020;</li> <li>2. We continue to monitor the impact of coronavirus restrictions on our finances at all levels of the church, expecting it to be some time before we are able to assess what the Church's future financial state will be;</li> <li>3. We are monitoring renewed negotiation with our contractors over costs related to rectifying additional problems following the refurbishment of Church House; and</li> <li>4. The financial support given by the Legacy and Church Building funds during 2020 is reported.</li> </ol> <p>Separate papers cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• presentation of the URC Trust Report and Financial Statements for 2020</li> <li>• the future of both the Ministers' Pension Fund and the final salary staff pension scheme</li> <li>• progress in discussions about tackling the deficit in the URC Ministers' Pension Fund.</li> </ul>
Previous relevant documents	Finance Committee papers for General Assembly 2020.
Consultation has taken place with...	Synod Treasurers; The Pension Committee; DGS (Administration and Resources).

#### Summary of impact

Financial	Nothing new in the report itself.
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External (e.g. ecumenical)	
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## Financial results

The appendix to this paper sets out the 2020 income and expenditure account of the URC central fund – the Ministry and Mission (M&M) fund – and the 2021 budget agreed at the November 2020 Mission Council.

At the time of writing last year’s report to General Assembly we were uncertain of the extent to which measures to counter the coronavirus would limit the ability of churches to support the M&M fund to the extent they had pledged. Accordingly, we asked committee convenors and Church House budget holders to look for ways of deferring or reducing expenditure.

In fact, as a result of the resilience of patterns of giving to local churches, the determination of most congregations to support the central fund, and the financial support which a number of synods were able to offer their churches and / or the fund, M&M contributions were a little more than £0.5million down on our £18.5 million budget expectations, with our total income being reduced by just a little under £750,000 compared to the budget. At the same time, our budgeted expenditure was cut by over £900,000, leaving the fund as a whole with a small surplus of almost £95,000. The Finance Committee has written letters of thanks to church congregations, church treasurers, synod officials and committee convenors / budget holders to congratulate all of them on the part they have played in helping us through this unprecedented year in such a manner.

In view of the ongoing financial uncertainties facing the church at all levels, it was extremely difficult for the Finance Committee to have confidence in its budget projections for 2021. Nonetheless, we persuaded Mission Council to adopt the budget as set out in the final column of the appendix, despite the uncertainties about future income. The projected outcome is a deficit in the year of £358,000, which will be met from the URC Trust’s reserves.

Last year, the pandemic led to delays in completing the audit of the 2019 accounts which, in the event, were only signed off by the URC Trust in September 2020. A separate paper for this General Assembly describes the position re the 2020 trustees’ report and financial statements.

## Church House refurbishment

We were pleased to be able to report last year that a satisfactory settlement had been achieved with the construction firm to recover costs arising from damp in the lower ground floor of the building following the work undertaken in 2017. Unfortunately, another area of damp has been found and discussions with the construction firm have been renewed. The Finance Committee receives regular reports on the progress of those discussions.

## Legacy Fund

Bequests to the United Reformed Church which are not specifically earmarked for other purposes are placed in the legacy fund, administered by the Finance Committee but with the involvement of the Deputy General Secretary (Mission). Currently, the fund is in a position to award grants totaling around £150,000 a year, though less than £20,000 was

disbursed during 2020 – no doubt in part because many innovative mission projects were put on hold following the pandemic.

### **Church Building Fund**

Similarly, grants made from the church building fund via the inter-synod resource sharing process were down to £53,000 although the fund had around £140,000 to disburse in support of churches undertaking certain types of building development.

### **Ministers' Pension Fund (MPF)**

The Finance Committee has no role in overseeing the MPF, which is under the trusteeship of a separate URC trust company. We do, however, have a fundamental interest in how it is performing, since the Church is the 'sponsor' in relation to the scheme 'employees' and is responsible for making good any deficit of scheme assets in relation to its liabilities. The latest triennial valuation of the scheme took place as at 1 January 2021. The final outcome is not yet known, but it looks as if the size of the deficit is not quite as large as we had expected but still very substantial. A separate paper outlines the state of discussions to address this and subsequent deficits.

### **The URC Pension Committee**

The Pension Committee is a sub-committee of Finance Committee. It oversees on behalf of the URC the Final Salary Pension Scheme, mostly for lay staff, which is under the trusteeship of an external trust company. It also monitors on behalf of the church the actions of the trustees of the MPF.

For the reasons given in a separate paper prepared for this General Assembly, the Pensions Committee and the Finance Committee are jointly recommending that General Assembly takes a decision in principle to close both current URC pensions schemes and to work on finalising good alternative schemes for both our ministers and employees, with the hope of introducing changes from 1 January 2023.

# Appendix

## THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

### Ministry & Mission Fund<sup>1</sup>

Draft Income and Expenditure account to 31 December 2020

	2019	2020			2021
	Actual	Actual	Budget	Variance	Budget
	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Income</b>					
<b>Ministry and Mission contributions</b>	(18,816,761)	(17,908,087)	(18,476,500)	(568,413)	(17,442,285)
<b>Pensions - additional funding</b>	(537,976)	(88,031)	(300,000)	(211,969)	(300,000)
<b>Investment and other income</b>					
Dividends	(931,795)	(946,774)	(925,000)	21,774	(925,000)
Donations	(8,908)	(8,824)	0	8,824	0
Specific legacies	(5,000)	(20,000)	0	20,000	0
Grants/Income - Memorial Hall Trust/Fund	(290,742)	(299,823)	(288,000)	11,823	(288,000)
Net other interest & bank charges	(10,983)	(5,729)	(8,000)	(2,271)	0
Other income, including property rentals	(146,413)	(155,972)	(162,400)	(6,428)	(167,300)
	(1,393,839)	(1,437,122)	(1,383,400)	53,722	(1,380,300)
<b>Total income</b>	<b>(20,748,577)</b>	<b>(19,433,241)</b>	<b>(20,159,900)</b>	<b>(726,659)</b>	<b>(19,122,585)</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>					
<b>Discipleship Dept.</b>					
<b>Ministry</b>					
Local and special ministries and CRCWs	13,253,105	13,482,999	13,698,000	215,001	12,910,700
Synod Moderators - stipends and expenses	670,888	534,604	739,000	204,396	759,500
Ministries department	349,127	266,320	334,600	68,280	431,300
Pastoral & welfare	1,232	499	2,000	1,501	2,000
	14,274,351	14,284,423	14,773,600	489,177	14,103,500
<b>Education &amp; Learning</b>					
Initial training for ministry	678,150	535,346	547,570	12,224	479,985
Continuing training for ministry	120,067	51,567	95,500	43,933	116,500
Resource Centres support	627,919	738,683	638,640	(100,043)	699,000
	1,426,136	1,325,596	1,281,710	(43,886)	1,295,485
TLS/Stepwise	130,826	97,526	121,600	24,074	119,000
Lay preachers support	5,708	3,335	7,000	3,665	7,000
On-line learning	57,814	52,356	60,000	7,644	58,700
Lay Development Fund	0	20,400	25,000	4,600	2,500
Education & Learning department	167,124	157,298	168,000	10,702	148,100
	1,787,607	1,656,511	1,663,310	6,799	1,630,785
<b>Children's and Youth Work</b>					
Staff costs	210,139	207,231	216,500	9,269	206,600
Management, resources and programmes	62,307	35,414	111,200	75,786	111,200
	272,446	242,644	327,700	85,056	317,800
<b>Safeguarding</b>					
Safeguarding policy and practice	156,526	169,851	199,500	29,649	197,800
<b>Discipleship Secretariat</b>					
Deputy General Secretary - Discipleship costs	66,051	64,103	83,600	19,497	10,125



<b>Mission Dept.</b>					
Mission dept staff and core costs	505,459	502,777	529,200	26,423	509,900
Mission programmes and memberships (net)	186,651	185,705	250,200	64,495	260,050
	692,110	688,482	779,400	90,918	769,950
National Ecumenical Officers	33,435	36,442	36,500	58	36,700
	725,545	724,924	815,900	90,976	806,650
<b>Administration &amp; Resources Dept.</b>					
Central Secretariat	284,655	295,053	270,500	(24,553)	291,700
Facilities	374,714	318,220	385,000	66,780	357,700
Human Resources	82,001	72,313	89,000	16,687	86,800
IT Services	214,795	208,479	237,700	29,221	232,000
Finance	415,087	372,614	385,400	12,786	377,900
Communications	464,739	446,827	464,800	17,973	475,200
	1,835,990	1,713,506	1,832,400	118,894	1,821,300
<b>Governance</b>					
General Assembly	100,000	63,527	100,000	36,473	123,000
Mission Council	67,058	36,499	63,000	26,501	65,500
Professional fees	105,573	135,055	100,000	(35,055)	120,000
Other	72,934	68,009	76,000	7,991	94,100
	345,566	303,090	339,000	35,910	402,600
Apprenticeship levy	45,754	56,471	55,000	(1,471)	50,000
Irrecoverable VAT	141,374	114,227	140,000	25,773	140,000
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>19,591,085</b>	<b>19,329,750</b>	<b>20,230,010</b>	<b>900,260</b>	<b>19,480,560</b>
<b>NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	<b>1,157,491</b>	<b>103,491</b>	<b>(70,110)</b>	<b>173,601</b>	<b>(357,975)</b>

# Paper G3

## URC Pension Schemes – current challenges – a family problem requiring a family solution

### Pensions Committee and Finance Committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	John Piper: <a href="mailto:john.piper30@ntlworld.com">john.piper30@ntlworld.com</a> Ian Hardie: <a href="mailto:ianzhardie@gmail.com">ianzhardie@gmail.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	None at this stage.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	The paper provides an update on the complex process of consultation across the URC family, which is ongoing.
<b>Main points</b>	<p>Because of the requirement for extra prudence, the United Reformed Church will have to find around £45 million of additional funding for the Ministers' Pension Fund (MPF) over the next ten years in relation to the benefits already earned by members of the MPF for their past service.</p> <p>Immediately after the 2018 actuarial valuation of the MPF, the Pensions Committee and the trustee of the MPF set up a joint group to oversee an Integrated Risk Management project with the objective of clarifying and then dealing with the challenges faced by the Church in relation to its pension schemes. This project has included detailed consultations with various parts of the URC family, primarily the trust companies that hold the funds of the Synods and General Assembly. All these trusts have accepted that this is a 'family problem that needs a family solution' and have offered help in proportion to their available resources. The consultation is going well, but will probably not be formally concluded until around the end of 2021.</p> <p>The extra prudence required of defined benefit pension schemes also has a significant effect on the cost of providing such pensions in the future. The future of both the URC pension schemes is considered in a separate paper.</p>

<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper titled 'URC Pension Schemes – facing up to some serious challenges' written for General Assembly 2020 and considered by Mission Council in July 2020. March 2021 Mission Council Paper titled 'URC pension schemes – dealing with current challenges – a conversation in progress'.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The URC Integrated Risk Management project group, the directors of the URC Ministers' Pension Trust, the directors of the synod trusts and the URC Trust, and synod moderators.

### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	None at this stage, but will be substantial.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None.

## Contents

1. Introduction
2. Some definitions and explanations
3. Summary of the challenges we face
4. Consultation process – the story so far
5. From consultation to action plan – future process and timetable

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 A substantial paper on this subject was written for General Assembly 2020. That meeting did not take place as originally planned, and the paper was considered by Mission Council. This paper does not repeat all the background information provided in that paper, which should be referenced if that level of detail is required. [https://urc.org.uk/images/General-Assemblies/Assembly2020/URC\\_Pension\\_Schemes\\_BofR\\_2020.pdf](https://urc.org.uk/images/General-Assemblies/Assembly2020/URC_Pension_Schemes_BofR_2020.pdf)
- 1.2 The objectives of this paper are to summarise the challenges as they are currently understood; to describe the consultation that has taken place and is still in progress; and to indicate when and how the challenges might be dealt with.
- 1.3 The future of the two existing URC pension schemes also needs to be seriously considered by General Assembly, and that is dealt with in a separate paper.

## 2. Some definitions and explanations

- 2.1 The other pensions paper for General Assembly 2021 includes explanations of the following terms, and these are not repeated here:

Defined Benefit pension schemes  
The Pensions Regulator  
Sponsor / Employer  
Trustees  
Maturity

## 2.2 Current URC pension schemes

The URC Ministers' Pension Fund (MPF) is the pension scheme that covers almost all ministers and Church Related Community Workers. A member of this scheme earns a pension of 1/80<sup>th</sup> of stipend for each year of pensionable service. For those who retire at normal retirement age, pension is based on the stipend at that date.

The URC Final Salary Pension Scheme is mostly for lay staff. A member of this scheme earns a pension of 1/80<sup>th</sup> of salary for each year of pensionable service. The calculation of pension at retirement is based on the highest 12 months' salary in the previous three years. Two-thirds of the members are employees at Church House or at Westminster College and, so, the United Reformed Church is the principal employer. The other members are or were staff at most of the synods or at Northern College, so those bodies are also participating employers.

## 2.3 Actuarial valuations

The liabilities of a defined benefit pension scheme stretch long into the future. They are uncertain, as they depend on many factors including life expectancy, inflation and interest rates. Their actual cost will only be known when the last member of the scheme has died.

Every three years, a defined benefit pension scheme has to be valued by the scheme actuary. This means that the liabilities are estimated, based on the most up to date information, and this estimate is then compared with the assets. If the estimated value of the liabilities is higher than the value of the assets, then there is a deficit on the scheme. The trustee of the scheme then has to agree a recovery plan with the sponsor or employer, which will define when the deficit will be made good. After each valuation, a schedule of contributions is signed by the sponsor, setting out the payments that will be made to cover the cost of future accruals of benefits and also, if appropriate, the deficit contributions in relation to the benefits already earned for past service.

## 2.4 Discount rate

An actuarial valuation is based on many assumptions. One of the most critical is the discount rate. This is the assumed rate of return on the assets in the scheme from the date of the valuation to the dates when the liabilities will have to be paid. The discount rate is normally expressed as 'gilts + X%', where gilts are government securities. So, the discount rate is a measure of the extent to which the return on the investments will exceed the return on government securities.

## 3. Summary of the challenges we face

### 3.1 The URC Final Salary (lay staff) Scheme

Most of this paper concerns the MPF. For the sake of completeness, this section concerns the other URC pension scheme.

The members of the Final Salary Scheme are almost all lay staff. The scheme covers the staff employed on behalf of General Assembly, including Westminster College, some or all of the staff at most of the synods and at Northern College. All these bodies are participating employers in the Final Salary Scheme and, therefore, share in the legal obligation to ensure it is properly funded.

This pension scheme is much smaller than the MPF. The Church contributions to the Final Salary Scheme, included in the Ministry and Mission Fund budget, are roughly a quarter of the Church contributions to the MPF.

Some of the issues now being faced in relation to the MPF have already been addressed for the Final Salary Scheme. In particular, following the 2016 valuation of the Final Salary Scheme, roughly £3.5 million of capital was paid in by the participating employers to deal with what was then a sizeable deficit. Also, because TPT takes a very prudent approach in relation to the pension schemes that it manages, the financial and investment strategy in relation to the Final Salary Scheme already allows for the fact that it is a maturing scheme requiring increasing prudence.

The 2019 valuation of the Final Salary Scheme showed a slight surplus.

The rates of the Church's future service contributions to the Final Salary Scheme have increased substantially since 2010, as they have for the MPF. More details of these increases are provided in the other pensions paper.

### 3.2 The URC Ministers' Pension Fund (MPF) - Valuation as at 1 January 2018

The 2018 valuation, on the technical provisions basis, showed a deficit of £3.9 million. This deficit had reduced much faster than anticipated from the £16.6 million deficit three years previously. This valuation used a discount rate of gilts + 2.2%.

The compliance team at the Pensions Regulator subsequently told the trustee of the MPF that this valuation was far too imprudent and that the discount rate used should have been no higher than gilts + 1.5%.

The URC Trust agreed to pay £1.5 million into the MPF in late 2019 to avoid the possibility of an immediate revaluation of the MPF on a more prudent basis, which would have led to higher contribution rates.

### 3.3 The challenge faced by the Church is around £45 million

The Pensions Regulator is requiring increasing levels of prudence in the valuation of all defined benefit pension schemes, and particularly for those schemes approaching maturity.

The term 'maturity' relates to the way that the number of members who have retired increases whereas, typically, the number of active members does not. This means that a point is reached where investments have to be sold to pay for the benefits that are due and the size of the scheme starts to reduce. This is a natural phenomenon. The MPF is maturing relatively quickly.

The actuarial valuation of the MPF as at 1 January 2021 is under way. If the same discount rate was used as in 2018 then the fund would show a slight surplus. As it

is, the discount rate used is likely to be around gilts + 1.0% and, as a result, the deficit is likely to be around £30 million. This deficit will have to be dealt with by 2026 – a much shorter period than was previously allowed.

One measure of the maturity of a defined benefit pension scheme is the point at which the annual amount being paid out in pensions is equivalent to 5% of the total value of the liabilities. The estimated date of this for the MPF is 2030. By this date, the Regulator will expect valuations to be based on a discount rate of no more than gilts + 0.5%. This would add another approximately £15 million to the deficit.

**The total amount we will have to find is currently estimated at £45 million, with £30 million of this required by 2026.**

## **4. Consultation process – the story so far**

### **4.1 Integrated Risk Management project (IRM)**

Immediately after the 2018 valuation, the Pensions Committee and the trustee of the MPF set up a joint IRM project group to look at all the risks associated with the MPF and its funding, and to help develop a Long-Term Objective (LTO) for the MPF, which is a financial and investment strategy that takes account of the maturity of the MPF and the changing requirements of the Pensions Regulator. The process has required a broad consultation with many in the Church. Because the issues are primarily financial and legal, this consultation has mostly been with the directors of the trust companies that hold the assets of the synods and of the General Assembly, as well as with the officers of the synods and of Assembly.

This consultation has, like so much else, been seriously affected by the pandemic. It has taken the form of frequent written briefings from the IRM group, written responses from the trust bodies, and meetings with individual trust representatives and with collective groups such as the synod treasurers and synod moderators.

### **4.2 Consultation – the story so far**

Facing such a huge challenge, it has been encouraging that all those involved in the consultation have recognised that this is a family problem that will require a family solution. The United Reformed Church family has considerable financial resources at its disposal, but it also has many and varied demands on those resources, some of which conflict with each other. The URC family may have the resources to deal with this challenge, but that does not mean that doing so will be painless. Money spent on pensions cannot be spent on other things.

Those who want more details of the consultation, who are not already in receipt of the regular briefings, are welcome to have copies. The first target of this consultation is to reach agreement in principle by June 2021 about how the £45 million can be raised. At the time of writing this paper, it is pleasing to report that this target date currently looks to be achievable. That is enormously to the credit of all those involved in the ongoing discussions.

## **5. From consultation to action plan – future process and timetable**

### **5.1 Commitments in principle from the Synod Trusts**

Even if agreement in principle is reached by June 2021, for most of the Synod Trusts this agreement will be subject to approval by their synod meetings in the autumn.



**5.2 Commitments in principle from the URC Trust**

Obligations and commitments will also be required of the URC Trust. It is also hoped to have these agreed in principle by June 2021.

**5.3 Mechanics**

Part of the agreement required with the URC Trust is about how this process will be managed over the next ten years. Two important elements of this, given the size of the numbers and the level of uncertainty in them, are:

- ensuring that money is not paid into the MPF which it doesn't actually need; and
- the need to provide some form of legal guarantee to the trustee of the MPF.

**5.4 Agreement of the trustee of the MPF**

It will be necessary for the directors of the URC Ministers' Pension Trust to agree any plan proposed by the Church.

**5.5 Timetable**

The legal deadline for all these agreements is the end of March 2022, but we are hoping to achieve this by the end of 2021.

# Paper G4

## URC Future Pensions – time for a change of approach

### Pensions Committee and Finance Committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	John Piper <a href="mailto:john.piper30@ntlworld.com">john.piper30@ntlworld.com</a> Ian Hardie <a href="mailto:ianzhardie@googlemail.com">ianzhardie@googlemail.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Resolutions.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p><b>Resolution 19</b></p> <p>1. The General Assembly, being representative of Local Churches, Synods and the whole Church, confirms the Church’s commitment to the pensions promises already made, and wishes any consideration of future pension arrangements for the Church’s Ministers of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Workers, missionaries and staff to keep clearly in mind:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The Church’s warm gratitude for the commitment, gifts and service of those who work among us and serve in our name</li> <li>b) The Church’s desire to deal with these people honourably in their retirement</li> <li>c) The Church’s desire to act as a responsible employer, for the people we employ and for our stipendiary office-holders.</li> </ul> <p><b>Resolution 20</b></p> <p>2. General Assembly, recognising that the significant changes to the legal and regulatory framework for defined benefit pension schemes are making the two current URC pension schemes disproportionately expensive for the benefits they deliver, agrees in principle to the closure to future accruals of both the Ministers’ Pension Fund and the Final Salary Pension Scheme.</p> <p><b>Resolution 21</b></p> <p>3. General Assembly acknowledges the careful work that has already been done on these complex and sensitive matters, authorises further work to be done on developing new pensions arrangements for office</p>

	<b>holders and staff, with the aim of presenting detailed options to Mission Council in November 2021, and then final proposals to General Assembly 2022, for implementation no sooner than January 2023.</b>
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### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	This paper asks General Assembly to make a decision in principle to close the two current URC pension schemes to future accruals and to authorise the complex and costly process of developing new pension arrangements for office holders and staff. Those proposed plans will be brought back to a subsequent meeting of General Assembly for approval.
<b>Main points</b>	<p>The key issues are dealt with in Part B of this paper.</p> <p>The Church's commitment to provide good pensions for its office holders and staff remains as strong as ever.</p> <p>If there is any change to pension arrangements, this will primarily affect benefits that will be earned in the future. The pensions earned by past service are protected.</p> <p>The United Reformed Church has two pension schemes, the Ministers' Pension Fund and the Final Salary Scheme. Both are defined benefit schemes.</p> <p>The annual Church contributions to the Ministers' Pension Fund will almost double in 2022 – an increase of more than £1.5 million. This is because of the extra prudence required by the Pensions Regulator. This estimated increase is much higher than was reported to Mission Council in March 2021.</p> <p>There are good alternatives available that should provide equivalent benefits to those from the current pension schemes, whilst avoiding this unsustainable increase in costs.</p> <p>Changing pension arrangements would be a complex and costly process. That is why it is necessary to ask Assembly to make a decision in principle, in order to authorise that work.</p>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	<p>Paper titled 'URC Pension Schemes – facing up to some serious challenges' written for General Assembly 2020 and considered by Mission Council in July 2020.</p> <p>Paper titled 'URC Future Pensions – a document for discussion' considered by Mission Council in March 2021.</p>
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The URC Integrated Risk Management project group. External consultants have helped with some financial modelling.

### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	The objective of changing the Church's pension arrangements is not, primarily, to reduce costs, but to deal with the expected increase in costs from 2022 to a level that is unsustainable and
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	that may no longer be the most cost-effective way to provide good pensions to the Church's office holders and staff.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None.

## Contents

### Part A: Introduction

1. Purpose and Scope
2. Some Definitions and Explanations

### Part B: Key Issues and Resolutions

3. The Church's commitment to its office holders and staff, including Resolution 1
4. Making an 'in principle' decision, including Resolution 2
5. Escalating costs of the existing URC pension schemes
6. Developing alternative pensions arrangements including Resolution 3

### Part C: Defined Contribution pension schemes – an introduction

7. Same purpose but different approach
8. Defined contributions
9. Personal pension pots
10. Choices while working
11. Choices at and after retirement
12. Other costs and benefits
13. Work to be done

### Part D: Defined Contribution pension schemes – some illustrative examples

14. Comparisons of benefits for members
15. Income in retirement – Comparison of the current Ministers' Pension Fund with a Defined Contribution scheme with 17.5% Church contributions
16. Income in retirement – Comparison of the current Ministers' Pension Fund with a Defined Contribution scheme with age-related Church contributions

## Part A: Introduction

### 1. Purpose and scope

- 1.1 A discussion paper on the future of the two URC pension schemes was presented to Mission Council in March 2021. The feedback from the discussion groups at Mission Council has led to what is hopefully the simplification of the format of this paper. Part B is the most important part of this paper. Much of the detailed information is now relegated to Parts C and D which are in the nature of appendices.
- 1.2 The subject matter of this paper is unavoidably complex. Some members of Mission Council struggled to understand what was presented to them and some suggested that the 'experts' ought to decide what should be done. However, the Church makes its important decisions in its councils and, in this case, it is clear that the appropriate council is General Assembly where decisions can be taken on behalf of the whole Church. The purpose of this paper is to enable members of General Assembly to engage with the issues, and to gain sufficient understanding to make wise decisions about the future.
- 1.3 Part B focuses on the key issues and the three resolutions.
- 1.4 Part C provides a brief introduction to the nature of Defined Contribution pension schemes, which are very different from Defined Benefit schemes. It also describes the significant gaps in our current knowledge. If General Assembly authorises the necessary work, it should be possible to present Mission Council in November with comprehensive and fully costed options which can then be developed into proposals for approval at General Assembly 2022.
- 1.5 Part D provides comparisons of the estimated income in retirement from the current Ministers' Pension Fund and two examples of Defined Contribution schemes with different approaches to Church contributions for three sample members. These examples are illustrative only. The properly worked out options may be quite different.

### 2. Some definitions and explanations

#### Defined Benefit pension schemes

The United Reformed Church has two active pension schemes and they are both Defined Benefit pension schemes.

A defined benefit pension scheme is one where the method of calculating a member's pension is pre-determined. In both the URC schemes, the calculation is based on years of service and salary or stipend at or close to retirement.

The costs of such a pension scheme depend on many unpredictable things like inflation and interest rates; investment performance; and the length of time members live in retirement. This means that the actual costs cannot be known until the last member has died. The estimated costs are formally calculated by the scheme actuary every three years. The sponsor or employer is obliged to meet the actual costs, whatever they turn out to be, less any contributions from the members.

The calculation of the benefits from a defined benefit pension scheme is pre-determined but that does not mean that the real purchasing power of those benefits

is known in advance. That depends, for example, on how salary or stipend increases have compared with inflation increases over a member's working life.

### **Defined Contribution pension schemes**

Defined contribution pension schemes are the most common alternative to defined benefit pension schemes. These are discussed briefly in Part C of this paper.

### **Current URC pension schemes**

The URC Ministers' Pension Fund (MPF) is the pension scheme that covers almost all ministers and church related community workers. A member of this scheme earns a pension of 1/80<sup>th</sup> of stipend for each year of pensionable service. For those who retire at normal retirement age, pension is based on the stipend at that date.

The URC Final Salary Pension Scheme is mostly for lay staff. A member of this scheme earns a pension of 1/80<sup>th</sup> of salary for each year of pensionable service. The calculation of pension at retirement is based on the highest 12 months' salary in the previous three years. Two thirds of the members are employees at Church House or at Westminster College and, so, the United Reformed Church is the principal employer. The other members are or were staff at most of the synods or at Northern College, so those bodies are also participating employers.

### **Sponsor / Employer**

Ministers and church related community workers are office holders rather than employees, though for pensions purposes this really makes no difference. The United Reformed Church is identified as the sponsor of the MPF and the principal participating employer of the Final Salary Scheme.

### **Trustees**

Every pension scheme has a trustee body which acts independently of the sponsor. The trustee must always act in the best interests of all the beneficiaries of the scheme. In relation to defined benefit pension schemes, the primary responsibility of the trustee is to ensure that the benefits already earned by the members are paid when they are due.

The trustee of the URC MPF is an 'in house' corporate trust called the URC Ministers' Pension Trust Limited. All its directors are members of the URC. Its professional advisors are different from those used by the church.

The provider of the URC Final Salary Scheme is TPT Retirement Solutions (formerly the Pensions Trust). TPT is a large specialist provider dealing with many different schemes. Its trustee is called Verity Trustees Limited, which acts as trustee of all its schemes. TPT's trustee has generally taken a highly prudent approach. This means that the level of contributions by the Church and the investment strategy adopted have already addressed many of the issues now facing the MPF.

### **The Pensions Regulator**

Acts of Parliament provide the legal framework for pension schemes. The Pensions Regulator is the body responsible for issuing detailed regulations and guidance, for monitoring compliance and, if necessary, for enforcement.



**Maturity**

Defined benefit pension schemes mature over time. That means that the number of members retired and receiving pensions grows whereas the number of members in work typically stays the same or, as in the case of the MPF, reduces. The financial effect of this is that there comes a point when the expenditure from the scheme exceeds the income to the scheme, investments have to be sold, and the size of the scheme starts to reduce. This is a natural phenomenon. This has happened with the MPF. It is still a little way off for the Final Salary Scheme.

The 'Long Term Objective' (LTO) of a defined benefit pension scheme is the funding and investment strategy which its trustee must determine. One measure of significant maturity is the point at which 5% of the liabilities of the scheme are being paid out each year. 2030 is the estimated date when this will happen for the MPF. The Pensions Regulator expects the assets of a defined benefit pension scheme to have been substantially de-risked by this date. It is this prudent approach to the funding of maturing pension schemes which is the primary cause of the anticipated substantial increases to contribution rates.

De-risking: The assets of the MPF are currently invested in equities (30%); property (10%); and gilts or government securities (60%). The valuation in 2030 is expected to assume that at least 80% of the assets will be gilts.

**Part B: Key issues and resolutions****3. The Church's commitment to its office holders and staff****3.1 Resolution 1**

***The General Assembly, being representative of Local Churches, Synods and the whole Church, confirms the Church's commitment to the pensions promises already made, and wishes any consideration of future pension arrangements for the Church's Ministers of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Workers, missionaries and staff to keep clearly in mind:***

- a) The Church's warm gratitude for the commitment, gifts and service of those who work among us and serve in our name;***
- b) The Church's desire to deal with these people honourably in their retirement;***
- c) The Church's desire to act as a responsible employer, for the people we employ and for our stipendiary office-holders.***

3.2 The above wording is, deliberately, the same as that agreed by Mission Council in July 2020 on behalf of General Assembly. This was by no means the first time that General Assembly, or Mission Council on its behalf, has reaffirmed its commitment to provide good pensions to office-holders and staff in the United Reformed Church.

3.3 This understanding of the Church's commitment to its office holders and staff is the starting point for any discussion about the future of the two URC pension schemes. There is no intention to go back on or to weaken the commitments that have previously been made. On the contrary, the objective is to maintain that commitment in the future, but in a way that recognises that the legal and regulatory framework in which defined benefit pension schemes operate has changed

significantly. The seriously negative impact of these changes on the Church and, potentially, also on the members of the pension schemes is impossible to ignore.

## **4. Making an ‘in principle’ decision**

### **4.1 Resolution 2**

***General Assembly, recognising that the significant changes to the legal and regulatory framework for defined benefit pension schemes are making the two current URC pension schemes disproportionately expensive for the benefits they deliver, agrees in principle to the closure to future accruals of both the Ministers’ Pension Fund and the Final Salary Pension Scheme.***

### **4.2 A decision for General Assembly**

General Assembly has always been the body to take decisions regarding changes to the terms of the MPF. General Assembly has also more than once decided that the two URC pension schemes should be kept in line with one another. It is being assumed that this is still the right approach to take.

There are many who will be affected by any change to pension arrangements – not only the members of the two pension schemes but also the local churches and synods that provide the funding that pays for the Church’s pension provisions; all participating employers in the Final Salary Scheme; and the trustees of the two existing pension schemes.

If this resolution is approved then appropriate consultation with all those affected will be important, and in some cases is legally required, before any changes are implemented. However, General Assembly is the only body the Church has that can make decisions of this kind on behalf of the whole Church.

### **4.3 An ‘in principle’ decision at this stage**

The development of new pension arrangements for the Church’s office holders and staff would be a complex task involving significant cost and time. It would be imprudent to embark on this task without, first, seeking agreement in principle for the way ahead from General Assembly. That is the main purpose of this paper.

This paper focuses on why those presenting it believe that change is unavoidable and that the need for change is urgent.

Assembly is only being asked to make an ‘in principle’ decision at this stage. If the necessary work is authorised, then detailed proposals will be brought to a subsequent meeting of Assembly for approval.

### **4.4 Any change will only affect ‘future accruals’**

The pensions already earned by members of defined benefit pension schemes will be protected. Any change made to pension arrangements will relate, primarily, to the benefits earned for service from the date of the change.

It is suggested that the earliest effective date for change will be 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023.

## **5. Escalating costs of the existing URC pension schemes**

- 5.1 Affordability – can the Church afford the rapidly escalating costs?**  
**The Church’s contribution to the Ministers’ Pension Fund in 2020 was £2.1 million.** This was roughly 10% of the total Ministry and Mission Fund budget.

**The estimated cost in 2022 is jumping to £3.5 million – an increase of around £1.5 million.**

Over recent years, the income to the Ministry and Mission Fund has been slowly declining. There is no way that it could be expected to cover such a massive and ongoing increase in costs.

- 5.2 Actual and estimated cost**

The actual costs of defined benefit pension schemes will not be known until the last pensioner has died. In the meantime, those costs have to be estimated.

If the estimated cost of pensions already earned increases, that can create a deficit on the pension scheme which the Church has to deal with by making additional payments into the scheme.

The estimated cost of pensions that will be earned by future service are met by regular ‘future service contributions’ paid by the Church and by the members.

The cost of these future service contributions by the Church, and any deficit contributions, are included in the annual URC Ministry and Mission Fund budget.

- 5.3 Ministers’ Pension Fund – previous increases in these future service costs**  
 Since 2010, the contributions by members have been fixed at 7.5% of stipend.

In 2010, the future service contributions paid by the Church were 12.35% of stipend. Based on the number of ministers in 2020, **the cost of these contributions would have been £1,166,000.**

The Church is currently paying future service contributions at the rate of 21.95% of stipend. **The total cost of these Church contributions in 2020 was £2,072,000.**

The main reason for this rise in costs has been the historically low interest rates that have persisted and indeed continued to decline since 2008.

- 5.4 Ministers’ Pension Fund – estimated future increases in these costs**  
**As stated above, the total Church future service contributions to the MPF are now estimated to rise by around £1.5 million to £3.5 million in 2022.** This allows for the expected reduction in the number of ministers. This is a much larger increase than the estimate included in the paper to Mission Council. Assuming no increase in the members’ contribution rate, the Church contribution rate will rise from 21.95% to 41.25%.

The main cause of this increase is the Pension Regulator’s requirement for extra prudence by defined benefit pension schemes that are maturing.

The annual cost to the Church is estimated to **increase by a further £300k by 2030.**

## 5.5 Final Salary Pension Scheme

The Final Salary Scheme is much smaller than the ministers' scheme and, therefore, the total costs for the Church are not so significant. The total contributions by the Church in 2020 were £490,000.

Nevertheless, costs are increasing. In 2010, the Church paid future service contributions of 16.9% of salary with members contributing 6% of salary. By 2021, the Church future contributions plus expenses had risen to the equivalent of 25.3% and member contributions had risen to 7.5%.

The Final Salary Scheme is maturing, though not as quickly as the MPF. It is, therefore, possible that there will be further increases in these future service contribution rates in the future.

## 5.6 Questions regarding 'value for money'

The massive increases expected in the future service contribution rates are caused by the requirement for the liabilities of the MPF to be valued more prudently. In particular, the assumed return on the invested assets is significantly reduced. This is linked to the assumption that the assets of a defined benefit pension scheme will be progressively de-risked as it approaches maturity. If the assets of a pension scheme are de-risked it is likely that the investment returns will be lower which means that it will cost the Church more to deliver the promised benefits.

Affordability is not just about whether there is enough money in the bank to meet the costs. It is also about the impact on other aspects of the Church's life and work of such a large rise in pension costs. Even if affordability was not an issue, this projected rise in costs would demand a serious look at alternative ways of providing pensions that might deliver equivalent benefits at a lower cost. Defined benefit pension schemes have long been viewed as the 'gold standard' in pension provision. This view is being seriously challenged by the significant extra funding now needed as the consequence of the increased prudence required, with the associated constraints on investment strategy. Good alternatives are available.

## 5.7 Staying with the existing pension schemes

If Assembly decides to stay with the existing pension arrangements, then the trustee of the MPF will be seeking much stronger assurances from the Church about how the increased level of contributions will be funded. This could be through increased guarantees and / or through even more prudent valuations, resulting in higher contribution rates.

## 6. Developing alternative pension arrangements

### 6.1 Resolution 3

***General Assembly acknowledges the careful work that has already been done on these complex and sensitive matters, authorises further work to be done on developing new pensions arrangements for office holders and staff, with the aim of presenting detailed options to Mission Council in November 2021, and then final proposals to General Assembly 2022, for implementation no sooner than January 2023.***

## 6.2 A time-consuming and potentially costly task

As stated above, a considerable amount of detailed work is necessary in order to develop new pensions arrangements that are a good fit for the Church and for the members of its two current pension schemes. Some of this work will have to be done by external consultants with the appropriate expertise. The purpose of this resolution is to authorise that work, and the associated cost. The aim will be to develop some detailed and properly costed options for consideration by Mission Council in November 2021.

It is a legal requirement to formally consult with the members of the existing pension schemes about proposed changes. It will also be necessary to consult with the trustees of the two existing schemes and with the other participating employers in the Final Salary Scheme.

Final proposals will be brought to a future meeting of General Assembly for approval – hopefully in 2022.

A very rough estimate of the costs of developing new pension arrangements is £50,000 to £100,000.

## 6.3 Making changes to the existing schemes is not an option

The Church has previously on occasions managed the cost of its pension schemes by changing the rules – for example, by increasing the normal retirement age, or by increasing the rate of contribution required from members. Given the scale of the projected increase in costs, these could only be brought under control by making severe changes to both the current schemes at unacceptable cost to the members either now in higher contributions or at retirement in reduced benefits.

## 6.4 Defined Contribution schemes – now a genuinely good option

The most common alternative form of pension scheme is a Defined Contribution scheme. Some general information on these is provided in Part C of this paper.

Some employers have used the change from a Defined Benefit to a Defined Contribution pension scheme as an opportunity to reduce costs by providing less attractive retirement benefits. This has created the false impression that Defined Contribution schemes are inherently inferior. This doesn't have to be the case.

It is true that in a defined contribution pension scheme the investment risk is transferred from the employer or sponsor to the members. However, it is also true that there are not the same constraints on investment strategy and, therefore, that significantly higher rates of return might be achieved. It is also true that the individual member of a defined contribution pension scheme has a great deal of flexibility – for example, to make financial arrangements for their retirement that fit their personal circumstances. It would, therefore, be wrong to assume that a change would be disadvantageous to scheme members. A lot of detailed work is necessary before it will be possible to suggest what a generous defined contribution pension scheme for the Church might look like.

It is also important to note that recent pensions legislation has provided for further flexibility which suggests that other options may be available in the future. Advice will be sought on these developments.

## **Part C: Defined Contribution pension schemes – an introduction**

### **7. Same purpose but different approach**

- 7.1 The purpose of all pension schemes is essentially the same. By setting aside funds during a person's working life, and investing them, the intention is to provide income in the person's retirement.
- 7.2 Defined Contribution pension schemes operate in a very different way from Defined Benefit schemes. This means that comparing their costs and their benefits is not at all straightforward.

### **8. Defined Contributions**

- 8.1 The employer / sponsor and the members make regular contributions into a Defined Contribution pension scheme as they do to a Defined Benefit scheme. However, in this case, the level of the contributions is fixed, though it can be changed after due notice has been given to members.
- 8.2 The income that will be available in retirement is not fixed. This will depend on the performance of the investments and on the choices made by each member.

### **9. Personal pension pots**

- 9.1 Each member of a Defined Contribution pension scheme has their own pension pot, consisting of the contributions made on their behalf plus the accumulated investment gains on those contributions. This pension pot is held by the trustee of the pension scheme on behalf of the member. When a member dies, their pension pot can be inherited and is subject to special taxation provisions.

### **10. Choices while working**

- 10.1 Some Defined Contribution pension schemes allow members to make contributions at different rates, usually between fixed minimum and maximum limits.
- 10.2 A Defined Contribution pension scheme is usually set up with a standard approach to things like investment strategy, but individual members often have the ability to choose a different approach in relation to their own pension pot.

### **11. Choices at and after retirement**

- 11.1 Each member of a Defined Contribution pension scheme has important choices to make as they approach retirement and then regularly afterwards. These choices are mainly to do with the rate at which income is taken out of the pension pot that has been accumulated. That may well depend on the personal circumstances of the member, and these may change over time. It is important that individuals obtain independent financial advice to help them with these choices. Once a pension pot has been spent, it is gone.

#### **11.2 Annuity**

One choice at retirement is to use the personal pension pot to buy an annuity. The annuity would be a monthly income, often increased annually in line with inflation, and possibly with a spouse's pension payable on the death of the member. So, an annuity would feel like a pension from a Defined Benefit pension scheme.



Annuities are, typically, provided by insurance companies which have to take a very prudent approach to investment policy, as they are carrying all the risks, and they aim to make a profit. In recent years, annuities have delivered poor value for money and have been used less often – at least in the early years of retirement. However, they do deliver certainty which is important for some people and they usually remove the need for active involvement.

### 11.3 Drawdown

The other approach for members of Defined Contribution pension schemes is called 'drawdown'. Here, each member decides on the amount of cash to be taken from their investment pot to provide income in retirement – this decision is reviewed regularly (e.g. annually) and can be revised. The rest of the pension pot remains invested. The decisions of each member will depend on such things as other income, dependents, housing costs, state of health, and lifestyle choices. For example, one member might decide to take out less money initially in case care costs become an issue later, where another member might decide to take out more money initially in the expectation that expenditure will reduce in later years.

Clearly, such an approach requires the active involvement of the member in their own financial planning.

- 11.4 It is possible to use drawdown in the early years of retirement and then to purchase an annuity some time later with whatever is left of the pension pot at that date. Recent legislation has indicated that other options may be available in future.

## 12. Other costs and benefits

- 12.1 Both the current URC pension schemes provide benefits on the death of a member in service or when they have left service but before their normal retirement date. Both schemes also provide for pensions to be paid to members who have to retire early on grounds of ill health.

If the Church moves to a Defined Contribution pension scheme, and if the Church wants to continue to provide benefits of this nature, then they will have to be provided separately from the new pension scheme.

- 12.2 If new pension arrangements are introduced, the two existing defined benefit pension schemes will still have to be operated more or less as before - albeit with no accrual of additional pension benefits for the members.
- 12.3 The total cost of these items is significant and will have to be taken into account in deciding what level of contribution the Church can afford to make into any new pension scheme.

## 13. Work to be done

- 13.1 It will be important to explore a variety of possible structures for a new URC Defined Contribution pension scheme, plus any benefits provided in addition to that scheme, in order to work out what might be the best fit for the Church and the members of its pension schemes.
- 13.2 A starting point for this work will be to see what benefits might be delivered for roughly the same cost as the Church is currently paying in future service

contributions. It will then be necessary to compare those projected benefits with the benefits from the existing pension schemes.

- 13.3 Another important part of the work will be to explore how best to ensure that members of both the current pension schemes receive appropriate support both before and after any change takes place and that they are encouraged to plan properly for their retirement, taking independent financial advice when necessary. Some of this support will need to come from the pension provider and some from the Church.
- 13.4 There is a lot of detailed work to be done before it will be possible to make firm and detailed recommendations about the best way forward.

## **Part D: Defined Contribution pension schemes – some illustrative examples**

### **14. Comparisons of benefits for members**

#### **14.1 Illustrations only**

The following examples are provided to help explain how Defined Contribution pension schemes work and the benefits they might deliver. They are not necessarily indications of what the Church might do. In particular, the levels of contributions by the Church and by the members that are eventually recommended may be higher or lower than in the examples explained below.

Before Assembly makes a decision about proposed new pension arrangements, it will want to know what the benefits provided by a proposed new pension scheme are likely to be compared with the benefits from the current schemes, and it will also need to know how the estimated costs compare. Until the other work described in section 12 has been done, it will not be possible to estimate what the total costs will be. In particular, the issues of ill health early retirement and death in service benefits are yet to be explored and they are not covered by the examples below.

#### **14.2 Choices of examples and other assumptions**

The results of financial modelling are provided for two structures of Church contributions and for three sample members of the Ministers' Pension Fund (MPF).

The first example assumes Church contributions into a new Defined Contribution pension scheme of 17.5% of salary / stipend and member contributions of 7.5% of salary / stipend. The results of this modelling suggest that this example would be too expensive and that it is likely to deliver benefits for younger members that are substantially larger than the current arrangements.

The second example assumes age-related Church contributions of 12.5% up to age 42; 15.0% from age 43 to 57; and 17.5% from age 58; and member contributions at 7.5% for all members. For members aged 58 or over, these two examples are the same. Again, the modelling results suggest that this might be over generous to younger members. If the final recommendation is for age-related contributions, the age ranges and / or the levels of contribution may differ from those in this example.

For each example, three sample members are considered, all of whom entered ministry at age 28. The first is aged 28 and has just entered ministry and, therefore, has no accrued pension in the MPF. The second is aged 43 and has an accrued pension in the MPF based on 15 years of service. The third is aged 58 and has an accrued pension in the MPF based on 30 years of service.

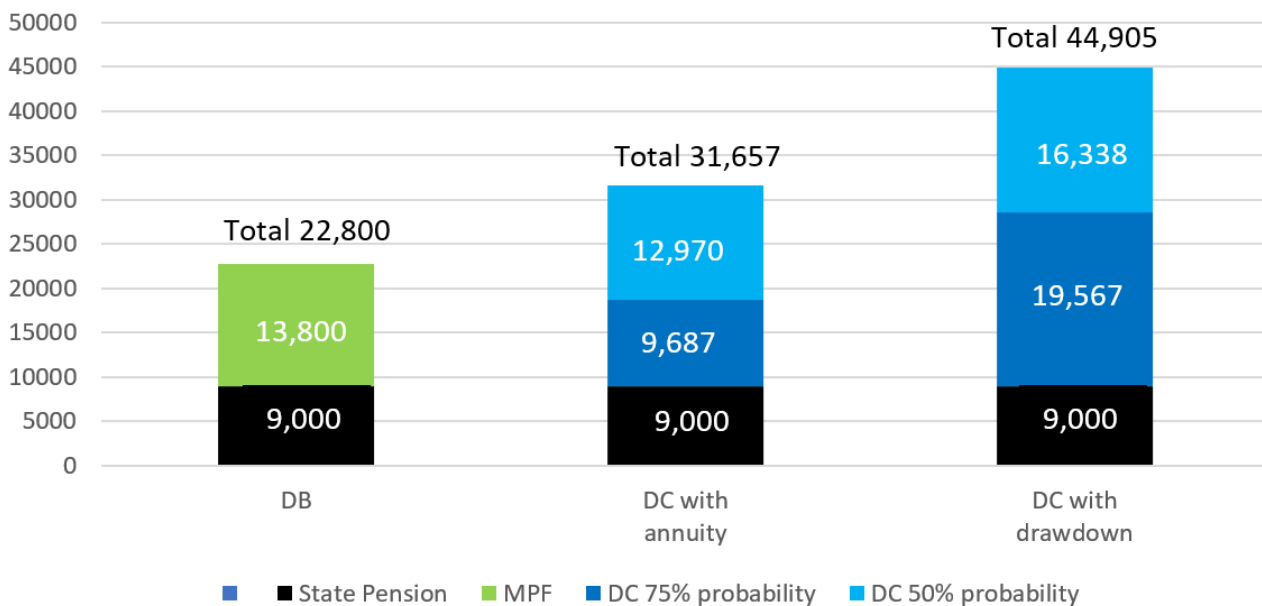
All the figures are expressed in current prices. It is assumed that inflation will have the same effect on stipend levels, on DB pensions in payment, and on DC investment returns which will be reflected in DC pensions. Of course, none of this may be true but it is a reasonable assumption for this purpose.

The impact of taxation and the option of a tax-free commutation are ignored.

**15. Income in retirement: Comparison of the current Ministers' Pension Fund DB scheme with a DC scheme with 17.5% Church contributions and 7.5% member contributions**

**15.1 Sample member 1: 28 year old, just entering stipendiary ministry**

Pension projection in £  
Age 28 - Employer 17.5%



This chart shows the estimated income in retirement on three different bases. In all three cases, the bottom dark rectangle represents the state pension of £9,000.

**Existing DB scheme**

The left-hand block represents the continuation of the existing DB scheme. The annual pension from the DB scheme at retirement in 40 years' time would be 40/80 of stipend = £13,800 so total annual income would be £9,000 + £13,800 = £22,800. So, income before tax in retirement is estimated to be just over 80% of stipend.

### **Suggested DC scheme with an annuity purchased at retirement**

As stated previously, the outcome of a DC scheme can only be estimated.

The central block represents a DC scheme, as described above, and assumes that at retirement the member's pension pot will be used to purchase an annuity (see paragraph 11.2 above).

The dark blue rectangle indicates that there is a 75% chance of receiving an annuity at retirement of at least £9,687 so total annual income including the state pension would be  $£9,000 + £9,687 = £18,687$ .

The light blue rectangle indicates that there is a 50% chance of receiving an annuity at retirement of at least £22,657 (£9,687 + £12,970), so total annual income including the state pension would be  $£9,000 + £22,657 + £31,657$ .

### **Suggested DC scheme with drawdown used after retirement**

The right-hand block represents a DC scheme, as described above, and assumes that the member will use drawdown to provide income in retirement (see paragraph 11.3 above).

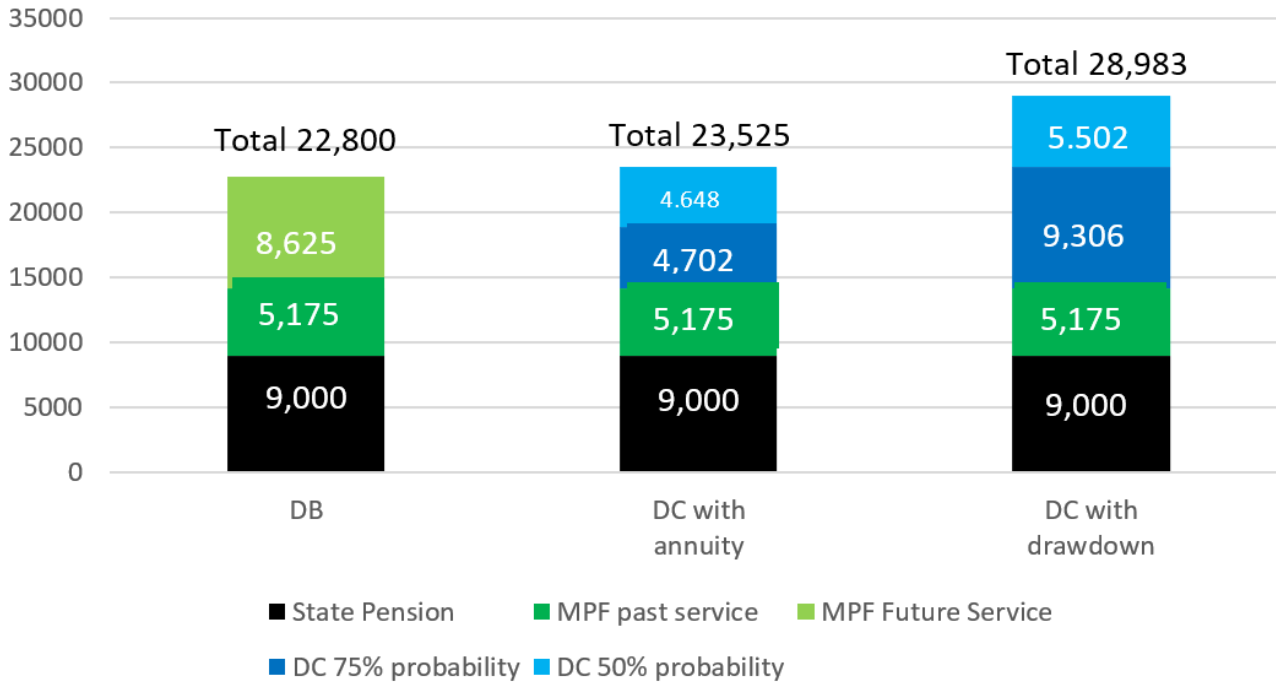
For the purpose of this modelling, it is assumed that the drawdown will be managed to deliver a pension for life fixed at retirement, increased annually by inflation, and followed by half a pension to a surviving spouse for the rest of their lifetime. These assumptions make the results more comparable with the current DB scheme.

The dark blue rectangle indicates that there is a 75% chance of delivering a pension at retirement of £19,567, so total annual income including the state pension would be  $£9,000 + £19,567 = £28,567$ .

The light blue rectangle indicates that there is a 50% chance of delivering a pension at retirement of £35,905 (£19,567 + £16,338), so total annual income including the state pension would be  $£9,000 + £35,905 = £44,905$ .

15.2 Sample member 2: 43 year old, with 15 years of past service

Pension projection in £  
Age 43 - Employer 17.5%



As before, the dark rectangle at the bottom of all three columns represents the state pension of £9,000. Now there is a dark green rectangle above this in all three columns which represents the pension payable from the DB scheme for the past 15 years. The value of this defined pension is fixed at 15/80 of stipend = £5,175.

**Existing DB scheme**

Again, the left-hand block represents the continuation of the current DB scheme and shows the total pension payable at retirement after 40 years' service of £13,800 (£5,175 + £8,625) and that the total annual income including state pension would be, as before, £9,000 + £13,800 = £22,800.

**Suggested DC scheme with an annuity purchased at retirement**

The central block represents a DC scheme, as described above, and assumes that the member's pension pot will be used to purchase an annuity at retirement (see paragraph 11.2 above).

The dark blue rectangle indicates that there is a 75% chance of receiving an annuity at retirement of at least £4,702 resulting in total annual income including the state pension and the DB pension of £9,000 + £5,175 + £4,702 = £18,877.

The light blue rectangle indicates that there is a 50% chance of receiving an annuity at retirement of at least £9,350 (£4,702 + £4,648) meaning total annual income including the state pension and the DB pension would be £9,000 + £5,175 + £9,350 = £23,525.

**Suggested DC scheme with drawdown used after retirement**

The right-hand block represents a DC scheme, as described above, and assumes that the member will use drawdown to provide income in retirement (see paragraph 11.3 above).

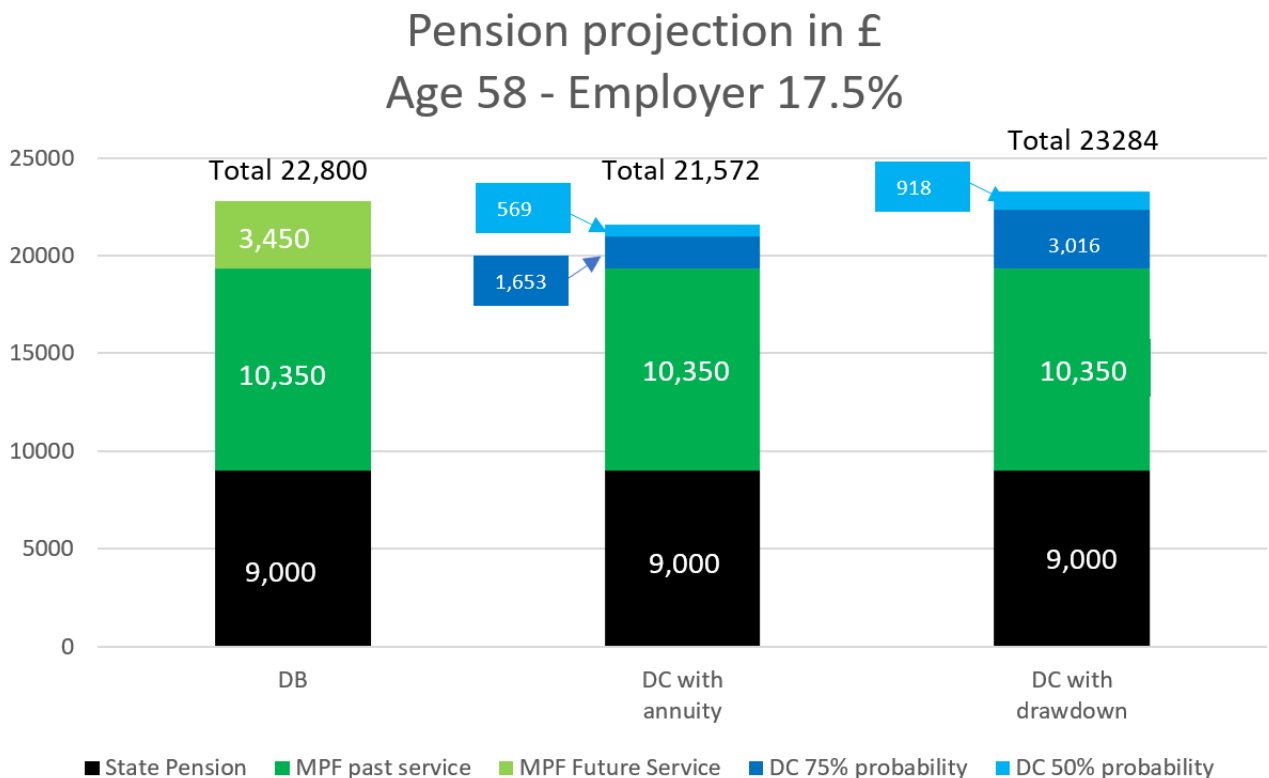
The dark blue rectangle indicates that there is a 75% chance of receiving an annual pension at retirement of at least £9,306 meaning that total annual income including the state pension and the DB pension would be £9,000 + £5,175 + £9,306 = £23,481.

The light blue rectangle indicates that there is a 50% chance of receiving an annual pension at retirement of at least £14,808 (£9,306 + £5,502) meaning that total annual income including the state pension and the DB pension would be £9,000 + £5,175 + £14,808 = £28,983.

**15.3 Sample member 3: 58 year old, with 30 years of past service**

The chart is on the next page.

Once again, the dark rectangle at the bottom of all three columns represents the state pension of £9,000. The dark green rectangle above this in all three columns represents the pension payable from the DB scheme for the past 30 years. The value of this defined pension is fixed at 30/80 of stipend = £10,350.



**Existing DB scheme**

Again, the left-hand block represents the continuation of the current DB scheme and shows the total pension payable at retirement after 40 years' service of £13,800



(£10,350 + £3,450) and that the total annual income including the state pension would be, as before, £9,000 + £13,800 = £22,800.

### **Suggested DC scheme with an annuity purchased at retirement**

The central block represents a DC scheme, as described above, and assumes that the member's pension pot will be used to purchase an annuity at retirement (see paragraph 11.2 above).

The dark blue rectangle indicates that there is a 75% chance of receiving an annuity at retirement of at least £1,653 resulting in total annual income including the state pension and the DB pension of £9,000 + £10,350 + £1,653 = £21,003.

The light blue rectangle indicates that there is a 50% chance of receiving an annuity at retirement of at least £2,222 (£1,653 + £569) meaning total annual income including the state pension and the DB pension would be £9,000 + £10,350 + £2,222 = £21,572.

### **Suggested DC scheme with drawdown used after retirement**

The right-hand block represents a DC scheme, as described above, and assumes that the member will use drawdown to provide income in retirement (see paragraph 11.3 above).

The dark blue rectangle indicates that there is a 75% chance of receiving an annual pension at retirement of at least £3,016 meaning that total annual income including the state pension and the DB pension would be £9,000 + £10,350 + £3,016 = £22,366.

The light blue rectangle indicates that there is a 50% chance of receiving an annual pension at retirement of at least £3,934 (£3,016 + £918) meaning that total annual income including the DB pension and the state pension would be £9,000 + £10,350 + £3,934 = £23,284.

## **16. Income in retirement: Comparison of the current Ministers' Pension Fund DB scheme with a DC scheme with age-related Church contributions and 7.5% member contributions**

### **16.1 Why age-related?**

In a Defined Benefit pension scheme, the pension earned for a year of service is the same for a member aged 28 as it is for a member aged 58. The cost of providing the pension for the member aged 58 is much higher because the contributions will be invested for a much shorter time. However, these costs are averaged out and expressed as a standard contribution rate for all members.

In a Defined Contribution pension scheme, the same effect works the other way round. As can be seen from the Defined Contribution parts of the example in section 15, if a standard contribution rate is used for all members, then the younger members will fare much better than the older members, because their contributions will be invested for longer.

The objective of an age-related structure of contributions is to partly smooth out this effect so that all members earn nearer to the same benefit for the same length of service, whatever their age.

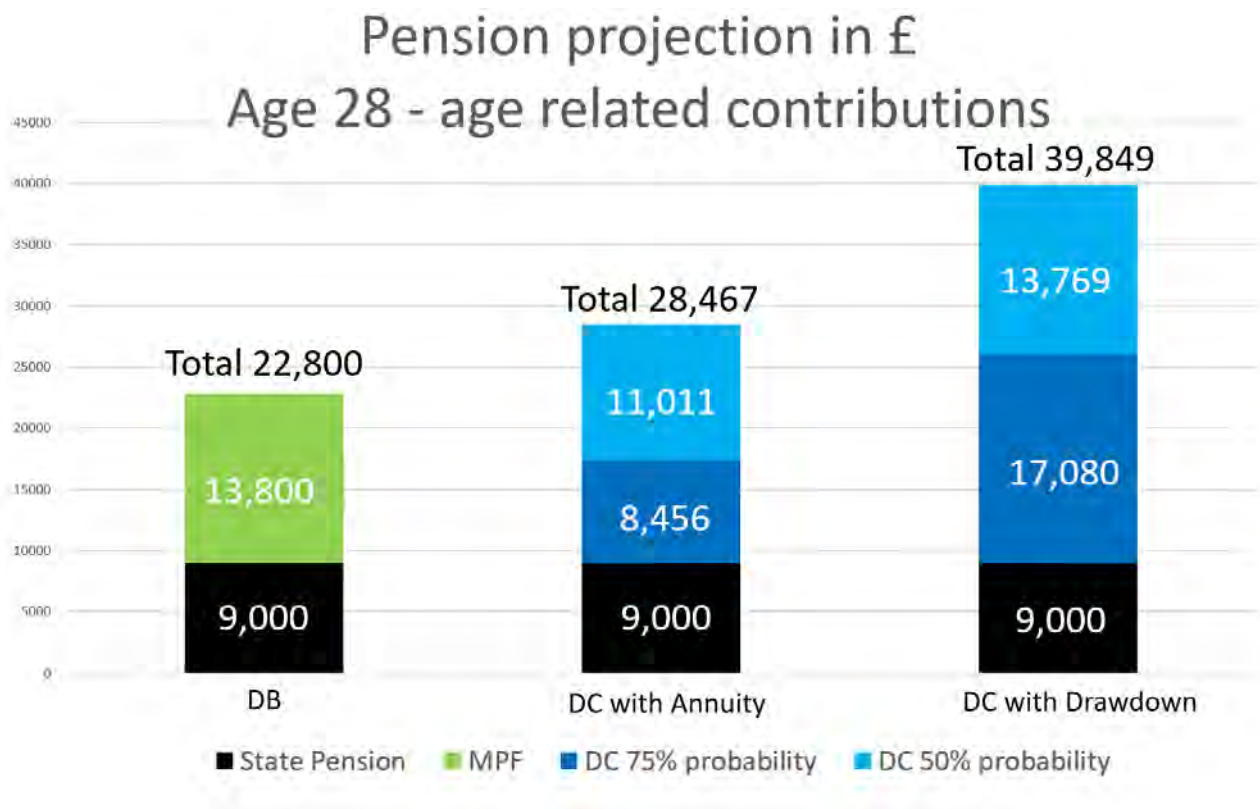
As stated above, the modelling has been based on the following structure of contributions:

Church contributions	Member aged up to 42	12.5%
	Member aged 43 to 57	15.0%
	Member aged 58 and over	17.5%
Member contributions	7.5% (as now)	

**Please note:**

This structure of contribution rates is for illustration only. If an age-related approach is eventually recommended, the age ranges may be different and the contribution rates may be higher or lower.

**16.2 Sample member 1: 28 year old, just entering stipendiary ministry**



This chart shows the estimated income in retirement on three different bases. In all three cases, the bottom dark rectangle represents the state pension of £9,000.

**Existing DB scheme**

The left-hand block represents the continuation of the existing DB scheme. The annual pension from the DB scheme at retirement in 40 years' time would be 40/80 of stipend = £13,800 so total annual income would be £9,000 + £13,800 = £22,800. So, income before tax in retirement is estimated to be just over 80% of stipend.

**Suggested DC scheme with an annuity purchased at retirement**

As stated previously, the outcome of a DC scheme can only be estimated.

The central block represents a DC scheme, as described above, and assumes that at retirement the member's pension pot will be used to purchase an annuity (see paragraph 11.2 above).

The dark blue rectangle indicates that there is a 75% chance of receiving an annuity at retirement of at least £8,456 so total annual income including the state pension would be  $£9,000 + £8,456 = £17,456$ .

The light blue rectangle indicates that there is a 50% chance of receiving an annuity at retirement of at least £19,467 (£8,456 + £11,011), so total annual income including the state pension would be £9,000 + £19,467 + £28,467.

### **Suggested DC scheme with drawdown used after retirement**

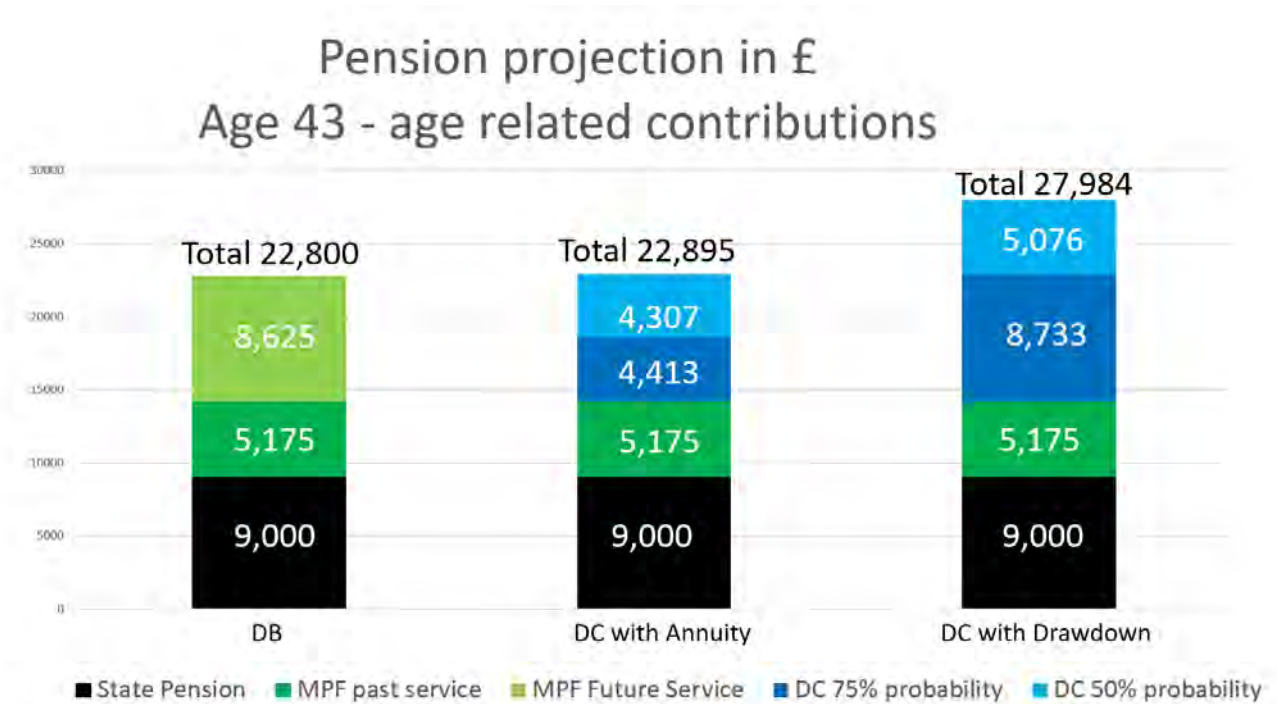
The right-hand block represents a DC scheme, as described above, and assumes that the member will use drawdown to provide income in retirement (see paragraph 11.3 above).

For the purpose of this modelling, it is assumed that the drawdown will be managed to deliver a pension for life fixed at retirement, increased annually by inflation, and followed by half a pension to a surviving spouse for the rest of their lifetime. These assumptions make the results more comparable with the current DB scheme.

The dark blue rectangle indicates that there is a 75% chance of delivering a pension at retirement of £17,080, so total annual income including the state pension would be  $£9,000 + £17,080 = £26,080$ .

The light blue rectangle indicates that there is a 50% chance of delivering a pension at retirement of £30,849 (£17,080 + £13,769), so total annual income including the state pension would be £9,000 + £30,849 = £39,849.

16.3 Sample member 2: 43 year old, with 15 years of past service



As before, the dark rectangle at the bottom of all three columns represents the state pension of £9,000. Now there is a dark green rectangle above this in all three columns which represents the pension payable from the DB scheme for the past 15 years. The value of this defined pension is fixed at 15/80 of stipend = £5,175.

**Existing DB scheme**

Again, the left-hand block represents the continuation of the current DB scheme and shows the total pension payable at retirement after 40 years' service of £13,800 (£5,175 + £8,625) and that the total annual income including state pension would be, as before, £9,000 + £13,800 = £22,800.

**Suggested DC scheme with an annuity purchased at retirement**

The central block represents a DC scheme, as described above, and assumes that the member's pension pot will be used to purchase an annuity at retirement (see paragraph 11.2 above).

The dark blue rectangle indicates that there is a 75% chance of receiving an annuity at retirement of at least £4,413 resulting in total annual income including the state pension and the DB pension of £9,000 + £5,175 + £4,413 = £18,588.

The light blue rectangle indicates that there is a 50% chance of receiving an annuity at retirement of at least £8,720 (£4,413 + £4,307) meaning total annual income including the state pension and the DB pension would be £9,000 + £5,175 + £8,720 = £22,895.

**Suggested DC scheme with drawdown used after retirement**

The right-hand block represents a DC scheme, as described above, and assumes that the member will use drawdown to provide income in retirement (see paragraph 11.3 above).

The dark blue rectangle indicates that there is a 75% chance of receiving an annual pension at retirement of at least £8,733 meaning that total annual income including the state pension and the DB pension would be  $£9,000 + £5,175 + £8,733 = £22,908$ .

The light blue rectangle indicates that there is a 50% chance of receiving an annual pension at retirement of at least £13,809 ( $£8,733 + £5,076$ ) meaning that total annual income including the state pension and the DB pension would be  $£9,000 + £5,175 + £13,809 = £27,984$ .

#### **16.4 Sample member 3: 58 year old, with 30 years of past service**

The results for this member are exactly the same as in the example in 15.3 above. This is because the age-related Church contribution illustrated for those members aged 58 or over is 17.5%, the same as in paragraph 15.3 above.

# Paper G-H 1

## Stipendiary Ministry target numbers

### Finance and Ministries Committees

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Ian Hardie: <a href="mailto:ianzhardie@googlemail.com">ianzhardie@googlemail.com</a> Paul Whittle: <a href="mailto:moderator@urcscotland.org.uk">moderator@urcscotland.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Resolution.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Resolution 22</b> <b>In view of both the uncertain future impact of the ongoing coronavirus restrictions on the finances of the Church and the likely impact of unprecedented additional pension contributions on the direct cost of stipendiary ministry, General Assembly directs that</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>in preparing the 2022 and 2023 budgets for the Church the Finance Committee and the URC Trust disregard resolution 19 of the 2012 General Assembly; and</b></li> <li>• <b>the Finance and Ministries Committees bring their suggested replacement for the 2012 resolution to the 2023 General Assembly.</b></li> </ul>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To remove the existing policy for calculating the target number of stipendiary ministers.
<b>Main points</b>	<p>Since 2012 the target number of stipendiary ministers is to be set so that the direct cost of stipendiary ministry moves in line with trends in the membership of the Church.</p> <p>Although this was intended to keep ministerial numbers in line with M&amp;M contribution levels, in practice this has not happened. (Church membership has reduced far faster than M&amp;M contributions have reduced.)</p> <p>Significantly increased pension costs during the next few years would dramatically cut the target number of ministers from next year, if the 2012 policy remains in place.</p> <p>The above resolution gives time to devise a better solution to the problem the 2012 policy was addressing while avoiding any potential adverse impact on ministerial numbers in the short term.</p>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Resolution 19 of the 2012 General Assembly and related note (2012 Book of Reports, page 252).



	Paragraph 8 of the Finance Committee report to that General Assembly (2012 Book of Reports, page 103). Ministries Committee report on 'Stipendiary minister numbers and deployment' (2016 Book of Reports, pages 154 to 161).
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The URC Trust

**Summary of impact**

<b>Financial</b>	The resolution is intended to prevent massive (and unanticipated) cuts in the target number of stipendiary ministers due to a financial policy previously agree by General Assembly.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	

1. In 2012, General Assembly adopted resolution 19, which reads “General Assembly directs that for 2013 and until further notice, the target number of stipendiary ministers should be set so that the direct cost of supporting the ministry from the Assembly budget moves in line with the trend in overall membership numbers across the Church.”
2. The 2012 Book of Reports reminded General Assembly that, in 2003, it had agreed until further notice that the target number of stipendiary ministers should be changed each year by the same percentage as membership changed. As the trend reduction in membership at that time had been around 3% a year, in practice this meant that planning had been thereafter based on a reduction in the number of stipendiary ministers of 3% a year. Ministries and Finance Committee worked together to estimate future trends, and to ensure the fluctuating number of ministers in service stays broadly in line with the policy. The problem identified with the 2003 resolution was that the direct cost of stipendiary ministry had been rising in light of stipend increases and higher pension contributions. During the same period, although M&M giving per member had increased, the fall in membership averaging 3.5% opened up a growing gap between M&M income and the costs of supporting stipendiary ministers. This led to resolution 19, which was passed by consensus.
3. It is clear from the 2012 Book of Reports that the then Finance Committee believed the resolution revised the Assembly policy on the number of stipendiary ministers “to bring the costs in line with what the local churches feel able to give to M&M”. That does not accurately describe what resolution 19 does. It would only have that effect if the movement in M&M contributions and the changes in membership levels were on an identical trajectory.
4. In fact, however, the lack of symmetry between movements in M&M contribution levels and membership numbers, which was noted in the 2012 paper itself, has persisted ever since. Essentially, membership numbers have dropped between 2012 and 2020 by an average of roughly 4.7% each year: but M&M giving has dropped at a much lower rate, averaging 1.4%. If one ignored the pandemic reduced giving in 2020, this latter average would have been 1%.

5. Of course, the financial impact of the pandemic is likely to continue to have an effect on M&M contribution levels for the next year or two at least. However, it is clear that *if* the intention of the 2012 resolution was to keep target ministerial numbers in line with changes in the trend in M&M giving by churches, the chosen 'proxy' for that – ie, membership - was a very imperfect means of doing so.
6. The 2016 General Assembly learned the results of some work undertaken by Ministries and Finance Committee to project both the target number of stipendiary ministers which the 2012 policy indicate could be afforded, and the actual number of stipendiary ministers predicted to be available for service for the years down to 2025. The intention was to enable planning to be done for a few years going forward, which respected the 2012 policy but smoothed its fluctuations in the same way as was done with the 2003 policy. In setting out the resulting figures for the projected target number of ministers, it was explained that the numbers for the most immediate years were offered with greater confidence.
7. Among the assumptions underlying the paper's calculations was "URC membership continues to fall at the average of 3.2% pa seen over the past five years".
8. The 2016 projections anticipated that, in every year down to 2025, the available number of stipendiary ministers would be fewer than the target "affordable" number provided for by the 2012 formula. Consequently, in drawing up the Ministries' budget for each year since, the focus has been on the predicted number of ministers and what they would cost.
9. Irrespective of the intentions of the compilers of the 2016 table, we now know that some of its assumptions have not been borne out in practice. In particular, the outcome noted at paragraph 5 above suggests that if we focus on the wording of the 2012 resolution, the 2016 projections for the target number of ministers overstate what is 'affordable': since the rate of membership decline has been greater than the 3.2% average used in 2016 in every subsequent year. On the other hand, if we look at the apparent intention behind the 2012 resolution to link the change in costs of ministry with the level of M&M contributions, the 2016 projections understate the target number of affordable ministers: since the 3.2% figure used has been greater than the reduction in M&M contributions in all but one of the subsequent years.
10. The 2012 resolution also gives rise to a significant current concern about the use of the total direct costs of ministry to work out the number of ministers which the church can afford. One element of those costs relates to contributions made by the church towards stipendiary ministers' pensions. Throughout the period concerned there have been two types of pension contribution.
11. One has been the cost of deficit recovery contributions in respect of previous service of both current and former ministers. It is anticipated that, in each of the years 2022 to 2026, the Church is likely to pay almost £4.5 million a year more in deficit recovery contributions than in 2020. That would represent a gigantic increase in the direct cost of ministry which, were the 2012 resolution to be applied strictly, implies the need to reduce the target number of ministers drastically from next year.

12. The other type of pension contribution is in respect of future service benefits of current ministers. In the short-term, there will also be problems regarding these contributions in 2022. The Ministers' Pension Fund scheme actuary has recently indicated that these future service contributions will have to rise by around £1.5 million in that year. The amount might fall back to nearer present levels in 2023, if General Assembly resolves in principle to close the existing MPF scheme and the suggested 1 January 2023 timetable can be met. It would seem perverse to further cut the number of ministers in 2022 (which the 2012 resolution would imply) only to be able to afford more ministers in 2023.
13. Accordingly, Ministries and Finance Committees invite General Assembly to pass the resolution set out at the start of this paper which will have the effect of setting aside the 2012 policy which:
  - never did what it was apparently intended to do;
  - is out of line with current practice in calculating the Ministries' budget; and
  - would lead to imminent cuts to the target number of stipendiary ministers in an endeavour to stay within its parameters.
15. Ideally, we would wish to offer a replacement policy immediately. That is not really practical at present. The urgency of the issue has come to our attention very recently, and we have not had time to identify a suitable alternative policy which does not suffer from the deficiencies of the 2003 and 2012 versions. But, even more importantly, the still uncertain impact of the ongoing pandemic on the M&M fund and the possible changes to pension fund costs over the next couple of years make this an unsuitable time to implement a new 'steady-state' policy. The resolution therefore authorises the Finance Committee to manage the budget costs as best it can for the next year or two, on the understanding that a new policy will be brought for consideration by General Assembly in 2023.

# Paper H1

## Ministries Committee

### General report

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Nicola Furley-Smith <a href="mailto:ministries@urc.org.uk">ministries@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	For information.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To update on the work of two sub-committees: Accreditations Sub-Committee (CRCW&SCM) and the Assessment Board.
<b>Main points</b>	To update General Assembly on the ministry statistics of the both sub-committees.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Ministries Report to General Assembly 2020.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Ongoing consultation across the denomination.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	None.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None.

### General report

The committee is responsible for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Work, lay preaching and eldership. It is concerned with central care and conditions of service, chaplaincies in industry, higher and further education, prisons and in the armed forces and 'special category' ministry. It has concern for the pastoral support of ministers, Church Related Community Workers and lay preachers, including supervision, appraisal, self-evaluation and counselling. It oversees the Assessment Board and is assisted by four subcommittees.

**Membership:**

**Convenor:**

Paul Whittle

**Secretary:**

Nicola Furley-Smith

**Nominated members:**

Gill Bates, Martin Camroux, Sam Elliot, Stuart Scott, Sally Willett

**Convenors of the Accreditations Sub-Committee:**

Russell Furley-Smith and Simon Loveitt

**Convenor of the Assessment Board:**

Bill Gould

**Convenor of the MOM Sub-Committee:**

David Coote

**Convenor of RMHS sub-Committee:**

Ann Bedford

**Leadership in worship advocate:**

Mrs Jenny Sheehan

**Synod Moderator:**

Jamie Kissack

1. Since March 2020, how we support local churches and individuals both inside and outwith the church community to be the people of God has been challenging. We are so blessed to have Ministers of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Workers and lay people who have risen to the challenge and embraced new ways of being church as we tackle the current crisis.
2. Ministries Committee wishes to update the denomination with the following sub-committee reports which indicate the health of the breadth of ministries across the denomination.

**Accreditations Sub-committee (CRCW&SCM)**

Maintaining the roll of ministers, this sub-committee accredits those applying for inclusion after training, and those coming from other denominations. It is concerned with numbers and recruitment. It also deals with applications for special category ministries. It supports the work of CRCW ministry.

**Convenors:**

Russell Furley-Smith and Simon Loveitt

**Convenor-Elect:**

Paul Dean (2021) [to serve as convenor 2021-2025]

**Secretaries:**

Nicola Furley-Smith and Steve Summers

**Members:**

Tim Clarke (SCM post holder), Susan Durber, Bill Gould (convenor of the assessment board), Ann Honey (CRCW post holder), Leonora Jagessar Visser t’Hooft, Rob Moverley, Marie Trubic, Dave Herbert (Synod Moderator), Paul Whittle (Convenor of Ministries Committee)

1. The Accreditations sub-committee has been asked to update the denomination on ministry statistics. This report does not deal with the wider work of the committee on CRCW and SCM, as this will be reported to General Assembly in 2022.
2. **Certificates of Limited Service**
  - 2.1 Certificates of Limited Service allow a minister of another denomination to serve in, and be paid by, the URC, in a specified post only and for a limited period of time. They provide a flexible way of responding to particular local ministry needs and opportunities.
  - 2.2 Three new certificates have been issued in the last year, and none have been renewed or extended.
  - 2.3 As a new initiative, and for a period of three years, part-time certificates of limited service will not be counted against a Synod’s deployment target.
3. **Certificates of Eligibility**
  - 3.1 Two Certificates of Eligibility have been issued in the last 12 months to ministers from the Church of North India and Congregational Federation.
4. **The Roll of Ministers of Word and Sacraments**

Admission to the roll of Ministers of Word and Sacraments (from 1 February 2020 to 31 March 2021).

  - 4.1 By ordination and induction:  
Stephen Manyeh Ansa-Addo, Lee Barbara Battle, Sarah Louise Fitton, Ceri Ann Gardner, Susan Henderson, Aiyana Aurora Gardner-Houghton, James Hamilton, Daniel Rawdon Harris and Matthew James Rigden.
  - 4.2 By transfer from other churches:  
Wayne Christopher Hawkins (Congregation Federation), Adam Payne (United Church of Christ USA), Daniel Pratt (Baptist) and Ashley James Barker (Churches of Christ, Australia).
  - 4.3 By changes within the Roll of Ministers:  
There have been no changes within the roll of ministers.
  - 4.4 Deletions from the roll by resignation and / or transfer to another denomination or by the disciplinary process:



Elizabeth Blair, Harmke Aleida Dorothee Bührma, Hugh Fraser Graham, Chris Adeney Lawrence and Roger Whitehead.

4.5 Re-admission to the Roll:

There have been no re-admissions to the roll.

4.6 Jubilee Ministers:

Celebrating 70 years of ordained ministry in 2021:  
Basil Ernest Bridge.

Celebrating 60 years of ordained ministry in 2021:

Derrick Peter Ackling, Kenneth Douglas Alway-Jones, Marjorie Ayton, Arthur Jack Beeson, Anthony Gerald Burnham, David Vandeppeer Clarke, Wilfred Kieville Gathercole, Michael Edmund Heard, Max Armstrong Moore, David Cranford Morgan, Barry Richard Parker, Roger Kaye Scopes, Brian John Slater, John Malcolm Smith, Harold Robert Tonks, Alan David Trinder and Adrian John Wells.

Celebrating 50 years of ordained ministry in 2021:

Anthony John Addy-Papelitzky, John Colbeck Durell, Graham Beresford Edwards, Anthony James Lawford Jones, Barbara Meachin, Terry Oakley, Michael John Bemrose Spencer, Brian Sadler Stone, Alan Edward Thomasson, Colin Peter Thompson and Michael John Wear.

4.7 Ministers who have retired from 1 February 2020 to 31 March 2021:

Bruce Stuart Allinson, Raymond Anglesea, Nicholas Brindley, Barrie David William Cheetham, Richard James Church, Hilary Jane Collinson, Stephen Collinson, Simon Robert Ellis, Nigel Mark Goodfellow, Martin Owen Hardy, Brian Alan Hunt, Nicholas Richard Brook Mark, Sally Elizabeth Martin, Donald Harold Nichols, Patricia Anne Nimmo, Peter Clive Noble, John Maldwyn Parry, John Proctor, Ian Howard Ring, Elizabeth Joan Shaw, Baker Stephen Covington Taylor, Kathryn Iris Taylor, Patrick Hugh Taylor, Mary Euphemia Taylor, Hamish Graham Forbes Temple and Kevin Watson.

4.8 Ministers who have died from 3 July 2020 to 14 April 2021:

Jeffrey James Armitstead, Brian Hudson Bailey OBE, Kathleen Bennett, Sidney Bindemann, Anthony John Bradshaw, Richard Vivian Buddle, Thomas Edward Charles Bush, Frank Robert Cochrane, Ann Maureen Cole, Antony Richard Cottam, Michael John Davies, Hazel Mollie Day, Norman Albert Edsall, Ralph Leonard Eveleigh, David Charles Macara Gardner, Eglan Graham, Tom Patrick Grant, Bernard Grimsey, Amanda Julie Harper, M Ruth Hendry, David James Hudston, Rosemary Dorothy Humphrey, Anne Hunt, Rhona Mitchell Jones, Graham Ellis Henry Long, Peter Russell MacKenzie, Jennifer Marsh, David Mather, Peter Ernest McIntosh, Kenneth Newborough, Peter Henry Newell, Brian Norris, Derrick Parkinson, Samuel Eric Rogers, John Derek Salisbury, Barrie Wilson Saunders, Ronald Reginald Prestoe Smith, Graham John Spicer, Noel John Stancliff, Brian John Stops, Robert Waters, Anthony James Wilkinson, David John Wilkinson and Betty Florence Williams.

**5. Roll of Church Related Community Workers**

Admissions to the roll of Church Related Community Workers (from 1 February 2020 to 31 March 2021).

- 5.1 By commissioning:  
There have been no CRCWs commissioned to the roll.
- 5.2 Deletions from the roll by resignation and / or transfer to another denomination or by the disciplinary process:  
There have been no deletions to the roll.

## **6. Roll of Assembly-accredited Lay Preachers**

- 6.1 The following have received Assembly accreditation between 1 February 2020 and 31 March 2021 as a result of having completed a URC course of study or having prior accreditation from another denomination.

Eastern	Joan Smith
South Western	Helen May Pengelly
Wessex	Geoffrey Charles Wyatt Scott
Thames North	David Mawuko Akoli Joan Maureen Manning

- 6.2 Deletions from the Roll of Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers by resignation, removal and / or transfer to other Churches from 1 February 2020 and 31 March 2021:  
John Stephen Allott
- 6.3 Lay Preachers Retired from 1 February 2020 and 31 March 2021  
Thomas Birch, Pamela Freda Cressey, Christopher Dawson, John Robert Desmond, Valerie Joan Elms, Maurice Leonard Gardner, Colin Edmund Garley, Jessie Griffiths, Raymond John Hagley, Judith Mary Johnson, Alison Mary Jolly, Charles John Jolly, J Alun Jones, Alan Jowett, William David Chown Lee, Guy Stuart Morfett, Mary Nance, Leslie Alfred Phillips, Colin Walter Riley, Rosemary Denise Sheldon, Peter Laurence Smith, Edward Bower Strachan, Elizabeth Lynne Upsdell, Peter Edward Watchorn and Martin Gareth Edward Withers.

## **Assessment board**

### **Membership:**

#### **Convenor:**

Bill Gould

#### **Secretary:**

Nicola Furley-Smith

#### **Members:**

Lis Mullen (2), Keith Reading (3), Jamie Kissack (4), Dan Morrell (4), Samuel Silungwe (5), Mark Tubby (7), Faith Paulding (7), Gerald England (8), Bridget Akinyombo (10), John Danso (10), Sue McCoan (10), Jan Adamson (13).

## **The flow of candidates**

1. Since the last report, two conferences have been held (November 2020, April 2021). Both were held virtually, with a pattern of interviews, exercises and worship, designed to be as far as possible similar to established procedures.

Candidates and assessors, and the chaplain on both occasions, were supportive of the process in these exceptional circumstances. It is hoped to revert to the 'normal' conference format from November 2021.

2. Overall, ten candidates were considered by the Board, of whom nine were accepted: four in Stipendiary Ministry, four in Non-Stipendiary Ministry four, and one for CRCW. Six of these candidates will begin their EM1 training programme in September 2021. However, due to the portfolio nature of their training package, three NSM4 candidates were able to start their period of training in January 2021.

Date of Conference	Number of candidates	Number accepted
November 2020	Five	Four (SM = one NSM4 = three)
April 2021	Five	Five (SM = three NSM4 = one CRCW = one)
Total	Ten	Nine

## Students in training, by Synod

### 01 Northern CRCW

Fliss Tunnard

### Non-Stipendiary Ministry

Roberta Ritson

### Stipendiary Ministry

Lisa Wilson  
Louise Sanders

### 02 North Western

### CRCW

Katy Ollerenshaw

### Non-Stipendiary Ministry

Walt Johnson

### Stipendiary Ministry

Jonnie Hill  
Kate Hunt

**03 Mersey**

**Stipendiary Ministry** Karen Jones

**04 Yorkshire**

**Stipendiary Ministry** Adam Woodhouse

**06 West Midlands**

**Stipendiary Ministry** Clare Nutbrown-Hughes  
Johnny O'Hanlon  
Steph Atkins

**07 Eastern**

**Non-Stipendiary Ministry 4** Mark Hayes

**Stipendiary Ministry** David Cumbers

**09 Wessex**

**CRCW** Alice Gilbert

**Non-Stipendiary Ministry** Chris Noyce

**Non-Stipendiary Ministry 4** Linda Pain

**Stipendiary Ministry** Kevin Dudman  
Ruth Dewis  
Siobhan Antoniou

**10 Thames North**

**Stipendiary Ministry** Joseph Amoah  
Solomon Arvee-Brown

**11 Southern**

**Stipendiary Ministry** Adam Earle

**12 Wales**

**Stipendiary Ministry** Kate Wolsey  
Mark Rodgers

**13 Scotland**

**Non-Stipendiary Ministry 4** Cathy Crosbie  
Derek McDonald  
Margaret Higton

**Stipendiary Ministry** Lesley Thomson  
Nicola Robinson

**Students in training statistics**

as of 31/03/2021

	Students in Training		Anticipated entry into URC Service			
	Mar 20	Mar 21	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>STIPENDIARY</b>						
Northern College (RCL) MWS	11	9	1	3	2	3
Northern College (RCL) CRCW	3	3		2	1	
Scottish College (RCL)	3	3		1	2	
Westminster College (RCL)	10	8	1	5	1	1
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>NON-STIPENDIARY</b>						
Northern College (RCL)	2	2			1	1
Scottish College (RCL)	1	4			4	
Westminster College (RCL)		2		2		
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>

MWS: Ministry of Word and Sacraments

CRCW: Church Related Community Worker

RCL: Resource Centre for Learning

## Ordinations and commissions

		Type of Ministry	Date of ordination	Date into URC	
Stephen	Ansa-Addo	Stipendiary Minister	04/09/2020		Park, Reading and Hungerford 2020-
Ashley	Barker	Non-Stipendiary Minister		23/11/2020	Bishop Latimer 2017-; and Lodge Road 2020-
Lee	Battle	Stipendiary Minister	04/08/2020		South Manchester Missional Partnership 2020-
Sarah	Fitton	Stipendiary Minister	18/07/2020		Huddersfield Group 2020-
Ceri	Gardner	Stipendiary Minister	25/07/2020		Hoole 2020 -
Aiyana	Gardner-Houghton	Stipendiary Minister	15/07/2020		Heavitree and Pinhoe and South Western Rural Missioner 2020-
James	Hamilton	Stipendiary Minister	18/07/2020		Emmanuel Church, Redditch and Beacon Church Centre, Rubery 2020-
Daniel	Harris	Stipendiary Minister	02/08/2020		Rochdale, Bury and North Manchester Missional Partnership 2020-
Wayne	Hawkins	Stipendiary Minister	01/09/1993	08/08/2020	Guildford Porstmouth Road 2020-
Susan	Henderson	Stipendiary Minister	05/08/2020		Inverclyde pastorate 2020-
Adam	Payne	Stipendiary Minister	11/06/2011	01/09/2020	Goldaming 2020-
Daniel	Pratt	Non-Stipendiary Minister	28/06/2014	01/10/2020	
Matthew	Rigden	Stipendiary Minister	30/01/2021		South East Lincolnshire Pioneer minister 2021-

# Paper H2

## URC Disciplinary Policy for Office Holders

### Ministries Committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Paul Whittle <a href="mailto:moderator@urcscotland.org.uk">moderator@urcscotland.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Resolution 23</b> <b>General Assembly adopts the Disciplinary policy for Office Holders as outlined in Appendix One on this paper.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To adopt a disciplinary policy for office holders (not Ministers of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community workers or paid employees).
<b>Main points</b>	Having a clear and established disciplinary process in place for unacceptable actions will prevent misunderstandings and seek to protect the office holder and the denomination.  Whilst rooted in the local church there is provision for the synod to start the process.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Guidelines for the Conduct and Behaviour of Elders Guidelines for the Conduct and Behaviour of Lay Preachers GP5.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Law and Polity Synod Moderators Synod Safeguarding Officers.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	None.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Discipleship is about relationships. A disciple is simply a learner, someone who is learning to follow Jesus, growing in their relationship with him, with other people and the wider world. The words 'disciple' and 'discipline' have obvious common roots. From time to time, disciples go astray and require discipline to remind them



of the expected standards they have agreed to, to correct them and bring them into renewed commitment.

- 1.2 The Disciplinary Policy for Office Holders describes the process to be put into effect when office holders (not Ministers of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Workers or paid employees) are alleged to have committed a breach of discipline.
- 1.3 Whilst the process is rooted in the local church there is provision for the synod to start the process where the local church is unable or unwilling to do so.
- 1.4 The Disciplinary Policy for Office Holders recognises the need to be fair and impartial when dealing with disciplinary issues. The process must always be conducted with courtesy and sensitivity towards those involved, and that pastoral care must have within it a degree of firmness and fairness, as well as compassion. The Gospel requires repentance as well as forgiveness, modification of behaviour as well as personal support and care.

## Appendix One

### URC Disciplinary Policy for Office Holders

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The United Reformed Church requires its office holders to live as persons of prayer and integrity, for the health and welfare of themselves and all those whom they serve. Members promise, 'in dependence on God's grace, to be faithful in private and public worship, to live in the fellowship of the church and to share in its work', and to give and serve, as God enables them, 'for the advancement of his kingdom throughout the world'. They also promise 'by that same grace, to follow Christ and to seek to do and to bear his will' all the days of their life'.
- 1.2 No matter what the structures in the local pastorate or synod may be, there may be times when the performance or conduct of an office holder falls below what is expected. The normal route for concerns about performance to the expected standard for a particular role would be a capability process except in the case of Gross Misconduct.
- 1.3 However, having a clear and established disciplinary process in place for unacceptable actions will prevent misunderstandings and seek to protect all. This should be shared with all office holders of the local pastorate during their induction.

#### 2. The purpose of the policy

- 2.1 The United Reformed Church is committed to creating an environment where all office holders are able to perform to their best ability.
- 2.2 The United Reformed Church recognises that there will be occasions when disciplinary and / or performance problems arise. The purpose of this policy is to

ensure that if such problems do arise, they are dealt with fairly and consistently across the denomination. This policy sets out the action that will be taken when problems occur.

- 2.3 For the avoidance of doubt, where an individual against whom an allegation of a disciplinary offence is made is a Minister of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Worker, Section O: the United Reformed Church ministerial disciplinary process for Ministers of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Workers shall apply.
- 2.4 For the avoidance of doubt, where an individual against whom an allegation of a disciplinary offence is made is an employee, the employer's disciplinary process shall apply.

### **3. Definitions**

- 3.1 For the purposes of this process, an office holder shall be:
- A lay Synod Clerk (not an employed person)
  - An Elder of the United Reformed Church, either serving or non-serving
  - A Church Secretary or equivalent
  - A Church Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer
  - A Synod Local Church Leader
  - An Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher
  - A Locally Recognised Worship Leader
  - An Interim Moderator
  - A Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator or Deputy
  - A Children's and Youth Worker (not an employed person)
  - A Pastoral Worker (not an employed person)
  - A General Assembly appointed, or synod appointed, Committee Convenor
  - Or any other such role as General Assembly might determine as holding office within the United Reformed Church.

### **4. Expectations of office holders**

- 4.1 It is expected that, during the process of candidating / nomination / recruitment / selection and / or election:
- office holders will not have misled the Church or those who, on its behalf, assessed their readiness to exercise a particular ministry
  - those who make the affirmations at ordination or commissioning do so honestly
  - that their conduct after taking up office will accord with the affirmations made at membership or, in the case of elders, at their ordination and/or induction, and any code of conduct applicable to their role
  - have completed any safer recruitment process, or equivalent, prior to taking up post.
- 4.2 It is also expected that if allegations are made of a safeguarding or criminal nature or they are to be interviewed by the police, arrested on a criminal charge, convicted of any criminal offence by a court, or accept a police caution in respect of such an offence, they will report that fact to their Synod Safeguarding Officer, who will inform the Minister, or Interim Moderator in the case of a vacancy, and

Moderator of the Synod exercising oversight of them. See Good Practice 5 Section 11. Gross Misconduct.

- 4.2.1 If the disciplinary offence is one of criminal activity, the disciplinary process will be paused at this point until the criminal matter has been dealt with;
- 4.2.2 If the disciplinary offence is of a safeguarding nature, the process will be paused at this point until the safeguarding process has been concluded.

See Good Practice Section 12.

## **5. Principles**

- 5.1 Whilst it is intended that this policy is rooted in the local, it is recognised that, on occasions, invoking the disciplinary policy will be too difficult because of the relationships of individuals involved in the process. In these cases, the local pastorate may delegate the responsibility to the Synod Pastoral Committee or equivalent to act in its stead.
- 5.2 Whilst it is intended that this policy is rooted in the local, it may be necessary for the Synod Moderator or their deputy to invoke the policy where a local pastorate is unable or unwilling to invoke the policy.
- 5.3 The normal route for concerns about performance to the expected standard for a particular role would be a capability process, except in the case of Gross Misconduct.
- 5.4 If the office holder is subject to disciplinary action, the following procedure is designed to establish the facts quickly, and to deal consistently with disciplinary issues.
- 5.5 At every stage the office holder will be advised of the nature of the complaint and given the opportunity to state their case in a meeting before any decision is taken on whether to impose a warning or other disciplinary sanction.
- 5.6 The office holder will be given the opportunity to be represented or accompanied at any disciplinary meeting by a friend or colleague.
- 5.7 In some cases, an investigation will be required before any final decision is taken on whether to impose a warning or other disciplinary sanction.
- 5.8 There is a right to appeal against any disciplinary action taken against an office holder.

## **6. Confidentiality**

- 6.1 The Church's aim is to deal with disciplinary matters sensitively and with due respect for the privacy of any individuals involved. All must treat as confidential any information communicated to them in connection with a matter which is subject to this disciplinary process as confidential and should not be discussed with anyone outside the process, except where information needs to be given to the trustees of the Church or synod in order that they can appropriately manage their legal responsibilities, including reporting to the Charity Commission.

6.2 The office holder, and anyone accompanying them (including witnesses), must not make electronic recordings of any meetings or hearings conducted under this process.

6.3 The office holder will normally be told the names of any witnesses whose evidence is relevant to a disciplinary hearing if one is appropriate, unless the Elders Meeting believe that a witness's identity should remain confidential.

## 7. Informal meeting

7.1 Before any policy and procedure is invoked, the local pastorate<sup>1</sup> through those appointed by the Elders Meeting (namely two people) will conduct an informal meeting. Most problems can be resolved by informal discussions, and often this can avoid the need for formal disciplinary action. This may include mediation or additional training or support for the office holder. An informal meeting would not be recorded as disciplinary action and would be seen as a process of constructive dialogue.

7.2 If the problem cannot be resolved informally with your office holder, it might then be appropriate to invoke a disciplinary process upon guidance being sought from the synod moderator or their deputy.

## 8. Stage 1 – formal verbal warning

8.1 A formal verbal warning may be given to the office holder if, despite informal discussions or training, the conduct or performance still does not meet acceptable standards. This should follow a further meeting delivered by the person within your church/pastorate / synod who is most relevant – this may be the Minister, CRCW, Church Secretary or Line Manager.

8.2 The office holder will be told

- the reason for the warning
- what the office holder needs to do to improve the situation
- a time frame within which the conduct or performance needs to be improved
- any support or training the United Reformed Church might provide to support the volunteer
- that the verbal warning is the first stage of the disciplinary procedure.

8.3 A brief note of the warning should be kept but, subject to satisfactory conduct and / or performance, this would lapse after six months except in safeguarding related incidents where it will remain on file indefinitely.

## 9. Stage 2 – written warning

9.1 If there is no improvement in standards within the prescribed time, or if a further offence occurs, the office holder should receive a letter from the Minister (or the Convener of the Elders Meeting) inviting them to attend a further disciplinary meeting.

9.2 The letter will contain:

- details of what the office holder has alleged to have done wrong

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<sup>1</sup> Where there is a Synod role, the Synod Pastoral Committee takes on the role of the local pastorate

- the reason why the current behaviour or performance is unacceptable
- an invitation to attend a disciplinary meeting with the Minister (or the Convenor of the Elders Meeting) at which the problems can be discussed
- information about the right to be accompanied at the disciplinary meeting
- copies of any documents that will be referred to at the disciplinary meeting
- a copy of the disciplinary process

9.3 The disciplinary meeting should take place as soon as is reasonably possible, but with sufficient time for the office holder to consider their response to the information contained in the letter, normally within two calendar weeks. The meeting should be an opportunity for both the office holder (with their friend or colleague) and the Minister (or the Convenor of the Elders Meeting) to talk about the issues or allegations being made, consider the information with a view to establishing whether to progress the disciplinary action.

9.4 A record of the disciplinary meeting (either written/recorded) shall be kept securely according to Data Privacy Policy of the local church / synod and will lapse after 12 months, except in safeguarding related incidents where it will remain on file indefinitely.

9.5 Following the disciplinary meeting, if it is decided that no further action is warranted, the office holder should be informed in writing. Where the office holder is found to be performing unsatisfactorily or their behaviour is deemed unsatisfactory, they will be given a written warning. A copy of the written warning should be kept on file, but the warning will lapse after 12 months subject to satisfactory conduct and / or performance except in safeguarding related incidents, where it will remain on file indefinitely. Where a written warning is given, the Minister (or Convenor of the Elders meeting) should be advised and kept up to date with any progress.

9.6 The written warning will set out:

- the performance and / or behaviour problem
- the improvement that is required
- the timescale and date for achieving the improvement
- any support that the United Reformed Church will provide to assist the office holder
- a statement that failure to improve could lead to a final written warning and ultimately dismissal
- a review date
- a copy of the disciplinary process
- the URC appeal procedure.

## 10. Stage 3 – final written warning

10.1 If the conduct or performance still remains unsatisfactory by the stipulated date, or if the misconduct is sufficiently serious to warrant only one written warning, a further disciplinary meeting (where they will be present) should be called with the office holder and their representative. The disciplinary meeting will be an opportunity for the office holder to answer the issues raised. Where this meeting establishes that there has been a failure to improve or change behaviour, then a final written warning should be given to the office holder.

- 10.2 The final warning will:
- give details of and the grounds for the complaint
  - set out the improvement that is required and a time frame
  - make it clear that any recurrence of the offence, lack of improvement or other serious misconduct within the stipulated period of time will result in dismissal
  - refer to the office holder's right of appeal.
- 10.3 A copy of the final written warning will be kept on file, but the warning will lapse after 12 months subject to satisfactory conduct and / or performance except in safeguarding related incidents where it will remain on file indefinitely.

## **11. Final stage – removal from office**

- 11.1 If the office holder's conduct or performance still fails to improve or if further serious misconduct occurs, the final stage in the disciplinary process may be instituted, and the office holder dismissed.
- 11.2 If the office holder is removed from roll for a safeguarding incident, a referral to the DBS barring scheme and the Charity Commission will be made.
- 11.3 If the office holder is a trustee, notification to the Charity Commission will be made.
- 11.4 The decision to dismiss will be taken by the Minister / or Convenor of the Elders meeting following an appropriate hearing and the office being given the opportunity to state their case and put forward any mitigating circumstances. Following the hearing the office holder will be informed as soon as possible as to the outcome and if relevant the reason for removal from the role, the date on which their role will terminate and the right of appeal.

## **12. Gross misconduct**

- 12.1 Where an office holder is found guilty of gross misconduct, they would normally be subject to summary dismissal (instant dismissal without notice) and the above procedures regarding progression of warnings will not apply.
- 12.2 The following are matters that are normally regarded as gross misconduct:
- 12.2.1 Fraud, forgery, theft or other dishonesty, including fabrication of expense claims;
  - 12.2.2 Actual or threatened violence, or behaviour which provokes violence;
  - 12.2.3 Deliberate damage to Church buildings, fittings, property or equipment, or the property of a colleague, contractor, customer or member of the public;
  - 12.2.4 Serious misuse of our property or name;
  - 12.2.5 Serious safeguarding incident or concern;
  - 12.2.6 Repeated or serious failure to obey instructions, or any other serious act of insubordination;
  - 12.2.7 Unlawful discrimination or harassment;
  - 12.2.8 Bringing the Church into serious disrepute;
  - 12.2.9 Being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs or other substances during working hours;
  - 12.2.10 Causing loss, damage or injury through serious negligence;

- 12.2.11 Unauthorised use or disclosure of confidential information or failure to ensure that confidential information in your possession is kept secure;
- 12.2.12 Acceptance of bribes or other secret payments;
- 12.2.13 Conviction for a criminal offence that in our opinion may affect your suitability to continue to work for the Church;
- 12.2.14 Harassment of, or discrimination against, employees, contractors, or members of the public, related to gender, marital or civil partner status, gender reassignment, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, religion or belief or age.

This list is intended as a guide and is not exhaustive.

### **13. Appeals**

If an office holder wishes to appeal against any disciplinary decision, this should be made in writing within 14 working days of the decision being communicated to them, to the Synod Moderator<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> And for Synod Office Holders to the General Assembly Appeals process.



# Paper H3

## House for Duty for ministers

### Ministries Committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Paul Whittle <a href="mailto:moderator@urcscotland.org.uk">moderator@urcscotland.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Resolution 24</b> <b>Mission Council adopts the policy on House for Duty as outlined in Appendix One.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	House for duty to enable ministry to be offered in places where it might not otherwise be possible. This document regularises current practice and establishes a policy.
<b>Main points</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There are particular circumstances which do not make stipendiary ministry feasible in the short-medium term, or in a particular geographical area where it is difficult to provide ministry, a manse may be provided to a minister on a 'house for duty' basis.</li> <li>2. House for Duty is normally defined as 'Sunday duty plus no less than two days per week' (or x sessions or x hours per week). The minister gains a house to live in rent free with the local pastorate paying Council Tax, Water Rates and buildings insurance and being responsible for the maintenance of the property in accordance with the synod manse scheme.</li> <li>3. In the first instance this will be for a period of three years and in no circumstances beyond seven years.</li> <li>4. A House for Duty Licence with the Synod Trust should be in place</li> <li>5. There should be a clear arrangement for housing at the end of the term.</li> </ol>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Ministries Committee Finance.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	None.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None.

1. The purpose of a house for duty is to provide a property to a Minister serving in a non-stipendiary capacity for the better performance of their ministry in places where it might otherwise not be possible. It is not to provide income for ministers, but to enable ministry to be offered in places where it might not otherwise be possible.
2. Where a Synod Pastoral Committee (or equivalent) recommends that there are particular circumstances which do not make stipendiary ministry feasible in the short-medium term, or in a particular geographical area where it is difficult to provide ministry, a manse may be provided to a minister on a 'house for duty' basis. In the first instance, this will be for a period of up to three years and in no circumstances beyond seven years. Before a minister occupies a property on this basis there must be in place a House for Duty License between the Minister and the Synod Trust, and a clear arrangement for housing for the Minister at the end of the term.
3. House for Duty is defined as 'Sunday duty plus no less than two days per week' (or x sessions or x hours per week). The minister is provided with a house to live in rent free, with the local pastorate paying Council Tax, Water Rates and buildings insurance, and being responsible for the maintenance of the property according to the synod manse scheme.
4. House for Duty works best if it is seen as an integral part of a proper mission and deployment strategy, certainly at synod level, by which ministers work collaboratively to achieve set goals. It needs to be thought through by all concerned including the Synod Pastoral Committee (or equivalent) and the local pastorate.
5. As those offering themselves for House for Duty posts now come from a broad range of backgrounds and experiences and are of a wide age range, there is great potential for the development of these types of roles in the future. They can be seen as opportunities to take a new approach to ministry and mission in a particular area, introduce changes, and prepare congregations for new ways of working in the future. This can include:
  - Pioneer Ministry
  - the development of Fresh Expressions
  - chaplaincy
  - a remit to work with specific societal groups or age ranges
  - work with children or young people
  - the development of community projects
  - the development and facilitation of lay ministry
  - training
  - as a trouble-shooter on fixed term basis to address specific problems.

It is important that the synod, local pastorate and minister should be actively involved in drawing up any ministry vision (role description) including a review at the outset, so that all parties understand what is being agreed to in both the House for Duty Licence and the Terms of Settlement.

## **6. Tax liability**

- 6.1 Discussions with the Inland Revenue have provided the assurance that if a house for duty was provided to a URC minister for the better performance of the duties

and the minister provided Sunday duty plus no less than two days per week (or X sessions or X hours a week) there would not be a tax liability for the Minister, Pastorate, synod or Trustee, as the house would be regarded as being provided for the better performance of the duties and Ministry and not a taxable benefit in kind (ministry is traditionally one of those occupations for which this arrangement is permissible and would not be regarded as a benefit in kind).

- 6.2 If a person is in paid employment and wishes to live in the manse to undertake the duties but cannot satisfy the minimum expectations of time, then it would be regarded as a benefit and taxable.

## Appendix One

### House for Duty Licence Template

1. This licence made on the XX day of two thousand and XX

**Between**

The Licensor: ..... Synod Trust

and

The Licensee: **[add the name of the Minister]**

2. The Licence relates to the property at XX [add the address of the property]
- 2.1 The Property belongs to the Licensor and the Licensee is required to reside therein for the better performance of his / her ministry.
- 2.2 The Licensor permits the Licensee without payment to occupy the property from XX until the termination of this License as provided in Clause 5.

**3. It is agreed as follows:**

**The Licensee agrees with the Licensor:**

- 3.1 To notify his / her occupancy to all relevant suppliers of services to the property and to promptly pay all accounts for the supply of such services.
- 3.2 That the property is provided as a single private dwelling house for the exclusive occupation by the Minister, ~~and~~ **[his / her]** immediate family and temporary guests and not to use it or any part of it for any other purpose.
- 3.3 To exercise reasonable stewardship of both the interior and exterior of the property.
- 3.4 To be responsible for repairing any uninsured damage to the contents of property, other than normal wear and tear.

- 3.5 To return the property in the condition it was received when the property is vacated, viz. clean, tidy, in good order and empty of personal possessions.
- 3.6 To keep all gardens belonging to the property in a good and tidy order.
- 3.7 To co-operate with the Pastorate and synod in allowing reasonable access to the property for maintenance and annual inspection.
- 3.8 To report to the [**Elders' Meeting / synod**] any matter that could lead to the deterioration or damage to the property.
- 3.9 To report any defect to the property that may present a health and safety risk to occupiers or visitors to the Manse.
- 3.10 Not to operate a business from the Manse unless specifically agreed in writing by the Synod Trust Company.
- 3.11 Not to allow or permit any nuisance or annoyance to be created on the property.
- 3.12 To give to the Licensor promptly a copy of any notice received concerning the property.
4. This Licence is personal to the Licensee and is not assignable by them.
5. This license is terminable in the following manner and circumstances:
  - 5.1 Upon the expiry of one month from the date on which the Licensee ceases to hold the Licence of XX Synod Trust Ltd;
  - 5.2 Immediately upon service of a notice in writing by the Licensor or the specifying of a serious breach of the Licensee's obligations;
  - 5.3 Without notice if the Licensee shall cease to reside in the Property or
  - 5.4 Upon three months' notice given to the Licensee by the Licensor or vice versa whichever shall be the earlier and upon termination of the License the Licensee shall remove all their possessions from the Property and shall give vacant possession of it to the Licensor.
6. The management and control of the Property shall remain vested in the Licensor and nothing herein contained shall create the relationship of Landlord and Tenant between the Licensor and the Licensee or derogate from the rights of the Licensor and all persons authorised by them to enter the Property from time to time to main and repair the same.

Signed: Licensor [director on behalf of the Synod Trust]

Signed: Licensee / Minister

# Paper H4

## Schedule E

### Ministries Committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Paul Whittle <a href="mailto:moderator@urcscotland.org.uk">moderator@urcscotland.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Resolution 25</b> <b>General Assembly makes the changes to Schedule E as outlined in Appendix 1 of this paper.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To make changes to Schedule E to reflect the actual categories of ministers who comprise the roll of ministers within the United Reformed Church.
<b>Main points</b>	a) To correct the date in 1c to 2000 b) To make an addition to 1e to reflect synod appointments.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	N/A
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Clerk to General Assembly.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	None.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None.

1. We live in a changing world. Attitudes towards ministry and the shape of ministry within the United Reformed Church has changed since Schedule E was written. As a result, Ministries Committee has been reflecting on the categories of ministry within our denomination which comprise the roll of ministers.
2. It is not surprising that there have been changes. Ministries Committee sees this paper as a tidying up exercise to reflect the categories of minister which do indeed comprise the roll.
3. The date in which ministers of the former Congregational Union of Scotland became ministers of the United Reformed Church needs to be corrected to 2000.

4. The changing nature of ministers deployed to synod posts or to General Assembly appointments needs to be reflected within the categories also. It would be possible for ministers on Certificates of Eligibility to be eligible to be appointed to such posts.
5. Therefore, Ministries Committee proposes
  - c) a change to the 1e with the additions of the words *or upon appointment within a synod or wider church*;

## Appendix One: Schedule E

1. The following constitute the categories of ministers comprising the Roll of Ministers of the United Reformed Church:
  - a) Ministers of the former Congregational Church of England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England who became Ministers of the United Reformed Church at its formation in 1972;
  - b) Ministers of the former Re-formed Association of the Churches of Christ who became ministers of the United Reformed Church in 1981;
  - c) Ministers of the former Congregational Union of Scotland who became ministers of the United Reformed Church in 2000;
  - d) Ministers who have been ordained as ministers of the United Reformed Church and inducted to a local pastorate (or some other post approved by the synod) after having received a call with the concurrence of the synod or have been appointed to a post by councils of the Church or are associate members of a synod;
  - e) Ministers of other churches who have been granted a Certificate of Eligibility by the General Assembly, or the committee designated by the General Assembly with the responsibility to grant Certificates of Eligibility, and who subsequently transferred to the United Reformed Church upon ordination and/or induction to a local pastorate following a call with the concurrence of the synod *or upon appointment to a post within a synod or the wider church*;
  - f) Ministers of other churches who, with the approval of a synod, have been permitted by the General Assembly, or the committee delegated by the General Assembly to act on its behalf, to transfer to the United Reformed Church without receiving a call to a local pastorate or without being appointed to a post approved by synod.
2. Ministers must conduct themselves and exercise all aspects of their ministries in a manner which is compatible with the unity and peace of the United Reformed Church and the affirmation made by ministers at ordination and induction (Schedule C) and the Statement concerning the

Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church (Schedule D) in accordance with which ministers undertake to exercise their ministry.

3. Acting in due exercise of their functions as contained in the Structure of the United Reformed Church, the councils of the Church have authority in certain circumstances (without prejudice to a minister's conditions under the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration) to suspend a minister which involves a temporary ban on the exercise of ministry by the minister concerned but not his / her removal from the Roll of Ministers.
4. A minister under suspension, whether in pastoral charge or not, shall not present him/herself as a minister and shall not preside at communion. The minister shall refrain from all activity which may lead others to believe that he / she is acting as a minister of religion. Suspension also means that the minister may not exercise the ministerial rights of membership of any council of the Church. Suspension does not remove any of the rights accorded by the process of determining the matter which had led to the suspension.
5. A person whose name has been deleted from the Roll of Ministers of the United Reformed Church and who remains a member of the URC has the privilege and responsibilities of that membership, but not those of a Minister of Word and Sacraments, and should refrain from all activity which may lead others to believe that he / she is acting as a minister of religion. However, should that person be re-instated to the Roll of Ministers, he / she would, on being called to a pastorate, need to be inducted to that pastorate, but not ordained, since ordination is not repeatable.



# Paper I1

## Report to General Assembly 2021

### Mission Committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Sarah Lane Cawte <a href="mailto:slanecawte@gmail.com">slanecawte@gmail.com</a> Francis Brien <a href="mailto:francis.brien@urc.org.uk">francis.brien@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	For information and discussion.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	This report provides an overview of the work of the Mission Committee and Mission Team in the period from July 2020 till April 2021. It describes completed and ongoing work.
<b>Main points</b>	A progress report is given on the work of: Church and Society, Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, Global and Intercultural Ministries (including Commitment for Life), Mission and Evangelism, Fresh Expressions and Rural Mission.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Mission Committee Report to General Assembly 2020. Mission Council 11/20: Papers G1 and G2 Mission Council 03/21: Paper I1
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	

# Report to General Assembly

The central task of the Mission Committee is to focus on mission, working with the whole of the Church to formulate and give expression to our mission and faith in ways which bring alive our vision of ‘being Christ’s people, transformed by the Gospel, making a difference to the world’ (General Assembly, 2007). The committee seeks to encourage growth in discipleship, evangelism and witness by:

- reflecting on the Church’s mission practice and theology
- formulating policy, strategies and programme (action) priorities
- reading the signs of the times and speaking prophetically
- working with partners
- continuously evaluating the place of mission and evangelism within the work of General Assembly.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on everyone’s life in the last year. Inevitably, it has affected the work of local churches and of the Mission Committee. The Mission Committee has held its meetings online. Whilst this took some adjustment initially, it has had benefits in focusing time and energy, and we expect to continue to connect in this way for at least some of our future meetings. Some events and projects have had to be set aside, at least temporarily, but a new creativity has emerged. People have been able to connect with others in meaningful ways, taking advantage of the technology to which many have access, and forums such as webinars have helped the Mission Team to engage church members with some of the important issues with which they are working.
- 1.2. The Mission Committee report offers an overview of each area for which the committee is responsible, and of the work of the staff members responsible for the work. Members of the Committee are listed in the Nominations Committee report.

## 2. Church and Society

Secretary for Church and Society: Simeon Mitchell

Programme Support Officer for Church and Society: Roo Stewart

- 2.1 The Church and Society programme helps the Church to speak prophetically about justice and peace issues in the public square, and supports local churches by providing resources and campaigns that help individuals make the links between faith, politics and social action. Most of this work is carried out through membership of the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT), a partnership between the United Reformed Church, the Methodist Church, and the Baptist Union of Great Britain, with the Church of Scotland as associate partners.



- 2.2 In April 2021, Simeon Mitchell, Secretary for Church and Society, was appointed interim Team Leader of JPIT for a period of two years, having previously been Deputy Team Leader.

- 2.3 In recent years, JPIT has been focused on helping the Church to work, witness and pray for:
- a society where the poorest and most marginalised are at the centre
  - a society that welcomes the stranger
  - a just economy that enables the flourishing of all life
  - a planet where the environment is renewed
  - a world which actively works for peace
  - a politics characterised by listening, kindness and truthfulness.

In 2020 / 21, the work was organised around five priorities:

### **Staying alert to justice**

- 2.4 In the context of the coronavirus pandemic, we raised awareness of how different people, groups and situations were being adversely affected by the crisis. As well as highlighting issues through the daily 'Stay and Pray' initiative, we advocated for action for those who fell through the gaps in support, such as migrants with No Recourse to Public Funds, and children in poverty missing out on free school meals.
- 2.5 A series of blogs explored aspects of racial justice, and a season of films and stories focused on people's lived experience of homelessness. We also offered a briefing and webinar about the changing landscape of winter provision for the homeless.
- 2.6 Looking internationally, the General Assembly Moderators backed the People's Vaccine campaign for equitable global access to Covid-19 vaccines, and a call for the cancellation of some of the poorest countries' debts in the light of the pandemic. An emergency resolution was passed by the November 2020 Mission Council objecting to cuts in the UK's commitment to devote 0.7% of national income to addressing global poverty, and joint briefing and advocacy work was undertaken on this issue with ecumenical partners.

### **Reset the debt**

- 2.7 Research that JPIT had carried out into poverty under lockdown identified the build-up of unavoidable debt by low-income households as a major impending problem which was not being addressed by others. In October 2020, the 'Reset the Debt' campaign was launched with a research report and national media coverage, to put a spotlight on this crisis and make the case for debt forgiveness – jubilee – to be part of the solution. Thousands of people have supported the campaign in some way, and we continue to work with Church Action on Poverty and the Jubilee Debt Campaign to build support in parliament and with the public for action on this issue.

### **Climate justice**

- 2.8 With the UN COP climate summit due to be held in November 2021 in Glasgow, this year offers a major opportunity for action on the climate emergency – locally, nationally and internationally. At a policy level, the General Assembly Moderators were invited to meet with the COP President, and signed letters calling for ambitious emissions reduction commitments and for global justice to be at the heart of future agreements.

- 2.9 Climate Sunday was launched as a significant ecumenical initiative resourcing local churches to engage with COP26, and the URC provided financial support and commended its resources and calls to action.
- 2.10 Within the URC, this year saw the West Midlands Synod achieve the first Eco Synod award in March 2021, and continuing growth in the numbers of churches engaging with environmental issues through Eco Church (England and Wales) and Eco-Congregation (Scotland), encouraged by a network of Green Apostles. Mission Council also passed a resolution urging people to work towards eliminating the use of single-use plastics, given their significant environmental impact.

### **From recovery to flourishing**

- 2.11 As the economy entered a recession and attention focused on the need for an economic recovery, the Churches developed a statement setting out our hopes for an economy that enables flourishing for both people and planet. We highlighted initiatives and events from partners around these themes, including the Fairtrade Foundation and the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR), and supported the launch of Church Action for Tax Justice's Fair Tax Now campaign in January 2021.

### **Welcoming the stranger**

- 2.12 The Church has continued to stand alongside migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, challenging 'hostile environment' policies and promoting a culture of welcome. We responded to the government's proposals for reform of the asylum system, and continued to call for an end to indefinite detention, the establishment of safe routes for unaccompanied child refugees to come to the UK from elsewhere in Europe, and for asylum seekers to be allowed to work. Church leaders joined in widespread condemnation of the use of former barracks as accommodation for asylum seekers. We raised concerns about the operation of the settled status scheme for EU citizens living in the UK, and launched an information campaign to raise awareness of the scheme through churches and highlight sources of support for vulnerable groups in applying.

### **Responding and resourcing**

- 2.13 In addition to work around these priorities, JPIT also enabled our Churches collectively to respond to government consultations and proposals on various other issues of longstanding concern, including gambling, defence and security policy, the role of faith groups, welfare provision, and nuclear weapons. We celebrated the passing into international law of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons with a statement and video from faith leaders, and encouraged banks and pension funds to reconsider their investments.
- 2.14 A range of resource materials were produced to enable informed discussion, reflection and response to current issues of justice and peace. Alongside the monthly JPIT email newsletter and podcast, regular social media posts and topical blogs, these included briefings on Brexit and the May 2021 elections, Advent worship resources, group study materials on 'How Does Change Happen?', and 'Politics in the Pulpit', a new weekly lectionary-based video podcast. All can be found at the JPIT website: [www.jointpublicissues.org.uk](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk).

### 3. Ecumenical and interfaith relations

Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations: Philip Brooks

Administrator: Carole Sired

Ecumenical and Interfaith Officer for the National Synod of Scotland:

John Bremner

Ecumenical and Interfaith Officer for the National Synod of Wales: Martin Spain  
(from June 2021)

#### Ecumenical relations

- 3.1 The URC works with the ecumenical instruments of England (Churches Together in England, CTE) and Wales (Cytûn), as well as with Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI).
- 3.2 A long period of reorganisation, which will result in the Scottish ecumenical instrument transforming from Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) to a more inclusive way for Scottish churches to work together ecumenically, is nearing fruition. Named the Scottish Christian Forum, the new organisation's aim is to significantly widen its membership base. In the transition period, the Scottish Church Leaders Forum has been working very effectively, particularly in its engagement with the Scottish Government during the period of the pandemic.
- 3.3 At the end of 2020, CTE consulted its members on their new strategic plan document, to which the URC Mission Committee provided extensive feedback.
- 3.4 At the meeting of CTE's Enabling Group in October, Victoria Turner (URC Youth) was elected a CTE trustee. Victoria is also part of CTE's working group responding to the issue, recorded in the 2018 Book of Reports, concerning Quaker, Hannah Brock Womack, who is still not able to take up her appointed position as CTE fourth president, because of her same-sex marriage.
- 3.5 During the lockdown period the URC, Church of England, Baptist and Methodist national ecumenical officers (NEOs) developed a toolkit as the companion document to 'A flexible framework for local unity in mission'. It is a practical guide to lighter touch ways of ecumenical working. The URC Communications department provided the design for this booklet.
- 3.6 During the first half of 2021, the NEOs and CTE have been engaging in Zoom consultations with regional church leaders to consider the future of intermediate ecumenism (often referred to as 'county bodies'). Several URC Synod Moderators and Ecumenical Officers have taken part in these 'virtual roadshows'. The organising group is due to draft a report of its findings and recommendations by the end of 2021.
- 3.7 After several years of research, the Free Churches Group (FCG) has published its report, 'The Church and Social Cohesion', produced in partnership with the Theos thinktank. It looks at the churches' grass roots contribution to social cohesion, offering practical recommendations for how churches can maximise their potential to foster social cohesion in the community. Helen Cameron, Chair of the Northampton Methodist District, has been elected as FCG Moderator-Elect. She will work alongside the current Moderator, Hugh Osgood, and take over from him in April 2022.

- 3.8 In November 2020, the international Reformed-Anglican Dialogue published a major report on its work: 'Koinonia: God's Gift and Calling'. The report was received enthusiastically by the URC's Faith and Order Committee. There are plans for a theological consultation led by the URC, Church of England and CTE to take place later in 2021.
- 3.9 The URC continues to take part in several bilateral groups, as well as acting in an observer capacity at the Methodist Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission and the Church of England Council for Christian Unity.
- 3.10 In 2020, Paul Whittle took over a caretaker role as co-convenor of the Methodist / URC Liaison Group. Geoffrey Clarke is nominated at this General Assembly to serve as co-convenor for the next five years.
- 3.11 As recorded in last year's Book of Reports, we continue to be thwarted in establishing the next round of dialogue between the URC and the Church of England, because our Anglican colleagues have been unable to find a co-convenor. Separately, two bishops were lined up to take on this role, but for different reasons, each of them had to withdraw.
- 3.12 The third phase of dialogue between the URC and the Roman Catholic Church has continued its momentum, transferring recent meetings to Zoom. Its co-convenors are John Bradbury and Bishop Paul Hendricks. Our postponed residential in Carlisle, looking at the relationship between covenant partners and companion churches in the ecumenical county of Cumbria, will hopefully take place in November 2021.
- 3.13 We are grateful to those who attend ecumenical assemblies representing the URC. Notable amongst these is Tim Meadows, who is the URC observer at the regular Church of England Synod meetings. Roy Fowler is retiring after several years representing the URC at Methodist Conference, and in 2021 Peter Pay took on this commitment.

### **European ecumenical relations**

- 3.14 Despite the inability to meet in person, the partnership between the Evangelische Kirche der Pfalz flourishes. A very successful virtual Advent communion service between the two churches took place last year and this was followed by another joint Pentecost communion service, with a focus on young people in the two churches. Perhaps the prize for the most creative event goes to Scottish College ordinand, Roberta Ritson, who organised an online Shrove Tuesday pancake party. It was much appreciated by both German and UK church members. At the end of July 2021, St Andrews URC, Roundhay, Leeds will be marking their 50-year partnership with the Lutherkirche in Frankenthal, and a 30-year link with the Martinskirche in Bernburg, by means of an online service of celebration.
- 3.15 The URC Waldensian fellowship now has regular online meetings, the most recent of which featured the organisation Mediterranean Hope, set up by the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy, and which seeks to help those who arrive in Italy by boat from Africa. Anyone wishing to know more about the URC's European partnerships, please contact Carole Sired: [carole.sired@urc.org.uk](mailto:carole.sired@urc.org.uk).



### Interfaith relations

3.16 Following on from a statement of condemnation by URC Assembly Moderators in April 2020 about Islamophobic comments posted on the BBC website, a regular line of communication has opened up with the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB). From this growing relationship, the idea germinated for a pilot in the November 2020 Inter Faith Week, which would partner churches and mosques for a series of online conversations. Local URCs in Banstead, Blackburn, Darwen and Salford took part. The aims were to build friendship and understanding between Christian and Muslim congregations, some of whom may never have ventured to speak to one another before. The pilot proved very successful, and was broadened to include Methodist, Salvation Army and Baptist partners. The Christian Muslim Forum (CMF) also came on board, and offered support to those churches and mosques who want to make a more permanent commitment by joining CMF's established twinning programme. We will be rerunning the church-mosque pilot for Inter Faith Week in 2021. Any churches interested in being involved, please email Carole Sired: [carole.sired@urc.org.uk](mailto:carole.sired@urc.org.uk)



3.17 The Interfaith Enabling Group is currently updating the URC guidelines regarding the use of church buildings by people of other faith communities. The current information dates back to a document written in 1974.

3.18 As worship centres begin to reopen, any local URC looking for a small grant to fund an interfaith event can apply to the URC's Interfaith Enabling Group for support from the Interfaith Fund. Email Carole Sired for an application form and funding criteria.

### 4. Global and Intercultural Ministries

Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries: Karen Campbell  
Administrator (Global and Intercultural Ministries): Veronica Daniel  
Programme Officer for Global Justice and Partnerships: Kevin Snyman  
Administrative Assistant (Commitment for Life): Suzanne Pearson



### **Intercultural work**

- 4.1 In the past year, much of the work of Global and Intercultural Ministries (GIM) has been shaped by significant world events – particularly the COVID pandemic and the killing of George Floyd, both throwing a harsh light on issues of racial injustice. In June 2020, GIM drafted a URC statement in response to George Floyd's killing. Whilst the statement was widely appreciated, many voices were crying out, 'What can we do?' GIM heard a sense of both urgency and possibility – a Kairos moment – and has responded as follows.

### **Racial justice conversations**

- 4.2 Whilst public attention focused on the Black Lives Matter protests, GIM hosted two online conversations asking, 'Do Black Lives Matter in the URC?' – an opportunity and challenge for the URC to consider whether our own house is in order. An initial open gathering drew well over 100 participants, whilst a second session was reserved for black and ethnic minority participants only. The sessions replaced the 24-hour residential gathering for black and minority ethnic ministers and CRCWs and Cascades of Grace, cancelled due to Covid-19.
- 4.3 The planned residential for synod Racial Justice, Commitment for Life and Global Partnerships co-ordinators was another casualty of the lockdown. Instead, GIM hosted two online gatherings led by the Revd Dr Peter Cruchley, Council for World Mission (CWM) Mission Secretary responsible for the 'Legacies of Slavery' project, with a third reserved for the co-ordinators' networks. Thought-provoking conversations explored the shift from 'Not Racist' to 'Anti-Racist', addressing questions such as 'What does it mean to be white in a world where Black Lives Matter?' The open sessions each attracted more than 70 participants and received overwhelmingly positive feedback.

### **Legacies of Slavery (LoS)**

- 4.4 GIM has consistently pointed to Legacies of Slavery as a concrete outworking of the URC's racial justice journey. The work of the Task Group was temporarily halted due to Covid-19 and lockdown. Resignations were received from Sue Fender and Ray Stanyon, later followed by group convenor, Alan Yates. Although numerically depleted, there remained a strong commitment and determination to get things done – and to do them well! Responding to an appeal from the Synod Clerks, the URC Legacies of Slavery webpage was launched at the beginning of October 2020. Work to refresh the page is ongoing, with featured resources to be placed under the headings agreed for the task group's focus: Apology, Reparations / Restorative Justice, White Privilege. A further section - Anti-Racist Living – will emphasise the commitment made by Mission Council, November 2020. The Task Group contributed to the Children and Youth resource 'Heroes and Villains' and launched the Black History Monthly in February 2021, an online gathering on the third Monday of each month aiming to keep issues of racial justice on the agenda throughout the year.
- 4.5 The Task Group's membership is being bolstered in preparation for the denomination-wide consultation bringing feedback to General Assembly 2022. Karen Campbell and Kevin Snyman maintain GIM's presence, working alongside Stephen Ansa-Addo and John Campbell. John has committed two days each week for six months as his sabbatical project, and the group has recently welcomed Victoria Turner and Zaidie Orr. We are delighted that David Reynolds,

Professor Emeritus of International History at Cambridge University, has agreed to become the convenor of the Task Group.

### **Anti-racist Church resolution**

- 4.6 GIM drafted this resolution committing the URC to an intentional journey from 'not racist' to actively 'anti-racist', adopted by Mission Council in November 2020 with 100% agreement. Unsurprisingly, there has been pushback. Some people argue that the URC is not racist – so is this not a waste of energy? Others express frustration – 'Doesn't this just repeat previous commitments which have not been acted upon?' There is a real sense that this time, we MUST make it count!
- 4.7 This resolution seeks to give concrete expression to resolutions adopted in previous years. It is not a project, not an initiative, but a commitment to a way of being and living. Various areas of work are currently being explored / developed:
- Template letter – enabling a quick response to queries
  - FAQ document
  - An independent racial justice audit
  - Resourcing the Racial Justice Advocates and Cascades of Grace to support the over-arching anti-racist journey
  - Legacies of Slavery – ensuring that work undertaken resources the anti-racist commitment.

### **Racial Justice networking / Ecumenical work**

- 4.8 Collaborative relationships have been developed with colleagues in the Baptist Union of Great Britain and CTBI. The GIM Secretary participates in the newly formed Racial Justice Advocacy Forum (RJAF) which seeks to enable more effective and prophetic action by the Churches regarding racial injustice, and has joined the core group taking this work forward. She is currently involved in planning for a George Floyd anniversary service, plus conversations for ecumenically produced Racial Justice Sunday materials. She is also part of a new Racial Justice Working Group devised by CTE. The aim is to ensure the URC has a presence in relevant conversations which may contribute to our anti-racist journey, learning from and supporting our partners in their journeys too.

### **Global work**

- 4.9 There has been contact with several Global Partners through introductory emails from Karen Campbell as the new Secretary for GIM, a video greeting for the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) General Assembly 2020, and facilitating a greeting for the URC's General Assembly from the Revd Keith Haley, General Secretary of the Guyana Congregational Union. GIM sent a message of support for a peace event held by the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) marking the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War, whilst former URC Assembly Moderator, David Grosch-Miller added his name to the People's Korean Peace Declaration.
- 4.10 We have had presence at online meetings of partners of the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL) and the Taiwan Ecumenical Forum (TEF). Karen Campbell and David Grosch-Miller are representing the URC on the newly formed TEF Theological Reflection Group. John Bradbury is a current President of the Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe.

- 4.11 The **CWM Partners in Mission (PiM)** programme is the means by which the URC sends and receives mission partners. Two of our three PiM relationships have required intensive support in the past year:
- Alison Gibbs, based in Zambia, returned to the UK in March 2020 for eye surgery. Subsequent health issues – and Covid-19 travel restrictions – threw up numerous practical concerns, preventing Alison from going back until late August. GIM Administrator, Veronica Daniel is to be commended for her outstanding patience and determination in resolving the issues. GIM's current focus is to complete arrangements for Alison's retirement and return to the UK in December 2021.
  - The Revd Yufen Chen, working with the Taiwanese Fellowship in London, has had a turbulent year. There was prolonged uncertainty regarding the project base, Lumen URC, with the church finally deciding to close in July 2020, and Thames North Synod was unable to commit dedicated space to the project. Simultaneously, the pandemic saw the departure of the majority of the Taiwanese students with whom Yufen had been working. Despite these challenges, Yufen has remained positive and resourceful. She has devised new online initiatives and spearheaded an online service commemorating James Laidlaw Maxwell, a medical missionary credited with the formation of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, drawing participants from both the UK and Taiwan. The PiM management group is exploring possibilities for relocating and renegotiating this project.
  - So-Young Jung, from the Presbyterian Church of Korea, has settled into her role as lay missionary with the New Malden and Kingston churches in Southern Synod, and has been developing excellent work with children and young people in the midst of the lockdown.
  - Although not a formal PiM relationship, the URC and PCT jointly support the work of Selena Tai with the St Peter's House Chaplaincy in Manchester. Selena was furloughed during the first Covid-19 lockdown. Subsequent conversations sought to resolve various arising queries and ensure the URC and PCT are kept informed of any further unexpected developments.
- 4.12 GIM appreciates the role of the **International Exchange Reference Group (IERG)** in overseeing and supporting the mission partners. Thanks to Paul Whittle for maintaining contact with Alison Gibbs and initiating URC conversations in preparation for her retirement. Farewell to Judith North who completed her term as IERG Convenor, and thanks to Revd Ana Gobledale, who has taken up the role.
- 4.13 GIM has supported various **Council for World Mission** online initiatives and gatherings – writing resource materials, joining webinar panels, and disseminating information to encourage URC participation. We have participated in online conversations involving churches from CWM Europe and Caribbean regions, enabling a better understanding of our partners, their contexts and work. CWM has informed and contributed to URC initiatives.
- 4.14 The URC is represented in CWM's governance through Lindsey Brown, who is a Trustee of the Council for World Mission (UK). Lindsey served on a panel commending Revd Jooseop Keum (Presbyterian Church of Korea) as CWM's

General Secretary to serve from July 2021. Karen Campbell becomes the Annual Members Meeting representative from June 2021.

- 4.15 GIM launched a URC-wide **Beirut emergency appeal** to support the relief efforts of our local partner, NESSL, following the explosion in August 2020. The appeal raised more than £15,000 including match-funding from the URC's World Church and Mission Fund.
- 4.16 A funding request from the **Presbyterian Church in Myanmar (PCM)** for a project to upskill women through training as nurse aids was agreed in principle. The arrangement has not been finalised due to the military coup of 1 February 2021. GIM has been in contact with the Revd Ramthanga, PCM General Secretary, expressing solidarity. A URC statement of support was released in March, including a prayer written by the Assembly Moderators.

### **Commitment for Life**

- 4.17 Commitment for Life (CfL) is the URC's global justice programme. In the last 12 months, CfL has witnessed the considerable impact of Covid-19 on our global partners. While Covid-19 has undoubtedly affected all of us, our partners in the global south have borne the brunt of the social and economic impacts of the pandemic, including our collective inability to co-ordinate a caring and just rollout of Covid-19 vaccines worldwide. CfL appreciates the current emphasis in GIM highlighting the ongoing impact of the Legacies of Slavery on the global financial architecture, and how this continues to work to the detriment of our global south partners.
- 4.18 Though Covid-19 has affected our work considerably, it has offered opportunities for new ways of engaging through prayer, learning and activism. In addition to our customary annual CfL communications, we have leveraged the reach of YouTube, Zoom and other media (FB: @comm4life) to share and communicate our message.
- 4.19 Christian Aid contact, Charlotte Scott, returned from maternity leave, and continues to provide support for our engagement with CfL partners in Central America, Bangladesh, Zimbabwe and Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. We thank Sarah Wake for her support during Charlotte's absence. We are delighted to be working with Helen Howe, Christian Aid's National Church Liaison Officer, who has been instrumental in assisting the URC generate its 'Just Scripture Programme' as part of CfL's engagement with the Education and Learning integration consultation. Helen also assisted in setting up the URC's well-received 'Grateful for our Vaccine' giving page.
- 4.20 Our partner Global Justice Now has helped shape our response to the pandemic, including the plea for full UK support for the COVAX programme, signing up to the World Health Organisation's Covid-19 technology access pool, and support for The People's Vaccine. Sandra Wild and Heidi Chow are CfL's points of contact. For further information about why this work is critical for our partners, watch this video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=-z0pZ7fzL-Q&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-z0pZ7fzL-Q&feature=youtu.be)
- 4.21 CfL helped curate and deliver the Fairtrade Foundation's 2021 Fairtrade Fortnight ecumenical service of worship.

- 4.22 We said farewell with gratitude to Alan McGougan, and welcomed Richard Lewney as convenor of the CfL Reference Group. The group has spent time reviewing its remit and terms of reference. Following Christian Aid's restructuring in Central America, it has researched the implications of reducing CfL support to three, from four, global regions. There is support in the group to push for an advocate in each synod. The Reference Group has identified a key focus for the short to medium term – widening CfL visibility to and engagement with the two-thirds of URC congregations that are not yet active Commitment for Life supporters.
- 4.23 Although donations to CfL have fallen, they are much better than expected. The total giving to CfL in 2020 was £253,422 which is about 23.1% down on the £329,901 collected in 2019. We appreciate the ongoing generosity and commitment of local congregations to the cause of global justice during these very difficult times.

## 5. Mission and evangelism

Deputy General Secretary: Mission: Francis Brien

Administrator: Carole Sired

National Rural Officer: Elizabeth Clark

Co-ordinator for Fresh Expressions: Linda Rayner

Project Manager for Walking the Way: Simon Peters

### Vision2020

- 5.1 Supporting local churches and synods in their engagement with God's mission, especially in sharing the good news and reaching out to the community, is a key part of our work. From 2010 to 2020, this work was focused on vision2020, the URC's ten-year framework for mission. An evaluation of vision2020 is being completed and will be presented to Mission Council in November.

### Walking the Way, living the life of Jesus today

- 5.2 The Project Manager for Walking the Way has continued to support churches and synods in a very active way throughout the pandemic, offering webinars, organising network meetings, and collaborating with others on resources. The Steering Group has considered feedback on Walking the Way's future and has developed proposals for the way forward. More information is given in a separate paper.

### Projects and partners

- 5.3 As in 2020, this year's **Greenbelt** festival has been cancelled. The URC planning team had put an enormous amount of work into a much more involved presence for 2021. Alongside the craft activities, we had also built in a family friendly café facility in a much larger tent. This would enable us to provide a space for music, storytelling, worship and talks. To facilitate this more ambitious presence, 46 volunteers had already signed up. We now look forward to taking this format forward to the 2022 festival, when we will also be celebrating the URC's jubilee.
- 5.4 We were actively involved in planning a major ecumenical conference on Missionary Discipleship, organised by the **CTE Group for Evangelisation**. The conference was offered online in November 2020 and brought together a wide range of people from the CTE member churches and partners. The next conference will be held from 16 to 18 November 2021.



- 5.5 The URC continues to partner with **HOPE**, who in the past year have provided excellent resources for local churches to help them engage with their communities in the pandemic ([www.hopetogether.org.uk](http://www.hopetogether.org.uk)). In collaboration with CTE, HOPE has also offered webinars on 'Edging into Hybrid Church'. This year, we have promoted **Thy Kingdom Come**, encouraging churches to join the global, ecumenical prayer initiative that is taking place from Ascension to Pentecost ([www.thykingdomcome.global](http://www.thykingdomcome.global)).

### Networks

- 5.6 We support the work of synod **Mission Enablers** by facilitating regular meetings for networking, sharing and support. During to the various lockdowns the Mission Enablers met more regularly online, reflecting on how the pandemic has affected the life and mission of the churches. Many churches have responded in very innovative ways to keep meeting as church (often online) and to remain a presence and support in their communities.
- 5.7 Now that churches are coming out of lockdown and returning to in-person worship the Mission Enablers are beginning to reflect on what churches and synods can learn from the experience. Many churches are now combining online and in person worship, and several Mission Enablers are involved in equipping them for this new reality of hybrid church.
- 5.8 Many people are now also reflecting on their church buildings, and how they can be used for mission. How live an issue this is was demonstrated recently, when over 250 people logged on to a webinar on the theme 'Building for the Future' organised by the **URC Buildings Forum**, a network affiliated with the Mission Committee.

### Fresh Expressions

- 5.9 We continue with the process of embedding fresh expressions thinking and practice into the URC<sup>1</sup>. This is the task of the Fresh Expressions Enabling Group (FXEG) set up by the Mission Committee. The group includes representatives from the Mission and Discipleship departments, as well as the Pioneers network and Synod Moderators. The group has met several times in the past year to reflect on the opportunities the lockdowns have created for churches to experiment with new ways of meeting. A strategy and action plan has been developed to encourage recognition of all kinds of church, both traditional and new – a 'mixed ecology of church'.
- 5.10 The group has also considered questions regarding theology and church order which have arisen, including the need for a specific definition of church and how this might be recognised in a new context. These have been sent to the Faith and Order Committee for further consideration and feedback.
- 5.11 Members of the FXEG participated in the Fresh Expressions Partners Learning Community in November 2020. This is an annual ecumenical gathering of the embedding groups within the partners of Fresh Expressions (the Church of

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<sup>1</sup> 'Fresh expressions of church (fx) are new forms of church that emerge within contemporary culture and engage primarily with those who don't 'go to church'.

England, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Union, the Salvation Army, the Church of Scotland and the URC). The meeting offered a good opportunity to exchange ideas and plans with one another.

- 5.12 'The Gathering' of URC people involved in pioneering (most of them in a lay / voluntary capacity) now meets every six weeks or so on Zoom – a major change from the original intention, which was to have three residential meetings in a year starting in January 2020. The group is working through the Godsend material from Fresh Expressions, which provides inspiration and a strategy for anyone starting a new expression of church. It is hoped that a second cohort of The Gathering can commence in 2022.
- 5.13 The URC Pioneer Ministers comprise both Special Category Ministry (SCM) and synod employed posts. Some are ecumenical. At the time of writing, a meeting of the group is being set up, again for mutual support and learning.

### Rural Mission

- 5.14 It has been encouraging to see how rural churches have coped with the Covid-19 pandemic. Services have taken place online where possible, by phone in some cases and service sheets have been delivered through people's letterboxes. Innovative ways have been found to support communities in terms of isolation and with practical help through food banks etc.
- 5.15 It is not all positive, as conversations across denominations show that in some cases difficult decisions have been brought forward and some churches will have to close, while others will need to find new ways of being church. The concept of an effective Christian presence remains important as we think about when, where and how to worship and do mission in rural areas post- Covid-19. Helping churches to reflect on this is a key part of the role of the National Rural Officer (NRO), Elizabeth Clark.
- 5.16 Isolation and loneliness have become key issues during the various lockdowns. Although by no means only a rural issue, those who live in isolated communities can find it harder to make social contacts. The Arthur Rank Centre, where Elizabeth is based, has been working on this issue for some time and has produced various resources which can be found at [arthurrankcentre.org.uk/mission/rural-isolation-and-loneliness-toolkit/](http://arthurrankcentre.org.uk/mission/rural-isolation-and-loneliness-toolkit/). This includes 'Table Talk' cards to help churches to talk about loneliness.
- 5.17 The Church needs to be prepared to advocate for the rural 'left behind'. Recent research reminds us that 'low pay is more prevalent and more persistent in Rural Britain than in urban areas' (Shucksmith, Chapman, Glass and Atterton, 2021, *Rural Lives*). Also, the percentage of people in poverty is the same in both urban and rural communities.
- 5.18 Other issues have also been high on the agenda of the National Rural Officer. Access to broadband is a continuing problem in some areas, and this has been underlined during lockdowns. Improved access to good and reliable broadband is essential for rural businesses and communities, as is access to public transport. The farming community is facing ongoing difficulties due to trade agreements after Brexit. Covid-19 has accelerated changes in all communities include rural



ones. The NRO continues to support the rural church in facing these changes, and speak out for those who do not have a voice.

- 5.19 Elizabeth Clark retires from her post in August 2021. This is a post that is shared with the Methodist Church. Mission Committee would like to express its thanks to Elizabeth for her years of faithful service to the URC and the Methodist Church, and wishes her every blessing in retirement.
- 5.20 The Methodist Church has recruited a full time National Rural Officer post, starting in the summer of 2021. This means that the joint NRO post will not continue. Mission Committee expressed strong support for the continuation of a NRO post in the URC and encouraged further exploration and conversation as to how this might be put into effect. Aware of the current financial challenges to the Church, the committee accepted the proposal that recruitment for a new post is put on hold, and that an evaluation is carried out into the impact of the post on the URC. Following this evaluation and further conversations with the Arthur Rank Centre, a proposal for resourcing rural ministry and mission will be brought to the Mission Committee in February 2022.

## **Conclusion**

- 6.1 The Mission Committee is grateful to the staff of the Mission Team, all of whom have worked incredibly hard during the last year. They have risen to the challenge of working remotely, and have responded with creativity and dedication. The report offers an insight into the huge range of work that has been carried out in the past year, work that gets to the heart of what it means to be God's Church: building relationships, challenging injustice and, as Christ's people, making a difference to the world.

# Paper 12

## Israel Palestine Report

### Mission Committee

#### Basic information

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<b>Action required</b>	<b>Decision.</b>
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p><b>Resolution 26</b></p> <p>1. <b>General Assembly instructs the Mission Committee to raise awareness about Holy Land pilgrimage amongst synods, local churches, ecumenical partners and individuals, underlining the importance of taking time to engage with Christian Palestinian communities and members of the local Christian churches in Israel and Palestine.</b></p> <p><b>Resolution 27</b></p> <p>2. <b>General Assembly affirms that Israel is a country which is recognised within the international community of States, with all the rights and responsibilities attendant on that status.</b></p> <p><b>Resolution 28</b></p> <p>3. <b>General Assembly affirms the United Nations commitment to a State of Palestine which is recognised within the international community of States, with all the rights and responsibilities attendant on that status.</b></p> <p><b>Resolution 29</b></p> <p>4. <b>General Assembly condemns all acts of violence in the region of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.</b></p> <p><b>Resolution 30</b></p> <p>5. <b>General Assembly expresses its deep concern over the worsening situation for the Palestinian people since Resolution 37 was passed in 2016, as evidenced by the subsequent work undertaken by the URC in response to that resolution. All Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, forced house demolitions and the acquisition of</b></p>

land by coercion, are breaches of international law. General Assembly, therefore, urges the Israeli Government to abide by international law and reverse its de facto annexation of the occupied Palestinian territories.

**Resolution 31**

6. General Assembly requests local churches and members to contact their constituency MPs to express concerns about the actions of the Israeli Government with respect to settlement expansion and house demolitions, and to ask what the UK is doing in response.

**Resolution 32**

7. General Assembly recognises the ethical principles-based approach of the URC Trusts and Pension Funds to investing and commends them in this long-established commitment, so that they can continue to avoid investing in any international company which facilitates the following activities in the occupied Palestinian territories:

- construction, production and services for the illegal settlements
- the economic exploitation of labour and the captive Palestinian market
- the illegal extraction and procurement of natural resources
- population control through private security and surveillance where it contravenes international law
- provision of specialised equipment for the forced demolition of Palestinian homes and structures
- building and servicing of the separation wall / barrier and its checkpoints on Palestinian land
- and any other breaches of international law.

**Resolution 33**

8. General Assembly affirms the ethical values of URC Synod Trusts and in this principled commitment requests them to ensure that they do not invest in any international company which facilitates the following activities in the occupied Palestinian territories:

- construction, production and services for the illegal settlements
- the economic exploitation of labour and the captive Palestinian market
- the illegal extraction and procurement of natural resources

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>population control through private security and surveillance where it contravenes international law</b></li> <li>• <b>provision of specialised equipment for the forced demolition of Palestinian homes and structures</b></li> <li>• <b>building and servicing of the separation wall / barrier and its checkpoints on Palestinian land</b></li> <li>• <b>and any other breaches of international law as researched and listed by respected agencies such as the United Nations, the Who Profits Research Center (Israel), Investigate (The American Friends Service Committee).</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Resolution 34</b></p> <p><b>9. General Assembly requests local churches and members to be aware of EU guidelines on the labelling of products produced in Israeli settlements, and to consider not purchasing these from UK retailers.</b></p> <p><b>Resolution 35</b></p> <p><b>10. General Assembly encourages local churches and members to actively play a part in supporting the Palestinian economy through the purchasing of Palestinian products available in the UK. These include but are not restricted to: Palestinian olive oil and food products, embroidery and olive wood carvings, cards, books, clothes and health / beauty products.</b></p>
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### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To stand in solidarity with Christian Palestinian communities and members of the local Christian churches in Israel and Palestine.
<b>Main points</b>	Engagement with partners about pilgrimage; lobbying local MPs about the injustices of the occupation in Palestine; providing an ethical framework to avoid investments in companies which profit from the Palestinian occupation; encouraging URC members to support Palestinian enterprises.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Resolution 37, General Assembly 2016. Mission Committee reports on Israel and Palestine to the 2018 and 2020 General Assemblies.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Central URC Trust and Pension Trust officers; Clerk to General Assembly; Synod Moderators and Treasurers; CCLA Charity Fund; Sabeel-Kairos; ecumenical partners.

## Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	The actions and work proposed are covered by existing budgets.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	The resolutions express commitments and policy positions which many of our ecumenical partners share.

## Introduction

1. Following on from the 2016 General Assembly resolution 37, the United Reformed Church has developed its work around the issues of the Israel / Palestine situation under the remit of the Mission Committee. The work has been extensive, and is recorded in reports to the 2018 and 2020 General Assemblies. One major aspect was the educational visit to Israel and Palestine in September 2019, in which 22 people took part, representing all 13 synods, URC Youth, Global and Intercultural Ministries, *Reform* Magazine, Commitment for Life and Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations. The ten-day visit was led by (then) General Assembly Moderator, Derek Estill. Participants saw at first hand many of the issues in the region. Close links were made with members of indigenous churches. and these have continued even during the extensive lockdowns of 2020 to 2021.

## What have we learned?

2. Since 2016, the URC has developed lines of contact with Palestinian Christians, all of whom testify to the deterioration of their living conditions, made worse by the pandemic and the lack of access to vaccinations, particularly when compared with their Israeli occupiers. In July 2020, Kairos Palestine and Global Kairos for Justice issued an appeal to churches worldwide in which they called on ecumenical partners to 'take decisive action' and expressing the desperate reality that 'words are not enough'. Entitled 'Cry for hope', ([www.cryforhope.org/](http://www.cryforhope.org/)) the appeal brought together a global network of grassroots ministries, denominational mission committees, and ecumenical organisations representing the indigenous churches.

## The growth of illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories

3. The resolutions to General Assembly have a particular focus on the settlements and enforced demolitions in the region. The illegal nature of the settlements is clear in international law. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention states: 'The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.' United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 of 2016 states that Israel's settlement activity constitutes a 'flagrant violation' of international law and has 'no legal validity'.
4. The settlements represent a de facto annexation of the occupied Palestinian territories. The United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Human Affairs assimilated a series of factsheets looking at the humanitarian impact over the first

50 years of occupation (1947–2017).<sup>1</sup> The statistics highlighted how from 2009 to 2016, Israeli authorities demolished or seized over 4,800 Palestinian-owned structures in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, compared with an average rate of approval of applications for building permits for Palestinians in the same period of less than 3%. When the report was published, 611,000 Israeli settlers lived in 250 settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Illegal settlements remain on the increase. Only in May 2021, there was considerable unrest in East Jerusalem, as the Israeli authorities attempted to evict Palestinians from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, located just outside the Old City, to give their homes to settlers.

5. Participants from the URC's 2019 educational visit witnessed the restricted access to water and electricity in the occupied territories. More than 70% of Palestinian communities are not connected to the water network. At least a third of Palestinians in East Jerusalem live in unlicensed homes, and face the risk of demolition and displacement.
6. In 2019 we visited Hebron City and saw the devastation and tension at first hand, as well as the disruption caused by the settlers. Nearly a third of the housing units in Hebron have been abandoned by their Palestinian residents.
7. We also saw the way in which settlers disrupt the olive tree farms. Writing in response to a letter written by a URC elder in January 2021, the UK Government's Minister for the Middle East, James Cleverley reported that the UK Government has 'repeatedly raised with the Israeli authorities our concerns about incidents of settler violence (including the destruction of olive trees) and intimidation'.

## Theological understanding

8. The Revd Dr Munther Isaac is the minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem and the academic dean of the Bethlehem Bible College. He is an international ecumenical guest at this year's General Assembly. His most recent book, *The Other Side of the Wall: A Palestinian Christian Narrative of Lament and Hope* was published in June 2020. He has written a paper, which can be seen on the CTBI website, entitled 'Palestinian Christians and the Promised Land'.<sup>2</sup> Dr Isaac does not question the existence of the State of Israel. He calls for a shared land theology, recognising that the land itself belongs to God (Leviticus 25:23). Christianity's link to the region is summed up by Dr Isaac's reference to the land as 'the fifth Gospel'. He writes, 'The Palestinian Church takes its identity and theology from its natural and unbroken relationship with the biblical land. This is the land where Jesus was born, and where many of the biblical events took place.'

## Pilgrimage

9. The 2019 educational visit spent part of its time in Bethlehem, staying in a Palestinian hotel, in support of the Palestinian economy and to meet with the local people. Our tour operators informed us that only around 1% of pilgrimages take

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<sup>1</sup> [www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/OCHAFACTSHEET-211217.pdf](http://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/OCHAFACTSHEET-211217.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://ctbi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Palestinian-Christians-and-the-Land-2017-England.pdf>

the time to engage with Palestinian communities or even with the leaders and members of the local Christian churches and centres in Israel and Palestine. Given the volume of Christian pilgrimages each year to the region, we believe there is scope to promote further the good work embodied in a film about pilgrimage, part funded by the URC, called *Walking the tightrope*. This is now accessible online.<sup>3</sup>

## Ecumenical partners

10. The resolutions which are offered to General Assembly represent very similar positions taken by Quakers in Britain, The Presbyterian Church USA, The United Church of Christ (USA) and The United Methodist Church (USA). The Central Finance Board of The Methodist Church in Britain has been asked to move from a policy of engagement with the type of companies defined in the URC General Assembly resolutions to one of not investing in them at all.

## Remaining committed to condemning antisemitism

11. The United Reformed Church remains committed to condemning all acts of antisemitism. As a denomination we have a proud history of speaking out against injustice, wherever it occurs. The resolutions proposed are not antisemitic. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism makes it clear that ‘criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic’.<sup>4</sup> In March 2021, the Jerusalem Declaration on antisemitism was published by a group of scholars of Jewish, Holocaust, Israel, Palestine, and Middle East Studies. The Jerusalem Declaration expands on the IHRA definition, making it clear that it is **not** antisemitic to support ‘the Palestinian demand for justice and the full grant of their political, national, civil, and human rights, as encapsulated in international law’. In terms of investment policy, the Jerusalem Declaration states that ‘boycott, divestment, and sanctions are commonplace, non-violent forms of political protest against states. In the Israeli case they are not, in and of themselves, antisemitic’.<sup>5</sup>

## Investment guidance

12. In preparing the resolutions, the Mission Committee consulted with Central URC Trust and Pension Trust officers. We were heartened to learn that current ethical guidelines already mean that the URC is not invested in any of the areas outlined. However, Trust officers agreed the importance of underlining the ongoing commitment in the resolutions offered. Similarly, many synod treasurers responded to say that Synod Trusts are also not invested in these types of companies. Several Trusts have their investments with the Charity Fund CCLA, who have confirmed to us that their ethical fund works to the United Nations guiding principles for businesses on human rights, which covers the bulk of the areas highlighted in the resolutions. CCLA are set to consult further with church investors, and so the close definition provided by the resolutions will help us to push the case for enhanced screening procedures. The research enabling investment screening of companies involved in the Palestinian occupation is

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<sup>3</sup> [www.fodip.org.uk/walkingthetightrope](http://www.fodip.org.uk/walkingthetightrope)

<sup>4</sup> [www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism](http://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism)

<sup>5</sup> [jerusalemdeclaration.org/](http://jerusalemdeclaration.org/)



increasingly sophisticated and accessible. For those synods who have concerns about screening, it is important to note that the resolutions come in the form of a request and an understanding that further support might be needed. We envisage this as a process whereby we work towards the commitment, expressed by all the synods and embodied in the resolutions, in speaking out against the injustices experienced by the Palestinian people under occupation.

## Summary

13. Resolution 37 from the 2016 General Assembly calls for ‘synods, local churches and individuals to respond with informed prayer, grace and solidarity’. As the situation has worsened for the Palestinian people since 2016, and against the backdrop of additional deprivation caused by Covid-19, the call to stand more resolutely in solidarity with Christian Palestinian communities and members of the local Christian churches in Israel and Palestine is more compelling than ever. The resolutions for the 2021 General Assembly respond to their direct call for such solidarity. They build on the work which flowed from the 2016 resolution, as well as the fact that Palestine is a long-standing Commitment for Life partner. The resolutions commit us to practical ways in which we can genuinely be prophetic as a denomination.

In this context, and equipped by much reflection and prayer, the Mission Committee offers its resolutions to the 2021 General Assembly.

## Resolution references

1. For Resolution 3: United Nations Security Council Resolution 1397.
2. For Resolution 9: European Commission, Interpretative Notice [eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/20151111\\_interpretative\\_notice\\_indication\\_of\\_origin\\_en.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/20151111_interpretative_notice_indication_of_origin_en.pdf)
3. For Resolution 10, please see: Fine foods from Palestine - Zaytoun; Fair Trade Palestinian Crafts - Hadeel - Fair Trade Palestinian Crafts. (Resolution 10) [zaytoun.uk/](http://zaytoun.uk/)

# Paper I3

## URC 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee: Ongoing Plans

Walking the Way Steering Group

### Basic information

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<b>Action required</b>	For information only.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>N/A</b>

### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	This paper provides an update on planning for the URC's 50th jubilee in 2022.
<b>Main points</b>	Planning for events and resources to complement and support local celebration of this important milestone is ongoing, with previously reported ideas taking shape alongside new possibilities. Further information about how to engage with these events and resources will be available in due course.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Mission Council 03/21, Paper I3 Mission Council 11/20, Paper O1.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Finance, Ministries, Education and Learning, Children's and Youth Work, Ecumenical and Interfaith, Global and Intercultural Ministries.

### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	Consultation is ongoing with the networks represented in the planning group, as well as the Finance Committee and Finance office, to make the most of existing budgets, interdepartmental budget planning and existing sources of funding within the URC.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Ecumenical partners are being consulted on the use of venues across London ahead of a service of worship on Saturday 1 October 2022, to which they will be invited. Work is ongoing with the Congregational Federation on a publication marking our shared anniversary.

## 1. Time to celebrate

- 1.1 Following the instructions of Mission Council in March 2020, the Walking the Way Steering Group established a planning group to prepare for the upcoming 50<sup>th</sup> jubilee of the United Reformed Church in 2022. Members of Assembly are invited to revisit the papers mentioned above for an overview of plans which have emerged thus far.
- 1.2 It has been clear throughout the process that celebration is important. In general, it offers a chance to focus on all that is good within our own story and to reflect on what really matters to us. It also helps us to plan for the future. In marking such a significant milestone as 50 years of a denomination's life and witness, the opportunities to benefit from these qualities of celebration are particularly strong.
- 1.3 Consequently, it is important to mark this jubilee in ways which are accessible, useful and beneficial to as many people as possible across the length and breadth of the denomination's reach.
- 1.4 It is clear that local churches and synods wish to mark this jubilee in different ways, which is very exciting. The planning group's priority is to organise events and resources which will complement these celebrations and enable everyone to join together in shared experiences and opportunities.

## 2. Events

- 2.1 A service of worship is being planned for the afternoon of Saturday 1 October 2022, in Methodist Central Hall Westminster in London, where the Uniting Assembly of the URC took place in October 1972. It is hoped as many people as possible from across the denomination will be able to attend. The hall has been secured for this date, and plans are being made for the content and logistics of this service.
- 2.2 The planning group is hoping that several venues, including Church House and the buildings of local URCs and ecumenical partners, will be available for people attending the service to visit during the day, to offer information, workshops, reflection, discussions, catering and other support for visitors ahead of the service.
- 2.3 Plans for a service of worship on the anniversary of the debate in Parliament of the United Reformed Church Bill in the Palace of Westminster are still being considered. A list of supporting MPs and members of the House of Lords have been passed to the chaplain of the Speaker of the House of Commons to assist with this.

## 3. Resources

- 3.1 In terms of resources, a free pack of materials for local churches to encourage and support local celebration of this important milestone is being planned.
- 3.2 A worship resources competition will enable people of all ages and abilities from across the denomination to share their creative skills in four categories (traditional hymn / song, contemporary hymn / song, rap, poem). Contributions to this competition will be shared across various media to allow as many people as possible to view, use and benefit from this content, and prizes will be issued at General Assembly in 2022.

- 3.3 An intergenerational picture book is also being planned to open up the URC's story in accessible and engaging ways.
- 3.4 Progress with books and publications for the jubilee, including history texts, a book on hymnody, and a joint publication with the Congregational Federation in recognition of our shared 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, have been affected by the global Covid-19 pandemic, particularly through the restriction of library access. However, work continues on these publications which are due for publication at various points throughout 2022.
- 3.5 Branding and merchandise, both free and for purchase, will be made available for individuals to use in marking the celebrations, as well as some offered to local churches wholesale to enable them to raise funds.
- 3.6 More information about all of these resources, including how to obtain them, will be provided in due course. They will be available from the URC Bookshop, [www.urcshop.co.uk](http://www.urcshop.co.uk), and the URC website, [www.urc.org.uk/50](http://www.urc.org.uk/50).

#### **4. Finance**

- 4.1 As more detailed information about the costs of planning emerges, as well as the need to make early payments to secure venues and other resources, the need for a formal jubilee planning budget has become increasingly apparent.
- 4.2 Consultation is ongoing with the networks represented in the planning group, as well as the Finance Committee and Finance office, to make the most of existing budgets, interdepartmental budget planning and available sources of funding within the URC.

#### **5. Branding**

- 5.1 Sara Foyle from the Graphics Team has been working on a range of logos for the 50<sup>th</sup>, some of which are shown overleaf. Our thanks to her and to Gavin Micklethwaite, a former head of design at Christian Aid, who helped narrow down the concepts from a complex brief from the planning group.



Faith – Hope – Love – since 1972



Faith – Hope – Love – since 1972



# Paper 14

## The future of *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today*

Walking the Way Steering Group

### Basic information

Contact name and email address	Francis Brien <a href="mailto:francis.brien@urc.org.uk">francis.brien@urc.org.uk</a>
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	<p><b>Resolution 36</b> In affirming that whole-of-life discipleship is the primary long-term focus of the United Reformed Church, General Assembly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) requests that those reviewing the future of the URC, as agreed by Mission Council in March 2021, take full account of the importance of whole-of-life discipleship.</li><li>b) instructs the Walking the Way Steering Group to continue its work until the end of the calendar year 2022, whereupon the work of the group in supporting the embedding of whole-of-life discipleship across the denomination will be continued by the Deputy General Secretaries for Discipleship and Mission.</li><li>c) asks those responsible for the finances of the Church to find ways to continue the role of Walking the Way Project Manager until the end of the calendar year 2022. The Project Manager should focus firmly on embedding the whole-of-life discipleship ethos of Walking the Way across the denomination, working closely with the Deputy General Secretaries for Discipleship and Mission in collaboration with the Walking the Way Steering Group, whilst it is in place.</li><li>d) invites all committees and groups connected with the life of the United Reformed Church to hold the whole-of-life discipleship ethos of Walking the Way at the heart of their work.</li></ul>

	<p>e) <b>instructs the Walking the Way Steering Group, through the Project Manager, and in collaboration with other Church House staff, to develop a range of resources to better embed the whole-of-life discipleship ethos of Walking the Way across the Church.</b></p> <p>f) <b>welcomes collaborative work across the Church to facilitate and resource the whole-of-life discipleship ethos of Walking the Way across the Church's life, work and witness.</b></p>
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### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	This paper offers proposals for General Assembly's consideration regarding the future of <i>Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today</i> , as well as an update on the Steering Group's current work.
<b>Main points</b>	Feedback from across the Church demonstrates continuing confusion about <i>Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today</i> as a focus for the whole Church rather than a programme in its own right. There is also a strong desire for more collaborative work, less duplication and for new resources only to be produced when necessary. To assist with this, the Steering Group proposes that it focus its energies firmly on embedding whole-of-life discipleship across the Church, working collaboratively at all levels of Church life, with a view to passing on this work, and that of the Walking the Way Project Manager, to the Deputy General Secretaries for Discipleship and Mission at the end of the calendar year 2022.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	<p>Mission Council 11/15 papers M1 and M2</p> <p>Mission Council 3/16 paper M1</p> <p>General Assembly report 2016, p.11</p> <p>Mission Council 11/18 paper I2</p> <p>Mission Council 11/19 paper I3</p> <p>Mission Council 03/20 paper I3</p> <p>General Assembly report 2020, p.195</p> <p>Mission Council 11/20 paper M1</p> <p>Mission Council 03/21 paper I4.</p>
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	<p>Mission</p> <p>Communications</p> <p>Education and Learning</p> <p>Children's and Youth Work</p> <p>Finance.</p>

### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	If the resolution above is passed, the Project Manager role and the work of the Steering Group will require funding for the calendar year 2022.
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<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Consultation and events considering whole-of-life discipleship with ecumenical partners, including Churches Together in England and Christian Aid, continue, especially around online discipleship and hybrid church.
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## 1. The current situation

- 1.1 *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today* is the United Reformed Church's focus on whole-of-life discipleship, exploring what it means to be a follower of Jesus in everyday life. It is all about celebrating and sharing experience and wisdom to empower people to be the presence of Jesus through their everyday lives by recognising that, whoever we are and whatever we are doing, God is with us, working through us to make a difference in the world.
- 1.2 The Walking the Way Steering Group, which includes representatives from networks across the denomination, seeks to work with people across the URC, sharing stories, suggestions, resources and good practice as widely as possible.
- 1.3 Every synod is responding to this focus in a different way, relevant to its own context and needs. The Steering Group seeks to support this work.

## 2. Clarity of message

- 2.1 At the close of 2020 and opening weeks of 2021, the Steering Group consulted widely with groups across the Church on the success of *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today*. A summary of findings can be found in Mission Council Paper I4 from March 2021.
- 2.2 Perhaps the most prominent message revealed through the feedback is that it is still not clear to many across the denomination that *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today* is designed to support whole-of-life discipleship development as a priority across the Church, and that it is not a programme in its own right. This has led to much confusion over what it is, how it can support the existing work of local churches, synods and other groups, as well as how the support it provides can be accessed easily.
- 2.3 It is clear that significant change is needed to the denomination's focus on whole-of-life discipleship in order to make sure that its message is shared and supported in clear and helpful ways.

## 3. The future

- 3.1 Aware of the long-term nature of the Church's focus on whole-of-life discipleship, the Steering Group has spent time considering the future of this focus, bearing in mind the aforementioned feedback, and proposes several ways forward for General Assembly's consideration:
  - 3.1.1 *Whole-of-life discipleship to be at the heart of the ongoing Church Life review* – This would help to keep whole-of-life discipleship firmly at the denomination's heart, whatever direction the future might take.
  - 3.1.2 *Collaborative working rather than a Steering Group* – The Steering Group believes that, given the current direction of its work, it would be best for the

group to remain in place until the end of 2022, at which point the Deputy General Secretaries for Discipleship and Mission should continue the work of monitoring and supporting the development of whole-of-life discipleship across the denomination. The group believes that the Walking the Way Project Manager role should finish at the end of the calendar year 2022, having focused explicitly, in its final year, on a strategy for embedding, including collaborative work with the Steering Group and the Deputy General Secretaries for Mission and Discipleship. This would make it clear that whole-of-life discipleship should be a focus which flows through everything the Church does, rather than an entity or programme in itself.

- 3.1.3 *Collaborative work across the church on whole-of-life discipleship* – If whole-of-life discipleship flows through everything the Church does, then it needs to be at the heart of all the Church's work. In the URC's conciliar structure, this means considering matters of discipleship carefully and regularly across all committees and groups at all levels of Church life as a core value which informs and shapes everyone's work. There should also be more collaborative work in terms of resource production, building on the strength of existing collaborative projects such as the Advent and Lent materials produced with Children's and Youth Work, Education and Learning and Church and Society. Such collaborative work should focus on the embedding of whole-of-life discipleship across the Church.

## 4. Update on continuing work

4.1 The Steering Group has continued its work according to the priorities set out in its report to Mission Council held in July 2020 under the following headings:

- a) *Resources and communications* – Plans for a URC podcast with a firm focus on discipleship are well underway with recording for several episodes already taking place. The podcast, to be launched in late May 2021, will look at a range of topics, including being a Christian in the workplace, climate justice, money, antiracism and the Covid-19 crisis a year on. Feedback has revealed that the Walking the Way website and social media content continues to be difficult to navigate and use easily. We have altered the social media strategy to produce more relevant content for the platforms it uses and help more people to find it. Work is also ongoing with Communications to combine as much content as possible into a single webpage which is easy to navigate.
- b) *Accompaniment* – Feedback on *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today* continues to show a need for accompaniment and mentoring support as local churches unpack what it means to follow Jesus in their context. The continuing Covid-19 pandemic has brought many challenges for churches in Southern Synod participating in the pilot accompaniment programme with the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC). However, they have been able to make use of technology to keep in contact, encouraging each other in building a whole-of-life discipleship ethos. Churches in Mersey Synod are also preparing to begin their journey with the LICC soon.
- c) *Online discipleship* – The Steering Group has hosted three online events, open to everyone in the URC with an interest in online discipleship, to share wisdom, explore challenges and ask questions. Demand for a third

session to enable deeper conversations about these issues is great, and it is hoped that a network will be created out of these sessions to support the continuing grassroots development of approaches to discipleship in online environments, as well as the use of online technology in discipleship generally. Events and consultation from Churches Together in England and Christian Aid on this ever developing topic have also proved fruitful.

- d) *Stepwise* – The Steering Group and Stepwise development group continue to enjoy representation in each other’s meetings to ensure that Stepwise can benefit from the Steering Group’s insights and vice versa. Further information on the development of Stepwise can be found in the Education and Learning report.
- e) *The URC’s 50th Anniversary* – The Steering Group has now set up a task group to plan for this important milestone in the denomination’s life, keeping a focus on whole-of-life discipleship at the heart of the celebrations. For further information on the group’s progress, see paper I3.
- f) *Networking* – Communication continues with synod teams (Children’s and Youth Development Officers, Training and Development Officers, Mission Enablers, etc.) with stories, resources, events and opportunities shared regularly. Online meetings of people from across the Church’s networks to share news and good practice on whole-of-life discipleship continue to be well attended. It is clear that whole-of-life discipleship is still a priority across the denomination, but more needs to be done to enable effective collaboration, cross-fertilisation and shared learning.

# Paper J1

## Report to General Assembly 2021

### Nominations Committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Ray Adams: <a href="mailto:ray.adams12@btinternet.com">ray.adams12@btinternet.com</a> Mr George Faris: <a href="mailto:nominations.secretary@urc.org.uk">nominations.secretary@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Resolution 37</b> <b>General Assembly appoints committees and representatives of the Church as set out on page 174 of the Book of Reports, subject to the additions and corrections contained in the supplementary report to Assembly.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To appoint members of various committees.
<b>Main points</b>	As above.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	N/A
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Wide consultation with synods, local churches and the committees and groups where appointments are needed.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	None.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None.

## Introduction

This committee brings to General Assembly for authorisation the names of people to serve as convenors and secretaries of Assembly committees, or as members of those committees for set periods. It also suggests names of people to represent the United Reformed Church on other bodies, and those who make up appointment and review groups for synod moderators and Assembly-appointed staff. Every synod is represented on the Nominations Committee, whose members serve for as long as their synod determines.

Convenor: The Revd Ray Adams (until 2021 General Assembly)

Convenor-elect: Mrs Helen Lidgett (convenor from 2021 General Assembly)

Secretary: Mr George Faris (until 2022 General Assembly)

Synod representatives:

1. Mrs Melanie Campbell
2. The Revd Brian Jolly
3. Mrs Rita Griffiths
4. Mr Tim Crossley
5. Mrs Helen Lidgett / the Revd Camilla Veitch
6. Mr Richard Lockley
7. The Revd Paul Whittle / Mr Keir Hounsome
8. The Revd Douglas Burnett
9. Mrs Sue Brown / Ms Karen Bell
10. Mr Simon Fairnington
11. The Revd Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor / The Revd Russell Furley-Smith
12. The Revd Adrian Bulley
13. Miss Morag Donaldson / Mr John Collings

We are also greatly helped by the presence and experience of a former moderator of General Assembly, the General Secretary, the Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries and a representative of the Equalities Committee.

## Current work

- 1.1 So that Assembly committees can support the work and mission of the United Reformed Church, Nominations Committee relies on the willingness and commitment of members of the United Reformed Church who generously give their time to serve. It is a challenge to identify new people with relevant skills and experience, but this is done in several ways:
  - i. The committee members, through consulting their own synod networks, bring names of people who are then considered, approached, and if they agree, are nominated for Assembly (or Mission Council) to appoint as vacancies occur in Assembly committees and groups.
  - ii. An annual letter listing forthcoming vacancies is usually sent to the synods for their consultation.
  - iii. Assembly committees are welcome to make suggestions, where appropriate, recognizing that often they have the clearest understanding of their own needs.
  - iv. Individuals are welcome to send their details to the secretary, indicating in which area of the Assembly's work they have an interest.
- 1.2 The Committee seeks to ensure that all committees are represented by lay and ordained members, male and female, black and minority ethnic, and younger people.

- 1.3 The number and range of church committees and groups is decided by General Assembly and Mission Council and our Committee's role is to serve the requirements of the Church. We are challenged, however, to maintain the size and number of committees on a regular basis and welcome any initiative by General Assembly to review their structures.

## Monitoring

- 2.1 Those invited to serve on the Church's committees and working groups are asked to complete a monitoring form. The results are shared with the Equalities Committee.
- 2.2 26 acceptances were received between August 2020 and April 2021. The ordained/lay and male/female figures are:

Ordained	15	58%
Lay	11	42%

Male	15	58%
Female	11	42%

- 2.3 An analysis of 21 responses providing monitoring data shows this age spread:

Under 26	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	Over 65
1	0	0	7	8	5
5%	0%	0%	33%	38%	24%

- 2.4 21 responses gave ethnic origin:

BAME	Non-BAME
6	15
29%	71%

## Thanks to all who serve on Assembly Committees and Groups

- 3.1 The Church continues to be blessed by many willing members who give their time and gifts to serve on its committees, panels and working groups, or who represent it on outside bodies. The formal acceptance of this report and the long list of names that follows is offered with a real sense of gratitude for all who serve in this way.

## Nominations Committee membership

- 4.1 The list of those who have served on the Nominations Committee (above) reflects the change of synod representatives since the last General Assembly. Thanks are due to all, particularly those who have recently relinquished their place on the Committee.
- 4.2 At this Assembly the Revd Ray Adams completes his term of service as convenor. He will be succeeded by Mrs Helen Lidgett. The committee and the wider church have benefitted greatly over the past four years from Ray's wide experience across the United Reformed Church.

## Those to be appointed or re-appointed

5.1 General Assembly is invited to appoint or re-appoint those listed below for the indicated period.

Key: \*\* = new appointment, † = extension of term of service, †† = further term of service

Ref	Committee/Group	Name	Role	Years
2.2.1	Panel for General Assembly Appointments	The Revd Reginald Mudenda (11)	Member**	5
2.2.1	Panel for General Assembly Appointments	The Revd Mark Robinson (9)	Member**	5
2.2.1	Panel for General Assembly Appointments	Mrs Darnette Whitby-Reid (10)	Member**	5
2.2.1	Panel for General Assembly Appointments	Mrs Pat Poinen (1)	Member**	5
2.4	Disciplinary Process Commission Panel	The Revd Nigel Adkinson (5)	Member†	5
2.4	Disciplinary Process Commission Panel	Mr Ian Corless (9)	Member†	5
2.4	Disciplinary Process Commission Panel	Dr David N Jones (5)	Deputy Convenor†	5
2.4	Disciplinary Process Commission Panel	Dr David N Jones (5)	Member†	5
2.4	Disciplinary Process Commission Panel	The Revd David M Miller (6)	Member†	5
2.4	Disciplinary Process Commission Panel	The Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe (2)	Member†	5
2.4	Disciplinary Process Commission Panel	Mrs Janet Virr (4)	Member†	5
4.1	Ministries Committee	Chris Kellett	Member**	4
4.1	Ministries Committee	The Revd Lesley Moseley	Member**	4
4.1.2	Maintenance of Ministry Subcommittee	The Revd Dr George Kalu	Member**	4
4.3	Children's and Youth Work Committee	The Revd Julian Sanders	Member**	4
5.3	Equalities Committee	The Revd David Salsbury	Secretary†	2
5.4	Finance Committee	Mr Vaughan Griffiths	Deputy Treasurer**	4
5.4	Finance Committee	The Revd Simon Copley	Member**	4
5.4	Finance Committee	Mr Gordon Wanless	Member††	4
8.1	Methodist/URC Liaison Group	The Revd Geoffrey Clarke	Co-Convenor**	5
8.1	Methodist/URC Liaison Group	Mr Tim Hopley	Member**	4
9.1	Northern College	Mrs Sheila Davies	Governor†	4
9.1	Northern College	Mr Willie Duncan	Governor†	4
11.4	Congregational Memorial Hall Trust	Mr Philip Bonnier	Representative†	4
11.4	Congregational Memorial Hall Trust	The Revd Derek Wales	Representative†	4

## Assembly committees and other appointments

Notes:

- General Assembly Moderators, Assembly Moderators-elect, the Immediate-past Assembly Moderators and the General Secretary are members ex officio of every standing committee. Deputy General Secretaries are members ex officio of every standing committee within their department. Any ex officio member may arrange for an appropriate deputy, such as any Deputy General Secretary or an officer of Assembly, to attend on their behalf. Any committee may invite other Assembly officers (or their deputies) or staff members to attend in a non-voting capacity where the business so requires.
- Symbols have been used as follows: \*\* denotes those whom General Assembly is invited to appoint for the first time; † denotes those who have been invited to extend their periods of service; †† denotes those returning after a break.
- Numbers in round brackets following names indicate the member's synod: (1) Northern, (2) North Western, (3) Mersey, (4) Yorkshire, (5) East Midlands, (6) West Midlands, (7) Eastern, (8) South Western, (9) Wessex, (10) Thames North, (11)



Southern, (12) Wales, (13) Scotland. This numbering is not shown where it is not relevant.

4. When a member of a committee is there as a representative of another body or a particular category this is indicated in round brackets following the name.
5. Committee membership is normally for a period of four years, though this may sometimes exceptionally be renewable. Committee convenors serve an additional preliminary year as convenor-elect. In sections one to four of the report, appointments with a different term are noted.
6. Dates in square brackets following names indicate the date of retirement, assuming a full term.
7. In accordance with the decision of General Assembly 2000, some nominations are made directly by the National Synods of Wales and Scotland.
8. In years when General Assembly meets, new committee members normally take up their roles at the conclusion of Assembly.
9. Nominations to Assembly committees and their subcommittees, and to advisory and task groups serving Assembly and Mission Council, should be of members of the United Reformed Church, or youth representatives who meet the criteria for membership of Assembly. A term of service may normally be completed if someone ceases to be a member of the URC during their term.
10. Nominations of URC representatives to external bodies should either be URC members, or youth representatives who meet the criteria for membership of Assembly, or URC staff who have relevant expertise. The nomination of a staff member would automatically lapse if the person concerned ceased to hold a URC post.

## **1. Mission Council**

Mission Council acts on behalf of General Assembly. It consists of the officers of Assembly, the immediate past and elect Assembly Moderators, the deputies to the General Secretary and treasurer, four representatives from each synod, normally, but not necessarily, including the moderator and the synod clerk, together with the convenors of Assembly committees, the chair of the United Reformed Church Trust and three members for URC Youth, including the URC Youth Moderator. In attendance are staff secretaries, Assembly Moderators' chaplain and others as appropriate.

### **1.1 Human resources advisory group**

Convenor: Mr Geoff Shaw [2023]

General Secretary

Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources)

Nominated members:

Mrs Bridget Fosten [2022]

Mrs Barbara Ellis [2024]

Vacancy

### **1.2 Law and polity advisory group**

Convenor: Ms Morag McLintock [2024]

Secretary: Mr Neil Mackenzie [2022]

General Secretary  
Clerk of General Assembly Assistant Clerk of General Assembly  
Synod Clerk representative: Mrs Melanie Campbell [2025]\*\*  
Property, legal and trust officers' representative: Ms Muna Levan-Harris\*\*  
Nominated members:  
Ms Denise FitzPatrick [2022] The Revd Steven Manders [2025]  
In attendance: Legal Adviser

### 1.3 Listed buildings advisory group

Convenor: The Revd Dr James Mather [2022] (nominated by the group)

Secretary: Mr Geoff Milnes [2022] (nominated by the group)

General Secretary

The Revd Ray Anglesea (1)

Ms Alison Lee (3)

Mrs Judith Booth (5)

Mr Peter West (7)

Mr Gerry Prosser (9)

Mr Guy Morfett (11)

Mr Michael Williams (2)

Mr David Figures (4)

Mrs Rachel Wakeman (6)

Mr Roger James (8)

Mr Christopher Buckwell (10)

### 1.4 Resource sharing task group

Convenor: The Revd Steve Faber [2024] (Synod Moderator)

Secretary: Mr Chris Atherton

Treasurer: The Revd Dick Gray

Miss Margaret Atkinson

URC Treasurer

Mr Mike Gould

### 1.5 Environmental task group

Convenor: The Revd Rob Weston

The Revd David Coleman

The Revd Trevor Jamison

The Revd Dr Rosalind Selby

Ms Alison Greaves

Mr Tom Veitch

## 2. General Secretariat

### 2.1 Faith and order committee

The convenor and nominated members normally serve for six years.

Convenor: The Revd Dr Robert Pope [2026]

Secretary: Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

General Secretary

Nominated members:

The Revd Samuel Silungwe [2023]

Ms Diana Paulding [2026]

The Revd Tessa Henry-Robinson [2027]

The Revd Sue McCoan [2026]

The Revd Kristin Ofstad [2026]

### 2.2 Nominations committee

Synods appoint and decide terms for their representation.

Convenor: Mrs Helen Lidgett [2025]

Secretary: Mr George Faris [2022]

Mrs Melanie Campbell (1)

Mrs Rita Griffiths (3)

The Revd Camilla Veitch (5)

Mr Keir Hounsome (7)

Ms Karen Bell (9)

The Revd Brian Jolly (2)

Mr Tim Crossley (4)

Mr Richard Lockley (6)

The Revd Dougie Burnett (8)

Mr Simon Fairington (10)

The Revd Russell Furley-Smith (11)  
Mr John Collings (13)\*\*  
A past Moderator of General Assembly  
General Secretary

In attendance:

Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries  
Equalities Committee representative

The Revd Adrian Bulley (12)

### 2.2.1 Panel for General Assembly appointments

Members usually serve for five years as training is required.

#### Retiring 2022

Mr John Ellis (11)

The Revd Mary Irish (7)

#### Retiring 2023

Mrs Barbara Ellis (3)  
The Revd Alison Hall (3)  
Dr Jim Merrilees (13)  
The Revd Ruth Whitehead (8)

The Revd Hugh Graham (10)  
Mrs Helen Lidgett (5)  
Ms Helen Stenson (12)  
Mrs Sheila Davies (3)

#### Retiring 2024

The Revd Jan Adamson (13)  
Dr Paul Ashitey (10)  
Mr Matthew Barkley (9)  
The Revd Lucy Brierley (9)  
Mr David Gartside (3)  
Ms Pippa Hodgson (5)  
The Revd Paul Robinson (12)  
Mr Alex Walker (4)

The Revd Tessa Henry-Robinson (9)  
Ms Victoria Paulding (5)  
Mr Reuben Watt (11)  
The Revd Sal Bateman (10)  
The Revd Peter Henderson (8)  
The Revd George Mwaura (5)  
Mr Patrick Sheard (1)

#### Retiring 2026

The Revd Reginald Mudenda (11)\*\*  
Mrs Darnette Whitby-Reid (10)\*\*

The Revd Mark Robinson (9)\*\*  
Mrs Pat Poinen (1)\*\*

### 2.3 Ministerial incapacity and discipline (Mind) advisory group

Convenor: Ms Michelle Howard [2024]

Secretary: The Revd Chris Copley [2022]

Synod Moderator: Vacancy

Convenor of the Assembly commission

Secretary of the Assembly commission

Convenor of the review commission of the incapacity procedure

Secretary of the review commission of the incapacity procedure

Consultant for ministers and CRCWs: The Revd Dominic Grant [2024]

Consultant for mandated groups: The Revd Ian Kirby [2023]

Training coordinator: The Revd Andy Braunston [2024]

General Secretary; Clerk of General Assembly; Secretary for Ministries; legal adviser

### 2.4 Disciplinary process – commission panel

Members serve for five years as regular training is required. They may be invited to continue serving beyond this as experience is especially valuable on this panel.

Convenor: The Revd Dr Janet Tollington (7) [2025]

Deputy convenor: Dr David N Jones [2026]<sup>†</sup>

Secretary: Mr Philip Laws [2022]

Members:

**Retiring 2022**

Mr Alan Kirby (11)

Mrs Cathy Glazier (11)

The Revd Craig Muir (6)

Mr Alastair Forsyth (4)

The Revd Ian Kirby (12)

Mrs Mary Kelly (1)

The Revd Jane Campbell (13)

**Retiring 2023**

Mrs Wendy Dunnett (9)

The Revd Alan McGougan (13)

Ms Mary Slater (11)

The Revd Bill Bowman (11)

**Retiring 2024**

The Revd Debbie Brown (3)

Mrs Barbara Goom (8)

The Revd Sue McCoan (6)

The Revd Sarah Moore (2)

The Revd Wendy Swan (11)

The Revd Peter Flint (11)

The Revd Naison Hove (11)

The Revd Deborah McVey (7)

Mrs Pat Poinen (1)

**Retiring 2025**

The Revd Martha McInnes (12)

The Revd Wilbert Sayimani (9)

The Revd Dr Janet Tollington (7)

The Revd Andy Braunston (13)

The Revd Rachel Poolman (1)

The Revd Dr Peter Stevenson (5)

Mrs Vivien Andrew (10)

**Retiring 2026**

The Revd Nigel Adkinson (5)<sup>†</sup>

Dr David N Jones (5)<sup>†</sup>

The Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe (2)<sup>†</sup>

Mr Ian Corless (9)<sup>†</sup>

The Revd David M Miller (6)<sup>†</sup>

Mrs Janet Virr (4)<sup>†</sup>

**2.5 Standing panel for the incapacity procedure**

This panel is normally convened by the member with legal experience.

Members serve one or two five-year terms.

Secretary: Dr Augur Pearce [2022]

Synod Moderator: The Revd Simon Walkling [2023]

Past Moderator of General Assembly: The Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe [2022]

Commission officer for the incapacity procedure: The Revd Roy Lowes [2023]

Mr David Nash (legal experience) [2023] Dr Ewen Harley (GP) [2023]

**2.6 Pastoral reference and welfare committee**

Convenor: The Revd David Grosch-Miller [2023]

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship)

Synod Moderator: The Revd Brian Jolly [2024]

The Revd Dr Irene John [2024]

Professor Malcolm Johnson [2022]

The Revd Bridget Powell [2023]

URC Deputy Treasurer

General Secretary

**2.7 Safeguarding advisory group**

Convenor: Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship)

Secretary: URC Safeguarding Adviser

Head of Children's and Youth Work

Secretary for Ministries

Nominated Members – maximum of three, serving one or two three-year terms:

Vacancy Mr Paul Smillie [2022]

Mrs Jane Dowdell [2023]

Co-opted members – maximum of two, co-opted for appropriate terms of service:

Education and Learning Programme Officer

### 3. Mission department

#### 3.1 Mission committee

Convenor: Sarah Lane Cawte [2024]

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary (Mission)

Vacancy (1)

Mrs Angela Bogg (2) [2022]

The Revd Murray George (3) [2024]

The Revd Clare Davison (4) [2024]

The Revd Robert Bushby (5) [2023]

Mr John Davey (6) [2022]

Ms Lindsey Brown (7) [2022]

The Revd Robert Jordan (8) [2022]

Vacancy (9)

Mr Simon Fairington (10) [2023]

The Revd Alex Mabbs (11) [2023]

The Revd Branwen Rees (12) [2022]

Vacancy (13)

#### 3.1.1 International exchange reference group

Convenor: The Revd Dr Ana Gobledale [2024]

Synod Moderator: The Revd Paul Whittle [2022]

Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries

Nominated member:

The Revd Ros Lyle [2023]

#### 3.1.2 Commitment for Life (CfL) reference group

Convenor: Mr Richard Lewney [2024]

At least two CfL advocates

Representative of mission team

Representative of mission committee

Representative from Christian Aid

Representative of Global Justice Now

Programme Officer for Global Justice and Partnerships

#### 3.1.3 Interfaith enabling group

Convenor: The Revd Tracey Lewis [2023]

Secretary: The Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

Ecumenical and Interfaith Officer for the National Synod of Scotland

Ecumenical and Interfaith Officer for the National Synod of Wales

Nominated members:

Ms Victoria Turner [2025]

Mr Andy Lie [2023]

Co-opted members:

The Revd Dr Graham Adams [2024]

The Revd Dr Mark Godin [2024]

The Revd Dr John Parry

#### 3.1.4 Joint Public Issues Team strategy and policy group

Deputy General Secretary (Mission)

The Revd Steve Faber

#### 3.1.5 Rural strategy group (United Reformed Church/Methodist)

Co-chair: The Revd Steve Faber (Synod Moderator) [2022]

Two vacancies

## 4. Discipleship department

### 4.1 Ministries committee

Convenor: The Revd Dr Marion Tugwood [2025]

Secretary: Secretary for Ministries

Leadership in worship advocate: Vacancy

Synod Moderator: The Revd Jamie Kissack [2024]

Convenor of the Assessment Board

Nominated members:

The Revd Stuart Scott [2023]

The Revd Sally Willett [2023]

Mrs Gill Bates [2024]

Chris Kellett [2025]\*\*

The Revd Lesley Moseley [2025]\*\*

#### 4.1.1 Accreditations (CRCW and SCM) Subcommittee

Convenor: The Revd Dr Paul Dean [2025]

Joint Secretaries:

Secretary for Ministries [2022]

Development Worker (CRCW & SCM) [2022]

Convenor of the Assessment Board

Representatives:

Synod moderators:

The Revd David Herbert [2024]

SCMs:

The Revd Tim Clarke [2024]

CRCWs:

Ms Ann Honey [2022]

Nominated Members:

Mr Rob Moverley [2022]

Two vacancies

Co-opted CRCW:

Ms Marie Trubic [2022] (not to be replaced)

#### 4.1.2 Ministries – maintenance of ministry subcommittee

Convenor: The Revd David Coote [2022]

Mr David Gartside [2022]

Mrs Jean Wyber [2022]

The Revd Dr George Kalu [2025]\*\*

Vacancy

Pensions committee convenor

#### 4.1.3 Ministries – retired ministers' housing subcommittee – under review

Members normally serve four years, but appointments may be extended for two more years.

Convenor: The Revd Anne Bedford

Secretary: Secretary of Retired Ministers' Housing Society Ltd

Mr Peter West

Mr Malcolm Lindo

The Revd Ken Summers

The Revd Simon Walkling (Synod Moderator)

ex-officio: URC Treasurer

Properties are managed by a company, Retired Ministers' Housing Society Ltd.

Details of the members of its board etc may be obtained from the Company Secretary at Church House.

#### 4.1.4 Assessment board

Members usually serve for five years as training is required.

Convenor: Professor Bill Gould [2024]

##### Retiring 2022

Mrs Bridget Akinyombo (10)

The Revd Jamie Kissack (4)

The Revd Lis Mullen (2)

Mr Keith Reading (3)

**Retiring 2023**

The Revd John Danso (10)

Mr Dan Morrell (4)

**Retiring 2024**

The Revd Jan Adamson (13)

The Revd Gerald England (8)

Mr Mark Tubby (7)

**Retiring 2025**

Ms Mercy Nimako

Ms Liz Sharples

The Revd Samuel Silungwe

**4.2 Education and learning committee**

Convenor: Mr Alan Yates [2023]

Secretary: Secretary for Education and Learning

Nominated Members: (nominated by the Nominations Committee)

Ms Adella Pritchard [2022]

The Revd Martin Truscott [2022]

Mrs Margaret Marshall [2024]

The Revd Tim Meachin [2024]

Ex-officio members:

a General Assembly moderator (current, past or elect)

General Secretary

Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship)

Representative Members: (nominated by the appropriate group)

RCL Principals:

The Revd Dr Rosalind Selby [2022]

Synod Training and Development Officers: The Revd Mary Thomas

CYDOs and other Children and Youth Work officers

EM1 students

Non-voting members: (nominated by the appropriate group)

Synod Moderator:

The Revd David Herbert [2022]

RCL Principals:

The Revd Samantha White

The Revd Dr John McNeil Scott

Secretary for Ministries

Methodist Church Representative

**4.2.1 Education and learning finance subcommittee**

Chair: Mr Alan Yates

Minutes Secretary: Secretary for Education and Learning

Co-opted Member: The Revd Edward Sanniez

Ex-officio: URC Treasurer, Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship),

Convenor of the education and learning committee

Staff in attendance: Chief Finance Officer

The chair and member are appointed by the education and learning committee.

**4.2.2 Stepwise development group**

Convenor: The Revd Alison Davis\*\*

Administrator: Stepwise Programme Assistant

Secretary for Education and Learning

Stepwise Programme Manager

Education and Learning Instructional Designer Project Manager for *Walking the Way*

Education and Learning Programme Officer (by invitation)

Convenor of the Stepwise Learning Standards Board\*\*

Representatives – serving appropriate terms of service:

Children's and youth work committee:

Mr Leo Roberts

Synod mission enablers network:

The Revd Stuart Radcliffe

Synod training and development officers:

Vacancy

Resource Centres for Learning:

a tutor

Together Ethnic and Minority URC:

The Revd Zaidie Orr



Co-opted Members:

The Revd Simon Goddard (Fresh Expressions)\*\*

The Revd Peter Henderson\*\*

Mr Iain Johnston (Faith in Community Scotland)

The convenor and the co-opted members are appointed by the education and learning committee.

#### 4.3 Children's and youth work committee

Convenor: The Revd Paul Robinson [2024]

Secretary: Head of Children's and Youth Work

URC Youth Moderator

URC Youth Moderator-elect

Convenor of the pilots subcommittee

Pilots representative

Nominated members:

Mr Matthew Barkley [2023]

Mr Reuben Watt [2023]

The Revd Janine Atkinson [2024]

The Revd Samantha Sheehan [2024]

The Reverend Julian Sanders [2025]\*\*

##### 4.3.1 Pilots subcommittee

Convenor: Mr Derek Goodyear

Members:

Resources:

Ms Liz Harrison\*\*

Synod Pilot officers:

Mr Alan Kendall\*\*

Vacancy

Representatives:

Children and Youth Development Officer and team: Ms Lorraine Downer [2023]\*\*

URC Youth Pilots: Vacancy

Pilots company / Friends On Faith Adventures group: Two to four vacancies

Co-opted:

Resources:

Ms Sandra Ackroyd

Members are nominated by the children's and youth work committee and serve one or two two-year terms.

#### 4.4 Walking the Way steering group

Co-Chairs: Deputy General Secretary (Mission) and Deputy General Secretary (Disc)

Secretary: Project Manager for *Walking the Way*

Stepwise Programme Manager

Head of Communications

Communications Officer

Representatives:

Children's and Youth Work:

Ms Ruth White

Global and Intercultural Ministries:

Revd Bachelard Kaze Yemtsa [2023]

Education and Learning Committee:

Mr Alan Yates

Resource Centres for Learning:

The Revd Peter Ball

Training and Development Officers:

The Revd Dr Jim Coleman

Mission Committee:

Mr John Collings

Mission Enablers:

Mr Martin Hayward

General Members:

The Revd Colin Bones [2023]

The Revd Caroline Andrews [2024]

#### 4.5 Worship Reference Group

Convenor: The Revd Sam Silungwe [2024]

Secretary: The Revd Elizabeth Gray-King [2024]

Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship)

Nominated Members:

The Revd Dr Anna Gobledale [2024]

The Revd Dr Matthew Prevett [2024]

## 5. Administration and resources department

### 5.1 Business Committee

Convenor: The Revd Adrian Bulley [2024]

Secretary: General Secretary

Moderators of General Assembly

Moderator-elect and Immediate-past Moderators of General Assembly

Clerk of General Assembly

Assistant Clerk of General Assembly

URC Treasurer

Nominated members:

Ms Ella Lemon [2022]

Mrs Darnette Whitby-Reid [2025]

### 5.2 Communications

Convenor: The Revd Dr Peter Stevenson [2023]

Secretary: Head of Communications

Mr Stan Hazell [2022]

The Revd Ian Fosten [2022]

The Revd Tim Lowe [2023]

Mr Dan Morell [2023]

The Revd Heather Whyte [2023]

Ms Joy Aldred [2024]

### 5.3 Equalities committee

Convenor: The Revd Anne Lewitt [2022]

Convenor-Elect: vacancy

Secretary: The Revd David Salsbury [2023]<sup>†</sup>

URC Youth representative: URC Youth Equalities and Diversity Representative

Nominated members:

The Revd Naison Hove [2023]

The Revd Jayne Taylor [2023]

The Revd Jo Clare-Young [2024]

Mrs Rosie Martin [2024]

The Revd Mhari McLintock [2024]

Ms Judy Rogers [2024]

Dr Ruth Shepherd [2024]

### 5.4 Finance committee

Convenor: URC Treasurer

Deputy Treasurer: Mr Vaughan Griffiths [2025]\*\*

Chief Finance Officer

Chair of the URC Trust

Nominated members:

Mr Frank Liddell [2022]

Mrs Jane Humphreys [2023]

Ms Joana Marfoh [2023]

The Revd Wilbert Sayimani [2023]

Ms Denise Harman [2024]

The Revd Simon Copley [2025]\*\*

Mr Gordon Wanless [2025]<sup>††</sup>

#### 5.4.1 Pensions committee

Convenor: Mr Richard Nunn [2022]

Secretary: Pensions Manager

Nominated Members:

Ms Joana Marfoh [2024] Vacancy  
Co-opted members, maximum of three:  
Mr David Martin  
Treasurer or Deputy Treasurer Convenor of the Investment Committee  
Convenor of the Maintenance of Ministry Subcommittee  
Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources)  
In attendance:  
Chief Finance Officer  
Secretary for Ministries (for Ministers' Pension Fund matters)

### 5.5 United Reformed Church Trust

Members normally serve for four years and may only serve a maximum of two terms (eight years). The directors of the Trust appoint new directors from those appointed as members. The members of the Trust elect the chair from among their own number and appoint a secretary and deputy secretary.

Chair: Mrs Val Morrison

Secretary: Ms Sandi Hallam-Jones

Deputy Secretary: Mr John Samson

Members:

#### Group one (synods 1, 2, 3, 4, 13):

The Revd Nick Mark (13) [2024]

Mrs Val Morrison (4) [2022]

#### Group two (synods 5, 6, 7, 8, 12):

Ms Catriona Wheeler (5) [2022]

Mr David Lathbury (6) [2022]

Mrs Margaret Thompson (7) [2022]

Mr Clifford Patten (7) [2024]

Mr David Greatorex (5) [2024]

The Revd James Breslin (5) [2024]

#### Group three (synods 9,10,11):

None

Vacancy (to be filled from any synod)

URC Youth appointee: vacancy

Moderators of General Assembly, Clerk of General Assembly, URC Treasurer

General Secretary

In attendance:

Convenor of the investment committee minute secretary

Chief Finance Officer

#### 5.5.1 Church House management group

Convenor: Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources)

General Secretary

Chief Finance Officer

Nominated members:

Mr Robert Buss [2022]

Dr Ian Harrison [2024]

Mr Adam Lester [2024]

vacancy

#### 5.5.2 Remuneration committee

Convenor: Mr William McVey

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources)

Ms Sushila Jetha (Methodist HR)

URC Treasurer

In attendance: Chief Finance Officer

### 5.6 The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd

Terms run until the AGM in September. The directors of the Trust appoint new directors from those appointed as members. The board members elect the chair from among their own number and appoint the company secretary.

Chair: Mrs Bridget Micklem [2023]

Deputy chair: Mr Richard Nunn [2022]  
 Secretary: Ms Sandi Hallam-Jones  
 URC Deputy Treasurer  
 Convenor of the maintenance of ministry subcommittee  
 Convenor of the investment committee

Members of the URC:

Mr Lyndon Thomas [2022]

Mr Colin MacBean [2024]

Members of fund appointed by members of fund:

The Revd Dr Janet Tollington [2023]

The Revd Paul Bedford [2022]

The Revd Caroline Vodden [2022]

The Revd Daniel Cheyne [2022]

### 5.7 Investment committee

Convenor: The Revd Dick Gray [2022]

Convenor-Elect: vacancy

Secretary: Ms Sandi Hallam-Jones

Members:

Mrs Jean Hudson [2023]

Mr Lyndon Thomas [2024]

Mr David Martin [2022]

Dame Katharine Barker [2023]

URC Treasurer

convenor, pensions committee

chair of United Reformed Church Trust or another director

chair of United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Trust or another director

Treasurer, Westminster College

In attendance: Chief Finance Officer

## 6. Representatives to meetings of sister Churches

6.1	General Synod of Church of England	The Revd Tim Meadows
6.2	Methodist Conference	The Revd Roy Fowler
6.3	Congregational Federation	Mission Committee Nomination
6.4	Church of Scotland	Assembly Moderator and synod representative
6.5	United Free Church of Scotland	Synod nomination
6.6	Scottish Assembly of the Congregational Federation	Synod nomination
6.7	Scottish Episcopal Church	Synod nomination
6.8	Methodist Church in Scotland	Synod nomination
6.9	Baptist Union of Scotland	Synod nomination
6.10	Presbyterian Church of Wales	Assembly Moderator
6.11	Union of Welsh Independents	Synod nomination
6.12	Covenanted Baptists	Synod nomination
6.13	Church in Wales Governing Board	Synod nomination
6.14	Provincial Synod of the Moravian Church	Mission Committee Nomination

## 7. Representatives on ecumenical Church bodies

The following have been nominated as United Reformed Church representatives at the major gatherings of the ecumenical bodies listed.

### 7.1 World Council of Churches 2022 Assembly

Delegate: The Revd Sarah Moore

### 7.2 Council for World Mission Assembly

Representatives will be appointed in 2023 for the 2024 CWM Assembly.

**7.3 World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) General Council**

Representatives are appointed for each meeting of the Council.

**7.4 Conference of European Churches Assembly**

Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations and one other

**7.5 The Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council**

The Revd Rowena Francis

The Revd Professor David Thompson

Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries

**7.6 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI)**

**7.6.1 CTBI Church leaders' meeting**

General Secretary

**7.6.2 CTBI senior representatives' forum**

General Secretary

Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

**7.6.3 CTBI environmental issues network**

The Revd Mike Shrubsole

**7.6.4 CTBI stewardship network**

Mrs Faith Paulding

**7.6.5 CTBI consultative group on ministry amongst children (CGMC)**

Head of Children's and Youth Work and one other

**7.6.6 CTBI interreligious network**

Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

**7.6.7 CTBI China forum**

The Revd John Scott

**7.6.8 CTBI Korea group**

The Revd David Grosch-Miller

**7.6.9 CTBI Middle East contact group**

Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

**7.6.10 CTBI Churches' refugee network**

The Revd Fleur Houston

**7.7 Churches Together in England (CTE)**

**7.7.1 CTE enabling group**

Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

**7.7.2 CTE group for evangelisation**

Deputy General Secretary (Mission)

**7.8 Action of Churches Together in Scotland (Acts) members meeting**

Appointed by the National Synod of Scotland

**7.9 National Sponsoring Body for Scotland**

Appointed by the National Synod of Scotland

**7.10 Churches Together in Wales (CYTUN)**

Appointed by the National Synod of Wales

**7.11 Commission of Covenanted Churches in Wales**

Appointed by the National Synod of Wales

**7.12 Free Church education committee**

Professor Graham Handscomb

Mrs Gillian Kingston

**7.13 European Churches' environmental network**

The Revd David Coleman

**7.14 Churches' committee on funerals and crematoria**

The Revd Sally Thomas

**7.15 Churches' forum for safeguarding**

URC Safeguarding Adviser

**7.16 Churches' network for nonviolence**

Head of Children's and Youth Work

**7.17 Churches Visitor and Tourism Association**

Mrs Valerie Jenkins

**7.18 Joint liturgical group**

The Revd Dr Ana Gobledale

**8. Representatives on formal bilateral and multilateral committees****8.1 Methodist / United Reformed Church liaison group**

Co-convenor: The Revd Geoffrey Clarke (Synod Moderator) (five-year term) [2026]\*\*

Co-secretary: Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

Ecumenical and Interfaith Officer for the National Synod of Scotland

Ecumenical and Interfaith Officer for the National Synod of Wales

Nominated Members – serving one or two four-year terms:

The Revd Tim Richards [2024]

Mr Tim Hopley [2025]\*\*

**8.1.1 Methodist/ United Reformed Church strategic oversight group**

General Secretary

A General Assembly Moderator

Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

**8.2 Church of England - United Reformed Church Contact Group**

Co-Chair: The Revd Ruth Whitehead [2024]

Co-Secretary: Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

The Revd Dr Susan Durber [2024]

Mr John Ellis [2024]

The Revd Tim Meadows [2024]

**8.3 EMU Partnership (Scottish Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church in Scotland and the United Reformed Church National Synod of Scotland)**

[see note 7]

Appointed by the National Synod of Scotland

**8.4 Conversations between the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe and the Anglican Communion**

The Revd Julian Templeton

**8.5 Roman Catholic / United Reformed Church Dialogue Group**

Co-chair: The Revd Dr John Bradbury

Co-secretary: The Revd Philip Brooks

Members:

Mr John Cornell

The Revd Dr Sarah Hall

The Revd Jason McCullagh

The Revd Lindsey Sanderson

**9. Representatives on governing bodies of theological colleges, etc**

**9.1 Northern College**

The Revd Mark Bates [2022]

Mrs Rosie Buxton [2022]

The Revd Raymond Singh [2023]

Mr Willie Duncan [2025]<sup>†</sup>

Two vacancies

In attendance: Secretary for Education and Learning

**9.2 Westminster College: board of governors**

Governors serve six-year terms, which may be renewed.

Convenor: The Revd Nigel Uden [2026]

Clerk to the governors: Mr Chris Wright [2022]

Honorary treasurer (Westminster College): Mr Andrew Grimwade [2022]

Principal: The Revd Samantha White

Mr Mark Hayes [2022]

Mr John Ellis [2023]

The Revd Jan Adamson [2024]

Mrs Darnette Whitby-Reid [2025]

The Revd Stuart Scott from 1 Sep 2020 to 31 Aug 2021

Note 1: A further six governors are appointed by the Cambridge Theological Federation, the University of Cambridge, Anglia Ruskin University, the college's teaching staff, its students and the Cheshunt Foundation.

Note 2: The Secretary for Education and Learning and the URC Treasurer are normally in attendance.

**9.2.1 The Cheshunt Foundation**

Mr Guy Morfett

**9.2.2 Cambridge Theological Federation**

Convenor, Westminster College governors

**10. Governors of colleges and schools with which the United Reformed Church is associated**

**10.1 Caterham School**

Southern Synod Moderator

**10.2 Eltham College**

Mr Martin Fosten



**10.3 Walthamstow Hall**

Mrs Isabel Heald

**10.4 Milton Mount Foundation**

Mr Ray Dunnett [2024]

The Revd Kevin Swaine [2024]

The Revd June Colley [2022]

The Revd Carole Elphick [2022]

The Revd Derek Lindfield [2022]

Mrs Daphne Bembridge [2023]

Governors serve four-year terms, which may be renewed.

**10.5 Silcoates School**

The Revd Jason McCullagh [2023]

Vacancy

Governors serve three-year terms.

**10.6 Taunton School**

Baptist governor at present

**10.7 Bishops Stortford College**

Mr Richard Harrison

**11. Miscellaneous**

The United Reformed Church is represented on a variety of other national organisations and committees as follows:

**11.1 Arthur Rank Centre**

The Revd Elizabeth Caswell

**11.2 Churches Legislation Advisory Service**

Ms Muna Levan Harris [2023]

General Secretary

**11.3 Congregational Fund Board**

Mr Anthony Bayley [2023]

The Revd Geoffrey Roper [2023]

The Revd Janine Atkinson [2023]

Mrs Mary Steele [2023]

Mr Mike Hart [2024]

**11.4 Congregational Memorial Hall Trust**

Mr John Ellis [2023]

Mr Simon Fairnington [2023]

The Revd Melanie Smith [2023]

Mrs Margaret Thompson [2024]

Mr Philip Bonnier [2025]<sup>†</sup>The Revd Derek Wales [2025]<sup>†</sup>

Representatives serve four-year terms which may be renewed.

**11.5 Historic England Places of Worship Forum**

Convenor of the listed buildings advisory group

**11.6 Lord Wharton's Charity**

The Revd Derek Lindfield

**11.7 Retired ministers' and widows' fund**

The Revd Julian Macro

Mr Anthony Bayley

Ms Liz Sharples

**11.8 Roots for Churches Ltd**

The Revd Nicola Furley-Smith [2024]

**11.9 Samuel Robinson's Charities**

Mr Tony Alderman

**11.10 Scout Association – URC faith adviser**

The Revd David Marshall-Jones

**11.11 United Reformed Church History Society**

The Revd Dr Michael Jagessar [2024]                      Mrs Jean Wyber [2022]

The Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe [2023]

Council Members serve five-year terms which may be renewed.

**11.12 World Day of Prayer**

England, Wales and Northern Ireland: The Revd Dr Ana Gobledale [2022]

Scotland: Synod appointment.

**11.13 Westhill Endowment Trust**

Mrs Julie Grove MBE [2022]

The Revd Leonora Jagessar-Visser 't Hooft [2023]

Note: this list will be superseded in July 2021. The latest list approved by General Assembly or Mission Council on its behalf is available at: [bit./ly/URCNom](https://bit.ly/URCNom).

# Paper J2

## Eastern Synod Moderator

### Nominations Committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Ray Adams <a href="mailto:ray.adams12@btinternet.com">ray.adams12@btinternet.com</a> Mr George Faris <a href="mailto:nominations.secretary@urc.org.uk">nominations.secretary@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Resolution 38</b> <b>General Assembly appoints the Revd Lythan Nevard to be Moderator of Eastern Synod from 1 August 2021 to 31 July 2028.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To appoint a new moderator of Eastern Synod.
<b>Main points</b>	As above.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	N/A
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Eastern Synod.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	None.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None.

### Eastern Synod Moderator

The Eastern Synod Moderator Nominating Group brings forward the name of the Revd Lythan Nevard, presently serving in South Western Synod.

General Assembly is invited to resolve as follows:

**General Assembly appoints the Revd Lythan Nevard to be Moderator of Eastern Synod from 1 August 2021 to 31 July 2028.**

# Paper K1

## General Report

### Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd David Grosch-Miller <a href="mailto:david.grosch-miller@urc.org.uk">david.grosch-miller@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	For information only.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To report the work of the committee and its oversight of welfare funds.
<b>Main points</b>	The work of the committee is necessarily confidential but the report draws attention to matters of general concern.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper I1 Report to Mission Council November 2020 .
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Finance Committee, Synod Moderators and the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	No proposed changes to existing provision.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None.

#### Introduction

This committee considers the cases of ministers who are referred to it, usually by synods, often at times of difficulty. It also deals with welfare and emergency matters including the use of welfare funds. Because of the confidential nature of its work the report is in general terms only.

Committee members: Convenor: the Revd David Grosch-Miller (from July 2018), the Revd Bridget Powell (from July 2019), Professor Malcolm Johnson (from July 2018), the Revd Brian Jolly (from July 2020), the Revd Dr Irene John (from July 2020), ex officio: URC Treasurer (or Deputy Treasurer) and the General Secretary.

The committee has met via Zoom throughout the pandemic and while there are some limitations this has enabled the committee to make decisions in a timely fashion. Urgent requests are occasionally dealt with via email.

**1. Pastoral reference work**

- 1.1 The committee responds to requests to support ministers and their families that are received from Synod Moderators and Assembly Officers. In the last year requests have included the need to support ministers because of delays in appointments resulting from Covid-19 restrictions.
- 1.2 There has been an increase in the number of requests for help with housing costs from retired ministers and those about to retire that lie beyond the scope of the Retired Ministers Housing Society.
- 1.3 The committee has expressed concern that the need for careful financial planning by ministers for retirement should be recognised early in ministry.
- 1.4 The churches' ministerial counselling service is a confidential support available to all ministers and their immediate family. The service has been appreciated by a number of ministers and was supported by grants of £11,648 in 2020

**2. Welfare grants**

- 2.1 PRWC has oversight of historic funds that are held for designated purposes and available to stipendiary ministers of the United Reformed Church. The level of grants available is set from time to time by the committee, and these are paid on application for the following purposes: education fees for children in URC affiliated independent schools, musical instruments for children, school uniform and equipment, public transport travel costs for school attendance. Further grants are paid at bereavement, as a Christmas gift to widows and widowers, and as a contribution to the housing costs of a minister's spouse following divorce or separation. The committee also receives requests for financial assistance to ministers for purposes not covered by the historic funds.
- 2.2 Welfare grants totaling £54,417.86 were paid in 2020. The income from historic funds was supplemented by grants from the Assembly budget of £17,000 in 2020.

**3. With thanks**

- 3.1 We have welcomed Irene John and Brian Jolly to the committee. We have appreciated the attendance of the General Secretary pending the appointment of a Deputy General Secretary, Discipleship. Camilla Veitch has completed her term of service and we have valued her insights and wisdom as we have wrestled some difficult issues. John Piper, in his capacity as URC Deputy Treasurer, has been a highly valued member of the committee, and we express our thanks as he comes to the end of his term of service. Samantha Bircham is the vital administrative cord that holds all our work together and her commitment and attention to detail are greatly appreciated.

# Paper R1

## Ministerial Disciplinary Process and Incapacity Procedure

The Clerk and General Secretary, for MIND (Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline Advisory Group)

### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Secretary of MIND: the Revd Chris Copley <a href="mailto:chrismvivian@gmail.com">chrismvivian@gmail.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision by General Assembly in July 2021. Synods to consider Basis and Structure changes, and elect to Standing Panels for Discipline, in Autumn 2021. Names to be proposed by Nominations Committee to Assembly Executive in November 2021. Transitional Provisions for ongoing cases to be considered by Assembly Executive in November 2021. MIND to offer training between November 2021 and July 2022. Basis and Structure changes to be considered for ratification by General Assembly in July 2022, and redrawn Process to come into effect at the close of that Assembly.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p><b>Resolution 39</b></p> <p>1. General Assembly adopts the following amendments to the Basis of Union and Structure of the URC:</p> <p><b>Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church</b> <b>Schedule E, Paragraph 4</b> – delete the word ‘ministerial’ before ‘rights of membership’.</p> <p><b>The Structure of the United Reformed Church</b> <b>Paragraph 1(4)</b> – Add heading ‘<b>Definitions</b>’ and reword:</p> <p>1.(4) Unless otherwise expressly stated or clearly excluded by the context, a) the expressions ‘minister’, ‘ministers’, ‘ministry’ and ‘ministerial’ when used in the Structure shall refer to the ministry of Word and Sacrament;</p>

- b) the expression ‘the Disciplinary Process’ shall refer to the Process established by the General Assembly under paragraph 2(6)(xxi), but includes any process so established for similar purposes before the adoption of that provision;
- c) the expression ‘the Incapacity Procedure’ shall refer to the Procedure established by the General Assembly under paragraph 2(6)(xxiii), but includes any process so established for similar purposes before the adoption of that provision.

**Paragraph 2(1)** – in function (ix), insert ‘(subject to paragraph 2(7)(ii))’ before ‘to suspend or remove names’.

**In the Functions of Synods**, delete the initial ‘A’ and the words in brackets.

**Function (xvii)** – delete existing text and replace with the following:

‘To discharge the functions required under the Disciplinary Process to be exercised by the synod, either directly, or indirectly through other officers or bodies, as the Process may provide’.

**Function (xviii)** – delete existing text and replace with the following:

‘To discharge the functions required under the Incapacity Procedure to be exercised by the synod, either directly, or indirectly through other officers or bodies, as the Procedure may provide’.

**Function (xxi)** after ‘Disciplinary Process’ delete ‘contained in Section O’.

Delete section (B) of the Functions of Synods

**Paragraph 2.(5)** – In sub-paragraph (A), after ‘the following functions’, delete the words in brackets.

**In the Functions of Ecumenical Area Meetings, Function (viii)**, delete ‘contained in Section O’ and the cross-reference in brackets.



**Function (xviii)** - delete existing text and replace with the following:

‘To discharge, concurrently with the synod, such of the functions and duties conferred or imposed by the Disciplinary Process or the Incapacity Procedure upon the synod in respect of a minister or Church Related Community Worker (or former holder of either office) serving or resident within the Ecumenical Area, after proceedings involving that person are concluded, as the synod may from time to time request’.

**Paragraph 2.(6)** – After ‘General Assembly is responsible for exercising the following Functions’ delete the words in brackets.

**In the Functions of the General Assembly, Function (xviii)**, delete the words in brackets.

**Functions (xxi) to (xxvii)** – delete existing text and replace with the following:

- (xxi) to establish, and from time to time to review, amend or replace a Process for dealing with cases of Discipline involving ministers or Church Related Community Workers;
- (xxii) to discharge the functions required under the Disciplinary Process to be exercised by the Assembly, either directly, or indirectly through other officers or bodies, as the Process may provide;
- (xxiii) to establish, and from time to time to review, amend or replace a Procedure for dealing with cases of Incapacity involving ministers or Church Related Community Workers;
- (xxiv) to discharge the functions required under the Incapacity Procedure to be exercised by the Assembly, either directly, or indirectly through other officers or bodies, as the Procedure may provide.

Renumber the last two functions (xxv) and (xxvi).

**Insert new paragraph 2(7) as follows:**

**‘Restriction on exercise of conciliar functions**

2(7)(i) As soon as any minister or Church Related Community Worker becomes the subject of a case under the

	<p>Disciplinary Process or the Incapacity Procedure, no council of the Church shall exercise any of its functions in respect of that person in such a manner as to affect, compromise or interfere with the conduct of that case, save as provided for by the Process or Procedure itself.</p> <p>(ii) The function of the Church Meeting to maintain standards of membership shall not be exercised in a disciplinary context in respect of any member of the local church who is at that time a minister or Church Related Community Worker; nor shall any such member be removed from the Roll of Members or the membership of that person be suspended by the Church Meeting for disciplinary reasons.</p> <p>(iii) The decision reached in any particular case (whether or not on appeal) under the Disciplinary Process or the Incapacity Procedure shall be made in the name of the General Assembly and shall be final and binding, and once so initiated that case shall be resolved only by the steps for which that Process or Procedure provides.’</p> <p><b>Paragraph 5</b> - delete existing opening text and replace with the following:</p> <p>5. The procedure for dealing with references and appeals not concerned with the Incapacity Procedure or the Disciplinary Process is as follows:</p> <p><b>Paragraph 5.4</b> – delete final sentence and replace with the following:</p> <p>No procedure governed by this paragraph shall be used to review or appeal against decisions reached under the Disciplinary Process or the Incapacity Procedure.</p> <p>Delete paragraphs 6 and 7 in their entirety.</p>
	<p><b>Resolution 40</b></p> <p>2. <b>General Assembly adopts the ‘Process for dealing with cases of discipline involving ministers and church related community workers’ (‘Disciplinary Process’) accompanying this Resolution in place of the existing Process.</b></p>
	<p><b>Resolution 41</b></p>

	<p><b>3. General Assembly makes the amendments accompanying this Resolution to the ‘Procedure for dealing with cases of incapacity involving ministers and Church Related Community Workers’ (‘Incapacity Procedure’).</b></p>
	<p><b>Resolution 42</b></p> <p><b>4. (a) The provisions of the new Disciplinary Process concerning appointments to the Assembly and Synod Standing Panels for Discipline, the Disciplinary Investigation and Commission Panels, the Appeal Commissions List and the posts of Assembly Representative for Discipline, Secretary to Assembly Commissions for Discipline and to Disciplinary Appeal Commissions are to come into force at the close of this session of the General Assembly.</b></p> <p><b>(b)The Assembly instructs synods to make their appointments to Standing Panels at the earliest opportunity, and instructs Nominations Committee to bring nominations for Assembly appointees under the new Process to the Assembly Executive in November 2021, so that all those appointed can receive initial training in the new procedures before the remainder of the Process comes into force.</b></p> <p><b>(c) The new Process is to come fully into force at the close of the meeting of Assembly in 2022 and govern cases coming to the notice of Moderators of synods or the Assembly Representative for Discipline on or after that date, provided that the amendments to the Basis and Structure mentioned in Resolution 1 have by then been ratified. Cases pending under the current Process at that date are to be dealt with as the transitional provisions of the new Process provide.</b></p> <p><b>(d) The amendments to the Incapacity Procedure are to take effect at the close of the meeting of Assembly in 2022, provided that the amendments to the Basis and Structure mentioned in Resolution 1 have by then been ratified.</b></p>

	<p><b>Resolution 43</b></p> <p><b>5. The Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline Advisory Group to the Assembly Executive (MIND) is instructed to make arrangements to offer the training mentioned in Resolution 4.</b></p>
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### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Redrawing of the Ministerial Disciplinary Process.
<b>Main points</b>	New definition of the basis for discipline; investigation by a team drawn from a denomination-wide panel; <i>prima facie</i> case to be shown to a judicial Standing Panel representative of the synod; option of a negotiated caution in less serious cases; reduction in size of Assembly and Appeal Commissions; new interface between the Process and the Incapacity Procedure.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper T1 for Mission Council November 2018 Paper T1 for Mission Council March 2019 Papers T1-T4 prepared for Mission Council March 2020 Papers appended to the report of Mission Council prepared for General Assembly July 2020.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Safeguarding Advisory Group; Legal Adviser; Standing Panel for the Incapacity Procedure Also external assistance through Scrutiny Groups, as explained in text below.

### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	No net increase of cost anticipated in operating the Process, though costs of Mandated Groups now borne at synod level will be replaced by costs of denominational Investigation Teams. Provision is made for certain expenses of parties to a case to be borne from denominational funds if approved by the responsible Commission.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Please refer to Appendix B to the draft Process (ministers under other denominational jurisdictions).

### General comment on the proposed new Disciplinary Process

In May 2019, Mission Council approved the preparation of a new Process for dealing with cases of discipline involving ministers and Church Related Community Workers. It directed MIND to proceed with redrafting. MIND had already identified certain principles to underlie the redrafting, as proposed to Mission Council in November 2018. The first version of the Framework to form the backbone of the new Process was amongst the papers seen by Mission Council at the May 2019 meeting.

It was indicated that the Framework would be complemented by Appendices, ranking equally with it and giving detail on specific aspects of the Process, whilst the Framework itself would present an overview of the main principles and stages. Since May 2019, the Framework and Appendices have been through the following further stages of revision and improvement:

- a) Summer 2019 – consideration of the Framework and all Appendices then drafted, divided between three Scrutiny Groups comprising members of MIND, volunteer members of Mission Council and individuals with relevant experience from outside MIND.
- b) September 2019 – consideration of the whole Process at a plenary meeting of MIND.
- c) Autumn 2019 – meetings with representatives of the Safeguarding Advisory Group (SAG) and with the Legal Adviser.
- d) January 2020 – MIND resolves to commend the new Process and ancillary proposals to Mission Council for adoption.
- (e) March 2020 – Papers circulated to Mission Council members, incorporating further improvements suggested by the Synod Moderators' Meeting, and at further meetings with Ministries Committee and SAG representatives and with the Legal Adviser. Mission Council was unable to meet physically, but comments from members were invited.
- f) July 2020 – The papers were included, with no significant further changes, in the *Book of Reports* for Assembly 2020 (and an online supplement), but it was agreed that the resolutions would be moved by the Clerk and General Secretary since there had been no opportunity for Mission Council to adopt them formally as its own. In the event, this was among the business of Assembly 2020 which had to be deferred to 2021.
- g) September 2020 and Spring 2021 – MIND agreed further minor improvements to its proposals (of a technical or clarifying nature, as indicated below) and substantive change in just one area (Disciplinary Appeal Commissions and their work).

The final version of our proposals (Framework and Appendices) accompanies this report. The Appendices are numbered from A to Z, save that there is no Appendix I. Appendix Z (transitional provisions for cases pending under the current Process when the new Process comes into force) has not yet been completed: a proposal regarding this, which will depend on the stage which proceedings pending under the old Process have reached, will be brought to the Assembly Executive in November 2021.

No attempt is made here to summarise the content of the new Process. It is hoped their effect will be clear from careful reading, although they contain a substantial volume of material. Those members of Assembly who were members of Mission Council in May 2019 will already be familiar with the main principles and stages, but MIND representatives will be glad to offer further explanation as desired at the meeting of Assembly.

We do, however, offer here a brief explanation of changes made since the draft Framework and Appendices were included in the *Book of Reports* for Assembly 2020 and its online supplement. This may save time for all who were on the Roll of that Assembly and so are already broadly familiar with the proposals.

### **Changes to the draft Process since Assembly 2020**

*Service of documents:* The version prepared for Assembly 2020 required an accused minister and the Investigation Team to send copies of certain documents to each other, at the same time as lodging those documents with the Panel or Commission responsible for the proceedings. The latest version transfers this responsibility for ‘serving the other side’ to the Panel or Commission Secretary concerned. This is reflected by amended wording in Framework Paragraph 5.3 and in Appendices O/4, O/7, U/4, U/8 and U/10.

*Cautions:* The Assembly 2020 version indicated that disposal of proceedings by a caution will not normally be appropriate if the minister concerned has already been cautioned for similar conduct under the new Process. The latest version extends this principle to any minister cautioned under the old Process. This is reflected by amended wording in Framework Paragraph 5.4.

*Appeals after a minister admits allegations:* The Assembly 2020 version suggested that no appeal will be possible if an Assembly Commission disposes of a case without a hearing, after the accused minister has admitted allegations. The latest version makes clear that either party will still, in that situation, have the option of appealing against the sanction imposed by the Commission. This is reflected by amended wording in Framework Paragraph 7.2.

*Incompatible roles:* The Assembly 2020 version indicated that no person can serve at the same time on more than one of the judicial bodies or ‘pools’ established for the Process, or as Secretary to such bodies, or in the ‘pool’ from which Investigation Teams are chosen. However, this was set out at different points in the relevant Appendices, and there was a danger of these provisions saying different things. Also, on reconsideration, provision was made for certain exceptions to the general principle, in the interest of making the best use of available talent when there could be no real incompatibility. The latest version sets out this restriction (and the exceptions) only in the Framework (Paragraph 8.8) and draws attention to it, without repeating it, by amended wording in Appendices F/3, H/5, K/1, N/2, N/5, U/1 and V/2.

*Safeguarding Advice to Assembly Commissions:* The Assembly 2020 version allowed a safeguarding professional who had been involved at earlier stages of a case to serve also, in some circumstances, as safeguarding adviser to a Commission when one was needed. MIND agrees with a point made by the Safeguarding Advisory Group that it would be better for a wholly independent person to give advice in this area to the Commission. This is reflected by amended wording in Appendix G/17.

*Composition of the Assembly Standing Panel for Discipline:* When allegations are made against a minister under Assembly oversight, the ASPD has the same role in the Process as is assigned to the SSPD in respect of ministers under Synod oversight. The rules for both Panels (in Appendices F and H) were designed to ensure that at least one minister and one Elder would serve on each Panel, allowing the third place to be taken by any member of the URC (appointed on the basis of qualifications and willingness). There has been no change to Appendix F since the Assembly 2020 version; but a simpler version of Appendix H has been substituted, which allows the Assembly Representative for Discipline to be selected from the entire membership of the Church, with the other two members of the Panel being ordained.

*Appendices' references to the Framework:* The Assembly 2020 version of the Appendices sometimes referred to provisions in the Framework as 'Paragraph ... of the Process'. It is felt that such references would be less ambiguous if they referred expressly to the Framework, so the words 'Paragraph ... of the Framework' have been substituted at Appendices H/10, L/2, L/9, M/1, P/3, P/4, S/3, and U/2.

*Grounds supporting or opposing an appeal:* The Assembly 2020 version of Appendix U indicated that an Appellant from an Assembly Commission decision, and the other party (the Respondent) to that appeal, must respectively provide a summary of the appeal grounds, or of the grounds for resisting it. It made clear that Respondents cannot rely at the appeal hearing on arguments not stated in their written summary; but it did not make this equally clear in relation to Appellants. The latest version therefore makes clear, by amended wording in Appendix U/2, U/4 and U/5, that the rules are the same for both parties (although the Appeal Commission can permit argument on other grounds, in its discretion).

*Provisional Appeal Commission decision 'on the papers':* The option in the Assembly 2020 version of Appendix U/7 for an Assembly Commission to give a provisional view on an appeal in advance of the hearing, which would make a hearing unnecessary if accepted by both parties, has been deleted in the latest version as making the appeal process unnecessarily complicated. This has necessitated minor changes also to Appendix U/8 and U/9.

*Witness arrangements for appeal hearings:* An Appeal hearing will not normally hear witnesses or revisit the findings of fact by an Assembly Commission.



Hearing witnesses is only permitted when new relevant facts have come to light since the Assembly Commission decision (Framework 7.4). The latest versions of Appendix U/8, U/9 U/11 and U/12 provide for written witness statements, and allow the Appeal Commission to indicate in advance of the hearing whether or not proposed witnesses should attend. This is designed to prevent wasting the time of witnesses whom the Commission may not feel able to hear.

*Appeal Commission composition:* This is the main area of substantive change in the Advisory Group's proposals since last year. The Assembly 2020 version of Appendix V provided for Appeal Commissions to be composed, as those under the old Process were, of a past or present Moderator and one other current member of the General Assembly, together with a convener who would have 'appropriate experience' (though the nature of that experience was not stated). Since an Appeal Commission has considerable freedom to reverse or alter the decision of an Assembly Commission, whose members will have given considerable time to a case and had the benefit of training in their role, it is now felt that an Appeal Commission should be at least equally well-qualified to take the important decisions entrusted to it. The latest version of Appendix V therefore provides for the selection of Appeal Commission members from a List drawn up ahead of any case. The Appeal Commissions List is analogous in this respect to the Commission Panel from which members of Assembly Commissions are selected; but there are more stringent qualifications for inclusion. These include legal or judicial experience, and/or relevant experience (which is more closely defined) in the URC along with a willingness to undergo training.

Some *typographical errors*, mostly affecting cross-references, have been corrected.

### **Comment on the proposed changes to the Incapacity Procedure**

The current Disciplinary Process provides for ministers facing disciplinary proceedings to be referred into the Incapacity Procedure instead, or *vice versa*, if the situation appears to justify this. The new Process therefore also needed to make some corresponding provision; but in the course of drafting this, it became clear some changes of substance might be called for, rather than merely carrying over the existing rules. MIND's proposals are contained in Appendix W to the draft Process, and in a set of proposed changes to the rules of the Incapacity Procedure itself. There has been no change at all in this area to the proposals set out in the 2020 *Book of Reports*.

To give a brief summary of the main changes currently proposed as regards the interface:

A case may be transferred from the Disciplinary Process (DP) to the Incapacity Procedure (IP) if the disciplinary forum (Synod Standing Panel, Assembly Commission or Appeal Commission) currently responsible for the case believes that an incapacity factor

- a) may have contributed to, and may possibly excuse, the alleged misconduct; or
- b) may render the minister incapable of exercising, or continuing to exercise, ministry even if he/she is innocent of culpable misconduct; or
- c) may prevent the minister from answering disciplinary allegations.

But it will be possible for the case to be returned to the DP if the Review Commission considering it under the IP concludes that none of these situations in fact exists.

A case which begins in the IP may only be transferred to the DP if the Review Commission suspects misconduct and is persuaded that none of the three situations just outlined exists or, having examined the possibility of mitigation due to an incapacity factor, still considers the minister may have a disciplinary case to answer.

Since a case will only enter the IP by the 'normal' route (ie with no disciplinary issues) after consideration by the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Commission (PRWC), which itself will have looked into the possibility of retirement on ill-health grounds recognised by the Church's pension scheme, corresponding provisions have been inserted into the Procedure for cases which reach the IP through the DP. However, since the circumstances of such cases could vary greatly, a measure of discretion has been built in, that discretion being conferred on the IP Review Commission, which can (but does not have to) make a reference to the PRWC and can (but does not have to) approve a final outcome in the form of ill-health retirement. As in the DP, there is a provision that the Procedure will not end merely because a minister purports to resign (unless that is a resignation or retirement approved on incapacity grounds).

The Special Appeals Body which, under the current IP, can reverse a Review Commission's decision to refer a case into the DP, will continue to exist. But there will be no corresponding Appeals Body empowered to reverse a DP judicial forum's decision to refer a case into the IP.

### **Comment on the proposed changes to the Basis of Union and Structure of the URC**

There has been no change at all in this area to the proposals set out in the 2020 *Book of Reports*.

At present the Structure of the URC contains a number of references to the Disciplinary Process (DP) and Incapacity Procedure (IP), but does not contain an express power for the General Assembly to make disciplinary and incapacity rules in the first place. MIND accepts there are various constitutional 'pegs' on which the current Process can be argued to 'hang', but suggests that a provision

devoted specifically to rule-making in this area is desirable, especially if the general powers of church councils are themselves going to be limited, and their functions expanded, by reference to the rules so made. On the other hand, MIND suggests the overall length of the Structure can be reduced, and duplication avoided, if detailed provisions of the DP and IP are not repeated in Structure paragraphs. Such repetition brings the risk that later changes to DP or IP will also necessitate a Structure change, taking up further time of Assembly and synods on something which may be quite minor and technical.

There are various places where, with the laudable aim of separating the Assembly's judicial functions exercised through Commissions from its (or a synod's) executive and legislative roles, the Structure currently spells out that neither level of council should intermeddle in disciplinary or incapacity cases, save as the DP or IP provides. MIND suggests it will be adequate for this to be stated in one place only. On the other hand, the Structure does not at present (but, MIND suggests, it should) make clear that a Church Meeting's disciplinary authority (to remove an individual from the membership roll or to suspend membership, in the exercise of its concern for membership standards) is not to be exercised in respect of a member who is on the Roll of ministers or of CRCWs. The rationale behind this is that, if a disciplinary issue arises concerning a minister or CRCW, it should be handled first with the additional safeguards of the DP.

MIND also proposes a minor change to the functions of an Ecumenical Area Meeting in the disciplinary context. Such a meeting does not have any direct function in ministerial discipline, but may need to bring Assembly Commission recommendations regarding a former minister deleted from the Roll to the notice of appropriate people. The suggested changes are intended to make clear that, although an Ecumenical Area Meeting may share in this task of passing on recommendations, the primary responsibility for so doing will always lie with the Synod.

Finally, there is one proposed change to the Basis of Union Appendix E, which deals with suspension of ministers pending disciplinary investigation. It is currently stated that such a suspended minister 'may not exercise the *ministerial* rights of membership of any council of the Church' (emphasis added). MIND suggests removing the word 'ministerial', so that during suspension all rights of membership are suspended. The chief right of membership which a minister may have, but which is not 'ministerial', is the right to attend, speak and vote at the Church Meeting of which he/she is a member. It seems to MIND that it may be counter-productive, if a minister is suspended (for example) in order to prevent undue contact with witnesses in a case, for the Structure to give that minister the right to attend the Church Meeting. Basis of Union Appendix F – the corresponding provision for CRCWs – does not contain the word 'ministerial' at this point, and thus already prohibits a suspended CRCW from such attendance.

## **Comment on the Resolutions and the timing of their implementation**

MIND hopes it will be possible to work towards the redrafted Process superseding the current Process with effect from the close of the General Assembly's 2022 session. The goal is for any allegations of misconduct which reach Moderators after that date to be dealt with completely under the new Process by judicial fora, Investigation Teams and officers appointed under it. This means that the members of Synod Standing Panels, the Assembly Standing Panel, the Disciplinary Investigation Panel and the Commission Panel will need to be named and receive initial training between the Assembly sessions of 2021 and 2022. This, in turn, calls for the Assembly of 2021 to give as much certainty as possible to the content of the Process, and to instruct synods and the Nominations Committee to make the necessary appointments in time for this to happen.

The changes to the Basis and Structure, however, cannot be finalised in 2021, since they will have to be referred to synods under paragraph 3 of the Structure and reconsidered for ratification at Assembly 2022. MIND hopes this is the last time that alterations in the Disciplinary Process will call for changes at the level of the Church's constitutional texts.

Accordingly MIND is grateful for the willingness of the Clerk and General Secretary to propose five resolutions to the 2021 General Assembly. The first will represent the first stage in making the desired changes to the Basis and Structure; the second will adopt the new Disciplinary Process; and the third will make the Incapacity Procedure changes.

The changes made by the second and third resolutions will, however, be deferred until the close of the meeting of Assembly in 2022 and will then be conditional on the Basis and Structure changes having been ratified. This is set out in the fourth resolution. An exception is made for those provisions of the Process under which appointments take place: those provisions, it is proposed, should come into effect on 13 July 2021, so that Autumn meetings of synods can make Standing Panel appointments, and names for other roles can be brought by Nominations Committee to the Assembly Executive in November 2021.

The individuals so appointed can then be offered training in the new Process before their duties commence at the close of Assembly 2021. The fifth resolution calls on MIND to offer such training.

## Ministerial Disciplinary Process

### Table of appendices

These are available to read online at:

A	Affirmations
B	Ministers under other denominational jurisdictions
C	Oversight
D	Moderator's recorded warnings
E	Double jeopardy
F	The Synod Standing Panel for Discipline
G	Safeguarding
H	The Assembly Representative and Standing Panel for Discipline
J	Suspension
K	Investigation Teams and the Disciplinary Investigation Panel
L	The Investigation Stage
M	Cautions
N	Assembly Commissions for Discipline and the Commission Panel
O	The Hearing Stage
P	Abandonment of allegations by an Investigation Team
Q	Admission of allegations by an accused minister
R	Hearing Procedure
S	Disciplinary sanctions
T	Reasons for Commission decisions
U	Appeal Procedure
V	Disciplinary Appeal Commissions
W	Interface with the Incapacity Procedure
X	Non-co-operation and non-appearance
Y	Dissemination of information and record-keeping
Z	Transitional provisions [cases pending under the old Process] – <i>not yet prepared</i>

*There is no Appendix I*

	<b>The framework</b>	
<p><b>1.</b></p>	<p><b>The expectations of ministers</b>                      At their ordination or commissioning, ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers make affirmations about their Christian belief, about the motives leading them to enter their ministry, and about their future conduct.</p> <p>It is expected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ that, during the process of candidature for the ministry in question, they will not have misled the Church or those who, on its behalf, assessed their readiness for that ministry;</li> <li>◆ that they will make the affirmations at ordination or commissioning honestly;</li> <li>◆ that they will serve in the ministry of the URC only so long as they can still with integrity teach and claim to hold the understanding of the Christian faith expressed in the Basis of Union; and</li> <li>◆ that their conduct after ordination or commissioning will accord with the affirmations then made.</li> </ul> <p>It is also expected that if they are arrested on a criminal charge, convicted of any criminal offence by a court or accept a police caution in respect of such an offence, they will report that fact to the Moderator of the synod exercising oversight of them.</p>	<p>The affirmations are set out at Appendix A.</p> <p>Throughout this statement of the Process, ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers are both referred to as 'ministers'. The expressions 'ministry' and 'Roll of Ministers' should be construed accordingly.</p> <p>Appendix B relates to ministers under other denominational jurisdictions.</p> <p>Arrest, conviction or formal police caution has the same consequences whether within or outside the United Kingdom.</p> <p>The synod with oversight is defined in Appendix C. As indicated in Paragraph 3, the Assembly Representative for Discipline may in certain</p>

		cases take the place of a Synod Moderator.
2.	<p><b>The place of the Disciplinary Process</b></p> <p>Even if these expectations are not met, in many cases a pastoral approach can be taken and a matter resolved by informal advice or an apology. But there are other cases in which a breach of expectations undermines the credibility of a person's ministry or the Church's witness. Allegations of such a breach (here called 'misconduct') call for a formal process of investigation, following the requirements of natural justice, and possibly for sanctions. It is with allegations of misconduct that this Disciplinary Process is concerned.</p>	<p>A separate procedure exists for cases of possible ministerial Incapacity.</p> <p>A Moderator's recorded warning (see Appendix D) may be given as part of the pastoral approach to apparent minor breaches of the expectations.</p> <p>Church meetings possess a disciplinary competence over their members, but this will not be exercised over a church member whose name remains on the Roll of Ministers.</p>
3.	<p><b>Allegations</b></p> <p><b>(1) Convening the Synod Standing Panel for Discipline</b></p> <p>Any allegation suggesting a failure to meet the expectations in paragraph 1 amounting to misconduct within the meaning of paragraph 2 must be referred to the Moderator of the synod exercising oversight of the minister concerned. Concerns coming to the notice of the Moderator without a report from any complainant may be treated as allegations of misconduct. A report of a criminal conviction, arrest or police caution is to be treated as though it were an allegation of misconduct.</p>	<p>The synod which exercises oversight of a minister is to be identified in accordance with Appendix C.</p> <p>Rules on double jeopardy appear at Appendix E.</p> <p>The composition of the SSPD is set out at Appendix F.</p>



	<p>On identifying any allegation as one of misconduct, the Moderator must call together the Synod Standing Panel for Discipline ('SSPD') and seek safeguarding advice, which must be passed on forthwith to the remaining members of the SSPD.</p> <p><b>(2) The Assembly Representative for Discipline and Assembly Standing Panel for Discipline</b>          Allegations respecting a minister treated under this Process as falling under the direct oversight of the General Assembly are to be referred to the Assembly Representative for Discipline ('ARD') who (if they are identified as allegations of misconduct) is to call together the Assembly Standing Panel for Discipline ('ASPD').</p> <p><b>(3) Striking out</b>          The SSPD may strike out allegations that are, in its view, patently frivolous, malicious, vexatious or unrelated to the expectations, stating why it considers that to be the case. Otherwise it must pass the allegations and any supporting evidence on for further consideration in the Investigation Stage.</p> <p><b>(4) Decisions on suspension</b>          As soon as it is aware of the allegations the SSPD may suspend the minister, with the consequences set out in the Basis of Union. The Moderator may suspend, acting alone, on first receiving the allegations if there is delay in calling together the SSPD and the Moderator considers immediate suspension necessary. However, neither the Moderator nor the SSPD should proceed to suspension without considering whether an alternative course of action is available. If the SSPD believes such an alternative could be considered but an interview with the accused minister would assist the decision, the minister must be offered the opportunity to meet with at least one member of the SSPD before the suspension decision is taken. Decisions to suspend or not to suspend must be accompanied by reasons, and reviewed by the SSPD on first convening and regularly thereafter: they may be revised at any time.</p>	<p>'Calling together' does not necessarily imply a physical meeting.</p> <p>The interplay of the Process with the Church's Safeguarding Policy, the participation of safeguarding professionals in the work of the SSPD, and the circumstances in which early steps in the Process may be deferred during external investigation are explained at Appendix G.</p> <p>The identity of the ARD and the composition of the ASPD are set out at Appendix H. References to a Synod Moderator and to the SSPD apply equally to the ARD and ASPD.</p> <p>Rules concerning suspension and extracts from Schedules E and F to the Basis of Union, listing its consequences, are set out at Appendix J.</p>

<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>Pastoral care</b></p> <p><b>(1) of the accused minister</b>                  When a minister is suspended (or, if there is no suspension, when allegations of misconduct are passed on to the Investigation Stage) the Moderator must arrange as soon as possible for another experienced minister to offer ongoing pastoral care to the accused minister. The role of the pastor so appointed is only to offer pastoral care and support. He / she is to operate independently of the Moderator, to have no involvement in any aspect of the Process and to observe the Church's normal practice regarding the confidentiality of pastoral conversations. The Moderator's own pastoral responsibility for the minister is suspended so long as the case remains under the authority of the SSPD. The Moderator must also inform the accused minister of the contact details of the person appointed to give guidance under paragraph 8.6.</p> <p><b>(2) of others</b>                  The Moderator must also consider what pastoral care is available to the accused minister's dependants, the complainant(s) and others directly affected by the case, including the members of local churches within the accused minister's pastorate, and must seek safeguarding advice if it appears possible that children or adults at risk may be involved.</p>	
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>The Investigation Stage and its outcomes</b></p>	
<p><b>5.1</b></p>	<p><b>(1) Investigation and report</b>                  The purpose of the Investigation Stage is for the original allegations (and any further allegations of misconduct which this stage may bring to light) to be fairly and expeditiously investigated by an Investigation Team, whose findings are to be reported to the SSPD. At this stage the Team is concerned with three issues: (i) the facts of the case, and in particular whether there is a <i>prima facie</i> case for full investigation; (ii) the seriousness of the allegations if proven, and (iii) whether the case can be appropriately disposed of by a caution. It may also, at any time, recommend the suspension of the accused minister or the lifting of a current suspension.</p> <p><b>(2) Decisions by the SSPD</b>                  Based on the Team's report and the accused minister's response, the SSPD (acting in the</p>	<p>The composition of an Investigation Team, and of the Disciplinary Investigation Panel from which it is drawn, are set out at Appendix K.</p> <p>The work of the Investigation Team is explained at Appendix L.</p>

	<p>name of the synod) decides, giving reasons, whether to end the Process, initiate proposals for an agreed caution, or send the case to the Hearing Stage.</p> <p>The role of the SSPD during this stage is judicial. As such it takes no part in the investigation but weighs impartially the facts and arguments presented by the Investigation Team and by the accused minister.</p>	
<b>5.2</b>	<p>If the Investigation Team concludes that the allegations against a minister do not amount to a <i>prima facie</i> case, or that even if proven they would not merit formal disciplinary sanctions, the Team will report accordingly to the SSPD. On receiving such a report the SSPD must take safeguarding advice, and must then declare the Process and any suspension terminated from that point, save that it may refer the report back to the Team on one occasion for reconsideration.</p>	
<b>5.3</b>	<p>If the Investigation Team believes its investigation into allegations against a minister reveals a <i>prima facie</i> case, on the basis of which, if the allegations were -proven, it would seek the imposition of a disciplinary sanction, the Team will report accordingly to the SSPD. The SSPD is to send the accused minister a copy of the Team's report and to be advised the minister of the time allowed for a written answer.</p> <p>On considering the report and any answer the SSPD must do one of the following: (i) refer the report back to the Team on one occasion for reconsideration and further investigation, (ii) declare the Process and any suspension terminated from that point, if (after receiving safeguarding advice) it does not agree that the report supports the Team's conclusions, (iii) (after receiving safeguarding advice) propose an agreed caution in accordance with paragraph 5.4, or (iv) pass the report, any answer and all supporting evidence on for consideration at the Hearing Stage.</p>	<p>The time allowed for the minister's answer is to be 14 days unless another period is set by the SSPD</p>
<b>5.4</b>	<p>An agreed caution may be an appropriate outcome in disciplinary cases where ministers accept the allegations against them (other than any allegations which the Investigation Team would not pursue for the reasons in paragraph 5.2), display convincing remorse and are willing</p>	<p>Appendix M sets out how a caution is to be drafted, negotiated and finalised.</p>

	<p>to undertake appropriate precautions against recurrence.</p> <p>A caution may be considered at the close of the Investigation Stage if the Investigation Team recommends this in its report, or if the SSPD, on receiving that report and the minister's answer, proposes a caution on its own initiative.</p> <p>Safeguarding advice must be taken on the terms of a caution as finally negotiated.</p> <p>A caution is not appropriate where a minister denies allegations being pursued by the Investigation Team; nor, normally, in the case of allegations similar to allegations found proved on an earlier occasion under this Process or an earlier version of the Disciplinary Process.</p> <p>If a caution is agreed by the minister, the Investigation Team and the SSPD, delivered formally by the SSPD and acknowledged by the minister, the Process and any suspension are terminated from that point.</p> <p>If a caution is recommended by the Investigation Team or proposed on the SSPD's own initiative, but the SSPD is satisfied it will not be possible to reach agreement on a caution in appropriate terms and within a reasonable time, then the SSPD must pass the Team's report, any answer and all supporting evidence on for consideration at the Hearing Stage. Correspondence entered into (subsequent to the Team's report) in connection with the proposal and attempted negotiation of a caution is not to be passed on, and will not be admissible at the Hearing Stage.</p>	
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>The Hearing Stage</b></p>	
<p><b>6.1</b></p>	<p>As soon as the SSPD passes a case on to the Hearing Stage, an Assembly Commission for Discipline ('ACD') is constituted to oversee and hear the case. Once a Commission is in being for a particular case, authority over that case passes from the synod to the General Assembly, in whose name the Commission acts. Any procedural directions, or decisions regarding suspension of the accused minister, are thereafter to be given by the Commission (after receiving safeguarding advice in respect of any lifting of suspension).</p>	<p>The composition of an ACD, and of the Commission Panel from which it is drawn, are set out at Appendix N.</p>

<p><b>6.2</b></p>	<p>Having satisfied the SSPD of a <i>prima facie</i> case against the accused minister at the close of the Investigation Stage, the task of the Investigation Team in the Hearing Stage will be to present the evidence in such a way as to assist the ACD in determining the truth of the allegations on a balance of probabilities, and to make submissions regarding the seriousness of the case and an appropriate sanction. Unless the Team abandons the allegations, its investigation will continue for this purpose until the date for submitting case material.</p>	<p>Rules for the timetable of the Hearing Stage (including a date for submission of the Investigation Team’s case material) are set out at Appendix O. Abandonment of allegations during the Hearing Stage is governed by Appendix P.</p>
<p><b>6.3</b></p>	<p>If, at any time after the appointment of an ACD, the accused minister notifies the Secretary of Assembly Commissions for Discipline (‘SACD’) of a desire to admit some or all of the allegations under investigation and to submit to the imposition of a sanction, the Commission may accede to the request after considering a response from the Investigation Team.</p>	<p>Rules for the admission of allegations are set out at Appendix Q.</p>
<p><b>6.4</b></p>	<p>The ACD is to hear the case presented by a single member of the Investigation Team or by another person appointed by the Team for that purpose. The accused minister has the right to be present and to reply. Witnesses may be called on behalf of the Team and by the minister, and cross-examined by them or by any member of the Commission. The Commission may call witnesses on its own initiative on theological questions, issues of discrimination, disability or cultural sensitivity, safeguarding issues or other matters on which it considers impartial specialist testimony to be essential.</p>	<p>Rules concerning procedure at hearings, reception of evidence given other than verbally, representation, persons permitted to accompany the accused minister or witnesses and the role of Commission witnesses are set out in Appendix R.</p>
<p><b>6.5</b></p>	<p>At the conclusion of the hearing the ACD is to determine, on the balance of probabilities, whether any or all of the allegations made against the minister have been proved. In respect of any proven allegation, it must decide either to impose no sanction, or that the accused minister should receive a written warning, or that his or her name should be deleted from the Roll of</p>	<p>Rules for written warnings and directions, and concerning deletion from the Roll are set out in Appendix S.</p>

	Ministers. If the accused minister is the subject of an earlier written warning which remains current, the ACD must take that into account. A written warning may be accompanied by directions regarding the minister's future ministry, conduct or remedial steps to be taken.	
<b>6.6</b>	If the ACD determines that none of the allegations made against the minister has been proved on the balance of probabilities, it must so declare. If there is no appeal, the Process and any suspension imposed as a consequence of those allegations will terminate from the end of the last day for lodging an appeal under paragraph 7.1.	
<b>6.7</b>	The ACD is to prepare a written statement of reasons for reaching its decision. The decision and reasons are to be circulated. In this statement it may make recommendations concerning the future activity of any accused person whose name is deleted from the Roll, or (if allegations are not proved) for precautions which might reduce the risk of future allegations of a similar nature. Such recommendations are of an advisory nature and not subject to appeal.	Appendix T also sets out rules for the circulation of written reasons.
<b>7.</b>	<b>The Appeal Stage</b>	
<b>7.1</b>	Notice of any appeal must be lodged, with a summary of the appeal grounds, within twenty-four days of posting of the ACD's written statement of reasons.	If the accused minister lives abroad the Commission may (but only when the statement of reasons is sent) direct an extension of the time for appealing to allow for postal delays.
<b>7.2</b>	Either the accused minister or the Investigation Team or both may appeal, but only on the ground of (i) a material failure to comply with rules of the Disciplinary Process, (ii) a breach of the rules of natural justice, (iii) a serious misunderstanding by the ACD of the facts before it, or (iv) new evidence which could not reasonably have been presented to the ACD and could credibly be expected to affect the outcome.  In addition, where some or all of the allegations against a minister are found proven, an appeal	Rules concerning the timetable for, and procedure and evidence at appeal hearings, are set out in Appendix U.

	<p>may be lodged against the decision on sanction. In such an appeal the Investigation Team may present the case for a sanction or for additional or varied directions to accompany a written warning; the accused minister may present the case against a sanction or for variation or cancellation of directions accompanying a written warning.</p> <p>No appeal may be lodged in respect of allegations abandoned by the Investigation Team under paragraph 6.2. If a sanction is imposed after allegations are <del>or</del> admitted by the accused minister under paragraph 6.3, the only appeal either party can lodge is one against the sanction.</p>	
<b>7.3</b>	<p>As soon as an appeal is lodged, a Disciplinary Appeal Commission ('DAppC') is constituted to oversee and hear the case. Once a Commission is in being for a particular case, authority over that case remains with the General Assembly, but the DAppC now acts in the Assembly's name and gives any procedural directions, or decisions regarding suspension of the accused minister.</p>	<p>The composition of a DAppC is set out at Appendix V.</p>
<b>7.4</b>	<p>An appeal is normally heard in the presence of both parties, the cases for the appellant and respondent being heard in that order. There is to be no rehearing of the case as a whole. Fresh evidence may not be received unless the DAppC is satisfied (i) that there is new evidence which could not reasonably have been presented to the ACD and could credibly be expected to affect the outcome, and (ii) that it can hear such evidence fairly, and that this would be more convenient than for a fresh ACD to hear it.</p>	
<b>7.5</b>	<p>At the conclusion of the appeal hearing, the DAppC may dismiss the appeal, may substitute its own decision for any decision which the ACD could have made (including varying directions or recommendations), or may quash the previous decision and remit the case for full re-hearing by a fresh ACD. Unless it remits a case for re-hearing, the decision of the DAppC is final, the Process and any suspension terminating when it is announced.</p>	<p>The rules in Appendix O set out the procedure if a case is remitted for rehearing; in which case the rules in Appendices R-T also apply.</p>
<b>8</b>	<p><b>Miscellaneous provisions</b></p>	
<b>8.1</b>	<p>The Process may be halted by a reference into the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure, and rules governing that Procedure may provide for a case</p>	<p>Appendix W provides in detail for the transfer of</p>



	<p>commenced under it to be referred into this Process. A notice of reference into this Process from the Incapacity Procedure will have the status of an allegation of misconduct and be acted upon as provided in Paragraph 3.</p>	<p>cases from this Process to the Incapacity Procedure</p>
<b>8.2</b>	<p>The Disciplinary Process continues notwithstanding the fact that an accused minister declines to co-operate, fails to appear at a Hearing or declares (or implies by conduct) his or her resignation from the ministry or from the United Reformed Church, and also notwithstanding the non-appearance of any potential witness.</p>	<p>Appendix X sets out the consequences of non-co-operation and similar conduct, and of a potential witness declining to appear.</p>
<b>8.3</b>	<p>Where this Process requires any document or written notification to be delivered to the accused minister, it must be delivered by hand or sent by First Class post or an equivalent method addressed to the minister's last known address. A postal address for any officer or group to which the accused minister may need to deliver material is to be supplied to the accused minister either at the outset of the Process, or before the time at which the need for such delivery may arise, and the minister must deliver such material by hand or send it by First Class post or an equivalent method addressed to that address. No method should be used which requires a recipient's signature before delivery.</p> <p>Directions under paragraph 8.4 may vary these requirements, and must set a period for deemed delivery if an accused minister lives outside Europe. All documents required to be served shall be placed in a sealed envelope addressed to the addressee and marked 'Private and Confidential'.</p>	<p>Documents and notifications are deemed to arrive three days after posting (First Class) or seven days after posting (Republic of Ireland or Continental Europe).</p>
<b>8.4</b>	<p>Directions may be given by the Panel or Commission under whose authority a case currently falls, either on application or of its own motion, covering matters of evidence, timing or procedure not otherwise provided for, if it considers this conducive to the fair, effective and expeditious operation of the Process. But the time allowed for lodging an appeal may only be extended if an extension is sought before the current time limit expires.</p>	
<b>8.5</b>	<p>Information about a case heard or investigated under the Disciplinary Process is confidential, save as the Process itself provides.</p>	<p>Appendix Y sets out rules regarding sharing</p>

		of information and retention of records.
<b>8.6</b>	A consultant unconnected with the case against an accused minister is to be appointed to offer him/her guidance through the steps of the Disciplinary Process. It is no part of the consultant's duty to carry out investigative work or advocacy, nor to offer legal advice, nor to attend a Hearing.	So long as it exists, the Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline Advisory Group (or, in cases of urgency, its Convenor) is to appoint the consultant.
<b>8.7</b>	<p>The costs incurred in the work of a SSPD shall be charged against funds of the United Reformed Church under the control of the synod. The costs incurred by an ASPD or by any Commission or Secretary of Commissions in operating the Process and the reasonable expenses of any witness attending a Hearing shall be charged against funds of the Church under the control of the General Assembly.</p> <p>After a case is referred into the Hearing Stage and an ACD appointed, the accused minister and the Investigation Team may each apply to the Commission for the approval of costs to be incurred in connection with that Stage, and any costs so approved may also be charged against funds of the Church under the control of the General Assembly. If this includes the fees of one or more experts, the parties are required to consult with a view to calling (if possible) a single expert by agreement.</p>	Necessary travel and meeting expenses of the Investigation Team will normally be allowable; but neither party shall be entitled to claim the cost of professional advice in formulating their position at any stage of the Process, nor costs of preparing the case for Hearing or professional representation at that Hearing.
<b>8.8</b>	<p><b>(1) Restriction of simultaneous appointments</b></p> <p>Save as permitted by Paragraph 8.8(2), no person may simultaneously do more than one of the following:</p> <p>(a) be included on the Disciplinary Investigation Panel</p> <p>(b) serve on a SSPD</p> <p>(c) serve on the ASPD</p> <p>(d) be included on the Commission Panel</p> <p>(e) be included on the Appeal Commissions List</p> <p>(f) serve as SACD, or</p>	Further provision about the Panels, List and Secretaries to which this paragraph refers is made in Appendices F, H, K, N, U and V.

	<p>(g) serve as Secretary of Disciplinary Appeal Commissions ('SDAppC').</p> <p><b>(2) Exceptions</b></p> <p>(a) A person may be included simultaneously on the Disciplinary Investigation Panel and on the Commission Panel, but may not be appointed to any ACD hearing a case against a minister after having, in that or any previous case, served on an Investigation Team regarding allegations made against that minister.</p> <p>(b) The same person may be appointed as SACD and SDAppC.</p>	
<p><b>8.9</b></p>	<p>Both columns of the text of the Framework, and the Appendices to which the Framework refers, are integral parts of the Disciplinary Process and carry equal weight.</p>	<p>Guidance Notes and diagrams published from time to time to assist those engaged in or affected by the Process are not to be considered part of the authoritative text, and in any conflict with the Framework or Appendices, the Framework and Appendices are to prevail.</p>
<p><b>8.10</b></p>	<p>Cases still pending under the previous Disciplinary Process at the date determined by the General Assembly for this Process to come into force are to be dealt with in accordance with transitional provisions.</p>	<p>The transitional provisions appear at Appendix Z</p>

## **Procedure for dealing with cases of incapacity involving ministers or Church Related Community Workers**

LP.1 Replace 'whilst not' by 'whether or not', and delete 'nevertheless'.

Insert new provision:

LP.1A In cases transferred into the Incapacity Procedure by a direction given during the Disciplinary Process after disciplinary allegations have been made against a minister or CRCW, the Review Commission and Appeals Review Commission are also to consider (i) whether incapacity factors could have contributed to any misconduct covered by those allegations (and if so, to what extent those factors may excuse or mitigate such misconduct if proven); and (ii) whether incapacity factors prevent the affected minister or CRCW from answering disciplinary allegations.

LP.4 Replace text down to 'commissioning' by the following:

Although the operation of the Incapacity Procedure is in most cases not based upon disciplinary allegations,

LP.5 Replace 'recommendation from the Disciplinary Process' by 'direction given for transfer from the Disciplinary Process' and delete the remaining wording from 'giving rise'.

A1.1 Replace existing definitions (and insert new definition of 'Incapacity factors') as follows:

'General Assembly Representative' shall mean the Assembly Representative for Discipline appointed under the Disciplinary Process

'Incapacity factors' means the three factors referred to in Paragraph LP1 as potentially rendering a minister incapable of exercising, or continuing to exercise, ministry

'Special Appeals Body' means the body appointed to hear appeals under Section H6 against a direction transferring a case into the Disciplinary Process

'Synod' means that synod which in relation to any minister or CRCW would be considered to exercise oversight for the purposes of the Disciplinary Process

B.6 Delete existing text and replace as follows:

A direction given by a synod or Assembly Standing Panel, Assembly Commission or Appeal Commission under the Disciplinary Process for

the transfer of a case into the Incapacity Procedure and the reasons given for that direction shall have the same effect, and be treated in the same way, as a Certificate of Entry and Commencement Notice respectively.

- E.7 Replace 'the issue of a Commencement Notice' by 'a direction given in that Process', and replace 'hereunder' by 'under the Incapacity Procedure'.
- F.4.4 Replace 'question of whether, based on the criteria set out in Paragraphs LP1 and LP4 the minister is or is not capable of exercising, or of continuing to exercise, ministry?' by 'matters arising for the Commission's consideration under Paragraphs LP1, LP1A or LP4?'

Insert new provisions:

- F 4.5 In the light of the Church's current Safeguarding Policy, what safeguarding considerations are raised by the possible incapacity factors engaged in the case, and what safeguarding advice should the Commission take before reaching a final decision on possible deletion from the Roll?
  - F 4.6 Should the PRWC be invited to consider a case transferred from the Disciplinary Process, including in appropriate cases the possibility of retirement on pension on grounds of ill health, and make recommendations to the Commission? (This step may also be taken at a later stage, before a final decision whether deletion from the Roll is or is not appropriate. Any invitation to the PRWC must state a time within which the PRWC is requested to report, although that time may be extended by the Commission.)
  - F 7 In any case entering the Incapacity Procedure under paragraph B6 by a direction for transfer from the Disciplinary Process, the Procedure is to continue, and the power to transfer the case back to the Disciplinary Process remains unaffected, notwithstanding any declaration by the minister concerned that he or she has resigned from the pastoral charge or other office formerly held, or completely from the ministry of Word and sacraments or of a church related community worker, or from membership in the United Reformed Church. However the Procedure will terminate in such a case if the Review Commission considers it appropriate in the light of incapacity factors to approve a proposal by the minister to retire from ministry, whether on pension or otherwise.
- H.1 and H2 – delete existing text and replace as follows:
- H.1 If it considers that, in a case within the Incapacity Procedure, the minister may be guilty of misconduct as defined in paragraph 2 of the Disciplinary Process, the Review Commission may, at any time during the Incapacity Procedure and whether or not a Hearing has taken

place, adopt the procedure set out in paragraphs H2 and H17 to transfer the case into the Disciplinary Process.

If the Review Commission believes (or considers further investigation may show) that any of the factors listed in paragraph LP1 may have contributed to, and may possibly excuse, the suspected breach of expectations, it must not direct such transfer until it has investigated how far that is the case. It must also not direct such transfer if, or so long as, it believes (or considers further investigation may show) that

- (i) any such factor may render the minister incapable of exercising, or continuing to exercise, ministry even if the minister is guilty of no such breach; or
- (ii) any such factor may prevent the minister from answering disciplinary allegations.

H.2 It shall instruct the Secretary of the Review Commission to inform the minister by written notice of its decision to direct a transfer of the case to the Disciplinary Process. This notice shall contain a statement of its reasons for reaching its decision and it may indicate what papers, if any, should be passed to the body responsible for conduct of the case within the Disciplinary Process. The notice shall inform the minister that she or he may within a period of 21 days from the receipt of the said notice give written notice to the Secretary of the Review Commission of his / her intention to appeal against the proposed direction. If at the end of the period no such notice of intention to appeal has been received (time being of the essence for this purpose) then the procedure set out in Paragraphs H.14 and H.17 shall be followed. The notice shall draw the attention of the recipient to the strict time limit for serving a Notice of Appeal.

H.11 Replace 'person to whom the reference back will be made' by 'body responsible for conduct of the case within the Disciplinary Process'.

H.13 Replace 'reject the proposed reference back' by 'cancel the direction for transfer'.

H.14 and H17 to H20 – delete existing text and replace as follows:

H.14 If the decision of the Special Appeals Body is to reject the appeal and to uphold the direction for transfer, or if there is no appeal against the direction, the Secretary of the Review Commission shall send to the minister (i) a notice advising him/her of that fact, (ii) copies of the direction for transfer and the statement of reasons appended to the decision, and (iii) copies of any papers being sent with the direction in accordance with Paragraph H.2 or Paragraph H.11 as the case may be.

H.17 If the decision is to reject the appeal and uphold the direction for transfer, or if there is no appeal against the direction, the Secretary of the Review Commission shall forthwith send or deliver to the Moderator

of the synod having oversight of the affected minister (or, if the minister is under the direct oversight of the General Assembly, to the ARD), for the attention of the synod or Assembly Standing Panel for Discipline as the case may be, (i) a written notice setting out the decision of the Review Commission, or in the event of an appeal, the Special Appeals Body, incorporating both the Review Commission's direction and (where applicable) the order of the Special Appeals Body dismissing the appeal, together in either case with the reasons given, and (ii) such other papers (if any) as are referred to in Paragraph H.2 or Paragraph H.11 as the case may be.

- H.18 In the event that a case transferred into the Incapacity Procedure by direction of an Assembly Commission or Appeals Commission is transferred back, the notice is to be sent instead to the Secretary of Assembly Commissions for Discipline or to the Secretary of Disciplinary Appeal Commissions, as applicable.
- H.19 The Secretary of the Review Commission shall at the same time send copies of the direction for transfer (but not the accompanying documentation) to the Moderator of the synod of the province or nation where an affected minister under direct Assembly oversight resides, the Synod Clerk, the General Secretary, the Press Officer, the Secretary for Ministries and the Convener of the PRWC.
- H.20 As soon as the direction for transfer has been sent in accordance with paragraph H17, the Review Commission shall declare the case within the Incapacity Procedure to be concluded and no further action shall be taken in respect thereof.

Delete H22 and H23 in their entirety.



# Paper T1

## Annual Safeguarding Report 2020

### Safeguarding Advisory Group

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Adrian Bulley <a href="mailto:adrian.bulley@urc.org.uk">adrian.bulley@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	To note.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Analysis of Safeguarding Annual Church Returns.
<b>Main points</b>	Please see overview.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Annual Safeguarding Report 2019.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Synod Safeguarding Officers.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	N/A
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	N/A

#### Overview

This report will give the following:

- Background information about the collation of the data from the Safeguarding Annual Church Returns (ACR)
- Information about statistics
- Highlight areas of interest
- Detail areas of vulnerability
- Provide a summary
- Detail areas for development.

#### Background information

Annual Returns that are specific to safeguarding are sent to churches every year in November / December, with a request that they are returned in January. Churches are not always able to return them by then, but the bulk of them are generally returned by April.

Synod Safeguarding Officers (SSOs) complete a report that analyses the information contained in these forms and make comments where requested. The reports are usually sent to the Assembly Safeguarding Advisor (ASA) who then compiles a report, drawing on the information contained in the SSO reports. In the absence of the ASA, this task has been completed this year by an SSO.

## **Statistics**

This year the writer considered that it would be useful to have an overview of statistics for each synod. In this way it can be seen for instance how many churches there are in each synod, the numbers of active Ministers, the numbers of volunteers and paid workers, and the numbers of serving Elders. Thanks go to Gillian Jones for providing these statistics which are crucial in putting a context to the figures gathered from the SSO reports.

Attached therefore as Appendix One are the global statistics by synod, together with some key statistics gathered from the SSOs' reports.

It is important to bear in mind that the statistics in the reports are based upon the information contained in the forms returned by churches. Some forms are incomplete in certain areas, hence some boxes state that there is no data available. Some synods have found that the pandemic has severely affected the ability of churches to complete and return the forms, so the statistics are lower for those most affected.

All SSOs are in the process of following up with churches which have not returned forms and have considerable follow-up work generally, as will be seen below.

## **Areas to highlight**

### **Completion of forms**

Forms state that they are to be completed by the Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator (CSC). SSOs record that this task is often completed by the Church Secretary. It is hoped that there has been consultation with CSC to ensure accuracy of data, although some churches do not have a CSC.

### **Church Safeguarding Co-ordinators**

It will be seen from Appendix One that some churches do not have CSCs, although the numbers may vary once SSOs have had the opportunity to chase missing forms. It is noted that some of these posts are being filled by Ministers or their spouses. This is contrary to Good Practice 5 (GP5). SSOs will be following up with churches, and supporting them to find appropriate people to fill these posts. Some churches have already been supported by their SSO to arrange to share CSCs as it is sometimes difficult for churches to find people.

The numbers of churches who have CSCs are significantly higher than when these forms were first sent to churches.

### **Elders' responsibilities**

The ACR asks whether the church follows a process to assess the suitability of Elders to engage with children and Adults at Risk. It does not ask what process is followed. All Elders who are engaging with vulnerable groups would need a safer recruitment process to do so. The tick on the form that a process is followed is therefore less meaningful than it would be if information about the process was requested or known via another route.

The form that SSOs are asked to complete asks if churches assess whether Elders understand their safeguarding responsibilities as trustees. This is of course an entirely different question. The two forms need to be aligned.

Some synods have been running, or will be running, training for Ministers and Elders who are Trustees, by solicitors within the Safeguarding Unit of Farrer & Co. Funding has been provided for this by successful application to the Synod Development Fund managed by the Safeguarding Advisory Group. Feedback so far is huge gratitude for the training and a greater understanding of trustee responsibilities as far as safeguarding is concerned. This suggests that Elders who are trustees and Ministers welcome being informed of their responsibilities and value the information in order to be able to carry them out effectively.

Work is being carried out by Ministries about recruitment of Elders generally which will include information about recruitment requirements for Elders who are also trustees.

### **Numbers of concerns and referrals to outside agencies**

It is clear from the reports that the numbers of concerns and reports to outside agencies are higher in respect of Adults at Risk than children. In terms of the concerns recorded within the reports, the percentage is 32% higher in respect of Adults at Risk. In terms of referrals, those to Adults Services are 44% higher than referrals to Children's Services.

The types of abuse recorded are domestic abuse, physical abuse, self-neglect, sexual abuse of children, and bullying.

### **Training**

Online training via Zoom has proved very popular, and a successful way of delivering training during the pandemic. All SSOs quickly learnt how to deliver the training, making use of Zoom features such as polls, whiteboards, and breakout rooms. Following training sessions, many SSOs report an increase in being contacted to discuss concerns. This suggests that awareness has been increased and that the relationship with the SSO is built upon through interacting with participants of the training.

One of the figures requested in the ACR is the number of people who have attended non-URC training. This data does not allow an assessment to be made as to the appropriateness and quality of the training for the people who have attended. For instance, there is no information about who provided the training, the level of the training itself or what roles people hold who are attending the training.

SSOs highlighted that the numbers of people recorded by churches as needing training may be different once the Training Framework has been approved by General Assembly and the roles of people requiring training are made clear.

SSOs consider that future provision of training will need to be carefully considered. Many participants have found it a real advantage to attend online training. However, it has been a barrier to some, and many have expressed the desire for face to face training. The reality is that a hybrid of delivery methods will be an advantage for churches once the opportunity for face to face training is safely available to us.

### **Pastoral care and support**

There is a difference between the information requested of churches in the ACR and that of SSOs in the report they complete. Churches are asked how pastoral care and support is exercised within the congregation. SSOs are asked more specific information

about how pastoral care is exercised in relation to people suffering abuse and how support is given to survivors of abuse, both recent and non-recent.

Most SSOs record that churches state that there is pastoral care provided by Elders and Ministers within congregations. Synods operate a variety of systems for general pastoral support of churches such as pastoral committees or groups. Pastoral care has been, without exception, available to everyone within churches. Many have commented upon how essential this has been during the pandemic and is a testament to everyone within Churches and synods that this has been possible, despite the challenges for everyone.

No specific process for supporting survivors of abuse was identified although some SSOs have supported those who have made allegations whilst an investigative process is ongoing. Pastoral support is also arranged for those about whom allegations have been made.

Two SSOs are working with Elizabeth Gray King of the Safeguarding Advisory Group (SAG) to formulate guidance as to how support can be provided to survivors of abuse. The group will meet with survivors to obtain their views. The group will look at ensuring that appropriate support is available within the church, as well as highlighting the need at times to signpost to external agencies.

### **Ecumenical relationships**

Some SSOs record formal process for working with ecumenical colleagues such as Ecumenical Safeguarding Forums. Many SSOs meet ecumenical colleagues on a regular basis. Working ecumenically is an added protection for vulnerable groups as it facilitates the sharing of legally permissible information between colleagues where necessary. Additionally, it is a further source of support for SSOs.

### **Blemished disclosures**

Some SSOs have conducted risk assessments in respect of blemished disclosures. Where the post is a ministerial one there is an excellent process in place where Ministries work with SSOs requesting risk assessments. This means that there is consistency of approach between ministerial and lay posts.

### **LEPs**

LEPs can follow whichever denominational policy they choose. This sometimes follows who owns the building, although it can also depend upon the denomination of the Minister. Completing annual returns can be very problematic for people within LEPs as they will have to complete at least two different forms and sometimes more. This is because denominations can insist upon their own form being completed which increases the work for the church. Many CSCs, and one Synod Clerk, have requested that work is done between denominations to agree a form that could be completed and circulated to each denominational safeguarding officer within the LEP, avoiding the need for duplication.

### **Areas of vulnerability**

#### **Safer recruitment**

This is the area where all SSOs identified a need for further work with churches. Most churches now do DBS checks on those who work with vulnerable groups. However, all identified an over-reliance on DBS checks. Sometimes this is the only part of the safer recruitment process that is carried out, and the process includes application forms, references being taken up and an interview.

There is an urgent need for raising awareness in most synods of the need to complete all parts of the process in relation to volunteers. Fortunately, the Appendix regarding this is likely to be completed this summer and there will therefore be considerable resources available to support churches in this process.

Some SSOs highlighted a lack of awareness about the levels of DBS checks meaning that sometimes people were having checks where the activity does not meet the criteria for a DBS check to be carried out. Additionally, some people are having barred list checks when the activity being carried out is only entitled to have an enhanced check. Training needs to take place to emphasise that it is not the role that attracts the need for a DBS check, but the activities carried out by the person within that role. SSOs have already been mindful of this and training has been arranged for verifiers with DDC. This will be an additional support for churches to assist them in navigating this very complex area.

The ACR form requests the numbers of DBS checks in respect of paid staff and volunteers working with children or Adults at Risk. However, no data is requested as to the number of people within each church needing these checks. This makes the collected data less helpful than it could be.

### **Policies**

The ACR form asks if churches have a policy whereas the form SSOs complete does not request this information. It has therefore been impossible to get an accurate reflection of the position within churches by the deadline for this report as this would involve some SSOs having to review every form returned.

However, this has been identified as an area of weakness by many SSOs within the comments they make. It is a requirement that policies are reviewed annually. SSOs reported that many policies are out of date, some not having been reviewed for a number of years; the most overdue being almost nine years. Additionally, reports reveal that some churches have policies in respect of either adults or children, rather than both.

The pandemic will of course have had an adverse effect on the ability of churches to review their policies over the last 18 months. SSOs are aware that churches will need additional support to ensure that their policies are up to date, and include both adults and children.

### **Contracts with those that pose a risk**

Several SSOs record that they have discovered that a contract is in place which they have not been aware of until seeing the annual return. GP5 states that SSOs need to be involved in all contracts as this is a key area of risk management. This is an area that churches can gain considerable support by involving the SSO and working with statutory agencies. This shares the responsibility as agencies such as Police and Probation are willing to be signatories to the contracts if they are involved.

The SSO report asks only for data about contracts that are managed by the URC. One synod had three such contracts but 13 listed overall. It would be useful to have information about contracts being managed by other denominations as they remain URC churches even though they are within a LEP. Our Synod Trustees need to be able to satisfy themselves, through their SSO, that risk is being managed. They cannot do this if no information is known about these contracts.

### **Summary re areas of vulnerability**

These areas are highlighted mainly because following procedures assists in protecting vulnerable groups. However, it is also important for reputational risk management as not following our policies, and the Charity Commission requirements, could negatively impact liability and insurance.

### **Overall summary**

All involved in church life, either by being part of a local church or synod, paid or volunteer, lay and ordained, have experienced considerable impact during the pandemic, practically, psychologically, and spiritually. It is therefore a huge testament to our churches' and synods' dedication that, overall, such a high number of annual returns has been received. The average returned this year is 82.4% compared to 84.8% in 2019.

There are areas of vulnerability, as set out above. SSOs have already started putting in place support for churches in these areas and will follow up churches that either have not returned forms or who they have identified as needing extra support because of the detail within the forms.

### **Areas for development**

Many SSOs raised that the forms could be produced electronically, particularly as some platforms automatically collate data if the correct questions are inserted. This might greatly assist churches and would certainly assist administrators and SSOs, particularly those SSOs without administrative support. If this concept is accepted there would, of course, always be the option for churches to have paper copies if preferred.

All acknowledge that the statistics gained are vital to the denomination having an overall picture of safeguarding, identifying risk, and knowing where support is most needed. Thanks go to Jane Dowdall, now a member of SAG, for originally instigating this essential process of Quality Assurance.

There is a review process in place in respect of the forms. SSOs will be working with SAG to ensure that the forms are as easy as possible for churches to complete and that the data requested is relevant to the denomination as a whole and to SSOs in order that they can identify where their churches most need support. All are particularly conscious that these forms are completed by volunteers who sometimes have full-time jobs elsewhere, or many roles within the Church. All are committed to streamlining the form where possible.

### **Conclusion**

The last 18 months have been exceptionally challenging. This report has been compiled with particular thanks to all of those who contributed to completing the ACRs and analysing data.

However, safeguarding is a whole church responsibility. Thanks therefore also go to all those who contribute to making our churches as safe as possible, either by the specific roles they have in churches and synods or by their presence in our churches as members or adherents.

# Appendix One

Table of general statistics by synod

Synods	Numbers of churches	Numbers of active Ministers	Number of additional ministers needing DBS checks	Numbers of Active CRCWs	Volunteers working with Children and Adults at Risk	Paid workers with under 25	Numbers of serving Elders	Numbers of LEPs
01 Northern	63	14	2	2	206	7	395	14
02 North Western	120	34	1	3	535	3	807	25
03 Mersey	77	26	29	0	411	12	409	20
04 Yorkshire	93	23	27	2	733	26	559	29
05 East Midlands	127	31	4	1	653	6	490	41
06 West Midlands	108	44	25	1	630	24	640	35
07 Eastern	119	47	2	2	575	12	600	38
08 South Western	102	41	17	0	385	17	520	32
09 Wessex	120	57	38	0	798	46	637	33
10 Thames North	120	40	19	1	643	42	726	35
11 Southern	141	64	12	1	918	50	836	35
12 Wales	86	19	7	1	200	3	388	32



13 Scotland	42	21	11	1	142	1	447	8
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1318</b>	<b>461</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6829</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>7454</b>	<b>377</b>

Table of statistics obtained from SSO reports collating data from the Annual Church Returns

Synods	Percentage of forms returned	Percentage of churches that have Safeguarding Coordinators (from the forms returned)	Numbers of people being managed on contracts	Numbers of people recorded as needing training (from the forms returned)	Numbers of people recorded as having received training 2020-2021
01 Northern	94%	95%	0	289	102
02 North Western	92%	93%	5	612	227
03 Mersey	95%	97%	2	334	107
04 Yorkshire	90%	99%	7	353	162
05 East Midlands	82%	97%	1	421	138
06 West Midlands	97%	94%	1	430	92
07 Eastern	93%	88%	4	304	115
08 South Western	86%	94%	3	310	155
09 Wessex	94%	100%	4	Data unavailable to SSO	195
10 Thames North	45%	Data unavailable to SSO	2	Data unavailable to SSO	103
11 Southern	67%	97%	8	595	177
12 Wales	56%	89%	4	153	107
13 Scotland	80%	97%	2	Data unavailable to SSO	34

# Paper T2

## Additions to URC Structure and Rules of Procedure

### Safeguarding Advisory Group

#### Basic information

Contact name and email address	Adrian Bulley <a href="mailto:adrian.bulley@urc.org.uk">adrian.bulley@urc.org.uk</a>
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	<p><b>Resolution 44</b></p> <p>1. <b>General Assembly resolves to make the following additions to the Structure:</b></p> <p><b>Functions of Church Meeting:</b> [numbering to be determined]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <b>To appoint a Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator.</b></li> <li>b) <b>To adopt and promote implementation of safeguarding policy in line with General Assembly recommendations.</b></li> <li>c) <b>To receive regular safeguarding reports from the church safeguarding co-ordinator.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Functions of Elders' Meeting:</b> [numbering to be determined]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <b>To satisfy themselves that all necessary procedures are in place to achieve the aims of the church's safeguarding policy.</b></li> <li>b) <b>To adopt best safeguarding practice for all church activities.</b></li> <li>c) <b>To report to Church Meeting and to synod.</b></li> <li>d) <b>To report to the building trustees, charity regulators and insurers when advised to do so by the Synod Safeguarding Officer.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Functions of synod:</b> [numbering to be determined]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <b>To appoint a Synod Safeguarding Officer or equivalent.</b></li> <li>b) <b>To have oversight of, and to support, monitor and report safeguarding related activities and issues within local churches, and amongst ministers, officers and staff of the synod.</b></li> <li>c) <b>To take all necessary powers and actions positively to promote implementation of good</b></li> </ul>

**practice in accordance with the safeguarding policy statement adopted by the General Assembly.**

- d) To adopt best safeguarding practice for all its own activities and events.**

**Functions of General Assembly:** [numbering to be determined]

- a) To appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead.**
- b) To have oversight of local churches and synods, monitoring practice.**
- c) To adopt a safeguarding policy statement and procedures for use throughout the whole United Reformed Church.**
- d) To advise on all matters of safeguarding throughout the church.**
- e) To adopt best safeguarding practice for all its own activities and events.**

#### **Resolution 45**

- 2. General Assembly resolves to make the following additions to the Rules of Procedure:**

**Safeguarding Implementation:** [numbering to be determined]

- 1. Church Meeting:**

- a) To appoint a Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator who is cognisant of current safeguarding policy, practice and procedure.**
- b) To receive regular – at least annual – safeguarding reports from the Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator.**

- 2. Elders' Meeting:**

- a) To present an annual safeguarding report to Church Meeting and an annual safeguarding return to synod.**

- 3. Synod:**

- a) To appoint a Synod Safeguarding Officer with the necessary experience, qualifications and current knowledge.**
- b) To arrange for safeguarding training as appropriate.**
- c) To collate church safeguarding returns and forward them to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.**

	<p><b>4. General Assembly:</b></p> <p>a) <b>To appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead with the necessary experience, qualifications and current knowledge.</b></p>
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### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Safeguarding is not currently mentioned in the United Reformed Church Structure. To add new functions will serve to ensure that safeguarding is foundational in our journey towards becoming a safer church, make explicit where various responsibilities lie and give the necessary authority for actions that need to be taken. Likewise, additions are proposed to the Rules of Procedure where they fall outside of the scope of the Structure.
<b>Main points</b>	To embed safeguarding responsibilities in the URC Structure and Rules of Procedure.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	N/A
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	<p>URC Safeguarding Adviser</p> <p>Law and Polity Advisory Group</p> <p>Clerk of the General Assembly</p> <p>Synod Moderators</p> <p>Synod Clerks</p> <p>Synod Safeguarding Officers</p> <p>Dr Lisa Oakley (external safeguarding consultant)</p> <p>Members of SAG.</p>

### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	None.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	N/A

1. Safeguarding is not currently mentioned in the United Reformed Church Structure. To add new functions will serve to ensure that safeguarding is foundational in our journey towards becoming a safer church and give the necessary authority for actions that need to be taken.
2. These proposed changes are the result of an extensive process of consultation with key people, both within and outside the Church.
3. The additional clauses avoid cross referencing other documents because to do so would entail a lengthy constitutional changes process for each subsequent amendment.
4. The primary responsibility for safeguarding in local churches lies with those local churches (through church meetings and elders' meetings).

5. Synod's support local churches with their safeguarding responsibilities. They do so by:
  - Assisting with the development of safeguarding policy
  - Assisting with the appointment of, and offering support to, Church Safeguarding Co-ordinators
  - Arranging and delivering safeguarding training in accordance with the Safeguarding Training Framework.
  - Monitoring safeguarding implementation through the annual safeguarding return.
  
6. Some of those consulted have asked for an explanation as to what is meant by 'all necessary powers and actions' within the proposed additions to the functions of synods. The following is offered by way of a response to that request (references are to existing functions in the Structure, although the proposed new functions will also be relevant):
  - a) In terms of the responsibility to 'take all necessary powers and actions positively to promote implementation of good practice in accordance with the safeguarding policy adopted by the General Assembly':
    - The best way to promote adoption of good safeguarding practices in local churches is through pastoral relationships: the coming alongside of Synod Officers to encourage and support.
  
  - b) Where such an approach fails to produce an appropriate response:
    - A synod may wish to arrange for appropriate people to visit a local church to discuss with elders and members appropriate implementation of safeguarding policy [Structure 2.(4)A(ix)]
    - a synod (and / or a Synod Trust Company) may think it appropriate to bind financial decisions (such as applications for grants or loans from local churches) and decisions about buildings works to evidence of safeguarding policy implementation [Structure 2.(4)A(i) and 2.(4)A(xxiii)]
    - a synod may wish to facilitate the grouping of smaller churches for safeguarding purposes, perhaps with one Safeguarding Coordinator covering several local churches [Structure 2.(4)A(i), 2.(4)A(iii) and 2.(4)A(iv)]
    - a synod might determine it appropriate to appoint additional people for a fixed period to support a local church in implementing safeguarding policy [Structure 2.(4)A(i), 2.(4)A(iv) and Structure 2.(4)A(ix)].
  
  - c) The final options for a synod, which a synod would undoubtedly only want to use as a last resort, include:
    - invoking the disciplinary procedure for church officers
    - If all else had failed, a synod could vote to dissolve a local church where safeguarding is consistently being flouted and all support has been rebuffed [Structure 2.(4)A(iii) and 2.(4)A(xxvi)].
  
  - d) It is noted that Directors of Synod Trust Companies as charities, and the Trust Companies themselves, are required by law to ensure that the synod follows good safeguarding practices.

# Paper T3

## Safeguarding Committee

### Safeguarding Advisory Group

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Adrian Bulley adrian.bulley@urc.org.uk
<b>Action required</b>	Decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Resolution 46</b> <b>General Assembly resolves that, effective from the close of General Assembly 2022:</b> a) <b>The Mission Council’s Safeguarding Advisory Group be disbanded, with thanks for all those who have given so generously of their time and expertise over the years, and</b> b) <b>A Safeguarding Committee be established as a standing committee of the General Assembly with the membership and terms of reference as described.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To create a new standing committee with responsibility on behalf of the General Assembly for safeguarding matters, and to disband the existing Mission Council Safeguarding Advisory Group.
<b>Main points</b>	To embed safeguarding in a new standing committee of the General Assembly.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Mission Council: March 2020 – Paper R1.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	URC Safeguarding Adviser Synod Safeguarding Officers Dr Lisa Oakley (external safeguarding consultant) Members of SAG.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	None anticipated.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	



## **Background**

The Safeguarding Committee is a new standing committee of the General Assembly, taking over and expanding the remit of the former Safeguarding Advisory Group, and is the body responsible for overseeing the implementation of General Assembly's Safeguarding Policy throughout the United Reformed Church.

The development of this committee is partly in recognition of the need to develop the safeguarding infrastructure to implement lessons learned from the Past Case Review and the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA).

## **Membership**

Convenor (nominated by the Nominations Committee, with sufficient recent experience and relevant skills drawn from one of the disciplines of social work, police, probation, health, education, not for profit)

Secretary (The URC Designated Safeguarding Lead)

A representative of the Synod Safeguarding Practice Group (nominated by that group)

A Synod Moderator

Up to two representatives nominated by the URC advocated survivors group

Two members

(nominated by the Nominations Committee, with relevant complimentary skills and recent experience, including safeguarding children / young people, safeguarding adults at risk, safeguarding law, police, and employment)

Two external independent members, one of whom may be an ecumenical safeguarding colleague (with relevant complimentary skills and recent experience, including safeguarding children / young people, safeguarding adults at risk, safeguarding law, police, and employment)

## **Ex Officio**

Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship)

Secretary for Ministries

Training and Development Coordinator

## **Terms of Reference**

1. To monitor the implementation of the URC Safeguarding Policy Statement as agreed by the General Assembly, making recommendations to Mission Council and General Assembly as appropriate.
2. To support the councils of the Church in the implementation of the safeguarding policy.
3. To oversee strategic matters of safeguarding throughout the United Reformed Church.
4. To recommend to the General Assembly changes to agreed policy from time to time.

5. To act as a reference group for the URC Designated Safeguarding Lead.
6. To ensure that Good Practice documents are updated, published, and circulated as appropriate.
7. To monitor local church and synod compliance with the General Assembly's Safeguarding Policy Statement and Good Practice and implementation of the strategic plan. To devise strategies for addressing identified weaknesses and non-compliance.
8. To advise on the development and delivery of safeguarding training across the denomination.
9. To encourage collaboration with ecumenical partners across the full range of safeguarding issues, including engagement in the development of public policy.
10. To build a holistic understanding of the services which the United Reformed Church receives from external or other relevant agencies and contractors that support its safeguarding policies and practices.
11. To receive learning lessons reports from cases and to consider any developments needed in response.
12. To consider when external reviews of cases are required.
13. To report in writing to each meeting of the General Assembly.

# Paper T4

## Safeguarding policy statement

### Safeguarding Advisory Group

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Adrian Bulley <a href="mailto:adrian.bulley@urc.org.uk">adrian.bulley@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Adoption.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Resolution 47</b> <b>General Assembly adopts the safeguarding policy statement outlined in this report and commends it to church meetings, elders' meetings and synods for consideration and implementation.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	This safeguarding policy statement seeks to underpin the implementation of safeguarding through all the councils of the United Reformed Church, and provide an important reference point in the governance of the church.
<b>Main points</b>	
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Good Practice 1-5.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	URC Safeguarding Adviser Synod Safeguarding Officers Dr Lisa Oakley (external safeguarding consultant) Members of SAG.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	None.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	

The United Reformed Church (URC) is committed to safeguarding in every area of its life and ministry.

Safeguarding is the action taken to promote and protect the well-being and human rights of individuals. This means we will:

- Do all we can to **create** and maintain a safe and caring environment for all people
- **Respond** promptly and effectively to any form of abuse and neglect, including reporting abuse to statutory agencies as necessary
- Seek to **prevent** abuse in any form from occurring.

We will seek to identify individuals who may pose a risk to others and take necessary actions to minimise risk whilst supporting these individuals in our communities when safe to do so.

The URC confirms that safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone: to prevent abuse and neglect of children, young people and adults; to act upon concerns of abuse; and to support the wellbeing of each person within all communities in which the Church is placed. Safeguarding is a requirement and a duty in all Councils of the Church. Safeguarding in the URC is supported with relevant policies, practice, guidance and training.

The Church acknowledges that the wellbeing of the child or adult who is experiencing or is at risk of experiencing abuse, harm and neglect is paramount, and it will always act in their best interests, in line with national legislation, relevant statutory guidelines and good practice guidance. The United Reformed Church believes that all people have the right to be and feel part of this community, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. We will operate in line with the Human Rights Act 1989, the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Equality Act 2010.

## Commitments

The URC will adhere to the policy statement above by committing to:

- Promote safe and healthy cultures in which good practice standards in safeguarding are updated and disseminated
- Ensure everyone in a position of trust is carefully recruited / selected / appointed / elected and trained in safeguarding children and adults at risk<sup>1</sup>
- Respond promptly and appropriately to any safeguarding allegation or concern (including reporting any allegations to statutory agencies) including those who may pose a risk to children, young people or adults at risk
- Care pastorally for all children and adults at risk, and all those who have experienced abuse in the past
- Ensure that all those who pose a risk to children, young people or adults at risk, and those who are the subject of allegations, receive appropriate pastoral care and supervision
- Exercise informed vigilance about risks in all forms of abuse and neglect
- Work together with other denominations, statutory agencies and voluntary organisations.

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<sup>1</sup> Definitions of 'child' and 'adult at risk' in Wales, Scotland and England in Appendix One

**Promoting safe and healthy cultures:**

- The URC is committed to the development of safe and healthy cultures in which the risk of harm is minimised, abuse is responded to effectively, and children, young people and adults are respected, nurtured and fully valued. We will ensure there are clear channels of communication to hear the voices of children, young people and adults.
- The Church and its individual members will take all appropriate steps to make sure a safe and caring environment and good working practices for all in their ministry with children and adults.
- We will do all we can to promote healthy cultures by adhering to Good Practice policy and guidelines.
- We will promote safe cultures by challenging any abuse of power and holding to account.
- We will do all we can to promote safe and healthy cultures by ensuring we act with care, accountability, and transparency. We will embed a culture that encourages reporting concerns, challenging abuses of power, and holding to account those in positions of leadership and responsibility. We will not tolerate any form of abuse, harm or bullying.
- We will embed a culture that provides care and support for those who are subject to any form of abuse.
- Safeguarding is foundational to safer, healthier cultures, and it is underpinned with effective policy, procedures and training. We will actively promote safeguarding and relevant training and support those engaged in safeguarding roles in our communities.

**Ensuring everyone in a position of trust is carefully recruited / selected / appointed / elected and trained in safeguarding children and adults at risk:**

- We will appoint officers with care, carefully recruit and select those in safeguarding roles and follow safer recruitment processes for all those who engage and work with children or adults.
- The safeguarding training framework will ensure regular accessible and consistent safeguarding training for all engaged in working with children, young people and adults at risk. It will ensure that everyone is well versed in the 4R's (Recognise, Respond, Report, Refer).

**Responding promptly and appropriately to any safeguarding allegation or concern, including those who may pose a risk to children, young people or adults at risk:**

- All safeguarding concerns, disclosures, allegations and suspicions will be responded to promptly and with respect following URC guidelines.
- All safeguarding records will be made in accordance with good practice guidance, kept and stored correctly and be shared in line with Data Protection legislation and statutory requirements.
- We will report to relevant statutory authorities and agencies when safeguarding concerns or allegations meet their thresholds. We are committed to working co-operatively in partnership with statutory authorities.
- Any actions taken will respect the rights and dignity of all those involved.

**Caring pastorally for all children and adults at risk, and all those who have experienced abuse in the past:**

- Survivors and those who have experienced abuse in the past will be listened to and offered the pastoral care and support they deem appropriate and relevant, irrespective of type of abuse, context, or when this occurred.
- Training and supervision for those with pastoral care responsibilities will be available so that they are equipped to recognise and respond to disclosures of abuse, and act in preventative and proactive ways.
- As part of embedding safe and healthy cultures, we commit to raising awareness of abuse and its impact in order that moving forward the whole church operates with an understanding and compassionate response to survivors.

**Ensuring that all those who pose a risk to children and adults and those who are the subject of allegations receive appropriate care and supervision:**

- Where an allegation is raised against a Church officer or anyone else within the Church, this will be responded to promptly in accordance with Church policies and procedures, as contained within its Good Practice documentation. We recognise that those who pose a risk may themselves be vulnerable. We will therefore consider support for them, with possible referrals to appropriate agencies.
- The Church will put all necessary safeguards in place to manage any risk to children and adults. Following a risk assessment, safeguarding contracts will be used to establish appropriate and clear boundaries and to mitigate identified risk.
- The Church is aware of the need for care and support to be available for family members or members of Church communities who are impacted by the allegation or subsequent outcome of investigation

**Exercising informed vigilance about risks in all forms of abuse and neglect:**

- The Church will take care to identify risks in circumstances where a person experiences abuse or an individual may present a risk to others.
- Safeguarding risks will be assessed diligently and locally, managed in accordance with civil and criminal law, and the church's good practice guidance.
- Trained safeguarding professionals will undertake risk assessments.
- The Church will take steps to mitigate risks and prevent abuse from happening.

**Working together with other denominations, statutory agencies and voluntary organisations:**

- We will form ecumenical partnerships and work closely with other denominations to have clear and mutually agreed arrangements that keep people safe in our local communities, and to create environments in which people can safely disclose safeguarding concerns.
- The Church will act in an open and accountable way in working in partnership with relevant agencies to safeguard children and adults at risk.
- Arrangements to work effectively with partners will be in place, and regularly reviewed to promote the wellbeing of children and adults at risk.

# Appendix One

## Definitions

**Safeguarding designated person** refers to an experienced and trained employed professional or volunteer who is delegated to lead safeguarding children and adults at risk in each council of the Church. In a local church that person is the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, in a synod that person is the Synod Safeguarding Officer, or equivalent, and for the General Assembly that person is the URC Designated Safeguarding Lead. The major responsibility of the designated persons is to deal with all concerns, disclosures, complaints, and allegations of a safeguarding nature.

**Safeguarding concerns** are matters relating to an individual and reported to a safeguarding designated person for advice, guidance or action; this may or may not result in a referral to statutory agencies.

The term '**children**' refers to those under the age of 18 years (Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 in Wales, Children and Young People Act 2014 in Scotland, The Children Act 1989 in England)

The term '**adult at risk**' refers to:

An individual in Wales aged 18 years and over who:

- a) is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect, and
- b) has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs) and
- c) as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it. (Social Services and Well Being Act 2014)

An individual in Scotland aged 16 years and over who:

- a) is unable to safeguard their own well-being, property, rights or other interests,
- b) is at risk of harm, and
- c) because they are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity, is more vulnerable to being harmed than adults who are not so affected (Adult Support and Protection Act 2007)

An individual in England aged 18 years and over who:

- a) has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and
- b) is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect, and
- c) as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect (Care Act 2014)



# Paper T5

## Safeguarding Advisory Group

### Safeguarding Training Framework

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Adrian Bulley adrian.bulley@urc.org.uk
<b>Action required</b>	Decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Resolution 48</b>  a) <b>General Assembly adopts the Safeguarding Training Framework for use across the United Reformed Church.</b> b) <b>General Assembly instructs synods to oversee the implementation of the framework.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	The Past Case Review indicated the need for standardised mandatory safeguarding training for those working with children, young people and adults at risk of harm (page 21 in the Learning Group report). The Safeguarding Advisory Group was instructed by the Mission Council (November 2018) to implement the recommendations of the learning group. This paper aims to set out the Safeguarding Training Framework.
<b>Main points</b>	The framework outlines a) the four levels of training: pre-foundation, foundation, intermediate and advanced b) which level is relevant for different roles within the church c) whether the training is mandatory or not.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Resolution 29 and its two appendices, General Assembly, Book of Reports 2020 (pages 227-254). Paper R3 at Mission Council, March 2020. Paper R2 at Mission Council, November 2019. Paper R2 at Mission Council, May 2019. Paper R2 at Mission Council, November 2018.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Members of SAG Safeguarding Training Review Working Group Synod Safeguarding Officers Synod Moderators Church Safeguarding Coordinators Ecumenical Safeguarding colleagues.

**Summary of impact**

<b>Financial</b>	Synod training with some support from Assembly funding if required.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The United Reformed Church recognises that it is everyone's responsibility to safeguard others and thus needs to ensure that people holding specific roles and responsibilities are specifically equipped to protect vulnerable groups.

**2. URC's Safeguarding Training Framework**

- 2.1 In order to achieve this goal, the URC will offer regular safeguarding training for all those working with children and adults at risk as well as those responsible for their care. They need to know how to promote the welfare of those in their care, reduce the likelihood of harm, abuse or neglect and respond effectively to concerns or allegations of abuse which arise.
- 2.2 The Safeguarding Training Framework details a tiered structure of training; pre-foundation, foundation, intermediate and advanced. It is hoped that the pre-foundation training will be taken up by a wide range of people involved with the life of the church: members, volunteers and staff. Some role holders in the life of the church, paid or voluntary, are required to undertake safeguarding training; for these individuals that will be either at foundation, intermediary or advanced level. The aim of all training is that we become a safer church for all.

**3. Safeguarding Training Structure**

- 3.1 The URC's safeguarding training programme has been structured into four distinct but related modules; pre-foundation, foundation, intermediate and advanced training. Training is designed not just to be informative but based on case example. Some training will be available as online learning which will enable more participants to engage in safeguarding training. The pre-foundation model will be made as accessible as possible so that anyone who wishes to learn may do so.
- 3.2 The table at Appendix Two illustrates the recommended level of training for individuals in various roles.
- 3.3 Training should be renewed every three years.

# Appendix One

## The content of the training framework

Whether this is in-person, online or self-taught training, the contents of the training will remain consistent at all levels. This framework is for England and Wales.

### Scotland

The National Synod of Scotland currently has a service agreement with the Church of Scotland to provide safeguarding training due to the differing national legislation, policy and practice. The Church of Scotland will ensure that their framework aligns with the URC framework insofar as possible and that anything directly related to the URC processes and procedures will be added to the training materials so that participants receive all relevant information.

### Pre-foundation Safeguarding training

Pre-foundation training represents the minimum level of safeguarding training that needs to be undertaken. It is suitable for everyone in the life of the local church. Every pre-foundation module will contain the following material:

- The 4Rs (recognise, respond, record and report) and their importance in Safeguarding
- An introduction to Good Practice 5 (and its successors) including the role of local church Safeguarding Coordinators and Synod Safeguarding Officers and where to find a policy framework and how to implement it
- Understanding how to conduct risk assessments
- The importance of record keeping, monitoring and reporting
- Understanding the principles of safer recruitment
- Dynamics at work in a small church.

Pre-Foundation training is estimated to last 60-90 minutes

### Foundation Safeguarding training

The foundation module will contain the following material, building on pre-foundation training:

- An introduction to the importance of safeguarding and the risks posed by those who seek to groom and exploit the Church
- Legislation, policy and guidance including Good Practice 5 (and its successors) and its appendices
- The types of abuse and an awareness of the signs of abuse and neglect
- A review of the 4Rs and how to effectively use these in a church context
- Real case examples and the opportunity for participants to discuss their thoughts in a collaborative environment
- Good Practice guidance related to maintaining a safe everyday environment
- The role of local church Safeguarding Coordinators and Synod Safeguarding Officers and how they can support local churches to be as safe as possible
- The voice of survivors, their experiences of abuse and how important it is to get our responses right when working with those who have experienced abuse and neglect.

Foundation training is estimated to last 60-90 minutes.

### **Intermediate Safeguarding training**

Intermediate training is complementary to the foundation module and enhances the knowledge that participants gained, whilst also introducing new topics and focusing on safer practices:

- Legal obligations placed upon faith based organisations including the role of Trustees and Elders as stipulated by the Charity Commission
- The unique safeguarding risks that churches face as 'open communities'
- Good practice guidance including security in church buildings, food hygiene, safe transportation, insurance and hire of premises
- Safer recruitment principles and the need for a consistent approach across the denomination. This includes an understanding of the common barriers to recruiting paid staff and volunteers safely
- Confidential record keeping and the importance of seeking and recording consent in relation to church activities
- A review of the 4Rs and how to challenge inappropriate behaviours
- Handling allegations against those involved in the church whether paid or voluntary, lay or ordained
- Online safety and how to effectively safeguard children, young people and adults at risk online.

Intermediate training is estimated to last 60-90 minutes.

### **Advanced Safeguarding training**

Advanced training is to support those who have safeguarding leadership roles in which they manage and oversee safeguarding arrangements and practice.

The advanced module contains the following content:

- The attitudes and values of the individual and how these can impact safeguarding decision-making. This includes how to recognise personal prejudices and biases
- Managing the safer recruitment process, and the importance of ensuring safe and suitable people are appointed
- Supporting those who may pose a risk to children or adults, whilst maintaining policies that place safeguarding at the heart of the church
- Managing allegations against people in the church, whether paid or voluntary, lay or ordained
- Working with multiagency partners, including how to assess thresholds of harm and working with the Designated Officer (DO)
- The principles of safeguarding adults at risk, including issues of capacity and when to override consent in an adult's best interests
- Systemic grooming, and the impact on the entire denomination. This includes how to have safe relationships with appropriate boundaries in place
- How to identify and respond to domestic abuse, and an awareness of how deeply held views can contribute to a culture where abuse is condoned
- An advanced understanding of how to recognise, respond, record and report safeguarding concerns, deal with allegations, complaints and disciplinary procedures, and how to support others in the Church.

The advanced module is estimated to last approximately four hours.

**Specialist training modules**

Synod Safeguarding Officers and some others may need to undertake specialist training as part of their professional development.

**Recognising other training providers**

Those who hold a role in the URC requiring completion of the Advanced level of training should complete this with the URC regardless of previous experience or other training undertaken because content relates directly to URC processes and procedures for safeguarding.

## Appendix Two

### Levels of mandatory training

**Note: Pre-Foundation training is recommended for everyone in the life of the local church.**

<b>Roles requiring mandatory training:</b>	<b>Foundation Training</b>	<b>Intermediate Training</b>	<b>Advanced Training</b>
Synod Safeguarding Officers / Advisors	✓	✓	✓
Managers of Synod Safeguarding Officers / Advisors	✓		
Church Safeguarding Coordinators	✓	✓	
Deputy Church Safeguarding Coordinator	✓	✓	
Members of the Safeguarding Advisory Group (or its successor), Synod Safeguarding Committees and Reference Groups	✓		
Active Ministers and CRCWs (including retired ministers who meet the requirements of active ministry)	✓	✓	
Synod Moderators	✓	✓	✓
Youth and Children Workers including volunteer leaders	✓	✓	✓
Youth and Children's Workers (volunteer helpers) **	✓	✓	
Adult Workers including volunteer leaders	✓	✓	✓
Adult Workers (volunteer helpers) **	✓	✓	
Managers of Children, Youth and Adults Workers	✓		
Pastoral Workers / Visitors	✓	✓	
Synod Clerks	✓		

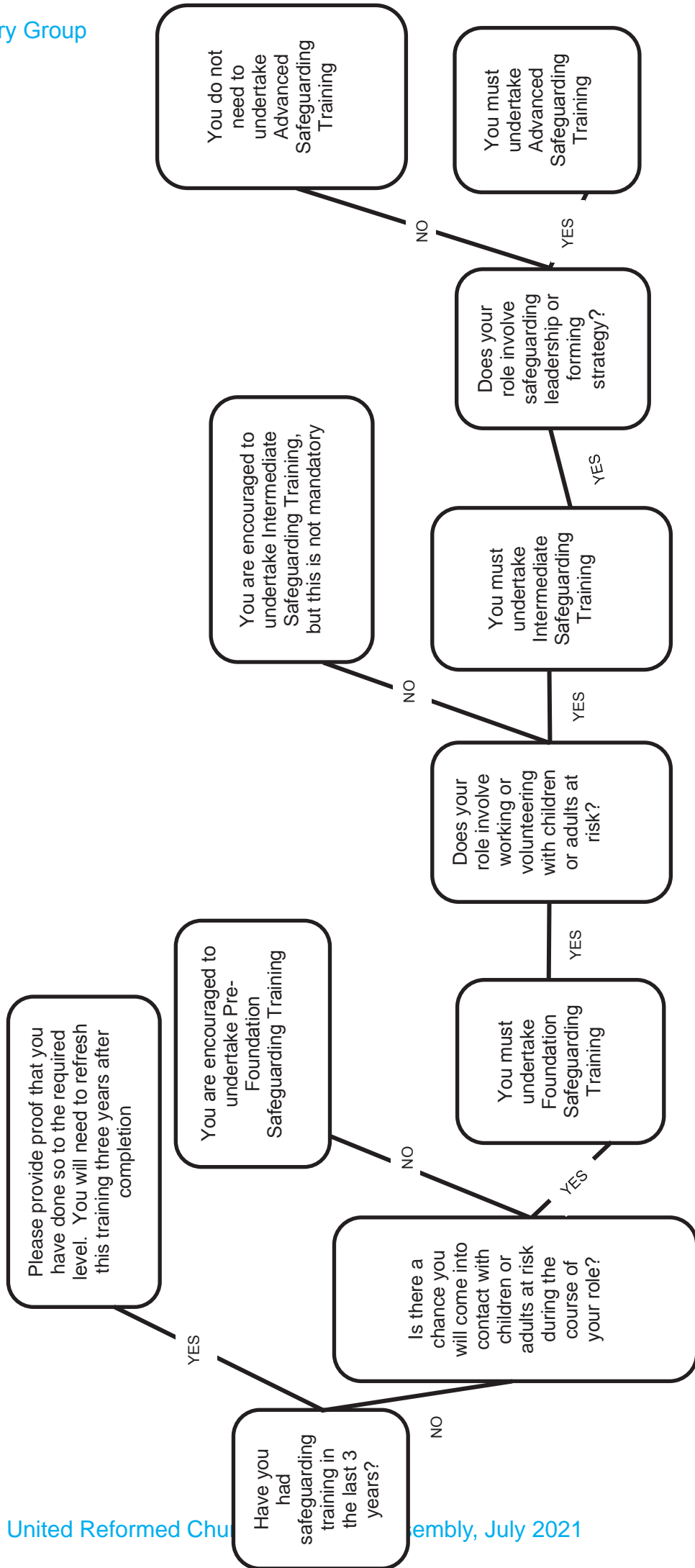
Section O Investigation, Commission and Appeal Panel Members	✓	
Worship Leaders and Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers	✓	✓
URC Trustees and Synod Trustees	✓	
Elders as local church trustees	✓	

\*\* those helping at a holiday club, assisting occasionally with Sunday school, running a craft activity at Messy Church, running the tuck shop at a youth group, helpers at a craft club / lunch / trip, etc, where it is clear these people are in 'helper' roles are always working in the presence of, and under the supervision of, a 'leader'.



# Appendix Three

## Flowchart of Safeguarding training



## Appendix Four

### Implementation plan

As from General Assembly 2021:

1. All synods will have safeguarding support in implementing training from pre-foundation to advanced level.
2. Training will be mandatory for all active ministers of Word and Sacrament and Church Related Community Workers. Failure to comply will be considered a disciplinary matter.
3. Training will become mandatory for other groups named in the grid in Appendix Two date yet to be confirmed.
4. Training will be rolled out by the Synod Safeguarding Officers (or equivalent) on behalf of the synods.
5. SAG to report on progress of implementation to Mission Council in November 2021.

### Key implementation

1. Agree clear requirements
  - Agree framework
  - Agree attendance process
  - Agree non-compliance process.
2. Implement training
  - Agree timetable in synod
  - Agree timetable by which training should be complete
  - Filter out any who have done training since 2018
  - Deliver training
  - Audit attendance
  - Deliver any non-compliance processes.
3. Agree clear data handling processes
  - Agree synod-based administration
  - Agree Assembly safeguarding administration
  - Agree how URC database is used
  - Create fields in database training area
  - Set up access for data entry.
4. Review and update training and processes
  - Capture emerging process information
  - Capture emerging training feedback
  - Review findings
  - Implement changes.

# Paper T6

## URC roles eligible for a criminal record check – updated

### Safeguarding Advisory Group

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Adrian Bulley <a href="mailto:adrian.bulley@urc.org.uk">adrian.bulley@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Resolution 49</b> <b>General Assembly approves the updated matrix of roles eligible for a criminal record check (as outlined on pages 255 and 256)</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To update the matrix of roles eligible for a criminal record check that was agreed by Mission Council in November 2018.
<b>Main points</b>	To add certain roles to those eligible for a DBS check, and to amend the level of check for others.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Mission Council: November 2018 – Paper R3.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	URC Safeguarding Adviser Safeguarding Training and Development Coordinator Secretary for Ministries Data Analyst and Administrator for Ministries Interim Safeguarding Adviser Members of SAG .

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	None anticipated.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	

#### Background

In November 2018, as part of a larger paper about vetting, disclosure and barring checks throughout the URC, the Safeguarding Advisory Group presented a matrix outlining roles within the United Reformed Church, and the level of check required.

With the benefit of experience, it is now appropriate to update that matrix as below. (For the sake of clarity, all changes and additions to the November 2018 matrix are in **red**.)

## URC roles eligible for a criminal record check

	Enhanced with barring information		Enhanced without barring information		Basic check	No checks	To be actioned by
	Adults	Children	Adults	Children			
Ministers, stipendiary / NSM and Church Related Community Workers - Active	✓	✓					Ministries Office
Ministers, stipendiary / NSM and Church Related Community Workers – Non-active						✓	Ministries Office
Ministers of other denominations employed by the URC	✓	✓					Ministries Office
Others in special category ministry posts	✓	✓					Ministries Office
Ministers and CRCWs in training	✓	✓					Ministries Office
URC Assembly accredited lay preachers in England and Wales			✓	✓			Ministries Office
URC Locally recognised lay preachers in England and Wales			✓	✓			Synod
In Scotland: URC Assembly accredited lay preachers URC Locally recognised worship leaders			✓ (using DBS)	✓ (using DBS)			Ministries Office
Assembly staff and Church House support staff who undertake regulated activity with children and / or adults	✓	✓					Ministries Office
Synod Safeguarding Officers or other safeguarding designated professionals, including Safeguarding Coordinators, deputy Safeguarding Coordinators and safe church advisers	✓	✓					Synod
Synod recognised lay pastors, local leader and interim ministers	✓	✓					Synod
Interim Moderators						✓	Synod
Children's and youth workers (voluntary or paid), children and youth workers, stewards and drivers in settings with regulated	✓	✓					Local Church

work with children and young people							
Vulnerable adult workers (voluntary or paid), elders and pastoral and personal care visitors where the role includes direct feeding, physical care, assistance with financial matters, bereavement support/counselling or driving to medical or social care appointments	✓						Local Church
United Reformed Church Trustees, Elders as local church trustees, trustees of registered charities providing regulated activities for children or adults at risk			✓	✓			Local Church
Serving Elders			✓	✓			Local Church
Assembly accredited lay preaching and locally recognised worship leaders in training			✓	✓			Ministries Office
Authorised Elders **			✓	✓			Local Church
Church caretaker and cleaners					✓		Local Church
Church Administrators (or equivalent working from a Church Office)					✓		Local Church
Church Treasurers					✓		Local Church
Synod Treasurers					✓		Synod

Frequency criteria: Once a week or more; intensive – four days or more in a 30 day period; or overnight – between the hours of 02:00 and 06:00.

\*\* Authorised Elders – it has been the practice of the United Reformed Church to authorise elders and lay preachers occasionally to preside at the sacraments of communion and baptism

# Paper X1

## West Midlands Synod

### Modern Day Slavery

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Steve Faber <a href="mailto:moderator@urcwestmidlands.org.uk">moderator@urcwestmidlands.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p><b>Resolution 50</b></p> <p>1) <b>General Assembly expresses its wish that there be a statement of URC policy on modern-day slavery, and directs the General Secretariat to undertake the research and preparation of such a proposed policy for Church House and Assembly business, consulting with other officers and committees as necessary. The draft policy is to be proposed to Mission Council / the Assembly Executive or General Assembly no later than the Assembly meeting in 2023.</b></p> <p><b>Resolution 51</b></p> <p>2) <b>General Assembly directs the Safeguarding Advisory Group / the Safeguarding Committee to draft, in consultation with others as necessary, clear guidance, including any necessary amendments to Good Practice 5 and Safeguarding training, that will help churches and individuals identify those subject to this form of abuse and how to take steps to prevent it.</b></p>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Synod resolution asking for a denominational policy statement on Modern Day Slavery.
<b>Main points</b>	Modern Day Slavery is a scourge on our times affecting nations, communities, and individuals. The West Midlands Synod believe we should have a clear policy statement to protect us from benefitting from modern day slavery through our direct actions and our supply chain.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	General Secretariat; Clerk to Assembly; Secretary for Church and Society; Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	Staff time only at this stage.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	

## Modern Day Slavery

- 1.1. The International Labour Organization estimates that globally 40 million people are held currently in Modern Day Slavery<sup>1</sup>, several times more than those subjected to the barbarity of the transatlantic trade from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is not something that is just happening overseas, it is estimated that there are over 130,000 people affected in the UK<sup>2</sup>. Whilst many of those people are trafficked from abroad, the third most likely country of origin was the UK itself. Modern day slaves are being held and exploited in the communities where the United Reformed Church operates.
- 1.2. It could be happening in plain sight of any one of us. It is therefore a matter about which there should be much greater awareness amongst our churches and members, and an issue about which we should speaking out.
- 1.3. Whilst many churches and groups have discussed the issue, it has never been formalised into an Assembly Policy or statement. (Under the Modern Day Slavery Act 2015, certain large businesses in England and Wales are required to have a slavery and human trafficking statement covering their supply chain, and there is a similar provision under Scottish Law.)
- 1.4. Whilst not required to under the legislation, the West Midlands Synod has adopted a policy and statement covering our supply chain, and we propose that the United Reformed Church should voluntarily undertake this measure as well, as a commitment not to knowingly allow modern day slaves to be exploited for the goods and services we purchase.
- 1.5. It has been said that the causes of Modern-Day Slavery are ignorance and indifference, “We are too busy in our own little worlds, we do not notice injustice and if we did then we did not care”. There has been much discussion of the evils of historic slavery, we may feel powerless to know exactly how to respond to that; however, we do have the power to do something about Modern Day Slavery, which is acknowledged to affect more people than historic slavery.

## 2. A policy for the United Reformed Church

- 2.1 In developing a policy, we ask General Assembly to produce a comprehensive and co-ordinated response, including the following elements:
  - Affirmation that the United Reformed Church deplores Modern Day Slavery
  - A commitment to educate and inform our own members about the topic
  - Ensure that it is reflected in our safeguarding
  - Examining our own practices and supply chain such as:

<sup>1</sup> International Labour Organization (19 September 2017) Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage [https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS\\_575479/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_575479/lang-en/index.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Office for National Statistics (26 March 2020) Modern slavery in the UK <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/modernslaveryintheuk/march2020>



- Confirm that our staff are paid at least the Real Living Wage
- Audit our own suppliers to determine whether they have adequate safeguards that seek to prevent Modern day Slavery in their supply chain
- Confirming that we have taken adequate steps to screen out from our investments any companies without adequate regard to Modern Day Slavery
- Prepare our own voluntary Modern Day Slavery statement for publication on our own website and inclusion in our annual reports, and encourage all synods to do the same.

2.2 The West Midlands Synod offers our agreed policy (see Appendix One) as a starting point or template for how the denomination might respond.

# Appendix One

## **Modern Day Slavery policy statement for the West Midlands Synod**

Modern slavery is an umbrella term which refers to slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour, and human trafficking. Due to the secretive nature of modern slavery, it is a complex and ever-evolving crime. It is an issue faced by our global church partner in India. It is also an issue here in the UK.

The United Reformed Church West Midlands Synod is committed to working in partnership with others to see the eradication of modern slavery in all its forms. We will strive to ensure that acts of modern slavery and human trafficking cannot occur anywhere within our synod, Local Churches, linked organisations and groups. We are committed to implementing and enforcing effective systems and controls to prevent modern day slavery from happening.

We adopt a zero-tolerance approach to modern slavery, and will not knowingly appoint or work with any supplier or partner who cannot demonstrate the same level of commitment in this area. We fully support the investigation and reporting of any supplier found to be in breach of our modern-slavery policy and approach to modern-slavery and human trafficking.

We seek to use our influence as investors to ensure the companies in which we invest take this issue as seriously as we do.

We also have a role to play in resourcing and mobilising local congregations of the United Reformed Church in the West Midlands Synod in the battle to eradicate modern slavery.

### **Underlying principle**

Our policies and procedures must reflect our commitment to acting ethically in our all relationships, including our business relationships, and help us enforce effective systems and controls to mitigate the risk of modern slavery occurring in our organisations or supply chains.

### **Our policies and procedures**

**Employment and Human Resources policies** – we will continue to deploy HR policies that ensure that staff are properly appointed, paid fairly, and enjoy a competitive remuneration package. Specifically, we check the eligibility to work of all new employees and no staff member is paid less than Real Living Wage. For a small fee we can register our commitment to it.

**Ethical Investment policy** – our investment advisors are informed of our ethical standards and there is an active screening process to keep our investment portfolio in line with those standards.

**Procurement policy** – synod will draw up a procurement policy which will set out factors which must be followed when selecting major and regular suppliers. This will assist in ensuring that a good business partner is selected, and includes supplier reputation and compliance with relevant laws and ethical procedures.

**A supplier code of conduct** – will be designed to help our suppliers understand the behaviours and standards that are expected of them when working with and for the synod.

This will include commitments to the Living Wage and to the abolition of slavery. Our Supplier Code of Conduct will be sent to all new major and regular suppliers (as defined by the Procurement Policy) as part of our due diligence process

### **Synod policy and local churches**

The West Midlands Synod urges all local churches within the synod to be aware of this statement and to consider adopting it locally.

The synod will seek to direct local churches to resources and organisations that seek to raise awareness of modern-day slavery.

The synod, in conjunction with other partners, will endeavour to provide training in how to spot the signs and respond appropriately to suspected instances modern day slavery. In this, we will bear in mind the experience of our global partner in India.

The synod will encourage local churches to make helpline numbers and contact details of support organisations clearly available in their premises so that any victims using the premises may find access to them.

*Date of adoption: 13 March 13 2021*

*Review due: March 2023*

*Responsible body: Synod Mission Council*

## Information papers index

URC History Society .....	263
Schools .....	266



# Information paper

## United Reformed Church History Society

### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Michael Hopkins: <a href="mailto:michael.hopkins@urc.org.uk">michael.hopkins@urc.org.uk</a>
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## United Reformed Church History Society Trustees Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2020

### Administration details

The Charity is registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales with the number 279213. Its registered address is Westminster College, Madingley Road, Cambridge, CB3 0AA.

**The Trustees of the Society**, known as the Council, manage the charity. They are the officers, up to four members elected by the Society's members, up to three members appointed by the United Reformed Church, and up to two co-opted members. The years in brackets after a person's name indicate the end of their present term of appointment / election.

The Officers are:

The President – the Revd Professor David Thompson (2023)

The Chairman of the Council – the Revd Dr David Cornick (2023)

Vice Chairman – Mr John Ellis (2021)

Secretary – the Revd Michael Hopkins (2024)

Treasurer – Mrs Jean Wyber (2022)

Librarian – the Revd Professor David Thompson (2023)

Journal Editor – the Revd Dr Robert Pope (2022)

The trustees elected by the members are:

The Revd Christopher Damp (2021)

Mr John Ellis (2021)

The Revd Fleur Houston (2024)

Dr Anne Samson (2024)

Those appointed by the United Reformed Church are:

The Revd Dr. Michael Jagessar (2024)

The Revd Dr. Kirsty Thorpe (2023)

Mrs Jean Wyber (2022)

Professor Clyde Binfield was co-opted throughout the period of this report.

### Other administration matters

During the year, the Society closed its bank accounts held with HSBC UK and now holds accounts with CAF Bank Ltd. The Society's investment holding of COIF Ethical Units is

held by the United Reformed Church Trust Ltd for its benefit. The holding of Epworth Multi-Asset Fund units is held directly by the Society.

### **Structure, governance, and management**

The affairs of the Society are governed by its Constitution which was approved by the Charity Commission in August 2005.

The Officers are elected annually and are eligible for re-election, but the President shall not normally be re-elected to serve for a total period of more than five years. The Council meets twice a year.

### **Objectives, activities, and achievements**

The object of the Society shall be to advance the Christian faith, and in particular:

- a) To encourage interest in and the study of the history of the United Reformed Church with its antecedents within the Congregational, Presbyterian, and Churches of Christ traditions and related movements and churches, their origins, principles, theology, churches and missions.
- b) To publish a Journal regularly, and such other publications as the Council shall from time to time determine.
- c) To provide an Annual Lecture.
- d) To encourage the collection and preservation of historical records and where appropriate to act as custodian, by arrangement with the United Reformed Church, of manuscripts, books, portraits, paintings and other relevant objects belonging to the Church.
- e) To make grants for the pursuit of historical studies in connection with the churches and movements referred to in a).

During 2020 the Society has continued to fulfil its objects of encouraging interest in and study of the history of the United Reformed Church, and its antecedent traditions and related movements. Two issues of the Journal: volume 10, issues 6 and 7 have been published, the Annual Lecture was given at the Conference, and work on the organisation of historical records continued. Risks associated with the charity have been assessed. The council has a Data Privacy Policy in place to minimize the risk of a data breach. The Council co-operates with other similar societies through the Religious Archives Group and the Association of Denominational Historical Societies and Cognate Libraries in order to raise awareness of the minority religious traditions in England and Wales.

The Conference and Annual Meeting was held online on 19 September by Zoom, at which the Annual Lecture given by Dr Steve Tompkins on the subject of the events that led to the Mayflower.

The College archives, (Westminster, and the Cheshunt Foundation), of which the Society holdings form a part, remain in the care of Mrs Helen Weller. She can be contacted every weekday morning except Friday by phone, 01223 330 620 or by email, [hw374@cam.ac.uk](mailto:hw374@cam.ac.uk)

The Marquis Fund, to further the study and publication of Nonconformist history, is administered jointly by the Society and representatives of Westminster College, Cambridge. Grants may be made to scholars of any denominational affiliation or none, if the criteria are satisfied. Application should be made to the Treasurer, using the College address. Two grants were approved in 2019, subject to the authors finding publishers.

The standard subscription rate for membership remains at £20. For all enquiries about Society membership, including a 25% reduction for students and newly retired ministers, please contact the Secretary, the Revd Michael Hopkins: **michael.hopkins@mansfield.oxon.org**, 01252 711 359. Gift Aid declarations continue to make a valuable contribution to the society's finances.

Society information is available on our website: **[www.urchistory.org.uk](http://www.urchistory.org.uk)**

### **Financial review and reserves policy**

There was a surplus of receipts over payments for the year of £3,301 (2019 surplus of £3,842) and unrealised gains on investments of £3,600 (2019 gains of £7,412) mostly due to the restriction on our activities because of Covid 19. The Council was unable to make any grants in the year. The cash at bank at the end of 2020 of £25,863 would cover annual costs for at least five years at the current level and therefore the Council did not suggest any change in the annual subscription to members of £20 (accredited students £15) for 2021.

The Council is considering investing more of its cash reserves to counteract the reduction in interest rates.



URC ID	School	Address	Telephone	Headteacher	Email
20A04	Taunton School	Staplegrove Road Taunton TA2 6AD	<a href="tel:01823703703">01823 703 703</a> Senior		<a href="mailto:enquiries@tauntonschool.co.uk">enquiries@tauntonschool.co.uk</a>
20A05	Taunton School	Staplegrove Road Taunton TA2 6AD	01823 703307 Prep		<a href="mailto:tpsenquiries@tauntonschool.co.uk">tpsenquiries@tauntonschool.co.uk</a>
20A06	Taunton School	Staplegrove Road Taunton TA2 6AD	01823 703300 Nursery/preprep		<a href="mailto:ppsecretary@tauntonschool.co.uk">ppsecretary@tauntonschool.co.uk</a>
20A07	Taunton School	Staplegrove Road Taunton TA2 6AD	01823 703200 International		<a href="mailto:enquiries@tauntonschool.co.uk">enquiries@tauntonschool.co.uk</a>
	Leatherhead Trinity School and Nursery	Woodvill Road, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT22 7BP	Tel: 01372 813615	Elizabeth Killin	<a href="mailto:woodvill@leatherheadtrinity.surrey.sch.uk">woodvill@leatherheadtrinity.surrey.sch.uk</a>
20A10	Mill Hill School	Grimsdell Mill Hill Preprep, Winterstoke House, Willis Grove, Mill Hill, London NW7 1QR	020 8959 6884	Mrs J Sanchez BA	<a href="mailto:office@grimsdell.org.uk">office@grimsdell.org.uk</a>
20A11	Mill Hill School	Belmont Mill Hill Prep, The Ridgeway, Mill Hill Village, London NW7 4ED	020 8906 7270		<a href="mailto:office@belmontschool.com">office@belmontschool.com</a>
20A12	Mill Hill School	Mill Hill School Senior, The Ridgeway, Mill Hill Village, London NW7 4ED	020 89591176		<a href="mailto:office@millhill.org.uk">office@millhill.org.uk</a>
20A13	Mill Hill School	The Mount, Mill Hill international, Milespit Hill, Mill Hill Village, London NW7 2RX	020 3826 3333		<a href="mailto:office@millhillinternational.org.uk">office@millhillinternational.org.uk</a>
20A14	Silcoates School	Wrenthorpe, Wakefield, West Yorks, WF2 0PD	01924 291614	Mr P Rowe	<a href="mailto:head@silcoates.org.uk">head@silcoates.org.uk</a>
20A15	Walthamstow Hall	Junior: Bradbourne Park Road, Sevenoaks, TN13 3LD	01732 453815	Miss Stephanie Ferro	<a href="mailto:ccrofts@whall.school">ccrofts@whall.school</a>
20A16	Walthamstow Hall	Senior: Holly Bush Lane, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3UL	01732 451334		<a href="mailto:whoffice@whall.school">whoffice@whall.school</a>
20A17	Bishops Stortford College	10 Maze Green Road, Bishop's Stortford, Herts CM23 2PJ	01279 838626 Pre prep		<a href="mailto:general.enquiry@bishopsstortfordcollege.org">general.enquiry@bishopsstortfordcollege.org</a>
20A18	Bishops Stortford College	10 Maze Green Road, Bishop's Stortford, Herts CM23 2PJ	01279 838583 Prep		<a href="mailto:general.enquiry@bishopsstortfordcollege.org">general.enquiry@bishopsstortfordcollege.org</a>
20A19	Bishops Stortford College	10 Maze Green Road, Bishop's Stortford, Herts CM23 2PJ	01279 838575 Senior		<a href="mailto:general.enquiry@bishopsstortfordcollege.org">general.enquiry@bishopsstortfordcollege.org</a>
20A20	Eitham College	Mottingham Lane, Mottingham, London SE9 4RW Grove Park Road. Mottingham.	020 8857 3457 Junior	Mr Edmund Cavendish	<a href="mailto:juniors@eltham-college.org.uk">juniors@eltham-college.org.uk</a>

20A21	Eitham College	Grove Park Road, Mottingham, London, SE9 4QF	020 8857 1455 Senior	Mr Guy Sanderson	<a href="mailto:headmaster@eitham-college.org.uk">headmaster@eitham-college.org.uk</a>
20A22	Caterham School	Harestone Valley Road, Caterham, Surrey CR3 6YA	01883 343028	Mr Ceri Jones	<a href="mailto:enquiries@caterhamschool.co.uk">enquiries@caterhamschool.co.uk</a>
20A23	Barrow URC Primary School	Old Row, Barrow, Clitheroe, Lancs BB7 9AZ	01254 822338	Mrs J Pay	<a href="mailto:office@barrow.lancs.sch.uk">office@barrow.lancs.sch.uk</a>
20A24	Christ the Sower Ecumenical Primary School	Singleton Drive, Grange Farm, Milton Keynes MK8 0PZ	01908 867356	Lorraine Quirk	<a href="mailto:school@ctsmk.org.uk">school@ctsmk.org.uk</a>
20A25	Holt Voluntary Controlled Primary School	The Gravel, Holt, Trowbridge, Wilts BA14 6RA	01225 782315	Mrs Margaret Harnden	<a href="mailto:admin@holt.wilts.sch.uk">admin@holt.wilts.sch.uk</a>
20A26	Queen's Park Primary School	Rivington Road, St Helens, WA10 4NQ	01744 678202	Mrs Justine Kellett	<a href="mailto:queenspark@sthelens.org.uk">queenspark@sthelens.org.uk</a>



## Resolutions index

<b>Resolutions</b> .....	270
Standing Orders .....	283



## **Mission Council**

Report on the work of Mission Council 2020-2021

**Resolution 01** **page 4**

General Assembly gives final approval to the proposal that: There shall be one Moderator of General Assembly, serving for one year. This Moderator may be a minister (of word and sacraments or CRCW) or an elder. Each synod may nominate one minister and one elder each year, but only one Moderator will be elected.

**Resolution 02** **page 4**

General Assembly gives final approval to the proposal that: The name of Mission Council shall be changed to Assembly Executive.

**Resolution 03** **page 9**

General Assembly resolves to create a General Assembly 'Minister for Digital Worship' post, full-time, for an ordained minister of Word and Sacraments under the terms of the Plan for Partnership and to fund appropriate administrative and digital editing support. As General Assembly post it will be for an initial term of seven years, with the possibility of renewal.

**Resolution 04** **page 9**

General Assembly instructs the General Secretariat, through consultation with the Human Resource Advisory Group, to finalise a Job Description and Person Specification for the role.

**Resolution 05** **page 18**

General Assembly gives final approval to its resolution to add a further question to Schedule B [of the Basis of Union] for elders as follows:

**Q:** Do you promise as an elder of the United Reformed Church to seek its well-being, unity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always so far as you are able to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church?

**A:** By the grace of God I do, and all these things I profess and promise in the power of the Holy Spirit.

## **Business Committee**

Mission Council Advisory Groups (by private members resolution from the Clerk and Convenor of the Business Committee)

**Resolution 06** **page 32**

General Assembly resolves that from the close of General Assembly 2021, all Mission Council Advisory Groups shall become Advisory Groups of the General Assembly, and instructs the Business Committee to reflect further on whether further work and / or greater clarity is needed on the differences between Standing Committees and Advisory Groups.

## **Children's and Youth Work Committee**

URC Children and the future of Pilots

**Resolution 07** **page 33**

General Assembly celebrates the work of Pilots over the past 85 years, its association with URC, and affirms our current local Pilots Companies.



**Resolution 08**

page 33

General Assembly approves and encourages Children's and Youth Work Committee in the creation of 'URC Children' as an umbrella to support the rich diversity of Pilots and all other expressions of children's work in local churches.

**Resolution 09**

page 33

General Assembly instructs Children's and Youth Work Committee to cease using staff time and funding on work exclusively for Pilots, and instructs the committee to support Pilots sub-committee to explore options for the future, including the care of local Companies and Friends On Faith Adventures Groups, in the light of this.

**Children's and Youth Work Committee**

URC committees and online meeting

**Resolution 10**

page 47

General Assembly requests all General Assembly committees and task groups to have at least one meeting each year entirely online and not during normal working hours (9-5 Monday to Friday).

**Resolution 11**

page 47

General Assembly also encourages all General Assembly committees and task groups to have the ability for people to join online for all meetings, with 50% of meetings each year to be held outside of normal working hours (9-5 Monday to Friday).

**Resolution 12**

page 47

General Assembly also invites all councils of the Church at a Synod and local church level to consider these resolutions to see where they can implement them into their structures.

**Communications Committee**

Digital Charter and Social Media guidelines

**Resolution 14**

page 59

General Assembly commends the new Digital Charter and updated Social Media Guidelines to all who engage with the Church digitally.

**Equalities Committee**

Affirmative action towards an anti-racist church

General Assembly instructs the equalities committee to form a small group to:

**Resolution 15**

page 74

Explore how the URC might implement a policy of 'affirmative action' to address the persistent underrepresentation of Black and ethnic minority people in Assembly-appointed posts (see table in appendix one).

**Resolution 16**

page 74

Specifically explore the possibilities and practicalities of a recruitment policy which actively engages with, and addresses, the current racial imbalance in Assembly-appointed posts.

**Resolution 17**

page 74

Explore the possibilities and practicalities, including any related costs, of an experience and skills development programme equipping participants for Assembly-appointed posts.

**Resolution 18**

page 74

To bring recommendations arising from the work of the small group to General Assembly 2022.

**Pensions Committee and Finance Committee**

URC Future Pensions – time for a change of approach

**Resolution 19**

page 90

The General Assembly, being representative of Local Churches, Synods and the whole Church, confirms the Church's commitment to the pensions promises already made, and wishes any consideration of future pension arrangements for the Church's Ministers of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Workers, missionaries and staff to keep clearly in mind:

- a) The Church's warm gratitude for the commitment, gifts and service of those who work among us and serve in our name
- b) The Church's desire to deal with these people honourably in their retirement
- c) The Church's desire to act as a responsible employer, for the people we employ and for our stipendiary office-holders.

**Resolution 20**

page 90

General Assembly, recognising that the significant changes to the legal and regulatory framework for defined benefit pension schemes are making the two current URC pension schemes disproportionately expensive for the benefits they deliver, agrees in principle to the closure to future accruals of both the Ministers' Pension Fund and the Final Salary Pension Scheme.

**Resolution 21**

page 90

General Assembly acknowledges the careful work that has already been done on these complex and sensitive matters, authorises further work to be done on developing new pensions arrangements for office holders and staff, with the aim of presenting detailed options to Mission Council in November 2021, and then final proposals to General Assembly 2022, for implementation no sooner than January 2023.



## Finance and Ministries Committees

Stipendiary Ministry target numbers

[Resolution 22](#)

[page 112](#)

In view of both the uncertain future impact of the ongoing coronavirus restrictions on the finances of the Church and the likely impact of unprecedented additional pension contributions on the direct cost of stipendiary ministry, General Assembly directs that

- in preparing the 2022 and 2023 budgets for the Church the Finance Committee and the URC Trust disregard resolution 19 of the 2012 General Assembly; and
- the Finance and Ministries Committees bring their suggested replacement for the 2012 resolution to the 2023 General Assembly.

## Ministries Committee

URC Disciplinary Policy for Office Holders

[Resolution 23](#)

[page 125](#)

General Assembly adopts the Disciplinary policy for Office Holders as outlined in Appendix One on this paper.

## Ministries Committee

House for Duty for ministers

[Resolution 24](#)

[page 133](#)

Mission Council adopts the policy on House for Duty as outlined in Appendix One.

## Ministries Committee

Schedule E

[Resolution 25](#)

[page 137](#)

General Assembly makes the changes to Schedule E as outlined in Appendix 1 of this paper.

## Mission Committee

Israel Palestine Report

[Resolution 26](#)

[page 155](#)

General Assembly instructs the Mission Committee to raise awareness about Holy Land pilgrimage amongst synods, local churches, ecumenical partners and individuals, underlining the importance of taking time to engage with Christian Palestinian communities and members of the local Christian churches in Israel and Palestine.

[Resolution 27](#)

[page 155](#)

General Assembly affirms that Israel is a country which is recognised within the international community of States, with all the rights and responsibilities attendant on that status.

**Resolution 28**

**page 155**

General Assembly affirms the United Nations commitment to a State of Palestine which is recognised within the international community of States, with all the rights and responsibilities attendant on that status.

**Resolution 29**

**page 155**

General Assembly condemns all acts of violence in the region of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

**Resolution 30**

**page 155**

General Assembly expresses its deep concern over the worsening situation for the Palestinian people since Resolution 37 was passed in 2016, as evidenced by the subsequent work undertaken by the URC in response to that resolution. All Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, forced house demolitions and the acquisition of land by coercion, are breaches of international law. General Assembly, therefore, urges the Israeli Government to abide by international law and reverse its de facto annexation of the occupied Palestinian territories.

**Resolution 31**

**page 156**

General Assembly requests local churches and members to contact their constituency MPs to express concerns about the actions of the Israeli Government with respect to settlement expansion and house demolitions, and to ask what the UK is doing in response.

**Resolution 32**

**page 156**

General Assembly recognises the ethical principles-based approach of the URC Trusts and Pension Funds to investing and commends them in this long-established commitment, so that they can continue to avoid investing in any international company which facilitates the following activities in the occupied Palestinian territories:

- construction, production and services for the illegal settlements
- the economic exploitation of labour and the captive Palestinian market
- the illegal extraction and procurement of natural resources
- population control through private security and surveillance where it contravenes international law
- provision of specialised equipment for the forced demolition of Palestinian homes and structures
- building and servicing of the separation wall / barrier and its checkpoints on Palestinian land
- and any other breaches of international law.

**Resolution 33**

**page 156**

General Assembly affirms the ethical values of URC Synod Trusts and in this principled commitment requests them to ensure that they do not invest in any international company which facilitates the following activities in the occupied Palestinian territories:

- construction, production and services for the illegal settlements
- the economic exploitation of labour and the captive Palestinian market

- the illegal extraction and procurement of natural resources
- population control through private security and surveillance where it contravenes international law
- provision of specialised equipment for the forced demolition of Palestinian homes and structures
- building and servicing of the separation wall / barrier and its checkpoints on Palestinian land
- and any other breaches of international law as researched and listed by respected agencies such as the United Nations, the Who Profits Research Center (Israel), Investigate (The American Friends Service Committee).

**Resolution 34**

page 157

General Assembly requests local churches and members to be aware of EU guidelines on the labelling of products produced in Israeli settlements, and to consider not purchasing these from UK retailers.

**Resolution 35**

page 157

General Assembly encourages local churches and members to actively play a part in supporting the Palestinian economy through the purchasing of Palestinian products available in the UK. These include but are not restricted to: Palestinian olive oil and food products, embroidery and olive wood carvings, cards, books, clothes and health / beauty products.

**Walking the Way Steering Group**

The future of *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today*

**Resolution 36**

page 166

In affirming that whole-of-life discipleship is the primary long-term focus of the United Reformed Church, General Assembly:

- a) requests that those reviewing the future of the URC, as agreed by Mission Council in March 2021, take full account of the importance of whole-of-life discipleship.
- b) instructs the Walking the Way Steering Group to continue its work until the end of the calendar year 2022, whereupon the work of the group in supporting the embedding of whole-of-life discipleship across the denomination will be continued by the Deputy General Secretaries for Discipleship and Mission.
- c) asks those responsible for the finances of the Church to find ways to continue the role of Walking the Way Project Manager until the end of the calendar year 2022. The Project Manager should focus firmly on embedding the whole-of-life discipleship ethos of Walking the Way across the denomination, working closely with the Deputy General Secretaries for Discipleship and Mission in collaboration with the Walking the Way Steering Group, whilst it is in place.

- d) invites all committees and groups connected with the life of the United Reformed Church to hold the whole-of-life discipleship ethos of Walking the Way at the heart of their work.
- e) instructs the Walking the Way Steering Group, through the Project Manager, and in collaboration with other Church House staff, to develop a range of resources to better embed the whole-of-life discipleship ethos of Walking the Way across the Church.
- f) welcomes collaborative work across the Church to facilitate and resource the whole-of-life discipleship ethos of Walking the Way across the Church's life, work and witness.

### **Nominations Committee**

Report to General Assembly 2021

**Resolution 37**

**page 171**

General Assembly appoints committees and representatives of the Church as set out on page 175 of the Book of Reports, subject to the additions and corrections contained in the supplementary report to Assembly.

### **Nominations Committee**

Eastern Synod Moderator

**Resolution 38**

**page 191**

General Assembly appoints the Revd Lythan Nevard to be Moderator of Eastern Synod from 1 August 2021 to 31 July 2028.

### **Ministerial Disciplinary Process and Incapacity Procedure**

The Clerk and General Secretary, for MIND (Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline Advisory Group)

**Resolution 39**

**page 194**

1. General Assembly adopts the following amendments to the Basis of Union and Structure of the URC:

#### **Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church**

**Schedule E, Paragraph 4** – delete the word 'ministerial' before 'rights of membership'.

#### **The Structure of the United Reformed Church**

**Paragraph 1(4)** – Add heading 'Definitions' and reword:

- 1.(4) Unless otherwise expressly stated or clearly excluded by the context, a)  
the expressions 'minister', 'ministers', 'ministry' and 'ministerial' when used in the Structure shall refer to the ministry of Word and Sacrament;
- b) the expression 'the Disciplinary Process' shall refer to the Process established by the General Assembly under paragraph 2(6)(xxi), but includes any process so established for similar purposes before the adoption of that provision;
- c) the expression 'the Incapacity Procedure' shall refer to the Procedure established by the General Assembly under paragraph 2(6)(xxiii), but

includes any process so established for similar purposes before the adoption of that provision.

**Paragraph 2(1)** – in function (ix), insert '(subject to paragraph 2(7)(ii))' before 'to suspend or remove names'.

**In the Functions of Synods**, delete the initial 'A' and the words in brackets.

**Function (xvii)** – delete existing text and replace with the following:  
'To discharge the functions required under the Disciplinary Process to be exercised by the synod, either directly, or indirectly through other officers or bodies, as the Process may provide'.

**Function (xviii)** – delete existing text and replace with the following:

'To discharge the functions required under the Incapacity Procedure to be exercised by the synod, either directly, or indirectly through other officers or bodies, as the Procedure may provide'.

**Function (xxi)** after 'Disciplinary Process' delete 'contained in Section O'.

Delete section (B) of the Functions of Synods

**Paragraph 2.(5)** – In sub-paragraph (A), after 'the following functions', delete the words in brackets.

**In the Functions of Ecumenical Area Meetings, Function (viii)**, delete 'contained In 'Section O' and the cross-reference in brackets.

**Function (xviii)** - delete existing text and replace with the following:

'To discharge, concurrently with the synod, such of the functions and duties conferred or imposed by the Disciplinary Process or the Incapacity Procedure upon the synod in respect of a minister or Church Related Community Worker (or former holder of either office) serving or resident within the Ecumenical Area, after proceedings involving that person are concluded, as the synod may from time to time request'.

**Paragraph 2.(6)** – After 'General Assembly is responsible for exercising the following Functions' delete the words in brackets.

**In the Functions of the General Assembly, Function (xviii)**, delete the words in brackets.

**Functions (xxi) to (xxvii)** – delete existing text and replace with the following:

(xxi) to establish, and from time to time to review, amend or replace a Process for dealing with cases of Discipline involving ministers or Church Related Community Workers;.

- (xxii) to discharge the functions required under the Disciplinary Process to be exercised by the Assembly, either directly, or indirectly through other officers or bodies, as the Process may provide;
- (xxiii) to establish, and from time to time to review, amend or replace a Procedure for dealing with cases of Incapacity involving ministers or Church Related Community Workers;
- (xxiv) to discharge the functions required under the Incapacity Procedure to be exercised by the Assembly, either directly, or indirectly through other officers or bodies, as the Procedure may provide.

Renumber the last two functions (xxv) and (xxvi).

**Insert new paragraph 2(7) as follows:**

**'Restriction on exercise of conciliar functions**

- 2(7)(i) As soon as any minister or Church Related Community Worker becomes the subject of a case under the Disciplinary Process or the Incapacity Procedure, no council of the Church shall exercise any of its functions in respect of that person in such a manner as to affect, compromise or interfere with the conduct of that case, save as provided for by the Process or Procedure itself.
- (ii) The function of the Church Meeting to maintain standards of membership shall not be exercised in a disciplinary context in respect of any member of the local church who is at that time a minister or Church Related Community Worker; nor shall any such member be removed from the Roll of Members or the membership of that person be suspended by the Church Meeting for disciplinary reasons.
- (iii) The decision reached in any particular case (whether or not on appeal) under the Disciplinary Process or the Incapacity Procedure shall be made in the name of the General Assembly and shall be final and binding, and once so initiated that case shall be resolved only by the steps for which that Process or Procedure provides.'

**Paragraph 5** - delete existing opening text and replace with the following:

- 5. The procedure for dealing with references and appeals not concerned with the Incapacity Procedure or the Disciplinary Process is as follows:

**Paragraph 5.4** – delete final sentence and replace with the following:

No procedure governed by this paragraph shall be used to review or appeal against decisions reached under the Disciplinary Process or the Incapacity Procedure.

Delete paragraphs 6 and 7 in their entirety.

**Resolution 40**

page 197

General Assembly adopts the 'Process for dealing with cases of discipline involving ministers and church related community workers' ('Disciplinary Process') accompanying this Resolution in place of the existing Process.

**Resolution 41**

page 198

General Assembly makes the amendments accompanying this Resolution to the 'Procedure for dealing with cases of incapacity involving ministers and Church Related Community Workers' ('Incapacity Procedure').

**Resolution 42**

page 198

The provisions of the new Disciplinary Process concerning appointments to The Assembly and Synod Standing Panels for Discipline, the Disciplinary Investigation and Commission Panels, the Appeal Commissions List and the posts of Assembly Representative for Discipline, Secretary to Assembly Commissions for Discipline and to Disciplinary Appeal Commissions are to come into force at the close of this session of the General Assembly.

- b) The Assembly instructs synods to make their appointments to Standing Panels at the earliest opportunity, and instructs Nominations Committee to bring nominations for Assembly appointees under the new Process to the Assembly Executive in November 2021, so that all those appointed can receive initial training in the new procedures before the remainder of the Process comes into force.
- c) The new Process is to come fully into force at the close of the meeting of Assembly in 2022 and govern cases coming to the notice of Moderators of synods or the Assembly Representative for Discipline on or after that date, provided that the amendments to the Basis and Structure mentioned in Resolution 1 have by then been ratified. Cases pending under the current Process at that date are to be dealt with as the transitional provisions of the new Process provide.
- d) The amendments to the Incapacity Procedure are to take effect at the close of the meeting of Assembly in 2022, provided that the amendments to the Basis and Structure mentioned in Resolution 1 have by then been ratified.

**Resolution 43**

page 199

The Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline Advisory Group to the Assembly Executive (MIND) is instructed to make arrangements to offer the training mentioned in Resolution 4.

**Safeguarding Advisory Group**

Additions to URC Structure and Rules of Procedure

**Resolution 44**

page 233

General Assembly resolves to make the following additions to the Structure:

Functions of Church Meeting: [numbering to be determined]



- a) To appoint a Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator.
- b) To adopt and promote implementation of safeguarding policy in line with General Assembly recommendations.
- c) To receive regular safeguarding reports from the church safeguarding co-ordinator.

**Functions of Elders' Meeting: [numbering to be determined]**

- a) To satisfy themselves that all necessary procedures are in place to achieve the aims of the church's safeguarding policy.
- b) To adopt best safeguarding practice for all church activities.
- c) To report to Church Meeting and to synod.
- d) To report to the building trustees, charity regulators and insurers when advised to do so by the Synod Safeguarding Officer.

**Functions of synod: [numbering to be determined]**

- a) To appoint a Synod Safeguarding Officer or equivalent.
- b) To have oversight of, and to support, monitor and report safeguarding related activities and issues within local churches, and amongst ministers, officers and staff of the synod.
- c) To take all necessary powers and actions positively to promote implementation of good practice in accordance with the safeguarding policy statement adopted by the General Assembly.
- d) To adopt best safeguarding practice for all its own activities and events.

**Functions of General Assembly: [numbering to be determined]**

- a) To appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- b) To have oversight of local churches and synods, monitoring practice.
- c) To adopt a safeguarding policy statement and procedures for use throughout the whole United Reformed Church.
- d) To advise on all matters of safeguarding throughout the church.
- e) To adopt best safeguarding practice for all its own activities and events.

**Resolution 45**

**page 234**

**General Assembly resolves to make the following additions to the Rules of Procedure:**

**Safeguarding Implementation: [numbering to be determined]**

**1. Church Meeting:**

- a) To appoint a Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator who is cognisant of current safeguarding policy, practice and procedure.
- b) To receive regular – at least annual – safeguarding reports from the Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator.

**2. Elders' Meeting:**

- a) To present an annual safeguarding report to Church Meeting and an annual safeguarding return to synod.

**3. Synod:**

- a) To appoint a Synod Safeguarding Officer with the necessary experience, qualifications and current knowledge.
- b) To arrange for safeguarding training as appropriate.
- c) To collate church safeguarding returns and forward them to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

**4. General Assembly:**

To appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead with the necessary experience, qualifications and current knowledge.

**Safeguarding Advisory Group**

Safeguarding Committee

**Resolution 46**

**page 237**

General Assembly resolves that, effective from the close of General Assembly 2022:

- a) The Mission Council's Safeguarding Advisory Group be disbanded, with thanks for all those who have given so generously of their time and expertise over the years, and
- b) A Safeguarding Committee be established as a standing committee of the General Assembly with the membership and terms of reference as described.

**Safeguarding Advisory Group**

Safeguarding policy statement

**Resolution 47**

**page 240**

General Assembly adopts the safeguarding policy statement outlined in this report and commends it to church meetings, elders' meetings and synods for consideration and implementation.

**Safeguarding Advisory Group**

Safeguarding Training Framework

**Resolution 48**

**page 245**

- a) General Assembly adopts the Safeguarding Training Framework for use across the United Reformed Church.
- b) General Assembly instructs synods to oversee the implementation of the framework.

**Safeguarding Advisory Group**

URC roles eligible for a criminal record check – updated

**Resolution 49**

**page 254**

General Assembly approves the updated matrix of roles eligible for a criminal record check (as outlined on pages 255 and 256)

## **West Midlands Synod**

### **Modern Day Slavery**

#### **Resolution 50**

**page 257**

**General Assembly expresses its wish that there be a statement of URC policy on modern-day slavery, and directs the General Secretariat to undertake the research and preparation of such a proposed policy for Church House and Assembly business, consulting with other officers and committees as necessary. The draft policy is to be proposed to Mission Council / the Assembly Executive or General Assembly no later than the Assembly meeting in 2023.**

#### **Resolution 51**

**page 257**

**General Assembly directs the Safeguarding Advisory Group / the Safeguarding Committee to draft, in consultation with others as necessary, clear guidance, including any necessary amendments to Good Practice 5 and Safeguarding training, that will help churches and individuals identify those subject to this form of abuse and how to take steps to prevent it.**

# Standing Orders for Virtual Meetings of General Assembly of the United Reformed Church

## 1. Records of Virtual Meetings

- 1.1 Any streaming and/or recording<sup>1</sup> of Virtual Meetings does not replace the formal minutes of the meeting and the decisions made. Formal minutes shall continue to be maintained and retained.

## 2. Operating Procedure

- 2.1 The Virtual Meeting will commence when the Moderator opens the meeting, within the requirements set out in the Rules of Procedure.
- 2.2 At the start of any meeting the Moderator shall make reasonable efforts to confirm that members can hear and be heard during the Virtual Meeting. The meeting will not start until the Moderator is satisfied that all is in order.
- 2.3 Where available video as well as audio should be normally used during Virtual Meetings. Where video is not available, or it is not safe for the attendee to use video, then audio only may be used.
- 2.4. The Virtual Meeting will finish when the Moderator formally closes the meeting.

## 3. Managing contributions from members during Virtual Meetings

- 3.1. All microphones should be set to mute at the start of the Virtual Meeting, apart from the Moderator and any (co)host(s). Microphones should only be unmuted when a participant is speaking.
- 3.2 The Moderator has absolute discretion to pause or adjourn the meeting at any time, and to remove any virtual attendees from the meeting if their conduct falls short of the expected standards in church.
- 3.3 In all but the smallest meetings, it is helpful if the Moderator is not also the host. The host may be a staff member(s) or volunteer(s) who are not a member of the meeting in the same way that such people may assist with stewarding a physical meeting.

## 4. Voting on items during the meeting

- 4.1 All decisions shall preferably be made by using any built in voting mechanism in the Virtual Meeting software, otherwise the Moderator will ask each individual member to raise their hand, either physically or using built in features, or to confirm verbally their agreement.
- 4.2 Voting shall normally use built in voting mechanisms, but where this causes a difficulty with more than one person joining a meeting from the same location in order for each person to have a vote then each person should log in on a separate device, or by telephone, or another piece of software used for voting. In a very small meeting, where the Moderator can see everyone on the screen at once, it may be possible to resolve this informally.
- 4.3 Voting on any motion whose effect is to alter, add to, modify or supersede the Basis, the Structure and any other form or expression of the polity and doctrinal formulations of the United Reformed Church, is governed by paragraph 3(1) and (2) of the Structure.

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1. Meetings should not normally be recorded, in order to comply fully with both safeguarding and data privacy policies.

### **5. Attendance**

- 5.1 All Virtual Meetings are required to meet any previously agreed quorum for meetings, where such a quorum has been specified.

### **6. Interpretation of Standing Orders**

- 6.1 Where the Moderator is required to interpret any Standing Orders in light of the requirements of a Virtual Meeting, they shall take advice from the Clerk before making a ruling. The Moderator's decision in all cases shall be final.

### **7. En bloc business**

- 7.1 The Moderator, Clerk, and General Secretary shall together decide which items of business shall be taken en bloc. Placing business in the en bloc category does not imply anything about the importance of any item of business, merely that those planning the meeting think that it may be possible to agree the business without discussion. Any members wishing to have items removed from en bloc business should notify the Clerk by a stated time in advance of the meeting. If three or more members have so notified, then the business shall be added to the agenda of the meeting, otherwise en bloc business shall be voted upon without any discussion.

### **8. Business requiring discussion**

- 8.1 It is not possible to use Consensus Decision-Making in its normal way during a Virtual Meeting, since Consensus Decision-Making relies upon the Moderator being able to sense the mood of the meeting and the members which requires senses not available in a Virtual Meeting. However, all meetings should still be conducted in the spirit and ethos of seeking consensus.
- 8.2 At any time during the debate, the Moderator may use the procedure indicated in Standing Order 4.1 to hold an Informal Straw Poll, which may be held purely to discern the mood of the meeting without making any decision. The Moderator may invite members to speak in the order they see fit. The Moderator may ask if anyone who has not yet contributed wishes to speak.
- 8.3 All decisions shall be made by vote, using the procedure set out in Standing Order 4.1. The Moderator, Clerk, and General Secretary shall together decide in advance which items of business require a simple majority, and which require a two thirds majority.<sup>2</sup> This Standing Order does not override any other provision for a specific majority set out elsewhere in the Standing Orders, particularly Standing Orders 10.12, 10.13 and 10.14.

### **9. Presentation of business**

- 9.1 All reports of committees, together with the draft motions arising therefrom, shall be delivered to the General Secretary by a date to be determined, so that they may be circulated to members in time for consideration before the date of the Assembly meeting.
- 9.2 A Synod may deliver to the General Secretary not less than twelve weeks before the commencement of the meeting of the Assembly notice in writing of a motion for consideration at the Assembly. This notice shall include the names of those appointed to propose and second the motion at the Assembly.
- 9.3 A local church wishing to put forward a motion for consideration by the General Assembly shall submit the motion to its Synod for consideration and, if the Synod so decides, transmission to the Assembly, at such time as will enable the Synod to comply with Standing Order 9.2 above.

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2. For example, agreeing the minutes of the previous meeting might reasonably be taken on a simple majority, whereas a major strategic decision with significant financial implications requires a greater level of support than a one vote majority.

- 9.4 A member of the Assembly may deliver to the General Secretary not less than 21 days before the date of the meeting of the Assembly a notice in writing of a motion (which notice must include the name of a seconder) to be included in the Assembly agenda. If the subject matter of such a notice of motion appears to the General Secretary to be an infringement of the rights of a Synod through which the matter could properly have been raised, the General Secretary shall inform the member accordingly and bring the matter before the Business Committee which shall advise the Assembly as to the procedure to be followed.
- 9.5 Proposals for amendments to the Basis and Structure of the URC, which may be made by the Mission Council or a committee of the General Assembly or a Synod, shall be in the hands of the General Secretary not later than 12 weeks before the opening of the Assembly. The General Secretary, in addition to the normal advice to members of the Assembly, shall, as quickly as possible, inform all Synod Clerks of the proposed amendment.
- 9.6 It shall not be in order, whether in en bloc business or any other decision-making, to move a motion or amendment which:
- 9.6.1 contravenes any part of the Basis of Union, or
  - 9.6.2 involves the Church in expenditure without prior consideration by the appropriate committee, or
  - 9.6.3 pre-empts discussion of a matter to be considered later in the agenda, or
  - 9.6.4 amends or reverses a decision reached by the Assembly at its preceding two meetings unless the Moderator, Clerk and General Secretary together decide that changed circumstances or new evidence justify earlier reconsideration of the matter, or
  - 9.6.5 is not related to the report of a committee and has not been the subject of 21 days' notice under Standing Order 9.4, or
  - 9.6.6 simply reaffirms existing work.

The decision of the Moderator (in the case of 9.6.1, 9.6.2, 9.6.3, 9.6.5, and 9.6.6) and of the Moderator with the Clerk and the General Secretary (in the case of 9.6.4) on the application of this Standing Order shall be final.

## 10. The business

- 10.1 If notice has been given of two or more motions on the same subject, or two or more amendments to the same motion, these shall be taken in the order decided by the Moderator on the advice of the Clerk.
- 10.2 A report presented to the Assembly by a committee or Synod, under Standing Order 9.1, shall be received for debate, unless notice has been duly given under Standing Order 9.4 of a motion to refer back to that committee or Synod the whole or part of the report and its attached motion(s). Such a motion for reference back shall be debated and voted upon before the relevant report is itself debated. To carry such a motion two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. When a report has been received for debate, and before any motions consequent upon it are proposed, any member may speak to a matter arising from the report which is not the subject of a motion.
- 10.3 During the meeting of the Assembly and on the report of a committee, notice (including the names of proposer and seconder) shall be given to the Clerk of any new motions which arise from the material of the report, and of any amendments which affect the substance of motions already presented. During the course of the debate a new motion or amendment may be stated orally without supporting speech in order to ascertain whether a member is willing to second it.
- 10.4 No motion or amendment shall be spoken to by its proposer, debated, or put to the Assembly unless it is known that there is a seconder. The only exceptions to this are motions presented on behalf of a committee, of which printed notice has been given,



and the procedural motions in Standing Orders 10.13, 10.14, and 10.15. The procedural motions in Standing Orders 10.13, 10.14, and 10.15 may be moved and spoken to without the proposer having first obtained and announced the consent of a seconder. They must, however, be seconded before being put to the vote, and precedence as between the procedural motions is determined by the fact that after one of them is before the Assembly no other motion can be moved until that one has been dealt with.

- 10.5 A seconder may second without speaking and, by declaring the intention of doing so, reserve the right of speaking until a later period in the debate.
- 10.6 An amendment shall be either to omit words or to insert words or to do both, but no amendment shall be in order which has the effect of introducing an irrelevant proposal or of negating the motion. The Moderator may rule that a proposed amendment should be treated as an alternative motion.
- 10.7 If an amendment is carried, the motion as amended shall take the place of the original motion and shall become the substantive motion upon which any further amendment may be moved. If an amendment is rejected, a further amendment with a different outcome may be moved.
- 10.8 An amendment which has been moved and seconded shall be disposed of before any further amendment may be moved, but notice may be given of intention to move a further amendment should the one before the Assembly be rejected.
- 10.9 The mover may, with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Assembly, alter the motion or amendment proposed.
- 10.10 A motion or amendment may be withdrawn by the proposer with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Assembly. Any such consent shall be signified without discussion. It shall not be in order for any member to speak upon it after the proposer has asked permission to withdraw unless such permission shall have been refused.
- 10.11 Alternative (but not directly negative) motions may be moved and seconded in competition with a motion before the Assembly. It shall be for the Moderator, on the advice of the Clerk, to rule when motions shall be considered as alternatives under the Terms of this Standing Order.
  - 10.11.1 When such draft alternative motions have been received by the General Secretary, the Moderators may ask the General Secretary to convene a meeting (physical or virtual) of the proposers, to ascertain if it may be possible to agree on a single draft motion to put before the Assembly, or to clarify the areas of disagreement.
  - 10.11.2 If the Assembly has alternative motions before it, each proposer shall be given the opportunity to present their motion in an order decided by the Moderator.
  - 10.11.3 After any amendments duly moved under Standing Orders 10.6, 10.7 and 10.8 have been dealt with and debate on the alternative motions has ended, the movers shall reply to the debate in reverse order to that in which they spoke initially. The first vote shall be a vote in favour of each of the motions, put in the order in which they were proposed, the result not being announced for one until it is announced for all. If any of them obtains a majority of those voting, it becomes the sole motion before the Assembly.  
If none of them does so, the motion having the fewest votes is discarded. Should the lowest two be equal, the Moderator gives a casting vote. The voting process is repeated until one motion achieves a majority of those voting.
  - 10.11.4 Once a sole motion remains, further discussion is permissible and votes for and against that motion shall be taken in the normal way and in accordance with Standing Order 4.
- 10.12 In the course of the business any member may move that the question under consideration be not put. This motion takes precedence over every motion before the



Assembly. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded and the proposer of the motion or amendment under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule. Should the motion be carried, the business shall immediately end and the Assembly shall proceed to the next business.

- 10.13 In the course of any discussion, any member may move that the question be now put. This is sometimes described as “the closure motion”. If the Moderator senses that there is a wish or need to close a debate, the Moderator may ask whether any member wishes so to move; the Moderator may not simply declare a debate closed. Provided that it appears to the Moderator that the motion is a fair use of this rule, the vote shall be taken upon it immediately it has been seconded. When an amendment is under discussion, this motion shall apply only to that amendment. To carry this motion, two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. The mover of the original motion or amendment, as the case may be, retains the right of reply before the vote is taken on the motion or amendment.
- 10.14 During the course of a debate on a motion any member may move that decision on this motion be deferred to the next Assembly. This rule does not apply to debates on amendments since the Assembly needs to decide the final form of a motion before it can responsibly vote on deferral. The motion then takes precedence over other business. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded and the proposer of the motion under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule or that deferral would have the effect of annulling the motion. To carry this motion, two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. At the discretion of the Moderator, the General Secretary may be instructed by a further motion, duly seconded, to refer the matter for consideration by other councils and/or by one or more committees of the Assembly. The General Secretary shall provide for the deferred motion to be presented again at the next Meeting of the General Assembly.

## **11. Timing of speeches and of other business**

- 11.1 Save by prior agreement of the Business Committee, speeches made in the presentation of reports concerning past work of Assembly committees which are to be open to question, comment or discussion shall not exceed five minutes.
- 11.2 The Assembly may meet in parallel sessions or Breakout Rooms to consider the past work of Assembly committees for questions and comments. Any draft motions arising therefrom must be dealt with in a plenary session of the Assembly.
- 11.3 Save by the prior agreement of the Business Committee, speeches made in support of the motions from any Assembly committee, including the Mission Council, or from any Synod shall not in aggregate exceed 15 minutes, nor shall speeches in support of any particular committee or Synod motion exceed 5 minutes, (e.g. a committee with four motions may not exceed 15 minutes). The allowed an aggregate of five minutes, unless a longer period be recommended by the Business Committee or determined by the Moderator.
- 11.4 Each subsequent speaker in any debate shall be allowed 3 minutes unless the Moderator shall determine otherwise; it shall, in particular, be open to the Moderator to determine that all speeches in a debate or from a particular point in a debate shall be of not more than a different specified number of minutes.
- 11.5 When a speech is made on behalf of a committee, it shall be so stated. Otherwise a speaker shall begin by giving name and accreditation to the Assembly.
- 11.6 Secretaries of committees and members of staff who are not members of Assembly may speak on the report of a committee for which they have responsibility at the

request of the Convenor concerned. They may speak on other reports with the consent of the Moderator.

- 11.7 In each debate, no one shall address the Assembly more than once without the permission of the Moderator, except that at the close of each debate the proposer of the motion or the amendment, as the case may be, shall have the right to reply, but must strictly confine the reply to answering previous speakers and must not introduce new matters. Such reply shall close the debate on the motion or the amendment.
- 11.8 The foregoing Standing Order (11.7) shall not prevent the asking or answering of a question which arises from the matter before the Assembly or from a speech made in the debate upon it.
- 11.9 An invited speaker, whether speaking to a draft motion or not, may address the Assembly for such period of time as may be agreed by the Business Committee.

## 12. Questions

- 12.1 A member may, if 2 days' notice in writing has been given to the General Secretary, ask the Moderator or the Convenor of any committee any question on any matter relating to the business of the Assembly to which no reference is made in any report before the Assembly.
- 12.2 A member may, when given opportunity by the Moderator, ask the presenter of any report before the Assembly a question seeking additional information or explanation relating to matters contained within the report.
- 12.3 Questions asked under Standing Orders 12.1 and 12.2 shall be put and answered without discussion.

## 13. Points of order, personal explanations, dissent

- 13.1 A member shall have the right to call attention to a point of order, and immediately on this being done any other member addressing the Assembly shall cease speaking until the Moderator has determined the question of order. The decision on any point of order rests entirely with the Moderator. Any member calling to order unnecessarily is liable to censure of the Assembly.
- 13.2 A member feeling that some material part of a former speech by such member at the same meeting has been misunderstood or is being grossly misinterpreted by a later speaker may request the Moderator's permission to make a personal explanation. If the Moderator so permits, a member so rising shall be entitled to be heard forthwith.
- 13.3 The right to record in the minutes a dissent from any decision of the Assembly shall only be granted to a member by the Moderator if the reason stated, either verbally at the time or later in writing, appears to the Moderator to fall within the provisions of paragraph 10 of the Basis of Union.
- 13.4 The decision of the Moderator on a point of order, or on the admissibility of a personal explanation, or on the right to have a dissent recorded, shall not be open to discussion.

## 14. Admission of the public and closed sessions

- 14.1 Only those who are members of the meeting, staff members in attendance, or invited guests may join a Virtual Meeting. However, a meeting in open session may be shown as a live stream.
- 14.2 A closed session is one in which the business is highly sensitive. Only members of Assembly, the Legal Adviser, and any technical staff required to enable Assembly to function may be present. Neither content nor process may be divulged to non-members, save specific information authorised by the Moderator in consultation with the Clerk and the Legal Adviser. No social media in any form may be used during a closed session, nor to report upon such closed session. Any live streaming must be switched off. Minutes will be taken, but these will be held *in retentis* by the Clerk, and shall not be made available to non-members.

- 14.3 A closed session may be called for at any time in any decision-making mode, and voted upon by the Assembly, requiring a simple majority. This motion takes precedence over every motion before the Assembly. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded, and the proposer of the motion or amendment under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule. Should the motion be carried the business shall immediately pause while non-members leave the meeting.
- 14.4 If a matter is known to be highly sensitive in advance, then the Assembly Officers, consulting the Legal Adviser if necessary, may announce in advance that a certain piece of business will be conducted in a closed session giving their reasons.
- 14.5 Members of Assembly who leave during a closed session may not be re- admitted.

## 15. Communications during the course of debate

- 15.1 The primary responsibility of members is to attend to the business and participate in the decision making. Those present must refrain both from posting on social media sites during business sessions and from commenting upon partially completed business. It is the responsibility of the communications committee's staff to make official announcements. This restriction is only in place when in session; those attending are free to join in the online debates during breaks and after the close of business in respect of business that the Assembly has completed. Everything written and shared on social media sites at any time is the sole responsibility of the author, and is subject to the same defamation laws as any other form of written communication.

## 16. Record of the Assembly

- 16.1 A record of attendance at the meetings of the Assembly shall be kept in such a manner as the Business Committee may determine.
- 16.2 The draft minutes of each day's proceedings shall be made available in an appropriate form normally on the following day. They shall, after any necessary correction, be approved at the opening of a subsequent session. Concerning the minutes of the closing day of the Assembly the Clerk shall submit a motion approving their insertion in the full minutes of the Assembly after review and any necessary correction by the Officers of the Assembly. Before such a motion is voted upon, any member may ask to have read out the written minute on any particular item.
- 16.3 A signed copy of the minutes shall be preserved in the custody of the General Secretary as the official record of the Assembly's proceedings.
- 16.4 As soon as possible after the Assembly meeting ends, the substance of the minutes together with any other relevant papers shall be published as a "Record of Assembly" and a copy sent to every member of the Assembly, each Synod and Local Church.

## 17. Suspension and amendment of Standing Orders

- 17.1 In any case of urgency or upon proposal of a motion of which due notice has been given, any one or more of the Standing Orders may be suspended at any meeting, provided that three-fourths of the members of the Assembly present and voting shall so decide.
- 17.2 Motions to amend the Standing Orders shall be referred to the Clerk of the Assembly for report before being voted on by the Assembly (or, in case of urgency, by the Mission Council). The Clerk of the Assembly may from time to time suggest amendments.





Illustrations of the URC cross and fish logo, one of the many activities offered by the Church during the Coronavirus lockdown:

Carole Marsden	page 30
Eleanor Marsden	page 268
Rosie Stone	page 290

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