

To: Members of Mission Council,
staff in attendance and observers

April 2017

Dear Colleagues,

Mission Council
Friday to Sunday, 12 – 14 May 2017
High Leigh, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire

I look forward warmly to seeing you at Mission Council, and write now to mention several practical matters.

1. There will be an introduction session at 12 noon on the first day for new Mission Council members, to outline processes and procedures, introduce the Assembly officers, and explain some items of business. Old timers who would like to attend are welcome too. A full version of our rules for procedure is in the 'Standing Orders' (which are also used at General Assembly), and these can be found on the URC website at: <http://bit.ly/2ol2sWX>, pp.247-257.
2. In recent Mission Council meetings we have taken some of our business *En Bloc*. The fact that an item is listed as *En Bloc* does not mean it is less important than timetabled items. Rather, the *En Bloc* list contains those items where the Moderators think that decisions might be reached responsibly without further discussion. You will see that the agenda includes a slot when these items will be voted on.

I suggest you read the *En Bloc* papers first. This will give you time to contact the author of a paper if you have questions. Authors' names and email addresses are noted on the cover sheets. If you think any of these papers need discussion at Mission Council, particularly if you disagree with a proposed course of action, you may ask that a piece of business be removed from *En Bloc*. A sign-up sheet will be available at the meeting, where you can list the paper you wish to be withdrawn. If an item gets three signatures by close of business on the first day, it will be withdrawn from *En Bloc* and added to our agenda, with time given for discussion.

I need to remind you too that we really rely on every Mission Council member to read the papers and take note of information to relay back to their synods. In using the *En Bloc* method of decision-making there is no wish to bury information or to avoid discussions which Mission Council ought to have. We must all ensure the appropriate flow of information from Mission Council to the synods.

3. You should already have several papers from the first mailing: a cover letter, an expenses form, a list of members, directions to the venue, and (for new members) 'What we are about in Mission Council.' If any of these are missing, please contact Helen Munt at Church House, 020 7916 2020, helen.munt@urc.org.uk
4. Observers and URC staff who are not members of Mission Council should not participate in decision making. Staff members are welcome to speak but, like observers, they should not use orange and blue cards.
5. We are not expected to post on social media sites during business sessions. This restriction applies when Council is in session. It also applies during a break, to any unfinished matter that has been carried forward to another session rather than concluded. Within that understanding, members may join in online debates during breaks and at the close of business. As ever, everything shared on these sites is the responsibility of the author and subject to the same defamation laws as any other written communication.
6. All bedrooms are en-suite. To comply with the venue's health and safety regulations, please do not bring food from outside into the Centre, nor take food from the dining room to your room.

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7. Below are the papers enclosed in this mailing listed according to the ways we mean to address them. Notice that two papers – D2 and J2 - which have to be prepared late, will only be available at the venue.

Category A: En Bloc

B2 and B3 Children’s and Youth Work Committee
F3 Faith and Order Committee: report on ongoing work
G1, G2, G3 Finance Committee
H3 Ministries Committee: updates
I2, I3, I4, I5, I6 Mission Committee
I8 Mission and Discipleship: Walking the Way
J1 Nominations Committee: main list of nominations
M2, M3, M5 Clerk and General Secretary
O1 Human Resources Advisory Group: report on work
R1 and R2 Safeguarding Advisory Group
T1 MIND: Changes to the Disciplinary Process
U1 Task Group on the Future of General Assembly

Category B: Majority Voting

M1 Clerk: appointment of Minute Secretary
M4 Law and Polity Advisory Group: Rules for Appeals

Category C: Consensus decision making

B1 URC Youth: commitment to God’s creation
F1 and F2 Faith and Order: Isolated Membership, and the Future of Church Membership
H1 Ministries Committee: Call
I7 Mission Committee: the World Council of Churches 2021 Assembly
J2 Nominations: supplement to J1 (late paper; to be tabled at High Leigh)
X2 West Midlands Synod: stipendiary minister numbers

Alternative resolutions

Papers D1 and Y1 present alternative resolutions about Windermere. These will be considered together under Standing Order 4.10, then Council will move to Consensus Decision Making, once one of the two has been identified as the substantive resolution. The Moderators deem this matter ‘urgent’.

Paper H2 presents two alternative ways forward for ministerial deployment. Again we start under Standing Order 4.10, then move to majority voting; we have to resolve this, one way or another.

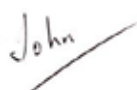
A number of matters are to be given agenda time, but do not presently require Mission Council decision

D2 Teaching staff appointment at Westminster College (late paper; to be tabled at High Leigh)
I1 Mission Committee: Greenbelt
I9 Mission Committee: the Rural Advocate (presentation but no paper)
X1 The Scottish Church Census
Z1 The Synod Moderators: where is God calling the URC?

8. A request from the Chaplains: are you musical; do you sing; do you play an instrument that you could bring? We hope to assemble a small choir and orchestra to lead hymns in the closing communion service. If you can contribute, you are warmly invited to do so. If you need a music stand, please bring it. If you think you need music transposed, please email gwencoll@gmail.com or revdmrobinson@gmail.com before 5 May.

9. As always, please come to share, listen, reflect and discern together, and to support each other in fellowship outside the formal timetable. Let us treat each other with grace as we seek the guidance of God.

With best wishes,
Yours sincerely,



Mission Council

High Leigh Conference Centre
12 to 14 May 2017



The
United
Reformed
Church



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**United
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Church**

www.urc.org.uk

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on behalf of Mission Council.

Groups – May 2017

The first named person in each Group is asked to act as group Leader and the second named person in each group as Reporter

<p>A</p>	<p>DAVID GREATOREX <i>Leader</i> PHILIP NEVARD <i>Reporter</i> Jane Baird Gwen Collins Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor John Ellis Bill Gould Joan Grindrod-Helmn James Merrilees Andrew Mills Victor Russell</p>	<p>B</p>	<p>SIMON FAIRNINGTON <i>Leader</i> HELEN LIDGETT <i>Reporter</i> Nigel Adkinson Francis Brienen Mitchell Bunting Derek Estill Rosie Martin Chris Parker Kim Plumpton Mark Robinson Paul Whittle</p>
<p>C</p>	<p>DAVID PICKERING <i>Leader</i> PAMELA DENT <i>Reporter</i> Jake Convery Rita Griffiths Ian Hardie Anthony Haws Barbara Jones Tony Lee Charles Mather John Proctor Carol Rogers</p>	<p>D</p>	<p>JACKY EMBREY <i>Leader</i> DAN MORRELL <i>Reporter</i> David Herbert Michael Jagessar Brian Jolly Margaret Marshall Neil Messer Jacqui Philips John Samson Nigel Uden Soo Webster</p>
<p>E</p>	<p>PETER MEEK <i>Leader</i> ANDREW EVANS <i>Reporter</i> James Breslin Melanie Campbell Ruth Dixon Nicola Furley-Smith Alison Micklem Andrew Middleton Edward Sanniez Steve Summers Alan Yates</p>	<p>F</p>	<p>RICHARD CHURCH <i>Leader</i> CLARE DOWNING <i>Reporter</i> Bernie Collins Steve Faber Michael Hopkins Keir Hounsome Morag McLintock Maria Mills Paul Robinson Fiona Thomas David Thompson</p>
<p>G</p>	<p>RUTH WHITEHEAD <i>Leader</i> FRANK LIDDELL <i>Reporter</i> Andy Braunston Susan Brown Adrian Bulley Dick Gray Mark Kirkbride Timothy Meachin Shirley Miller Grace Pengelly Kevin Watson</p>	<p>H</p>	<p>SIMON WALKLING <i>Leader</i> GRAHAM HOSLETT <i>Reporter</i> David Grosch-Miller Gwen Jennings Hannah Jones Jennifer Mills Chris Reed John Smith David Tatem Elizabeth Welch</p>

Mission Council Agenda

12-14 May 2017

24/04/2017

Friday 12 May		
12:00 – 12:45	Introduction session for new MC members (Sycamore Room 3)	
12:00 – 12:45	Registration in the Main House reception area	
1:00	Lunch	
Session One		
2:00 – 3:30	Opening Worship Appointment of Minute Secretary Introductions and Administration Minutes from October 2016 (http://bit.ly/2oDq3NO) Matters Arising The Revd Bernard Thorogood: birthday greetings Our context for mission: The Scottish Church Census	M1 X1
3:30	Tea Break <i>Access to rooms available</i>	
Session Two		
4:15 – 6:15	Faith and Order: two papers on membership in the Church Our context for mission: God's rural work Ministries, and West Midlands Synod: three papers on ministry in the Church	F1 and F2 I9 H1, H2 and X2
6:45 – 8:00	Dinner	
Session Three		
8:00 – 9:15	Where is God calling the URC? Plenary introduction and group-work. Evening prayers	Z1
Saturday 13 May		
8:30	Breakfast	
Session Four		
9:15 – 10:45	Morning prayers Education & Learning and Finance; Mersey and NW Synods: the Windermere Centre	D1 and Y1
10:45	Coffee	

Session Five 11:15	Our context for mission: commitment to God's creation Matters removed from en bloc Appeal, Reference and Constitutional Review	B1 M4
1:00 – 2:00	Lunch	
Session Six 2:00 – 4:00	Free time or remaindered business	
Session Seven 4:30 – 6:30	En Bloc business Nominations (supplement) Westminster College appointment World Council of Churches Assembly 2021 Windermere (continued)	En Bloc J2 D2 I7 D1 and Y1
6:45 – 8:00	Dinner	
Session Eight 8:00 – 9:15	Remaindered business Evening prayers	
Sunday 14 May		
8:30	Breakfast	
Session Nine 9:30 – 10:45	Communion service	
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee	
Session Ten 11:30 – 12:45	Opening Prayer Remaindered business Where is God calling the URC? Possible steps forward. Greenbelt Farewells and thanks Closing prayer	Z1 I1
1:00	Lunch and departures	
1:45 – 3:00 (max)	Meeting of committee convenors (Sycamore Room 3)	

Paper B1

United Reformed Church Youth
Commitment to God's Creation





Paper B1

United Reformed Church Youth

Commitment to God's Creation

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Dan Morrell urcyamoderator@gmail.com
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	<p>a) Mission Council commends the work already carried out by children's and youth work committee, children's and youth work department and URC Youth Executive in reducing the overall carbon footprint of the annual URC Youth programme.</p> <p>b) Mission Council warmly receives the document 'Commitment to God's Creation', adopted by URC Youth Assembly 2017 as a mandate for change.</p> <p>c) Mission Council instructs URC Youth Executive to work collaboratively with mission committee and communications committee to advance this work and develop further ideas to get, particularly, children and young people involved in tackling climate change.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Ensuring enactment of the URC Environmental Policy, as well as URC Youth's own commitment to tackling climate change. Reducing the overall carbon footprint of the URC, in particular that of URC Youth. Also promoting climate justice among those of URC Youth age.
Main points	The work already done is good, but more is needed.
Previous documents	URC Environmental Policy; URC Ethical Investment Guidelines
Consultation has taken place with...	URC Youth Assembly; URC Youth Executive; Grace Pengelly; Lucy Zwolinska; Derek Estill; Andrew Weston; Alison Greaves; ACT Community

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Work will continue to be done with the Joint Public Issues Team, and the Big Church Switch group

Commitment to God's Creation

Background

1. Mission Council will recall the adoption of the United Reformed Church's Environmental Policy at General Assembly 2016. This highlights 'action which churches, synods and Assembly will seek to implement with respect to caring for Creation and reducing the Church's carbon footprint' (Assembly Reports, 2016).
2. Paragraph 5.6 of the policy 'encourages URC Youth to develop a strategy responding to the issues of climate change'.
3. Whilst the issue of Climate Change was, of course, already on the hearts and minds of many of URC Youth, the URC Youth Executive felt, in light of Paragraph 5.6, it appropriate to make a commitment of its own to tackling climate change and reducing the impact the URC Youth programme has on the environment. As well as continuing to uphold the appropriate sections of the URC's Environmental Policy.
4. As such, I drafted a list of commitments to this effect. This list, with a short introduction, is included as an Appendix to this paper.
5. The document was discussed, amended and approved by URC Youth Executive. It was then taken on their behalf to URC Youth Assembly 2017.
6. A conversation was held informally at Youth Assembly, before the business was tabled, between those who were particularly interested in the topic. Wonderful conversations took place and the young people highlighted several things:
 - a) It's not just our duty as Christians to take action on climate change, but our duty as humans;
 - b) Social media is a huge channel through which to make a change, and must be utilized to its full capabilities for this purpose;
 - c) Telling personal success stories has a huge impact;
 - d) People need concrete things to put their finger on if they are to do anything.
7. The business was tabled and was received very positively by Assembly the next day. The following resolution was passed by consensus:
 - a) Youth Assembly continues to express deep concern at changes to our global climate brought about by human activity and the disastrous consequences this is having for God's creation and people.
 - b) Assembly acknowledges and appreciates the steps that have already been taken by URC Youth Executive and the Children's and Youth Work Department to reduce the Assembly's carbon footprint.
 - c) Assembly warmly welcomes the URC's revised Environmental Policy accepted at its General Assembly in July 2016, outlining the need for: caring for God's creation, reducing its carbon footprint, improving recycling, minimising waste and improving efficiencies on finite natural resources.
 - d) Having recognised the need for action, Youth Assembly adopts the 'Commitment To God's Creation' as a mandate for change, and calls upon URC Youth to engage wholly with this document.
8. Another, largely procedural resolution, was passed after this asking for a report on this work to be delivered to Mission Council, which brings us up to the present.

The work so far

9. The key emitter in the yearly calendar is Youth Assembly, mainly because it is the largest event. Focus has, therefore, been put into reducing the Assembly's carbon footprint to begin with.
 - a) Youth Assembly's venue since 2012 has been Whitemoor Lakes, Alrewas, Staffordshire. This venue is very environmentally friendly. Well-insulated walls and ceilings reduce heat losses.
 - b) Its waste is taken to a site where it is burnt and used to power 40,000 homes in Derbyshire.
 - c) A coach is provided free of charge for those travelling by train to the nearby station (Tamworth). Whilst other primary reasons for this coach include cost reduction for participants, and convenience. A coach also saves on having numerous taxis take participants to the venue. It is also an incentive to get the train to Assembly, this being a more environmentally friendly option than cars.
 - d) This year each participant (young and old!) was given a thermos mug to use for tea and coffee. These were finely decorated, I must add. This avoids the use (and consequent disposal) of paper cups that the venue provides for guests. These mugs can be used again throughout the year, and indeed at the next Assembly.
 - e) All the forms that needed filling in by participants were uploaded onto a secure section of the URC Youth website. Printed copies were available for those who needed these. This reduced paper usage by over 1,000 sheets.
10. Venues for the 4 annual URC Youth Executive meeting are always selected close to train stations, for convenience and also to encourage use of trains. Correspondence is made beforehand so that Executive members coordinate taxi sharing from the station.

Work proposed or underway

11. In January I attended a meeting for the Big Church Switch. This is one of the flagship parts of the document. The simplicity of signing a church up to this means that individuals from URC Youth can take this initiative back to local churches. Members of Mission Council are encouraged, as is also indicated in the Environmental Policy, to encourage and promote the Big Church Switch in their own settings.
12. Promotion work will also take place for Eco-Church or Eco-Congregation (in Scotland). URC Youth Executive will ensure young people feel adequately equipped to help their churches achieve an Eco-Church or Congregation award.
13. The URC Youth website resources for mental health have proven useful to many people since their inception. The aim would be to replicate something similar for tackling climate change. Resources will therefore be made available on the website, both in house and from other organisations, to aid young people in making a difference in their local settings and synods.
14. Isolation among young people in a local church setting is a common issue; often they are alone or in a very small group. As such it is very easy for young people to feel like they cannot make a difference in their church or local area. However, the URC Youth structures allow for effective use of each synod youth representative (serving on URC Youth Executive) as a liaison between local/synod and Assembly level to ensure that no young person feels like they are climbing the mountain alone.
15. Further reductions will be made by URC Youth Executive and the Children's and Youth Work office in paper usage.

16. As the work continues, it is hoped that URC Youth Executive will liaise with, in particular, mission and communications committees, and relevant Church House staff, to further this work and ensure that the collaborative thinking can bear good fruit.

Conclusion

17. It is the mind of Youth Executive that the Church has made environmentally based decisions when it is convenient. Rather than as a vital decision that has to be made in order to preserve God's creation. The Church does need to be going out of its way, bending over backwards, to preserve our world, not just do it when it suits us.
18. The commitment passed at Youth Assembly acknowledges this and reminds us all that not all things are necessities. Some things are, indeed, luxuries. As such it is time that the URC moved on from its luxuries and started taking action.
19. Promoting awareness is vital, and if people knew the disastrous effects some of these luxuries have on the environment, then perhaps they'd be considered for removal.
20. This report doesn't mark the start, or the end of URC Youth Assembly's work, but is simply an update. The commitment acknowledges that work has already been done to reduce the carbon footprint of the URC Youth programme, in particular of the URC Youth Assembly.
21. However the commitment does call for more work to be done, and so all relevant bodies will be consulted as this moves forward to ensure that the maximum potential can be achieved from children and young people's evident enthusiasm for this issue.

Appendix: The Commitment

Introduction

As Christians we are called to be stewards of God's creation and to care for all God's people. The United Reformed Church Youth continues to recognise that human activity is causing significant changes to our global climate with disastrous consequences.

The Youth Assembly has a history of taking action on this issue, and appreciates the efforts that have been made on its behalf by many people to help live lives that demonstrate our commitment to being good stewards.

As part of continuing efforts by the wider United Reformed Church, the Youth Assembly has been called to "develop a strategy responding to the challenge of climate change" (Para. 5.6, Environmental Policy for the United Reformed Church, 2016). This commitment is for all young people within the United Reformed Church and is both a response to this call, and the next step on our continuing journey to live lives that reflect God's love to all.

Commitments

United Reformed Church Youth Assembly:

1. Resolves to:
 - a) enact the United Reformed Church's environmental policy as far as is possible, stating our intent and providing a basis upon which appropriate action may be undertaken.
 - b) raise awareness of the issue of climate change at all levels of the church;
 - c) pray for the people and places affected by climate change, and for those people who are working to promote climate justice;
 - d) raise awareness, through prayer, preaching, Bible study, teaching and discussion, of the need for confession and repentance in relation to the causes of climate change, and of our calling, as God's redeemed people, to live joyfully, simply and responsibly with respect to God's Creation – caring for and treasuring that Creation, and celebrating all that is achieved in fulfilling that calling;
 - e) 'be a church that has taken significant steps to safeguard the integrity of creation, to sustain and renew the life of the earth' (Statement 10 of vision2020);
 - f) promote the 'Big Church Switch' as a clear and powerful message to governments and businesses that Christians are prepared to lead the way and that switching to renewable energy sources is crucial if we are to live.

2. Mandates the URC Youth Executive to:
 - a) make efforts to reduce the annual Assembly's carbon footprint, paper usage and general waste;
 - b) consider transport emissions when selecting meeting venues and locations, with the hope of a reduction in car and air travel;
 - c) promoting personal engagement in addressing climate change, emphasising that little steps can be made individually to make a big difference altogether;
 - d) encourage and support local and Synod youth groups/bodies in their efforts to lobby local councils, MPs and churches to get on board with tackling climate change;
 - e) ensure the United Reformed Church uphold the "...in relation to climate change" addendum (Mission Council November 2015, Paper G2) to the Ethical Investment Guidelines passed at its General Assembly in 2010.

3. Calls on Synod Youth Executives and local youth groups to:
 - a) encourage local churches to become 'Eco-Churches' (England and Wales) or 'Eco-Congregations' (Scotland);
 - b) forge relationships in both ecumenical and interfaith circles to achieve our common goal together;
 - c) consider transport emissions when selecting meeting venues and locations, with the hope of a reduction in car and air travel.

Paper B2

Children's and Youth Work Committee
Pilots Advocate





Paper B2

Children's and Youth Work Committee

Pilots Advocate

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Tim Meachin (committee convener) revd.tim.meachin@gmail.com The Revd Jenny Mills (committee convener elect) revdjmill@btinternet.com
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council supports the children's and youth work committee's decision to appoint a Pilots Advocate, which will be funded from the C&YW budget, and resolves that this post be filled through the nominations committee in the usual way.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Pilots Advocate
Main points	The Pilots Management Committee in consultation with the Children's and Youth Work Committee has introduced the voluntary role of Pilots Advocate.
Previous relevant documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's and Youth Work Committee minutes from September 2016 and February 2017. • Pilots Advocate Role descriptor
Consultation has taken place with...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilots Management Committee • Children's and Youth Work Committee • General Assembly Clerk (regarding due process)

Summary of Impact

Financial	Expenses – responsibility of the Children's and Youth Work Committee budget
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Pilots is made available to other denominations e.g. the Congregational Federation.

Pilots Advocate

Background

- 1.1 Pilots was set up in 1936 by the London Missionary Society in conjunction with the Congregational Union of England and Wales, as a way of saying “thank you” to children across the country who had raised money for missionary ships in the South Seas. It was founded on the great stories of courageous and dynamic people, in particular John Williams whose missionary work was undertaken in the South Seas.
- 1.2 This commitment to recognise and nurture the gifts and talents which children and young people bring to the service of God and His Church continues to sit at the very heart of the Pilots organisation today. The children of the past made their mark through their enthusiastic support of the ‘Missionary Ships’. The contribution children make today is just as important to the ‘world-wide church of Jesus Christ’.
- 1.3 The organisation is financed by the United Reformed Church and is the denomination’s principal formal organisation offered for children and young people. It should also be noted that Pilots companies exist in a variety of denominations.
- 1.4 Pilots operates through the Pilots Management Committee (PMC) as a sub-committee of the Children’s and Youth Work Committee.

The impact of the Children’s and Youth Work Re-structuring

- 2.1 In 2013 the Children’s & Youth Work (CYW) department of the United Reformed Church (URC) underwent radical restructuring following cuts to the CYW budget.
- 2.2 This restructuring affected Pilots more than was realised it would at the time. Whilst there have been some positive elements of being more integrated, the overall effect has not been beneficial to the organisation.
- 2.3 One of the most obvious downsides of the restructuring was the disappearance of the full-time dedicated post of Pilots Development Officer (PDO).
- 2.4 Previously there had been a part-time Master Pilot, a role assigned to a stipendiary minister. The URC’s decision to create the PDO post in 1998 was bold and visionary. The part-time Master Pilot role came to an end as the PDO became the “face of Pilots” in the Church. As a consequence the number of Pilots companies increased.

Changes in recent years

- 3.1 The specific activities of the PDO were:
 - contributing to Synod meetings;
 - visiting ministerial training colleges;
 - encouraging Synods to appoint Regional Pilots Officers (RPOs);
 - developing a network of RPOs,
 - who would work closely with Children & Youth Development Officers (CYDOs) and hold annual strategy meetings;
 - visiting and encouraging Pilots Companies.

- 3.2 The restructuring mentioned above, together with the restructuring of Synods and consequent demise of Districts, resulted in many local churches as well as Pilots Companies, feeling isolated - and numbers dropped.
- 3.3 Not every Synod has been able to identify and appoint a dedicated Regional Pilots Officer. The role of RPO, in some synods, has been passed to already over loaded CYDOs. In these synods, Pilots will, inevitably, not be a priority.
- 3.4 All 3 areas of C&Y work, Pilots, Children's and Youth are now centred on the Head of Children's and Youth Work Development post. (HCYWD). It became clear that the programme, pre-restructuring, which was being delivered by 3 equal Assembly C&YW posts, supported by 3 administrative posts, could not be sustainable now, given the current staffing levels of 1 Assembly appointed post plus a Programme Officer and 2 administrative posts. There is little time for the HCYWD to give to development as time is necessarily consumed by day to day operational work.
- 3.5 In all of this, the identity of Pilots has been affected – although it has become part of the bigger picture it is now a smaller part of it, it has become the wallpaper, unnoticed and under-promoted. Pilots ceased to be 'offered' to churches in the same way as there was no PDO to promote the work, there was no national overview and no longer did the opportunities exist to visit and encourage synods and local churches to consider Pilots as a way to enhance their missional discipleship.
- 3.6 Company numbers have declined since 2012 with the ending of the PDO post.

2012	81
2013	75
2014	65
2015	61
2016	59

Why have a Pilots Advocate?

- 4.1 In its efforts to identify and arrest the decline in numbers and encourage growth, the PMC believes:
- that it is necessary to establish the place and role of Pilots in the C&Y programmes of the church;
 - that the Children's and Youth Work Committee (CYWC) needs a clear understanding about the overall programme being offered to the churches;
 - that Pilots is an integral part of that programme.
- 4.2 The PMC believes that appointing someone, in a voluntary capacity with a knowledge and passion for Pilots, who could take a lead in the advocacy of Pilots across the URC will provide a strong input to the future of the organisation and so play a major part in addressing the decline and encouraging growth.
- 4.3 Hence the members of the PMC meeting requested:
- that the C&YW Committee identify the programme of C&YW to be delivered;
 - that Pilots is promoted as the programme offered and supported by the URC for work with children;
 - that consideration be given to the creation of an honorary, fixed period (2 – 3 years), position for a Pilots Advocate whose job would be that of a URC-wide advocate for Pilots, fulfilling the encouraging, enabling and supporting role carried out previously by the PDO.

- 4.4 In Feb 2016. The CYWC passed the following resolutions:

“Pilots is the Children’s and Youth Work programme, for those aged 5 to 18, offered and supported by the United Reformed Church and will be promoted as such, where it is appropriate.”

“In response to a suggestion from the Pilots Management Committee, the CYWC advocates the creation of the role of ‘Master Pilot’/ Pilots Advocate. This would be a fixed term appointment to advocate, encourage, enable and support Pilots (similar to the previous PDO). The CYWC asks the PMC to draw up details of this initiative, including a role description, resource requirements and costings to be considered at a future meeting.”

Funding

- 5.1 Funding for the Pilots Advocate will come from the CYW budget as specified in the Role Description. Since this is a voluntary role the only costs will be the associated expenses such as travel and some overnight accommodation.

Conclusion

- 6.1 For the Pilots Advocate to be recognised and accepted by the denomination, the PMC now shares with Mission Council its plans for this appointment and requests that it be added to the Nominations Committee list in order that names can be identified and an appropriate appointment be made.
- 6.2 The PMC firmly believes that a Pilots Company in a local church can greatly enhance their outreach to children and young people and promote the inclusive ethos of the URC’s ministry to children and young people.

Paper B3

Children's and Youth Work Committee
Review of Children's and
Youth Work

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Church
Church 2017
Church 2017
Church 2017



Paper B3

Children's and Youth Work Committee

Review of Children's and Youth Work

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Tim Meachin (committee convener) revd.tim.meachin@gmail.com The Revd Jenny Mills (committee convener elect) revdjmill@btinternet.com
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council accepts the need for a full review of children's and youth work in the URC, and directs the children's and youth work committee, the head of children's and youth work and the DGS (Discipleship) to undertake such a review, the cost being met from the C&YW budget.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To support the Children's and Youth Work Committee's intention to undertake a full review of the work of Children's and Youth Work.
Main points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Resignation of The Head of Children's and Youth Work Development resulted in a review of the post. • The review group appointed by the Children's and Youth Work Committee recommended that a fuller review of Children's and Youth Work should be undertaken. • The Children's and Youth Work Committee believes that this is appropriate and asks Mission Council to support this course of action.
Previous relevant documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's and Youth Work Committee minutes from September 2016 and February 2017. • Head of Children's and Youth Work Development Review Report – December 2016
Consultation has taken place with...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The General Secretary • The Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship) • Head of Children's and Youth Work Development post Review Group • The Children's and Youth Work Committee

Summary of Impact

Financial	Unknown – meetings and travelling expenses to be met from the C&YWC budget.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Potential for improved ecumenical relationships to be included in the review.

Review of Children's and Youth Work

1. The Children's and Youth Work Committee (C&YWC) was advised of the resignation of the Head of Children's and Youth Work Development (HCYWD) at its meeting in September 2016. Under the guidance of the General Secretary, the committee established a group to review the post of HCYWD in order to inform the recruitment of a new HCYWD.
2. The review group members all concluded that a fuller review of Children's and Youth Work should be undertaken by the incoming HCYWD in collaboration with the C&YWC and the Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship).
3. The C&YWC gave substantial time to the consideration of this proposal at its February 2017 meeting and concluded that a full review is necessary. The committee is willing to be responsible for terms of reference, for appointing the review group, and for paying for the review from its budget.
4. The C&YWC asks Mission Council to note the committee's intention, and record its support for this course of action, by means of the resolution we have brought.

Paper D1

Education & Learning and Finance Committees
Future of the Windermere Centre

United Reformed Church 2017
Church 2017
Church 2017



Paper D1

Education & Learning and Finance Committees

Future of the Windermere Centre

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Richard Church, Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship) richard.church@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mission Council resolves to close the Windermere Centre with effect from 25 May 2017. 2. Mission Council sets a budget for the Windermere Centre's support from denominational funds for 2017 of []. 3. 3. [To be presented only if Resolution 1 were to be passed] Mission Council supports in principle the sale of the Windermere Centre premises in order to create a designated Lay Development Fund.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To respond to the request of the last meeting of Mission Council to consider the implications of ceasing to use the Windermere Centre building and to bring detailed proposals.
Main points	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To update Mission Council on actions since the last meeting. 2. To review the purpose and actual usage of the Centre. 3. To record the principal results of the consultation. 4. To suggest ways forward for digital discipleship work. 5. To explain recent and prospective levels of financial support. 6. To outline some practicalities if the Centre were to close. 7. To explain the Education & Learning Committee's recommendation that the building should cease to be used as an RCL base. 8. To outline potential uses for the revenue stream that would be released by closure of the building. 9. To outline a possible Lay Development Fund that could be created if the building were sold.
Previous relevant documents	D1 & D2 at October 2016 Mission Council
Consultation has taken place with...	URC Trust, URC Finance Committee, Windermere Management Committee, North Western Synod, Centre staff

Summary of Impact

Financial	See paras 36-41
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None

The future of the Windermere Centre

At its last meeting, Mission Council resolved that:

Mission Council, mindful of the importance of:

- *The pastoral care of the Windermere Centre staff*
- *The requirement for proper consultation with the staff*
- *The necessity to take seriously any alternatives suggested in that consultation*
- *The value of the work of the Resource Centre for Learning (RCL) to the denomination*
- *The need to consult with the URC Trust, the Windermere Management Committee, the North Western Synod and Carver URC;*

Instructs the Finance and the Education and Learning Committees to look at the implications of ceasing to use the Windermere Centre building and to bring to Mission Council in May 2017 detailed proposals to enable a final decision to be made in the light of all the above consultations. Mission Council thanks (the ecumenical hospitality provider [name of provider deleted]) for its continuing support to the Windermere Centre but does not wish to pursue the option of a formal partnership. Mission Council agrees that the budget support arrangements for the Centre made in November 2015 should remain in place until at least its May 2017 meeting. Mission Council requests the Education and Learning Committee to bring forward creative proposals for the continuation and development of the Resource Centre for Learning. This should include exploring how the work on digital discipleship may be carried forward.

Background

1. In April 2016, the Windermere Management Committee (WMC) sought the permission of the Assembly Education & Learning Committee to explore separating the functions of the Centre by entering a trial period with an ecumenical hospitality provider on the one hand and establishing courses of general interest to members of the United Reformed Church and friends of the Windermere Centre on the other. The reason for doing this was a recognition that the Centre had lacked a sustainable approach to hospitality management in an increasingly demanding sector.
2. This was agreed and a potential partnership was developed with a Christian hospitality provider with a proven track record in running establishments in a professional way, catering largely but not exclusively for Christian groups. Mission Council October 2016 were offered a way forward involving partnering with this organisation in the running of the Centre with WMC taking responsibility for the RCL programmes of the Centre, but were not persuaded that the medium-term costs justified entering further partnership.
3. Instead Mission Council asked that the Education & Learning Committee, working with the Finance Committee, look at the full implications of ceasing to use the building. The third option of carrying on as in the past was discounted as having little support.

Update

4. Following the decision of the October Mission Council that a widespread consultation should be undertaken with all interested parties over the future of the Windermere Centre, several actions have been taken of which Mission Council should be aware.

5. The appointment of a part-time transitional director of the Windermere Centre has been made. The Revd Mitchell Bunting, previously Convener of the Windermere Management Committee, has agreed to serve from 1 December 2016 until the end of May 2017. The Synod of Scotland have graciously seconded him for this task from part of his role as Ecumenical Officer for the National Synod of Scotland.
6. Mindful of Mission Council's call to consult widely, much of Mr Bunting's time is being spent travelling to meet various groups who are involved in lay education and in the life of the Windermere Centre.
7. The vacancy created by Mr Bunting's appointment has been filled by the Revd John Smith who has agreed to serve as Convener of the Windermere Management Committee. Mr Smith is well suited to this role having previously served as Convener of the Assembly Education & Learning Committee.
8. The Secretary for Education & Learning clarified the timescale within which representations concerning the future of the Windermere Centre were invited and many comments have been received from individuals and groups and been posted on the URC website. <http://urc.org.uk/future-of-the-windermere-centre.html>
9. The Assembly Education & Learning Committee held a meeting in December, focused on the Windermere Centre in the light of the Mission Council deliberations and a summary of their recommendations appears later in this paper.

The Pastoral Care of Staff

10. The pastoral care of the staff who work at the Centre has been a priority and Mrs Jane Baird (Deputy General Secretary Administration & Resources) went immediately to meet with the staff following Mission Council to explain the decision of the last council meeting. Subsequent visits have been made to support and encourage staff in what is naturally an unsettling time for them all.

The value of the Windermere Centre as a Resource Centre for learning

Missional Considerations

11. The United Reformed Church has endorsed *Walking the Way – living the life of Jesus today* as its emphasis for the foreseeable future. It is therefore reasonable to consider the missional arguments for the continuation of the Windermere Centre in the light of this emphasis.
12. It has been suggested that the Windermere Centre has a distinctive contribution to the mission of the United Reformed Church as it sets out to “resource the church through hospitality and theological adventure”. This argument falls broadly into three categories: the content of its courses, the method by which it is financially sustained, and the nature of the hospitality offered by the Centre.
13. *iChurch*, digital discipleship and a missional critique of church have all been marks of the work of the Centre in recent years. ‘It’s your space’ and ‘Pay what you can’ have emphasised the service that the Centre exists to offer to the Church. Freely hosting groups of destitute asylum seekers, for example, have been actions which the Centre has taken to ‘flesh out’ the Church’s commitment to those on the margins of society.

14. The question that these beneficial missional initiatives pose is: are there other ways in which theological adventure and hospitality can be provided which achieve even greater benefits from the input of the Church's resources of people and finance? Among the responses noted by the Education & Learning Committee there were many who argued that the Windermere Centre was too far away and they were hoping that opportunities for discipleship development might be offered more locally. Others argued that 'It's your space' deterred them from coming and 'Pay what you Can' was confusing as it was unclear when it should apply and when it should not.
15. Clearly if the Assembly Education & Learning Committee were not devoting at least £150,000 per year of their budget towards the support of the Windermere Centre, it would be possible to devote more money towards the employment of lay training devoted to Walking the Way and deployed more regionally. In addition, the proceeds of sale of the Windermere Centre could establish a fund devoted to ensuring that Walking the Way could be resourced through a dedicated lay training fund.
16. Some statistics on the type of use of the Centre in recent years are significant.

Some of these are reproduced below:

(Numbers of attendees)

Year	Lay training for church purposes	Not lay training for church purposes	Church events
2013	402	294	235
2014	271	479	268
2015	249	525	332
2016	87	481	241
TOTALS	1009	1779	1076

NB Column 1 relates to equipping discipleship; Col. 2 hobby events; Col. 3 church weekends

17. Another factor was the need to reduce costs to meet tight budgets. This had a similar effect on the Centre as the 2012 budget cuts had. But the Centre was not established primarily to be a venue for committee meetings.
18. The lower number of lay training events in 2016 is due in part to the Director's resignation and the effect of the marketing manager having to divert her attention to being acting Director. However, it indicates that there was a lower take-up for lay training events over the past three years. It more significantly reflects the change to 'It's your space' reflecting a move away from programme provision to an approach tailored to the needs of groups.
19. Some correspondents have urged the Church to refocus the life of the Windermere Centre around some aspect of the Church's life such as retreats and spirituality or as a pastoral training centre. Other contributors have urged a fund-raising campaign together with energetic advocacy of the courses that the Centre offers by a Director touring the country to speak to churches and synods to envision people to pursue lay training.

20. The contributions highlight the value that the Windermere Centre has had to many people in their path of discipleship. They also highlight the general lack of knowledge about the extensive and distinctive approaches which the WMC has undertaken in recent years to try and move beyond a shrinking customer base within the URC; over a third of a million pounds has been provided from denominational funds, over and above the regular Windermere budget, to support these initiatives. Many of the consultation suggestions have been tried in the past and found to make limited impact on Centre usage.

Wider Consultations

The following groups have been consulted regarding the future of the Windermere Centre:

The URC Trust

21. Whilst not being a policy making body, the Trust has advised the following:
- a) Regular expenditure: If the building cannot be used for URC charitable purposes, the URC should not spend revenue year-on-year in using it in other ways
 - b) Stewardship: If the building ceased to be used for URC charitable purposes, the Trust would expect to view it as an asset that had to be responsibly stewarded, and that might lead to a decision to sell
 - c) Alternative uses: Some alternative uses that were suggested might be fine if someone else took the building on to fulfil them, but they would not necessarily be appropriate ventures for the URC to manage.

The Windermere Management Committee

22. A detailed paper was received from the WMC which was summarised in the following statement. 'Following their consideration of the case for continuing and the effect of a further drawn out deliberation on the staff, at this stage the Committee supports the view that the Centre should close, and advises that this should take place as quickly as possible after the decision, and that any decision to carry on would have seriously difficult implications in terms of the reduced Business Case.'

North Western and Mersey Synods

23. The officers of the North-Western Synod have expressed concern about the short time within which the consultation regarding the possible closure of the Windermere centre is taking place. Their contention is that the Church needs a longer period in which to reflect on the Centre and its role and to that end have offered a sum of £250,000 over the next three years.
24. The intention of the offer is to defray the costs to the Assembly funds of maintaining the Centre and to give more time for thought about how the Centre might function as a lay training centre for the north of England.
25. Whilst the generosity of this offer is appreciated, it is not clear how the additional time will help to minimise the uncertainty of the current staff or to establish any new thinking, given that the Windermere Centre's income has in each of the past seven years been below budget and throughout that time various initiatives have been taken by the Windermere Management Committee to try to remedy the situation. The figures presented to the October Mission Council showed that the £250,000 offered would not cover the costs of a further three years of the Centre so M&M funding would still be required.

26. Mersey Synod also seek a pause to enable detailed discussion of the need for lay training in the belief that there is an apparent need for a viable costed national strategy for lay training including residential, teaching and IT components. This work remains the responsibility of the Education & Learning Committee whether or not the Centre remains open.

Carver Uniting Church (formerly Carver Memorial URC)

27. Carver have indicated their sadness at the possible closure of the Centre with which they have had such a close working relationship over many years. However, if the decision is to cease to use Windermere as an RCL they hope that a way might be found both for a good price for the URC Trust and community value to apply equally in any sale of the property.
28. With that in mind they have said that should additional local help be of use in assisting with examining any possible avenues they would do their best to support it.
29. They further comment that if the national Church would like to examine further work for the RCL or *iChurch* using Carver premises they would be very pleased to work to make this possible.

Digital Discipleship

30. In the development of a successor course to Training for Learning and Service (TLS), as well as in broader thinking about how local churches can be resourced locally as they work to deepen discipleship within their congregants, online resourcing will play an ever more significant role. Whilst questions of access and availability must be addressed, the adoption of digital communication is as big a shift in the 21st century as the printing press was at the time of the European Reformation.
31. The ease with which churches downloaded vision4life materials, the development of the Windermere Online festival, the growing circulation of the daily devotions since Advent 2016 and the popularity of *iChurch* throughout the United Reformed Church all illustrate the importance of digital discipleship.
32. The Blended Learning Task Group's report for the Education & Learning Committee *Blended Lives, Blended Learning. Formation for Christian Discipleship in the Digital Age* <http://bltgreporturc.org.uk/> makes several recommendations for the whole URC, including that the Church make a significant investment in building its capacity for online learning through identifying and networking digital champions, in collaboration with synods and the assembly communications committee.
33. To achieve this, they recommend that the Education & Learning Committee, in consultation with other Assembly Committees, explore the possibility of creating a post of Online Learning Enabler, as the potential in this area could not be realised without the appointment of a dedicated staff member with the necessary professional skills.
34. The draft job summary of the suggested post assumes the continuing attention of Assembly Committees, Synods and RCLs to a range of expressions of digital discipleship. This includes *iChurch* which was pioneered by the Windermere Centre as part of its role as a Resource Centre for Learning.

35. To assess the viability and sustainability of *iChurch*, when separated from the Windermere Centre, steps have been taken to establish a part-time, six-month temporary post of *iChurch* Project Officer. This is intended to support existing and potential *iChurch* users while the Education & Learning and Communications Committees decide how best to take the work forward. A joint Communications/ Education & Learning *iChurch* Strategy Group has started work with clear terms of reference and will report to the two committees.

Financial Support

36. Requests have been received for Mission Council to be told how the financial support given to the Windermere Centre compares with that given to the other three Resource Centres for Learning (RCLs). The bald data is provided in the table below, which shows the total direct transfer of funds from the Church's central budget for the work of each RCL last year and, for comparison, five years previously. For the three RCLs that train ministerial students (EM1) a substantial share of this money does not go to the RCL itself but is in fact payments to cover the academic fees and maintenance costs support of these students: this element is identified in italics in the table.

Table: Financial Support for RCLs (£k)

	2011 Core Budget	2011 Core Actual	<i>2011 EM1 Actual</i>	2016 Core Budget	2016 Core Actual	<i>2016 EM1 Actual</i>
Northern College	218	214	<i>184</i>	240	248	<i>272</i>
Scottish College	35	37	<i>61</i>	36	36	<i>19</i>
Westminster College	286	283	<i>306</i>	295	320	<i>294</i>
Windermere Centre	110	136	<i>0</i>	134	179	<i>0</i>
Total	649	670	<i>551</i>	705	783	<i>585</i>

37. Before attempting to draw any conclusions from this data, it is necessary to notice what very different institutions the four RCLs are and the major differences in the services they are asked to provide to the Church. The budget process used by the Education and Learning Committee is specifically designed to ensure that the financial support does recognise in as fair a way as possible these differences.

Some of the differences are summarized below:

- Three RCLs operate from dedicated buildings; the Scottish College model of learning does not require one.
- The costs of running the buildings used by Westminster and Windermere fall wholly on the URC; at Northern these costs are shared ecumenically.
- Three RCLs provide initial ministerial training (EM1) and a large share of their funding is directly correlated with the number of such students in training in the given year; the Windermere Centre is not involved in EM1.
- Residential EM1 training is by far the most expensive form of training per capita that the URC asks for from its RCLs; only Northern and Westminster provide this.
- Westminster and Windermere have received substantial donations from Assembly towards building projects during the last decade; the other RCLs have not.

Clearly it is not possible to draw any simple comparative value-for-money conclusion from the table above.

38. What the table does illustrate is that of the four RCLs, three succeed in working within their agreed budgets or only a few percentage points above them. By contrast, the Windermere Centre has regularly required significant extra support beyond that agreed. In each of the last seven years Windermere has exceeded its budgeted support and by an average of 27%; this is mainly due to usage consistently falling below the levels hoped for at the time the annual budget was agreed.

Funding Scenarios

39. The Finance Committee has looked at the potential costs of running the Centre for 2017 as well as estimating the potential costs of closure. It concluded that, were the Centre to remain open throughout this year, it would be expected to generate a deficit of around £185,000. This, in part, reflects uncertainty caused by the MC decision in October 2016 but also reflects the more general recent fall-off in business.
40. 40.1 If the Centre closes in May 2017 the Committee calculates the 2017 position will produce a running cost deficit of around £100,000 up to the point of closure.
- 40.2 If the Centre were to close, there would also be some one-off closure costs incurred subsequently. These include redundancy payments and other costs of dealing with leased equipment and holding the unused building for the remainder of the year. These closure costs amount to around a further £100,000 but could properly be offset against any sale proceeds were the property then to be sold and so not be a burden on the M&M Fund.
41. Mission Council will need to set a budget for 2017 for the Centre to replace the notional, temporary number used in the initial 2017 budget pending a decision about the Centre's future. The Finance Committee will present a suitable resolution to Mission Council once the Council's mind on the future of the Centre is clear.

Proposed future usages if not used as an RCL

42. There have been many suggestions mooted. These include that the building be used as wedding reception venue, that it be operated by the staff as a small guest house, occasionally hosting such church groups as might wish to use it. The staff have indicated that they believe that with some additional time the Centre can be made financially viable, although independent advice presented to the last Mission Council clearly suggested otherwise.
43. The transitional director has spoken of the value that such a house might have to the dispersed members of the Iona Community if it were still available for bookings, another submission argued for its retention as a retreat centre. Carver Church suggested that the centre should be used for supported housing or housing for older people which they indicate is in short supply in the area. None of these alternative uses have yet been accompanied by a business plan. Some of them would require the building to be sold to another body capable of adopting new uses not within the URC's objectives, which would also take the financial risk of pursuing such ventures away from the URC Trust.

Contingency Plans

In the event of the Windermere Centre continuing as a Resource Centre for Learning.

44. As the secondment of the transitional director and the operations manager end in May, people would need to be found to occupy these roles and to develop a fresh vision for the Windermere Centre.
45. As noted above, a fresh budget of around £185,000 for 2017 would have to be funded by the Church and discussions begin about where reductions in the budget of the Education & Learning Committee, or some other committee, should be imposed in subsequent years to continue to provide this sort of level of financial support to the Centre.

In the event of the closure of the Windermere Centre

46. If a decision is made by Mission Council to cease using the Windermere building for an RCL, then the date recommended for closure is 25 May. This will give the benefit to the outgoing staff of allowing them to seek alternative employment while the tourist season is still young. The staff have made it clear that if closure is decided upon, an early date would be their preference.
47. Closure of the Centre would end Education & Learning's responsibility for the Windermere Centre. Education & Learning and the Windermere Management Committee would hand over responsibility to the URC Trustees. As soon as a possible a closure team would be identified (the Christian hospitality provider previously offered help in this matter).
48. In the short term the URC Trust would take responsibility for security arrangements for the empty premises. For the longer term they would be guided by any steers from Mission Council about the use or disposal of the premises, subject to their legal obligations as Trustees.

Committee responses as requested by Mission Council

49. Having been asked to look at the implications of ceasing to use the Windermere Centre building, the Education & Learning Committee at its meeting on 19 December 2016 first considered the submissions received by then. It was important to test the mind of the committee members, and therefore go over some of the same ground covered by Mission Council in October 2016 in the light of the ideas and comments received. After much discussion the committee concluded that its recommendation to the Mission Council meeting in May 2017 would be:
 - i) to cease using the Windermere Centre building as a residential RCL in its current configuration;
 - ii) to release the relevant portion of the E&L budget designated for Windermere to take forward the work of lay discipleship;
 - iii) to explore urgently with the URC Trust potential other uses of the building.

What follows are indications of what needs to be done in each of these areas

Ceasing to use the building

- 49.1 The Windermere Management Committee, having spoken with staff over the intervening period, and in the light of hospitality industry experience have recommended that if a decision is made to close the centre it should be implemented as soon as possible, with a closure date of 25 May 2017. This would benefit the staff to find alternative employment early in the season.
- 49.2 The Windermere Management Committee would be drawn to an end, with the Education & Learning Committee handing over responsibility for the building to the URC Trustees. A meeting of WMC is scheduled for June 19-20. This could be a joint meeting of the outgoing WMC and the people appointed by the Trustees to look after the building until decisions are made about its disposal.
- 49.3 Deposits for bookings already made for after 25 May would be returned, and suggestions made for alternative venues in the area. A list of potential venues would be drawn up in advance of 25 May.
- 49.4 The WMC has produced an outline of practical arrangements in the event of closure which they would discuss with the URC Trust.
- 49.5 The Human Resources Office at Church House would continue to oversee arrangements for legal compliance and pastoral care of staff throughout the closure process.

Using the E&L budget

- 50.1 Mission Council asked the Education & Learning Committee to bring forward creative proposals for the continuation and development of the Resource Centre for Learning, to include exploring how the work on digital discipleship may be carried forward.
- 50.2 In 2015 Mission Council agreed that the normal level of budget support for the Centre's work should be less than £125kpa. Therefore, assuming a budget of £120k for the sake of argument in the coming years, what follows is an example of how such a sum could be used to take forward the work of lay discipleship.
- 50.3 The educational principles underlying the Education & Learning Committee's approach seen, for example, in the terms of reference for the group which is designing the successor to TLS are in tune with the 2006 Training Review. They speak of lay development which is integrated, peer-group focused, offered through dispersed delivery that is accessible locally, contextual, residential where necessary, offering blended learning, and offering excellence.
- 50.4 The Windermere Centre would no longer be available as a residential centre, but residential learning would take place as close to where people live as possible, and the cost of this would be included in the budget for specific programmes as it has always been. Facilities for residential courses at Northern and Westminster Colleges would continue to be available.
- 50.5 The £120k previously used to pay for the salary and on-costs of the Director of the Windermere Centre, some administrative support, and the underwriting of programme costs could instead be used for the salaries of two staff dedicated to supporting congregations to be confident in engaging with 21st century forms of communication i.e. a possible iChurch staff post and the projected post of online learning enabler described above in sections 33-34.

- 50.6 The place where these two posts would report is yet to be determined. The nature of the work suggests that they could be located anywhere in the three nations, as they could work from home and travel extensively. There is a fruitful discussion to be had as to whether they should be based in one or more of the other three RCLs, within the Education & Learning team as part of the staff of the successor to TLS, or even within groups of Synods.

Other uses of the building

51. Exploring urgently with the URC Trust potential other uses of the building.
- 51.1 Potential other uses of the building have been suggested above. The Education & Learning Committee would argue that the greatest need from its perspective is for a lay development fund which would be able to offer funding analogous to the EM3 allowance which Ministers of Word and Sacraments and CRCWs can draw upon for individual continuing development. This would be made possible by the profit from the sale of the building being invested to create an annual income. Current estimates suggest that this could be in the region of £40kpa.
- 51.2 In 2015 the Education & Learning Finance Sub-Committee looked at a draft plan for using a small inherited fund assigned to it as a Lay Development Fund, but concluded that the total non-recurring income of £15k would be better used by being set aside for the development work involved in designing the successor to TLS. The draft plan could be the basis for using the recurring annual income from the “Windermere Fund”.
- 51.3 A budget of £40,000 per year could make 115 grants i.e. 8 grants per Synod of £350 per individual, although not everyone would necessarily request the maximum £350. If the normal amount were £200 that would be 200 grants or 15 per Synod. The funding criteria set by the Education & Learning Committee would emphasise bold and adventuresome discipleship development for the sake of the kingdom. Synods would decide who gets the grants, and it would be in addition to any existing provision from the Synod.
52. The Committee will invite Mission Council to express a view on this option should a decision be made to close the Centre.

Conclusion

53. The Windermere Centre has been iconic for many people within the United Reformed Church, and is a place where lives have been changed over the past 30 years. The hospitality and theological adventure represented in the place and the people of the Centre are immeasurable. The proposals put forward in this paper offer ways of releasing the investment represented by the Windermere Centre to transform lives throughout the United Reformed Church. They take into consideration the changes within the URC over the past 30 years. The Centre was pioneering in taking the development of lay people seriously. Its legacy must be to continue to give people access to hospitality and theological adventure wherever they find themselves. Thirty years on, there are Training Officers, Mission Enablers, and Children and Youth Development Officers, pioneering ministries and new ways of being church. The Education and Learning Committee believes we should now be ready to release resources of personnel and finance to meet the perennial challenge of lay discipleship in fresh ways that are collaborative, risky, and venturesome.

Paper F1

Faith and Order Committee

‘The Wider Fold’

A Scheme for including isolated
members of the United Reformed
Church

United Reformed Church
Church 2017
Church 2017
Church 2017



Paper F1

Faith and Order Committee

'The Wider Fold' A Scheme for including isolated members of the United Reformed Church

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Elizabeth Welch welchea@talk21.com
Action required	Discussion and agreement.
Draft resolution(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council agrees the scheme for isolated members, and direct that it be inserted into the Rules of Procedure. 2. Mission Council directs that this scheme shall be interpreted widely, graciously, and generously, and in particular that during the initial stages the commendation of a Synod Moderator or an Assembly Officer shall be sufficient for the name of a minister, and their spouse/ widow(er) to be added to this Roll, and the commendation of a minister in pastoral charge shall be sufficient for the name of any other person who has formerly been a member of the URC and could have become an isolated member, had such a scheme existed at the relevant time.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Provision of formal URC membership for those who for various reasons are geographically isolated from a local URC but who wish to retain a formal membership.
Main points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership in the United Reformed Church is an important concept • Isolated Membership offers a non-geographical substitute for the local church • Isolated Membership would not be open to everyone. It would exist primarily to serve five 'constituencies' of people who have joined the URC in the regular way through the decision of a Church Meeting • Those who are members of the United Reformed Church through Isolated Membership would be eligible for all forms of service, as any other member is. • Its sole purpose to deal with one specific issue, and to do so in a way that although it may stretch our rules and the theological principles underlying them, does not break them.

Previous relevant documents	Paper F2 Mission Council May 2015 General Assembly 2016 <i>Book of Reports</i> page 128
Consultation has taken place with...	Mission Council, General Assembly, Law and Polity Advisory Group

Summary of Impact

Financial	Nil
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Improved ecumenical recognition of URC members and presence in churches of other traditions.

‘The Wider Fold’

A Scheme for including isolated members of the United Reformed Church

The principles

- 1.1 Membership in the United Reformed Church is an important concept. It represents a degree of commitment in exchange for the right to share in decisions of the church. However, there are people who have been received as members of a local church, and who retain a commitment to the URC, but now live too far distant from a local church to worship there regularly. There are also people with a transitory lifestyle, students, young adults, or members of the armed forces for instance, who wish to identify with the URC but do not easily fit into the traditional forms of membership. Isolated Membership is intended to provide membership for those who find a meaningful link to a local church impractical. It is intended to overcome their geographical isolation by including them in the denomination as a whole.
- 1.2 Isolated Membership offers a non-geographical substitute for the local church, with all the limitations of a substitute. People would be admitted to it by transfer from a local church, and admitted to a local church by transfer from Isolated Membership. Only actual local churches, however (so not Isolated Membership) would be able to admit candidates on profession of faith. This is because, in our long-standing practice, admission to membership involves not only a willingness to commit and a declaration during public worship, but also (for good reason) the decision of a council of the church, made on the recommendation of another council, the elders’ meeting, which is satisfied of the candidate’s preparation and sincerity. Isolated Membership is neither appropriate nor practical for doing any of that, and will rely on the judgement of a Church Meeting commending candidates for transfer.
- 1.3 Isolated Membership would not be open to everyone. It would exist primarily to serve five ‘constituencies’ of people who have joined the URC in the regular way through the decision of a Church Meeting, who wish to continue to ‘belong’ and to maintain their commitment; but who are unable, for reasons of distance or mobility, to put down regular roots in an existing local church. The likely constituencies would be:
 - i) students and young adults, resident away from home for part of the year, or in a transitory lifestyle in the early years of a career;
 - ii) members of the armed forces and their households who receive the ministry of URC chaplains;
 - iii) members of the URC, including retired ministers and non-serving elders, who have moved away from any locality where regular attendance at a local United Reformed Church is practical;
 - iv) URC members worshipping in a church of another denomination, which had earlier been a local ecumenical partnership in which the URC was involved but is no longer;

- v) URC members whose local church has closed, and who are not able to worship in another local church, but who wish to retain their membership of the URC.
- 1.4 Thought has been given to the suggestion that those who come to Christianity through ‘fresh expressions of church’ might also be potential members through Isolated Membership. It is up to each Synod to decide whether a ‘fresh expression’ is sufficiently settled to be recognised as a local church, to hold a Church Meeting, to elect elders, etc. If it is not, then we do not feel its attenders can yet be considered members of the URC and they would not, therefore, be eligible for Isolated Membership.
 - 1.5 Those who are members of the United Reformed Church through Isolated Membership would be eligible for all forms of service, as any other member is, and it would be possible for Isolated Members to contribute financially.
 - 1.6 There are a great many issues surrounding membership. This scheme is not intended, and not able, to address them all. Its sole purpose to deal with one specific issue, and to do so in a way that although it may stretch our rules and the theological principles underlying them, does not break them.

Draft Scheme for Isolated Members of the URC

To be inserted as a new section into the Rules of Procedure

(N.B. The paragraph numbers below are for use at Mission Council, and this numbering might not apply when these paragraphs were written into the *Rules*)

- 2.1 The normal pattern would be for a local church to retain on their membership roll the name of someone who finds themselves living at a distance, noting that students at university some distance from their home would normally be left upon a membership roll until they have graduated, and students for the ministry would likewise normally be left upon a membership roll until they complete their training, even if they have moved their permanent home to a training institution. However, if a local church was unable or unwilling to retain these, or any other, names on their membership roll, then such people could become Isolated Members.
- 2.2 The General Assembly, in consultation with the Synods, may identify a local church which has a particular vocation to “hold” the membership of Isolated Members. Such an agreement, made in conjunction with the Synod, would include appropriate arrangements such that that the said local church neither receives a greater than fair share of scoping, nor requests for excessive contributions to the Ministry and Mission Fund. Such agreement would also include details of who will be responsible for maintaining at least annual contact with Isolated Members, at least by telephone or electronic means. If an Isolated Member wishes to resign from the URC, this will be received in the normal way by the Church Meeting. If an Isolated Member refuses contact, other than through ill health, for a period of two years, they may be deemed to have resigned.
- 2.3 It is agreed that such Isolated Members may be added to the membership roll of the said local church simply by resolution of the Church Meeting, with no further ceremony. Isolated Members wishing to make a financial contribution to the URC, may do so by direct gifts to the Ministry and Mission Fund. Isolated Members will be eligible for all forms of service in the wider church as are other members.

Paper F2

Faith and Order Committee
The Future of Membership

United Church 2017
Church 2017
Reformed Church 2017
Church



Paper F2

Faith and Order Committee

The Future of Membership

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Elizabeth Welch welchea@talk21.com
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council receives the report of the Faith and Order Committee on the future of Church Membership in paper F2 of Mission Council May 2017, accepts the broad principles set out therein, and requests that the Faith and Order Committee undertake further work to develop these ideas, consulting with others as necessary, with the aim of working towards a common practice across the church, in order to establish clarity and reduce current inconsistencies over how church membership is handled.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The concept, understanding and practice of church membership within the URC. • To develop a more coherent and effective practice of recognising, valuing and recording those who are closely involved in the life of our churches.
Main points	Clarification is needed on how membership is understood in the URC. A way is needed of recognising those as members who are deeply involved in the life of our churches but have not for one reason or another come into formal membership. A category of 'voting members' meets the continued requirement for legal purposes of those who make the fullest commitment.
Previous documents	Paper F2 Mission Council May 2015
Consultation has taken place with...	Mission Council

Summary of Impact

Financial	Nil
External	Nil

The Future of Membership

1. **The Issue.** Discussions in the Faith and Order Committee and, subsequently, in Mission Council revealed questions about the practices associated with church membership in the United Reformed Church. The changing nature of society and the ecumenical commitments of the United Reformed Church have created a mismatch between traditional ways of expressing membership and their implementation in the local church. This paper seeks to propose new guidance on how membership is organised in our churches, while retaining the historic doctrines which shaped us.
2. **The Church Roll.** Broadly speaking, this paper recommends that local churches keep two rolls. The first roll will be the larger: it will consist of all who are associated with a local church in its worship and pastoral outreach. The second will be that specified by the Basis of Union, consisting of all those received as church members. They will have been received upon confession of faith or on renewal of promises on transfer. These are the people who will be the voting members of the church meeting, will be available to represent the local church in its wider councils, and to serve on them, and will be eligible for ordination as elders or ministers of word and sacrament.
3. If the changes outlined above were made the task of the elders in keeping a church roll would be simplified. The larger church roll would reflect those reckoned to be part of the local church, irrespective of their voting status. The house-bound and the casual attender could be included as part of the fellowship for which the church as a whole cares. Further, it would be possible from time to time to hold the equivalent of the Methodist Covenant Service, which has its origins in Nonconformist practice, at which 'voting members' renewed their commitment and those on the church roll were challenged to join them.
4. The considerations which lead to these proposals are set out below.

The roll of 'voting members'

5. **Legal Considerations.** Alongside our changing religious practices a nuanced view of church membership has grown as a consequence of a number of legal developments. Membership of the United Reformed Church is defined by the Basis of Union. The Church requires those seeking office, or acting as representatives in its wider councils, to be church members in this particular sense. Membership in this sense compares with that of secular organisations, in which people take responsibility for a common enterprise. Members are required on admission to make a profession of faith, as set out in the Basis of Union.
 - 5.1 The Basis of Union, as agreed in 1972, had a transitional provision for the use of forms 'customarily used by the uniting churches prior to unification', that is to say, more than forty years ago. Such forms were sometimes less clear in their expression of faith than the statement of Christian belief expressed in Schedule A of the Basis of Union. The service of admission to membership was revised some years ago to withdraw the transitional provision.

6. Commitment. The term 'voting' member has been used here, although other terms might be considered. It has the advantage of being clear to understand. It makes the point that 'voting' members are those who take on responsibility for the local church in terms of the Basis of Union. They are members of the Church Meeting, and are to that significant extent in sympathy with the Basis. This would be explored with them before they were admitted as communicants or received on transfer from another local church or denomination. Admission to the 'voting member' category will then be open to all who are prepared to express their Christian baptism through commitment to the local United Reformed Church. At the heart of that commitment is a willingness to wait upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit with one's fellow members.
7. The 'voting members' are therefore those who take responsibility as Church Meeting for maintaining the worship and witness of the local church and its denominational links. This responsibility is exercised corporately, those gathered together seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which is why postal or proxy voting is not acceptable.
8. Everyone on the larger church roll should also be challenged to take up the responsibility of 'voting' membership, but they should not be classed as outsiders because they do not feel able to do so. This choice is important, but it is not as critical as the choice to be a Christian.
9. Absence. The roll required by the Basis of Union, of 'voting' members of Church Meeting, would need to be reviewed from time to time. Admission to this roll would be through the membership procedures laid down in the Basis of Union and the supporting guidance relating to Schedule A. However, it would now be possible to remove people from this roll without removing them from the church roll. The key to this is to put the onus on the absentee in the first place. 'Voting members' who were absentees could be asked whether they wished to continue in this capacity. Failure to reply could be taken as a negative. Since this is the point at which the law is involved care will need to be taken. This is the one area in which the old customs of discipline will still apply. Careful application to this principle will relieve local churches of the anomaly of people who take no active part in the life of the church for years, then turn up and vote at critical meetings. If all else fails, and it is decided to remove a person from the roll of 'voting members', it is essential that notice is given to them at their last known address.

The larger church roll

10. Membership of the Universal Church. Denominations with a different history to ours, such as Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Anglican Communions, make separate provision for what we have here termed 'legal membership' since for them membership by baptism is determinative. The time may have come for the United Reformed Church to put itself into a comparable position. We believe that all baptised Christians are members of Christ's church. It is difficult to see how any other term than 'member' could be used for this purpose in everyday life.
11. The Committee would therefore be glad to know whether Mission Council welcomes this emphasis on Christian baptism as the proper starting point for reflection on membership in our Church. Would this help us see more clearly than we have sometimes done that every Christian belongs to the worldwide Body of Christ, and that we have a responsibility to nurture one another's growth in the faith?

12. Local churches can, and many do, keep a roll of all those associated with them, including children and young people. Such a roll might well include the unbaptised, for instance, the children of those with convictions about 'believers' baptism'. This should be encouraged and affirmed. Instead of having a church membership limited to part of the worshipping and serving congregation a local church roll should embody everyone. It would then be possible to avoid the use of terms such as 'associate member'.
13. Agreed Criteria. Local churches will need to agree criteria for membership of the larger church roll and make these known for the avoidance of misunderstandings. These criteria will be pastorally driven.

Corollaries and related issues

14. Local Ecumenical Partnerships already have provisions for a general roll of members and the identification of denominational members.
15. Synods will have the responsibility of identifying how these proposals might be implemented in *Fresh Expressions* of church.
16. Only 'voting' members would be eligible to transfer to the 'Wider Fold', and thus to become Isolated Members of the Church.
17. The proposals may offer a satisfactory solution to the concerns of long-standing church members who, for reasons of chronic medical conditions or extreme age, feel unable to take a full part in the life of the local church. They would not be removed from the church roll but could be relieved of any obligation to attend meetings or represent the church in wider councils. This would be a matter of pastoral sensitivity, to be discussed with the people concerned, where possible.
18. There will be implications for the future keeping of denominational statistics and for assessment of contributions to the wider Church.

Appendix: Historical Background

19. Membership of the United Reformed Church involves two concepts, held in tension. The first is the classic view of church membership, derived from Pauline theology, which sees church membership as incorporation in Christ by baptism, leading to koinonia (usually translated as 'fellowship') with other Christians. It includes the concepts of Christian discipleship and corporate worship. In this sense the United Reformed Church view is not substantially different from that of other Christian denominations. However, a sensitivity arose after the Reformation that a distinction should be made amongst the baptised in relation to those sharing in the Lord's Supper. We associate this sensitivity with the Puritans. They resisted the idea that all parishioners were entitled to share in Communion by virtue of residence. In their view the parish minister should be satisfied that proper repentance had been expressed before a person appeared at the table. After their enforced separation from the Church of England, Baptists, Independents and Presbyterians kept membership rolls of their communicant members. These were the basis of church discipline. In England

and Wales the discipline of the established churches was located in bishop's courts and was exercised into the eighteenth century, but not with the rigour demanded by Dissenters. In Scotland the Kirk practised this discipline, as did the various Scottish Calvinist Dissenters. The ultimate sanction in disciplinary processes was excommunication. Those judged unworthy to receive communion were denied it. Times of penitence preceded communion, which was observed only a few times each year. In Dissenting congregations this discipline was further reinforced by the practice of covenanting. Local congregations covenanted with each other to express their common Christian commitment, recognising the *koinonia* which bound them together. Members who broke covenant and remained unrepentant were expelled. Some covenants were renewed from time to time, meaning that those who chose not to subscribe ceased to be members.

20. An administrative device in this system of membership, in wide use in established churches and amongst Dissenters, was the issuing of communion tokens. These admitted the bearers to communion. Tokens were usually pewter and bearing the name of the parish or local church involved. Within living memory churches in our tradition issued communion cards, which served the same purpose and might also act as a record of attendance when collected up. Registers of members' attendance at communion were kept and persistent absentees removed from church rolls.
21. Within the United Reformed Church few would wish to exercise seventeenth-century discipline on church members, requiring moral judgements on individuals. Even if we did wish it, many small congregations have no capacity to act in a quasi-judicial manner. However, in our day, the removal of members from church rolls is carried out reluctantly, as if we were, in fact, making a moral judgement, rather than recognising a changed relationship. As an added complication, congregations generally welcome those who are not their own church members to Communion, without question. It is assumed that the stranger who comes to Communion has their own spiritual integrity, or that Communion will be a 'converting ordinance', to borrow a phrase from our past.

Paper F3

Faith and Order Committee
Report of ongoing work

United Reformed Church 2017
Church 2017
Church 2017



Paper F3

Faith and Order Committee

Report of ongoing work

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Elizabeth Welch welchea@talk21.com
Action required	Reading and reflection
Draft resolution(s)	No resolutions

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	This report is offered so that members of Mission Council can see a summary of the ongoing work of the Faith and Order Committee, and feed back any comments to the committee.
Main points	Update on work taken to the 2016 General Assembly, ongoing work on scripture, ecumenical matters and theology of marriage.
Previous relevant documents	Reports to General Assembly in 2014 and 2106 and to Mission council in the intervening periods.
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of Impact

Financial	Nil
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Report of ongoing work

The Remit of the Faith and Order Committee:

- To address issues of faith and order on behalf of the URC.
- To participate in and respond to ecumenical and inter-faith discussions on faith and order issues.
- To advise the assembly, its officers and committees on questions of faith and order.
- To listen to concerns raised by Local Churches, synods and individuals and to advise as appropriate.
- To publish and disseminate occasional materials relating to questions of faith and order.

Introduction

The ongoing work of the Faith and Order committee covers a range of theological and ecumenical areas. The committee seeks to reflect the broad spectrum of theological understanding across the URC, with an affirmation of the particular theological approaches that are formational and celebrated in the URC. What follows is a summary of ongoing work.

1. **Church Membership.** Two separate reports, on 'Isolated Members' (arising out of the 'Wider Fold' discussion) and the Future of Membership are being brought to Mission Council. Work is ongoing on drawing up a revised leaflet on membership for sharing with prospective new members.
2. **Follow up from reports taken to 2016 General Assembly:**
 - i. **Authorised elders.** This report which went to the 2016 General Assembly has been circulated to the synods and is being taken forward in a variety of ways. The Faith and Order Committee are happy to receive reports from the synods about the implementation of this report and are dealing with issues arising. One such is the question that has been raised as to whether every lay preacher be Authorised to preside at Holy Communion. The Committee thought that it was better to put this issue on hold until the present report on Authorised Elders has had a chance to be implemented and tested across the synods.
 - ii. **What is the Spirit saying to the churches?** A theological reflection on this question was offered to the 2016 General Assembly, based on the previous booklet circulated to the churches and synods and the responses received. Work is taking place on formatting a pamphlet from the proposals agreed at General Assembly and making this available across the church for churches to use as and when they feel so led. The Faith and Order Committee is aware that General Assembly instructed the Faith and Order committee and the Walking the Way Group to work together, and is looking forward to this happening.
3. **Ecumenical involvement.**
 - i. **Ecumenical Dialogues:** The church-wide ecumenical discussions that have been happening between the Church of England and the United Reformed Church, and the Roman Catholic Church and the United Reformed Church are now moving in their next phase in a more contextual and practical direction, so there is less need for the involvement of the Faith and Order Committee in theological reflection in these areas.
 - ii. **Relation to new churches:** There has been a discussion about the United Reformed Church's relation to new churches, especially Pentecostal churches. The Faith and Order committee has had an initial consideration of doctrinal issues surrounding co-operation with new partners and has decided to wait for

specific issues to be raised out of shared working with partner churches before considering this matter further.

- iii. **CPCE discussion** papers. A number of interesting reports have come to the URC from the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe. Fleur Houston, who is involved with the CPCE will be invited to the July FAOC meeting and detailed consideration will be given to these reports.
 - iv. **New frameworks in mission** CTE report: In response to this CTE report, the committee had an initial discussion on the ongoing significance of unity as the United Reformed Church's contribution to ecumenical discussion
 - v. **Episcope**: a paper on oversight in the URC has been offered and is being worked on. There are ecumenical implications with regard to the nature of episcopate when the URC shares together with other churches, as well as a discussion within the URC about oversight ministry.
 - vi. **Use of title**: An interesting issue was raised as to whether a URC minister could continue to use the title 'reverend' if he or she resigns from the URC Roll of Ministers in order to become a Roman Catholic. It was advised that this would be inappropriate, while also being noted that people who had used the title of the minister previously might need some help in understanding the journey that the minister was taking and the implications of this.
4. **Sola scriptura**: The Faith and Order Committee has been looking at the role of scripture within the URC from a range of perspectives. It has noted for example that bible study groups are not necessarily thriving in local churches; that there's a diffidence about entering into reflecting on scripture; that there are issues about different views of the authority of scripture; that the discussions on marriage have not necessarily been addressing this topic from a scriptural perspective. A concern has been expressed about the development of 'silos' of interpretation across the church and how to connect between these 'silos'. Five papers have so far been written by various ministers across the church and have been considered. Alan Spence is working on a paper that might be circulated more widely to aid the wider church in reflection on the role scripture plays in the church's life.
 5. **Theology of marriage**: The Faith and Order Committee has been responding to concerns raised re the need for theological and biblical work in this area. At present the approach taken is to build on a resource list of articles published on the URC website and to offer links to other websites where this matter is discussed. A particular piece of work is being looked at, and that is the idea of covenant in relation to marriage. The committee would be glad to receive more articles, from a variety of directions.
 6. **Theology of buildings**: work on this area is ongoing, in relation to the Buildings Forum.
 7. **Theology of Worship**: There has been an ongoing discussion as to where the URC wide responsibility for worship lies, after the ending of the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee. Tribute has been paid to the excellent daily devotions now available by email and the annual prayer handbook. There is a desire to share the wealth of URC specific worship and liturgical resources more widely, and to reflect on the theological undergirding of the URC's understanding of the nature of worship.
 8. **Holding a position/making a statement on behalf of the URC**: an interesting issue has been raised about the possibility of holding a position or making a statement on behalf of the URC and who takes responsibility for this.
 9. **Thanks**: Warm thanks are due to the secretary of the committee, Revd David Tatem, at the time of his forthcoming retirement, for his hard work in relation to this

committee, especially in drawing up agendas, writing the minutes and following up on the work of the committee; his ecumenical vision, his wide knowledge of the church, the thoughtful contributions he has made to the committee's discussions and the helpful way he has kept on top of the varied work of the committee. The committee looks forward to welcoming his successor, Revd Philip Brooks, when he starts in July.

Membership of the Committee (with dates when member's terms finish)

Elizabeth Welch (Convener) 2017. Alan Spence (Convener-elect 2016-17 and Convener until 2023), Malachie Munyaneza 2018, Tim Meadows -2018, Anna Briggs -2020, Catherine Ball -2020, Samuel Silungwe 2023 (name going to May 2017 Mission Council), Secretary for Ecumenical and Inter-faith Relations: David Tatem finishing in July 2017 and Philip Brooks starting in July 2017; General Secretary; Moderators of General Assembly. Consultant: Stephen Orchard, C of E Observer: Jeremy Worthen

One further new member is being currently sought.

Paper G1

Finance Committee
Financial Outcome 2016

United Reformed Church
Church 2017
Church 2017
Church 2017

Paper G1

Finance Committee

Financial Outcome 2016

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	John Ellis Treasurer john.ellis@urc.org.uk
Action required	For information
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To report on the financial outcome relative to budget for 2016.
Main points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&M income was below both budget and 2015 • Expenditure was below budget, mainly due to fewer than expected stipendiary ministers • Overall there was a small surplus
Previous relevant documents	Budget Paper G1 at November 2015 Mission Council. Emergency Resolution Paper D2 at October 2016 Mission Council.
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of Impact

Financial	Reserves start 2017 at the satisfactory level expected.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	No direct impact.

Financial Outcome 2016

Introduction

1. It is hoped that the URC Trust's formal and audited Report and Financial Statements for 2016 will be available for perusal on the URC website by the time Mission Council meets. Hard copies will be available on request.
2. The attached table summarises the outturn against budget for the items covered by the budget approved in November 2015 by Mission Council.

Income

3. The encouragement from the 2014 General Assembly for local churches to keep their Ministry and Mission (M&M) Fund giving on a gently upwards trajectory, instead of a gently downwards one, appeared to have some impact in 2015 but the effect seems now to have worn off. In 2016 total M&M giving fell again by just over 1% in cash terms, or around 3% in real terms (ie after adjusting for inflation). While Mission Council will be very grateful for all the hard work that lies behind a total M&M income last year of almost £19.3m, this figure is below budget.
4. Overall income was £24k short of budget.

Expenditure

5. The average number of stipendiary ministers in 2016 was significantly lower than expected at the time the budget was prepared. While this made more acute some deployment challenges, from a purely financial point of view it meant expenditure in direct support of ministers was over £400k below budget.
6. Mission Council was warned that net expenditure in support of the Windermere Centre would be well over budget. In the event it was 34% over budget at £179k, drawing down £29k of the emergency funding agreed at the October 2016 Council meeting.
7. The financial support necessary for *Reform* threatened to exceed the limit set by Mission Council of £90k, but some additional advertising income secured late in 2016 kept the net cost to £88k. A cover price rise and some cost reductions have been implemented for 2017.
8. Overall expenditure was £286k below budget.

Overall Position

9. Mainly because of the lower stipendiary minister numbers, the overall position for 2016 was a swing from a modest budgeted deficit to a modest surplus of £152k, equivalent to less than 1% of income.
10. With 2016 effectively in balance, the Finance Committee believes the Church's level of free financial reserves is satisfactory.

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Draft Income and Expenditure account to Dec 2016

Department/ Project	2015	2016 (Jan-Dec)			2017
	Actual	Actual	Budget	Variance	Budget
	£	£	£	£	£
Income					
34 Ministry and Mission contributions	(19,483,157)	(19,260,087)	(19,340,000)	(79,913)	(19,153,000)
35 Pensions - additional funding	(386,447)	(20,634)	0	20,634	0
31 Investment and other income					
Dividends	(846,074)	(848,128)	(827,000)	21,128	(827,000)
Donations	(785)	(12,403)	0	12,403	0
Specific legacies	(459)	0	0	0	0
Grants/Income - Memorial Hall Trust/Fund	(253,977)	(257,416)	(250,000)	7,416	(250,000)
Net other interest	(19,121)	(10,962)	(40,000)	(29,038)	(15,000)
Other income, including property rentals	(14,438)	(42,941)	(20,000)	22,941	(5,000)
	(1,134,854)	(1,171,850)	(1,137,000)	34,850	(1,097,000)
Total income	(21,004,458)	(20,452,571)	(20,477,000)	(24,429)	(20,250,000)
Expenditure					
A Discipleship Dept.					
A1 Ministry					
01 Local and special ministries and CRCWs	14,804,768	14,274,885	14,688,200	413,315	14,057,800
02 Synod Moderators - stipends and expenses	718,356	703,057	663,500	(39,557)	678,960
03 Ministries department	302,189	306,100	295,800	(10,300)	300,275
03P Pastoral & welfare	816	559	2,000	1,441	2,000
	15,826,129	15,284,600	15,649,500	364,900	15,039,035
A2 Education & Learning					
04 Initial training for ministry	720,025	646,013	641,500	(4,513)	730,000
04 Continuing training for ministry	108,577	103,423	107,500	4,077	107,500
04 Resource Centres support	574,953	604,942	571,000	(33,942)	606,500
	1,403,555	1,354,377	1,320,000	(34,377)	1,444,000
W Windermere RCL - net support	123,192	179,317	133,900	(45,417)	121,100
04L Training for Learning & Serving - net support	102,660	96,848	92,900	(3,948)	86,900
04P Lay preachers support	12,077	6,435	10,000	3,565	10,000
04T Education & Learning department	166,514	145,137	148,300	3,163	148,700
	1,807,997	1,782,115	1,705,100	(77,015)	1,810,700
A3 Children's and Youth Work					
06 Staff costs	195,702	200,717	206,600	5,883	207,517
06 Management, resources and programmes	63,944	59,560	86,130	26,570	78,700
	259,646	260,277	292,730	32,453	286,217
A4 Safeguarding					
07 Safeguarding policy and practice	68,563	101,256	78,800	(22,456)	123,083
Discipleship Secretariat					
Deputy General Secretary - Discipleship costs	0	0	0	0	51,000
B Mission Dept.					
10A-B Mission dept staff and core costs	436,095	467,720	483,800	16,080	501,400
10C-E Mission programmes and memberships	245,438	188,758	235,500	46,742	219,732
	681,533	656,478	719,300	62,822	721,132
11 National Ecumenical Officers	33,046	35,908	35,000	(908)	35,400
	714,579	692,386	754,300	61,914	756,532
C Administration & Resources Dept.					
20 Central Secretariat	323,329	315,872	309,800	(6,072)	241,100
24 Church House costs	334,712	301,316	336,000	34,684	276,900
24A Human Resources	66,755	68,684	78,800	10,116	113,000
23 IT Services	156,663	182,973	165,100	(17,873)	178,000
21 Finance	413,653	434,684	403,900	(30,784)	402,000
22 Communications	383,922	376,010	386,800	10,790	404,000
	1,679,033	1,679,539	1,680,400	861	1,615,000
D Governance					
29 General Assembly	130,952	96,085	100,000	3,915	115,000
27 Mission Council	46,879	48,894	44,000	(4,894)	42,000
28 Professional fees	88,015	122,583	103,000	(19,583)	98,000
25 Other	81,422	86,432	59,000	(27,432)	58,000
	347,267	353,993	306,000	(47,993)	313,000
Apprenticeship levy	0	0	0	0	37,500
Irrecoverable VAT	142,145	146,339	120,000	(26,339)	140,000
Total expenditure	20,845,361	20,300,506	20,586,830	286,324	20,172,067
NET (SURPLUS)/DEFICIT	(159,097)	(152,065)	109,830	261,895	(77,933)

Note: Variances are (adverse)/favourable

Paper G2

Finance Committee

Ethical Investment Guidelines re Usury

United Reformed Church
2017

Paper G2

Finance Committee

Ethical Investment Guidelines re Usury

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	John Ellis; Treasurer john.ellis@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, amends the Church's Ethical Investment Guidelines to define "significant" in connection with usurious practices to be 10% of turnover.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To bring the criteria in the URC's Ethical Investment Guidelines for not investing in companies that have a significant share of business in usury into line with that used for other products and by our ecumenical partners.
Main points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2013 a clause on usury was added to the URC's ethical investment guidelines • Companies involved in usury were to be avoided if more than 25% of their turnover related to this activity • The reasons for this high threshold no longer apply so it can be reduced to a more typical 10%
Previous relevant documents	Paper K3 for the May 2013 Mission Council. Ethical Investment Policy Statement, last revised by Mission Council in November 2015 and on the URC website.
Consultation has taken place with...	Investment Committee URC Trust URC Ministers' Pension Fund Board

Summary of Impact

Financial	Not significant
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Proposal would bring URC policy into line with that of our principal ecumenical partners undertaking Ethical Investment work through the Church Investors Group

Ethical Investment Guidelines on Usury

Background

1. The United Reformed Church has a long history of commitment to ethical investment. The Assembly guidelines are followed as far as possible by the central investing bodies of the denomination and are recommended for use by Synods and local churches and associated bodies with money to invest. The short form of the Guidelines is attached as an Appendix; the full version is on the URC website.
2. One part of the Guidelines relates to companies in which the URC does not wish to invest because of the products or services they sell, eg tobacco or pornography. Given the practical impossibility of identifying every possible activity, direct or indirect, of large and complex companies, it has been the practice amongst Church ethical investors to say they will not invest if a company has a significant engagement with the prohibited activity; and to define “significant” as meaning 10% or more of the company’s turnover related to that activity.
3. By 2013 there was widespread concern at the high and often hidden interest rates and marketing activities of some payday and similar lenders. Several Church bodies responded by adding a clause about usury to their ethical investment guidelines and the United Reformed Church did this at the Mission Council meeting in May 2013.
4. The original intention of the URC Finance Committee had been to recommend the usual threshold of 10% of turnover as the measure of significance in relation to usurious activity. However it became clear that several other major Church investors with whom we work closely were setting their threshold at 25%. As most of our effective company lobbying and engagement on ethical matters is done ecumenically, it seemed wisest to have the same threshold in the URC guidelines to enable a united front on these issues. Hence it was recommended to, and accepted by, Mission Council that the usury threshold should be set at 25%.

Proposal

5. Our principal ecumenical partners have recently amended their usury threshold to the more normal 10% and so there is no longer any advantage in the URC being at 25% and every reason to amend it to 10%.

Resolution

Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, amends the Church’s Ethical Investment Guidelines to define “significant” in connection with usurious practices to be 10% of turnover.

Appendix: Summary of URC Ethical Investment Guidelines

1. General Assembly recommends that trustees and all those with investment responsibilities connected with the United Reformed Church should avoid any investment in:
 - a) companies directly engaged in the manufacture or supply of weapons;
 - b) companies a significant part of whose business is in the manufacture or supply of: alcoholic drinks, or tobacco products, or military equipment (other than weapons); or the provision of gambling facilities; or the publication or distribution of pornography; or in the extraction of thermal coal or the production of oil from oil sands;
 - c) companies who benefit by offering credit at usurious rates of interest to those who do not have access to funds through normal lending channels.

General Assembly is of the view that in the definition of the activities outlined in b) above, 'significant' means that the share of turnover derived from the activity concerned is more than 10% of the company's total turnover; for c) above the equivalent threshold should be 25%.

2. In addition to the exclusions listed above, the URC's investment bodies should reserve the right to avoid investment in companies whose operations are deemed to:
 - contribute directly to human rights violations or support the maintenance of oppressive regimes who are guilty of gross human rights violations;
 - contribute to a systematic, harmful impact on the social or natural environment;
 - harm the society in which they operate more than they benefit it;
 - promote injustice.
3. Further, it is expected that governance standards of our advisers, our fund managers, their agents, and the companies in which we invest, both directly and indirectly, should meet internationally accepted norms. By focusing on these standards, investors will favour companies which will be seeking to develop their businesses sustainably in the long term interests of their shareholders and other stakeholders.
4. Nestle Clarification: for investment purposes all companies should be treated in accordance with this ethical investment policy. There is no further requirement to exclude holdings in this company.
5. General Assembly recognises that this policy cannot be binding upon those with responsibility for specific investment decisions but when these bodies seek advice on investment matters they should apply due diligence to ensure that the integrity and reputation of the United Reformed Church is, as far as is practical, protected.

March 2016

Paper G3

Finance Committee

Ending of the Stewardship
Sub-committee

United Church 2017
Church 2017
Reformed Church 2017
Church 2017

Paper G3

Finance Committee

Ending of the Stewardship Sub-committee

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	John Ellis, Treasurer john.ellis@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council thanks all those who have served on the Stewardship Sub-committee, discharges the Sub-committee and agrees that its work should be taken forward within the Finance Committee.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To explain the recommendation of the Finance Committee that its Stewardship Sub-committee should be wound up.
Main points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Church has handled stewardship questions in a variety of ways in its central structures • Since 2009 one vehicle has been the Stewardship Sub-committee of the Finance Committee • The work done by the Sub-committee recently can now be covered in other ways.
Previous relevant documents	No recent ones. Mission Council minutes for October 2007.
Consultation has taken place with...	Communications staff

Summary of Impact

Financial	Minor savings in meetings costs
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None

Ending of the Stewardship Sub-committee

Background

1. Stewardship has always been an important component of Christian discipleship. The United Reformed Church has sometimes reflected this in its formal structures by having a group dedicated to its exploration and promotion.
2. From 1989 to 1999 an energetic Stewardship Advocate led this work and made his presence felt in very productive ways around the Synods and Districts. The programme “TRIO” (= The Responsibility Is Ours) helped local churches follow up on the stimulus provided.
3. In the early years of this century, responsibility fell to the Life and Witness Committee who had a Stewardship Sub-committee. After the 2007 General Assembly abolished the Life and Witness Committee, Mission Council agreed in October 2007 that the Church’s Stewardship Sub-committee should become a sub-committee of the Finance Committee.
4. The Finance Committee initiated various consultations in 2008 which led to the Sub-committee being reconstituted in a different form from hitherto. As questions of strategic policy rested with the Finance Committee, the Sub-committee’s role was focused on the generation of attractive resources for the Church.
5. In the early years of the present decade the Sub-committee organised a major revamp of TRIO to make it useful in the Powerpoint age and it remains a valuable resource for congregations. More recently the Sub-committee’s output has mainly been the annual leaflets about the Ministry and Mission (M&M) Fund which are sent to every church. Other leaflets on stewardship themes are available on the website.

Review

6. With the end of the term of the present Sub-committee Convenor imminent, he and the Finance Committee reviewed the work of the Sub-committee. They concluded that it was now possible, partly because of some staff changes in Communications, to cover all that the Sub-committee had been doing in other ways. Although the contributions of certain individuals had been valuable, there was no need for a formal Sub-committee in order for those energies to be available and released.
7. Noting this conclusion and the request of Mission Council for the central committee structures to be streamlined where possible, the Finance Committee agreed at its February 2017 meeting that the Sub-committee should now be discharged. Responsibility for the annual M&M leaflet and any other future initiatives would rest with the Finance Committee.

Recommendation

8. Mission Council is invited to endorse the Finance Committee's conclusion and ratify the decision to end the Sub-committee as a separate part of the Church's committee structure.

Paper H1

Ministries committee

Further thinking on call

United Church 2017
Church 2017
Reformed Church 2017
Church 2017



Paper H1

Ministries committee

Further thinking on call

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Paul Whittle moderator@urceastern.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Mission Council supports the suggestion of a wider calling group and concurrence to specific spheres of responsibility as normal practice, noting that in some cases ministerial responsibilities will be reviewed and may be varied by mutual agreement and so with a fresh concurrence, while in others the same responsibilities will be held for the duration of the ministry. Mission Council instructs the Ministries Committee to consult widely, and to prepare proposals with regard to the required changes to the Basis of Union and to the Structure. Mission Council instructs Ministries Committee to do further work on the practicalities of a change in the locus of call and concurrence, in particular with reference to manse provision and the vacancy candidating process.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To continue the thinking on call and concurrence emerging from the October 2016 Mission Council, recognising that it is both helpful and important to receive contributions to the discussion from Mission Council as we move to consider possible changes.
Main points	This paper explores questions of call and concurrence and seeks to clearly identify issues that need to be addressed. It recognises the need for further work.
Previous documents	Paper H2 Mission Council October 2016
Consultation with...	

Summary of Impact

Financial	No impact on the budget
External	No direct immediate impact

Thinking Further About Call

1. At its October 2016 meeting Mission Council passed by consensus a resolution stating:
Mission Council asks the Ministries Committee to bring proposals for a reworked practice of call with the aim of:
Ministers being called to service by synods;
Synods and local churches together discerning opportunities for the best use of ministers reflecting the aspirations of God's people and the needs of the local congregations;
Synods having the flexibility to move ministers as appropriate in response to the discernment of new opportunities;
Synods engaging local congregations in a process of learning, support and encouragement to enable widespread understanding and acceptance of this understanding and working out of call.
2. This paper and its accompanying resolutions seek to take thinking on this matter forward, though recognising that significant work remains to be done.
3. In terms of ministry and discipleship, a call is something that God initiates. We often ask questions such as, 'What is God calling you to?' Responding to call is of major importance and should not be minimised. However, the question of a response should not be allowed to block or blur the role of God as the one who initiates a call.
4. God's calling is not restricted to those whom we tend to describe as ministers. All are called, and so the range of roles that the church requires are filled. Together we are all the Body of Christ, each a part. We need to see questions about specific calls and ways of calling in the light of the broader context of the range of tasks in which Jesus' disciples get involved.
5. The Bible portrays a range of ways in which a call may be experienced. For example, as for Samuel, it may come through a dream (1 Samuel 3:3-4), as for David, it may come through a selection process (1 Samuel 16:12), as for Isaiah, it may come through a dramatic religious experience (Isaiah 6:8), as for Simon and Andrew, it may come through a personal challenge (Mark 1:16-18), as for Matthias, it may come through a process of nomination and casting lots (Acts 1:23-26), and, as for Saul, it may come through an overwhelmingly dramatic experience (Acts 9:3-6).
6. Looking for further Biblical indicators as to the process of call and appointment, especially within the early church, would suggest that the first church leaders, the apostles and their successors, such as Timothy and Titus, were far more concerned about the qualifications and giftings of candidates than they were with establishing appointment procedures. Mostly, the leaders seem to have taken the prime role in selecting candidates and the churches testified as to the character of candidates. The important thing is that the whole church was involved. Any changes to our processes need to retain that breadth of involvement.
7. As Mission Council has previously noted: "URC practice with respect to the call to ministry fits this pattern. There are normally four partners in any call, these being God, the individual being called, and two conciliar confirmations. Most often the individual is called by the Church Meeting (or Meetings) and that is confirmed by the

concurrence of the Synod (often delegated to a pastoral, or equivalent, committee.) However, there are several variations which are recognised as entirely appropriate and valid. Any who occupy those Assembly posts that must be held by a minister – Synod Moderators, Secretary for Ministries, General Secretary – are ‘called’ via an appointing group and an Assembly resolution (sometimes delegated). Appointments in some Special Category Ministry (SCM) posts, chaplaincies etc are made by an appointment group and this is then concurred by synod. Non-stipendiary (NSM) post-holders are appointed by the synod though, in practice, in those situations where an NSM is being appointed to a pastorate the synod will often encourage the local congregation to go through a calling process. That effectively amounts to the synod issuing the call and seeking concurrence from the local Church Meeting – though that language will not normally be used.”¹

8. That “normal” practice accords with the Structure of the United Reformed Church which states that function (vii) of the Church Meeting is “to call a Minister or Church Related Community Worker (CRCW) with the concurrence of the Synod(s)” and that function (vii) of the Synod is “to give (or, where deep pastoral concern for the church requires it, to withhold) concurrence in calls to Ministers or Church Related Community Workers.”
9. However, as already noted, there is a variety of practice. Presumably those appointed in ways at some variance from the detailed instruction of the Structure are seen as being properly appointed and as exercising a valid ministry?
10. Having good ways of appointing ministers and of confirming those appointments is vital. Part of maintaining good practice demands some consideration as to whether current methods continue to be relevant and working well.
11. The idea that, in the past, most pastorates were single congregations is simply not so. However, pastorates are becoming more complex and a more flexible approach may be needed to take the denomination towards, and past, the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century. Ministers are often called to a group of churches, and it is becoming increasingly common for that to be a shared (team) ministry with one or more colleagues. It is common, and part of terms of settlement, that ministers may be asked to vary their responsibility during the tenure of a particular post. Most often, though not always, this entails taking an additional congregation. It is increasingly rare, though not unknown, to be the minister of a single congregation. Different forms of lay ministry are also increasing and so there is a jigsaw to be pieced together of growing complexity.
12. We should then consider whether amending our practice of call and concurrence would offer a better reflection of reality and allow greater scope for varying ministerial responsibilities in answer to the changing needs of congregations and communities and the challenges provided by variance in the provision and availability of ministers. Any change must also aim to enable ministers to minister more effectively, bringing their gifts in the best way to the challenges of the twenty-first century church.
13. As one specific example, it is awkward when, as now happens frequently, we “persuade” ministers that they may be “called” to an additional congregation, and then ask that congregation to offer a “call”, always saying that they can decline, but sometimes saying, and sometimes failing to say, that any alternative suggestion is unlikely to be forthcoming.

¹ Paragraph 8 of Paper H2, Mission Council October 2016.

14. The Statement of the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church affirms “our right and readiness, if the need arises, to change the Basis of Union.”
15. As practice is already frequently at variance with the statements contained within the structure as to call and concurrence, we could simply continue along the line of actual variance and determine that no change was needed or helpful. However, it would seem desirable for what we actually do to be in line with our structure.
16. We would therefore propose that each synod (or an intermediate body or committee to which the synod chooses to delegate this) is the calling group for ministers to particular areas and that ministers are appointed to specific congregations/pieces of work for agreed periods, concurrence being given by the relevant congregations or other relevant bodies. Where relevant, every effort should be made to include representation from the churches, or other organisations, likely to be served amongst the persons serving on a call group. When a ministry is reviewed, it may be extended, varied or amended. We further propose that concurrence, rather than being an important procedural confirmation, becomes a specific affirmation of call to a particular role, in some cases for a particular period.
17. The normal process established by paragraph 16 does not prevent a synod from using a pastorate, which may on occasion be a single congregation, as a calling group. However, it is necessary for two councils, whether by delegation (eg to a Synod Pastoral Committee) or by acting in a parallel fashion (eg. two or more Church Meetings, meeting together or separately), to be participants in any call, together with the minister concerned and the recognising and discerning of God’s call, whether it is an initial call or at a point of review. It also does not prevent an actual time limit being the duration of the ministry.
18. Good calls happen in a range of ways, and it is important to continue to recognise that. This suggested change develops what is already happening in a number of places. As an example we cite some stories from Eastern Synod. For some years, in the Norwich area the seven (now six) churches have joined to call ministers to the whole group and it is only after the call process (and formerly after the start of the ministry) that the minister’s exact responsibilities have been defined. In West Suffolk a group of nine churches formed an Area Partnership. One was an LEP, and the other eight shared two ministers, each taking responsibility for four congregations. When one of the ministers retired, the remaining minister changed responsibilities so that she remained with one of her former congregations, but changed her other three to assume responsibility for three that had previously been in the other part of the pastorate. Later, the new ‘other’ minister changed responsibilities ‘swapping’ one church for another, which involved a reorganisation that crossed two separate ‘then’ Area Partnership boundaries. These are the realities of being God’s URC today that we seek to address.

Paper H2

Ministries Committee
Deployment Formula

United Reformed Church
2017
Church 2017



Paper H2

Ministries Committee

Deployment Formula

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Craig Bowman: ministries@urc.org.uk Paul Whittle: moderator@urceastern.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Draft resolution A: Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, agrees that stipendiary ministry posts, excluding those identified by General Assembly for CRCWs and Special Category Ministry, shall be allocated to synods on the basis of a formula with a weighting of 60% for the number of members in each synod and 40% for the number of congregations in each synod. This formula shall be reapplied annually on the basis of the latest information available.</p> <p>Draft resolution B: Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, agrees that stipendiary ministry posts, excluding those identified by General Assembly for CRCWs and Special Category Ministry, shall be allocated to synods on the basis of the existing formula with a weighting in the ratios of 3:2:1 for number of members: number of churches: population. The population element should be updated to the 2011 census as quickly as possible. This formula shall be reapplied annually on the basis of the latest information available.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	An updated formula to distribute the number of stipendiary ministry posts available to the church to be equitably shared across the 13 synods.
Main points	Mission Council is asked whether to adopt a new formula removing the population element from the calculation or to retain the current formula, with the option of updating the population element in line with the 2011 census.
Previous relevant documents	General Assembly 2016 Book of Reports pp154-161 'Stipendiary minister numbers and deployment.'
Consultation has taken place with...	Mission Council and synod moderators.

Summary of Impact

Financial	There is no additional financial implication.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Increased clarity with regard to projected stipendiary minister numbers in each synod assists the exploration of ecumenical leadership opportunities.

Deployment formula

Calculating deployment targets

1. Part of the report of the Ministries Committee to General Assembly 2016 concerned stipendiary minister numbers and deployment and proposed an amendment in the way in which minister numbers allocated to each synod are calculated. The following extract from the *Book of Reports* to General Assembly explains the background.
2.
 - 2.1 “In 1979, Assembly agreed that the number of stipendiary ministers available to the Church as a whole should be allocated to each of the synods according to a formula which was weighted in the ratios 3:2:1 for number of members: number of churches: population, and the formula has in general served the Church well over the intervening years.
 - 2.2 “However, the one sixth population element has not been regularly updated and still uses 1991 census data. It would be possible to recalibrate using 2011 census data. As population shifts generally follow economic prosperity, the main effect of such a recalculation would be to shift resources from the poorer synods towards the synods that are already the wealthier ones.
 - 2.3 “In addition, as this population element represents only one sixth of the weighting in the formula, and as the number of stipends available continues to fall, the difference made to the number of ministers available to any given synod as a result of inclusion of this element is less and less. Ministries is therefore recommending that the allocation formula is now simplified and the population element be removed from the calculation.”
3. The paper recognised that this had a disproportionate effect on two synods (Yorkshire and Scotland) and suggested that transitional arrangements be put in place to assist these synods with the adjustment. In fact, taking the targets for the end of 2016, if this change had been agreed and put into immediate effect, two synods (Northern and Wales) would have seen no change; four synods (North Western, Mersey, South Western and Southern) would have seen their target increase by one; two synods (Eastern and Wessex) would have seen their target increase by two; three synods (East Midlands, West Midlands and Thames North) would have seen their target decrease by one; one synod (Yorkshire) would have seen their target decrease by two; and one synod (Scotland) would have seen their target decrease by three.
4. One of the groups of people most heavily involved with operating the deployment formula is the Synod Moderators and awareness of this proposed change in the months prior to General Assembly provoked significant, but very mixed, reaction to what was being suggested, with some supporting removal of the population element in the calculation and others opposing it. Interestingly, the prime argument advanced from both perspectives was missional. On the one hand it was said that it seems wrong to remove the one element that looks beyond ourselves while, on the other hand, it was said that as our mission is surely focussed where we are present, it makes sense to concentrate our resources in those places.
5. As a result of those conversations Steve and Linda Faber did some work with the population figures, matching the 1991 census figures against those from 2011 and calculating the percentage change. The figures produced show these changes in population figures:

Northern Synod	- a reduction of 12.6% ¹
North Western Synod	- an increase of 9.1% ²
Mersey Synod	- an increase of 4.7%
Yorkshire Synod	- an increase of 8.9%
East Midlands Synod	- an increase of 16%
West Midlands Synod	- an increase of 14.9%
Eastern Synod	- an increase of 19.1%
South Western Synod	- an increase of 10.6%
Wessex Synod	- an increase of 18.8%
Thames North Synod	- an increase of 26.1%
Southern Synod	- an increase of 17.6%
National Synod of Wales	- an increase of 9.1%
National Synod of Scotland	- an increase of 6%

with the total variation being an increase of 12.7%.

This offers a helpful indication of the trends in population change.

6. The resolution proposed to General Assembly (Resolution 29(c)) stated: "All remaining stipendiary posts for both ministries shall be allocated to synods on the basis of a formula with a weighting of 60% for the number of members in each synod and 40% for the number of congregations in each synod. This formula shall be reapplied annually on the basis of the latest information available."
7. That resolution was amended and so the one agreed by General Assembly stated: "All remaining stipendiary posts for both ministries shall be allocated to synods on the current basis until more work has been done on deployment at Mission Council."
8. The October 2016 meeting of Mission Council was asked to consider this question as one of the 'basket' of issues that were presented on behalf of the Ministries Committee. The only clear request that emerged from that discussion was that 'footfall' be a factor, rather than membership. Further consultation, particularly with the Synod Moderators, has recognised that, however desirable, that is simply not practical on the denominational level and that establishing an appropriate and equitable means of measuring such is not feasible.
9. However, that still leaves the population element undecided. Ministries Committee believes that its earlier suggestion remains valid. It believes this because, firstly and mainly, retaining the population element tends to advantage those with access to greater economic resources, and that, secondly, retaining this element does not make a significant difference, especially given that targets will not produce exact numbers.
10. We therefore present Mission Council with two alternative resolutions, but recommend the first. Should Mission Council fail to make a clear decision, the second resolution will effectively prevail, as it represents the status quo. Mission Council could ask for further work to be done on this. Ministries Committee does not believe that further work can usefully be done and so hopes that such a suggestion will not be made but, if this were suggested, would wish for a clear identification of what work is needed.
11. Tables showing the effect on deployment quotas if population figures are updated or removed.

¹ A shift of that part of Cumbria that was in Northern to North Western is included here.

² See footnote 1

11.1 1991 Population

Weighting - % Members 50, Churches 33, Population 17

SYNOD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	TOTAL
MEMBERS -2016	2501	5269	3141	3124	3499	4409	4445	3202	5864	5051	6834	2055	2666	52060
CHURCHES - 2016	69	130	82	98	132	117	134	114	131	129	148	95	47	1426
POPULATION (k)	3051	3931	2733	4494	4702	5632	3266	3204	4271	5904	5818	2808	5000	54814
Target, start of 2016	20	37	22	26	31	35	33	27	38	39	48	19	22	397
Target, end of 2016	19	36	22	26	30	33	32	26	38	37	45	19	20	383
Target, end of 2018	18	33	20	24	28	31	30	24	35	34	42	18	18	354
Target, end of 2020	16	30	19	22	26	28	27	22	33	32	38	16	17	326
Target, end of 2022	15	28	17	20	24	26	25	20	30	29	36	15	16	302
Target, end of 2024	14	26	16	19	22	24	23	19	28	27	33	14	14	278

11.2 2011 Population

Weighting - % Members 50, Churches 33, Population 17

SYNOD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	TOTAL
MEMBERS -2016	2501	5269	3141	3124	3499	4409	4445	3202	5864	5051	6834	2055	2666	52060
CHURCHES - 2016	69	130	82	98	132	117	134	114	131	129	148	95	47	1426
POPULATION (k)	2665	4288	2861	4892	5454	6470	3890	3542	5075	7445	6841	3064	5300	61787
Target, start of 2016	20	37	22	26	31	35	33	27	38	39	48	19	22	397
Target, end of 2016	18	35	22	25	30	33	32	26	39	38	45	19	20	383
Target, end of 2018	17	33	20	23	28	31	30	24	35	35	42	18	18	354
Target, end of 2020	15	30	19	22	26	28	28	22	32	32	39	16	17	326
Target, end of 2022	14	28	17	20	24	26	25	20	30	30	36	15	15	302
Target, end of 2024	13	26	16	18	22	24	23	19	28	27	33	14	14	278

11.3 No Population

Weighting - % Members 60, Churches 40

SYNOD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	TOTAL
MEMBERS -2016	2501	5269	3141	3124	3499	4409	4445	3202	5864	5051	6834	2055	2666	52060
CHURCHES - 2016	69	130	82	98	132	117	134	114	131	129	148	95	47	1426
Target, start of 2016	20	37	22	26	31	35	33	27	38	39	48	19	22	397
Target, end of 2016	18	37	23	24	30	32	34	26	40	36	46	19	17	383
Target, end of 2018	17	34	21	22	27	30	31	24	37	33	43	18	16	354
Target, end of 2020	16	32	19	21	25	27	29	22	34	31	39	16	14	326
Target, end of 2022	15	29	18	19	23	25	27	21	32	29	36	15	13	302
Target, end of 2024	13	27	16	18	22	23	25	19	29	26	33	14	12	278

Targets show numbers of FTE (full time equivalent) ministers deployed, minus number in SCM posts

Figures for members and churches are taken from the 2016 Annual Returns

Population figures are given in thousands (k)

H2

United Reformed Church • Mission Council, May 2017

Paper H3

Ministries Committee
Ministries updates

United Reformed Church
2017
Church 2017



Paper H3

Ministries committee

Ministry issues

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Paul Whittle moderator@urceastern.org.uk
Action required	None
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To explore the range of questions of current concern with respect to different aspects of the ministry of the church and, in particular, the deployment of Ministers of Word and Sacraments
Main points	This paper explores a range of ministry issues, including call, models of ministry, the deployment formula, the use of the ministry budget, the value of the ministry and mission covenant and the place and development of local leadership
Previous relevant documents	None of direct relevance
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	No direct immediate impact

Ministry Updates

1. Ministries Committee is currently working on a number of key issues that were mentioned at the last, or previous, Mission Councils. It is appropriate to offer some updates.
2. Work is ongoing on the number of ministers, actual, targets and predicted. There was a greater number of unpredictable changes than anticipated during 2016, though not significantly so. However, this has led to an unexpected, though not unexplained, gap between the actual and predicted numbers at the end of 2016. The current work on Certificates of Eligibility and different methods of spending money budgeted for ministry will address this.
3. The working party that has been exploring all aspects of non-stipendiary ministry is about to report to Ministries Committee. It is anticipated that relevant matters, and possibly proposals, will be brought to the next meeting of Mission Council.
4. A complete update of the Movement of Ministers document, including better use of electronic links, is needed and under consideration, but is an extensive piece of work. As an interim measure a reasonable updating of the current document is almost complete, and should replace the current website documentation soon.
5. As requested by General Assembly, a code of conduct for authorised elders has been prepared – Appendix 1. This will benefit from some minor amendments, not least that the document currently only mentions DBS (England and Wales) and not PVG (Scotland). However, the committee believes it is sufficiently robust to be offered without further delay, and so it is now available for use as and when required by synods. Ministries Committee reminds Mission Council that General Assembly instructed that authorised elders be required to subscribe to such a code as a condition of authorisation and suggests that demonstrating such commitment is best achieved by a request to sign the code.
6. In response to the resolution agreed at the October 2016 Mission Council requesting further work on communicating the Ministry and Mission covenant, a brain-storming meeting of appropriate representatives was held. Among the main things noted were the different approaches used by different synods. Work is being done on this issue separately, and will be reported to a subsequent meeting of Mission Council. A second point concerned the difficulty of persuading people to engage in realistic levels of stewardship: generally speaking, poorer communities tend to be significantly more generous. A third, and related, point was about seeing giving as a key element in discipleship. It was agreed that, at this stage, it made sense to continue present practice for 2017, and so an appropriate leaflet and accompanying letter will be produced, though with an emphasis on celebrating what we have achieved. It was further agreed to develop more innovative and varied approaches for subsequent years, potentially using such means as video clips and podcasts, but additionally to ensure clear integration with Walking the Way.

Appendix 1 to Paper H3

Code of Conduct for Authorised Elders

Introduction

In 2016 the General Assembly agreed that the pattern of presidency at the sacraments if the minister in pastoral charge is not available should be as follows:

1. the Church Meeting may invite another Minister of Word and Sacraments;
2. if such a minister is not available, the Church Meeting may invite an elder (or accredited lay preacher) authorised by the synod, in accordance with the provisions of §25 of the Basis of Union: elders of the local church and accredited lay preachers regularly conducting worship there should be considered first;
3. authorisation for such presidency by the synod, normally of members from within the congregation concerned, should be for an initial period of three to five years (according to synod judgement), including a probationary year on first appointment, with the possibility of renewal. Before renewal there should be consultation by the synod with the congregation, and a review of its needs.

Authorised Elders in this document refers to those appointed by the synod under 2 above, whether elders or lay preachers. Such appointees agree to abide by this code of conduct.

Faithful living

Those appointed will take account of the need to model a Christian lifestyle including:

- Live a Christian life as persons of prayer and integrity.
- Be committed to growing in faith and discipleship and developing the gifts each has been given.
- Avoid doing anything to undermine the spiritual health of another.
- Regard all persons with equal respect and concern and not discriminate against anyone on the basis of gender, race, age, disability or sexual orientation.
- Refrain from using privilege or power for personal advantage or gain, whether financial, emotional, sexual or material.
- Work collaboratively with ministers/CRCWs, elders, members and lay preachers where appropriate.
- Seek advice from others if in doubt about one's competence to deal with any issue or situation.
- Engage positively with all the councils of the church.

Authorised Elders will:

- Remember that the worship of the local church is an expression of the worship of the whole people of God.
- Treat honourably the traditions and practices of the United Reformed Church
- Be sensitive to the particular patterns of worship life in the congregation for which they are authorised
- Undertake such training as determined by the synod in line with the requirements of General Assembly
- Engage positively with the review process at the end of the probationary year and at the end of the appointment period.
- Hold a valid Disclosure and Barring Service certificate.
- Be supportive of any changes the church and synod may wish to make at the end of the appointment, recognising that changes within the pastorate may mean there is no ongoing need for an authorised elder or that it is appropriate for someone else to take on the role.

Paper 11

Mission Committee
Greenbelt 2017

United Reformed Church
2017
Church 2017



Paper I1

Mission Committee

Greenbelt 2017

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Steve Summers steve.summers@urc.org.uk
Action required	Information is provided to circulate to local churches.
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To inform members about the United Reformed Church's association with Greenbelt and to build support for this involvement.
Main points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The United Reformed Church is an Associate Sponsor of Greenbelt for 2016 and 2017. • The Greenbelt Festival is from 25 – 28 August 2017 at Boughton House, Kettering, Northamptonshire. • Individuals and local churches are invited to participate with the <i>URC at Greenbelt</i> project.
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council discussions in 2014-15, most recently minute 15/3. Paper I3, Mission Council March 2016.
Consultation has taken place with...	Mission Committee, Communications department, General Secretariat, Chief Finance Officer.

Summary of Impact

Financial	This project is fully-funded by a Legacy Fund grant.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	This involvement will expand our contacts and witness, in the context of a well-known and widely-supported Christian festival.

Greenbelt 2017

1. Greenbelt is a collision of the arts, faith and justice. Engaged with culture, inspired by the arts, sustained by faith, Greenbelt aspires to be an open generous community reimagining the Christian narrative for the present moment. This vision is primarily lived out annually, with a festival and rich programme of music, visual and performing arts, spirituality, comedy, talks and discussion. But thinking of Greenbelt as just another 'festival' doesn't do it justice. It is also an idea, a way of seeing, a gathering of the clans – part movement, part moment. Its genius is that it defies easy description. Celebrating artistry and nurturing activism, the Greenbelt Festival is an act of imagination – inspirational, provocative and fun. Energised by a progressive Christian worldview which is politically and culturally engaged, Greenbelt creates a festival that is inclusive, open-minded, participatory and generous in spirit.
2. Since 1974, Greenbelt has equipped and re-energised Christians to be imaginative and effective disciples in their local communities. Greenbelt and the United Reformed Church signed an agreement in January 2016, making the denomination an associate sponsor of the Greenbelt festival for the first time. The partnership is a natural fit, building on the URC's rich Nonconformist history of exploration of radical Christian faith and working for justice, and the dynamic and creative energy of the Greenbelt festival.
3. The aims of the *URC at Greenbelt* project include:
 - to generously invest in, join with and contribute to a festival which has an outstanding and unique track-record for encouraging and equipping Christians with their discipleship and ministry for more than four decades. Greenbelt continues to provide a crucible for faith and praxis where people return home enthused and envisioned to develop their local churches, neighbourhoods and communities.
 - to accompany Greenbelt as we collectively explore God's mission for today, envision how we may be and do Church more imaginatively and discover how disciples of Christ might live out their faith more effectively.
 - to encourage, gather together and strengthen the sense of community for the numerous URC members who have been part of the Greenbelt movement for many years and to provide a recognisable presence for URC members new to Greenbelt.
4. These aims were successfully addressed via our activities at the 2016 festival and will continue to be addressed this year. The large, uniquely-decorated and distinctive 'U', 'R' and 'C' letters that were displayed and collectively transformed outside our URC Tent symbolised the image of the URC that our project conveyed. Awareness was particularly raised about the JPIT, CRCW ministry, Reform, Commitment for Life, Pilots, CreateTalk, Luther King House, East Midlands Synod, TLS, Discipleship and Pioneer Ministry by conversations and displays in the URC Tent. URC Youth representatives took on invaluable roles and responsibilities that should be particularly recognised. Another benefit of this venture has been closer working relationships among colleagues across the different teams with representatives of Mission, Communications and Discipleship playing equally valuable roles. Blog articles from Grace Pengelly, Ann Honey, Ruth Maxey and Francis Brienens were circulated to 20 000 subscribers each and comments and photos about the URC uploaded via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram sites.

5. The highly-visible *URC at Greenbelt* team members were often asked about the meaning of their 'Scrap the Church?' tee-shirts that they were wearing. This, plus the different URC activities connecting with our theme, naturally led to conversations about the URC's dissenting tradition and our desire to continually be discerning God's mission for today in contemporary society. Over 500 people wrote down their comments about what the Church could scrap or improve and the URC activities stimulated conversations and personal reflection about the role and effectiveness of Church in society. One of the most encouraging aspects of the URC's formal presence at the festival was the high number of URC people who came along to our activities and emphasised how good it was to see the URC so prominent as part of Greenbelt. Additionally, a good number of URC members came along to the festival for the first time due to our Association with Greenbelt. The 27 volunteers involved with our *URC at Greenbelt* team felt a strong sense of belonging, identity with and commitment to the project and the URC.
6. Following on from the success of the *URC at Greenbelt* project in 2016, plans are well underway for our involvement with the 2017 festival. Relationships with Greenbelt staff are strong and the URC is viewed as a key player as Greenbelt moves forward. The festival is held this year from 25 to 29 August at Boughton House near Kettering, Northamptonshire. The theme for this year's festival is 'The Common Good', how can we collectively transform life for the sake of the world? Please see: www.greenbelt.org.uk for more information.
7. Our *URC at Greenbelt* presence sits within the current *Feasts & Festivals* celebrations; the festival is a given while the feasts and food focus lends itself to many activities and discussions. Within our URC theme of 'More than Welcome', URC-organised activities at Greenbelt 2017 will include a 'giant picnic table & shelter' art installation; 'Pop-up picnic liturgy' with a number of 'eucharistic moments' happening around the village over the weekend, depicting stories from the gospel that incorporate food; a Discussion Panel exploring the theme, involving those who feel more-or-less welcome in society and church; a 'Cake & debate' session as part of the youth programme; and the 'URC Banqueting Tent' in the Greenbelt Takeaway Area where people can relax, meet with others, listen to stories, learn to knit, attend workshops and discuss key issues around the theme. The popular URC 'treasure hunt' will involve searching the site for hidden picnic hampers, answering questions on food and feast stories from the Bible and collecting knitted food to bring to our Banqueting Table so that it gradually becomes laden over the weekend. The aim is to illustrate The Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-24), to explore how to enact more than mere tokenistic or lukewarm welcome, and to consider who is missing from our conversations, our communities and our churches. On the final day, festival-goers will be invited to take an item of food back home as a gift from the URC, along with an action card encouraging them to identify and build relationships with those who feel less-than-welcome in their communities and churches.
8. Last year's festival 'treasure hunt' showcased the brightly and uniquely-decorated stars designed by church groups and synods across the URC. For this year's 'treasure hunt', local knitters and crocheters are invited to produce as much knitted or crocheted food as possible! Interested individuals, community groups and churches should email crcw.admin@urc.org.uk for patterns and information about where to send the produce. A large amount of wool will also be needed for the festival so if you have any to spare, please also contact this address.



9. Individuals and local churches are encouraged to email the project coordinator: steve.summers@urc.org.uk if they would like to know more about the *URC at Greenbelt* project or expect to attend this year's festival. There is a Greenbelt page on the URC website and URC Communications have created a URC Greenbelt event on their Facebook page where the latest information about the *URC at Greenbelt* project will be posted. Whilst recognising your individuality and the different strands we represent within our URC-tapestry, we encourage you to become 'knitted together' for The Common Good!

A short presentation about Greenbelt will be given to Mission Council.



Paper 12

Mission Committee

Partnership Re-Commitment

[Presbyterian Church of Ghana, London and Europe
Presbytery and the United Reformed Church]

United Reformed Church
2017
Church 2017
Church 2017



Paper I2

Mission Committee

Partnership Re-Commitment [Presbyterian Church of Ghana, London and Europe Presbytery, and the United Reformed Church]

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Bernie Collins and Michael Jagessar michael.jagessar@urc.org.uk
Action required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission Council to note and affirm the Partnership Re-commitment • Mission Council to endorse the following resolution as a matter of good order and practice
Draft resolution(s)	<p>a) Mission Council welcomes and affirms the Partnership Re-commitment between the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, London and Europe Presbytery, and the United Reformed Church.</p> <p>b) Mission Council recommends as good practice, and requests Church Meetings to consider seriously, the principle that an individual should not serve as an Elder in both of these churches simultaneously. This would not prevent an individual serving as an Elder in one denomination, and at a later time serving as an Elder in the other.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	
Main points	Re-affirmation of the URC's partnership with the growing London and Europe Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana
Previous documents	2011 Memorandum of Understanding between the PCG and URC
Consultation has taken place with...	Mission Committee Faith and Order Dialogue Group (URC and PCG)

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External	The Presbyterian Church of Ghana Churches Together in England

Partnership Re-Commitment

[Presbyterian Church of Ghana, London and Europe Presbytery and the United Reformed Church]

1. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) and the United Reformed Church (URC) have had a long relationship as partner Churches. On 15 May 2011 the PCG and URC affirmed in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) their vision of sharing a common commitment to mission in the UK through partnership and a desire to nurture Reformed Churches for immigrants from Ghana that are in formal relationship with both the URC and the PCG.
2. Since then the Presbyterian Church of Ghana has established a sizeable network of congregations in the UK, and a European Presbytery. This mission and ministry continue to grow. In local contexts, especially in London some PCG communities share the worship space of URC Churches, URC ministers are working collaboratively with PCG colleagues, PCG ministerial colleagues share in BAME gatherings, and there are ongoing conversations around ways that the PCG (UK) and the URC can support each other's ministry.
3. Believing that we are guided by the Holy Spirit into a continuing relationship of mutual friendship and partnership in the work of the Gospel, we sense that the time is right for the URC and the PCG (UK) to re-affirm:
 - our common faith in the living and true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
 - our common heritage as Reformed Churches within the Reformed family of Churches;
 - our sharing in, as partners, a common missional calling, a commitment to growing the Church and deepening Christian discipleship, and a desire to enable each other's mission and ministry, as God's Spirit will lead us;
 - our commitment to give and receive from each other, learn from one another, to pray for one another, and to consider practical ways of sharing resources where possible, as we seek to serve and walk the way of abundant life of God in Christ.
4. This renewal of our commitment re-affirms our long and strong partnership links and our desire to grow and deepen our relationship in new and mutually enriching ways.

Resolution

5. Over the last year, we have had a series of conversations, and these continue. One of the practical issues discussed was that of overlapping eldership which we felt would merit attention and guidance from the respective Councils of both the PCG and the URC. To this end, we bring before Mission Council the resolution above.
6. The resolution does not seek to require an elder presently serving with both churches to resign immediately from one or the other. But the principle would imply that as soon as this overlapping service could reasonably be ended (for example on the completion of a stated term in one of the churches), the elder should take the opportunity to stand down. After this they would only serve in one denomination at any one time.

Paper 13

Mission Committee

The Kingston Declaration 2017
New International Financial and
Economic Architecture Colloquium
CWM - Europe and the Caribbean

United Church 2017
Church 2017
Reformed Church 2017
Church 2017



Paper I3

Mission Committee

The Kingston Declaration 2017 (Europe and the Caribbean -CWM)

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Bernie Collins and Michael Jagessar michael.jagessar@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council endorses the direction of travel of CWM's NIFEA process, and commends the Kingston Declaration to URC congregations for prayers, study, reflection and action.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	The Declaration is the result of the first of three colloquia of CWM member churches of Europe and the Caribbean aimed at developing a plan of action towards constructing just, caring and sustaining global and economic structure.
Main points	See the list of 'Actions' within the report.
Previous relevant documents	The Sao Paolo Statement [an ecumenical document – WCC, WCRC and CWM]
Consultation has taken place with...	The Mission Team and the Mission Committee

Summary of Impact

Financial	Any financial impact is already built into the Assembly Budget of Mission
External (e.g. ecumenical)	World Mission Body and Member Churches of CWM's Caribbean and Europe

The Kingston Declaration of the New International Financial Economic Architecture Colloquium

1. As representatives of the Council for World Mission Caribbean and European Region Member Bodies¹ we have convened in Kingston Jamaica from 25 to 29 January 2017 to reflect upon the critical challenges of pervasive economic, social and ecological injustice, widespread poverty and inequality which continue to devastate countries and communities within our Regions and the rest of the world.
2. This Colloquium is the first in a series of three on the Economy of Life – the ordering of our world that all may have life in its fullness (John 10:10). Our gathering deliberated upon and affirmed the challenges highlighted in the Sao Paulo statement. We engaged with a number of presentations on the subjects concerned, discussed and debated and undertook exposure to local community projects working in the areas of our theme.
3. The context of the inauguration of President Trump and the British vote to leave the European Union shaped our conversation. They function as examples of democratically expressed anxieties which are leading to the development of policies which we believe will lead to extensive and further exclusion and oppression. We are conscious that such policy changes often fall most heavily on vulnerable groups.
4. We commit and covenant together in advocacy, self-critique, and self-development. The work we do shall be evidence based, grass roots informed, prophetically inspired, and ecumenically supported. This is a journey to which we joyfully and whole heartedly commit.
5. In all we do, we look to Jesus who spoke so often about money, was never complacent concerning economics and does not desire us to be complacent about the economics of our age.

Affirmation of the Sao Paulo statement

6. The Sao Paulo Statement which arises from a global ecumenical conference on a New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA) 'seeks to engage the proponents of diverse proposals and solutions, set criteria and a framework and develop a plan of action towards constructing just, caring and sustaining global and economic structure.
7. Having received and reflected critically upon the overall message of the statement, we welcome the theological, socio-political and economic affirmations contained therein. The colloquium further recognized that within our contexts particular attention must be paid to the exploitation of natural resources; unjust tax and trade

¹ CWM member churches present: Congregational Federation; Guyana Congregational Union; Presbyterian Church of Wales; United Church of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands; Union of Welsh Independents; United Reformed Church. Also present: Evangelical Lutheran Church of Suriname.

arrangements; land-grabbing; systems of indebtedness and the ongoing consequences of slavery. All of these perpetuate grinding poverty, economic hardship and ecological destruction.

Actions

The members of this colloquium have determined to undertake the following actions:

Self- awareness

- Understanding our context is key to appropriate responses
- We should map the emergence of policies (national and transnational) that marginalize sectors of society
- Combating the rise of forms of nationalism that undermine the Christian conviction that all human lives are infinitely valuable
- We must talk openly and deeply about the ongoing consequences of Empire and its past injustices, particularly slavery, and the question of reparation must be addressed.

Policy Development

- Review of our denominational investment policies
- Development of environmental policies, sustainability, use of church property
- Developing appropriate schemes, e.g. microfinance, that work to intervene into or eradicate poverty, the development of local markets.

External engagement

- Identifying relevant NGO partners to work alongside
- Advocacy towards government
- Mobilization of local community in advocacy
- Cascading of our learning towards church members engaged in local, regional, and national government that they may act with knowledge of the system
- We as churches must be at the forefront of just and legitimate protest against social, political, ecological, financial, economical injustices against God's creation
- Empowerment through training and capacity building.

Communication

- Building denominational and social cohesion to mobilize our common resources towards a new financial and economic architecture
- Sharing the statistics and stories to which we have been exposed, to open eyes and hearts to the degradation and dehumanization of poverty
- Developing a common vocabulary in which we can communicate around social and economic justice
- Communication to wide audiences from school children to government officials, in appropriate language.

Common Action

- Create a simple network to enable communication of action and sharing of files, and work between members of the colloquium
- Sharing our stories of implementation, and existing work, towards the eradication of poverty and ecological injustice.

Self-Education

- We do not understand enough about either the existing economic architecture or new alternatives and must work to increase our understanding
- We will explore alternative mechanisms of exchange
- We will explore the particular impact of poverty on groups typically disenfranchised in our societies (including, but not limited to, disabled persons, sexual minorities, and refugees)
- The impact of patriarchy and its intersections must further be explored and challenged
- We will imagine and interrogate the possibility of a New International Financial and Economic Architecture.

Epilogue

1. We have heard and been moved by stories of struggle. Struggle creates hope. That we care enough to struggle gives us hope. 'Hope is God's gift to battered, broken, disappointed and dispirited people, giving us the will to go on, to be able to say: "Yes, we can" when everything says "No"'.² Hope is participatory, and engenders solidarity. Our hope is in God, and is born in God.
2. Nehemiah was disturbed to the point of distress by the experience of his homeland. His vulnerability and human suffering caused a powerful man of his day to let him go, to give him resources enough for a contextual solution to a problem created by the battles of Empires. Our love for one another, and the pain it causes to see our neighbour in pain can mobilise the resources of the present age.
3. Our existing economic architecture is intricately intertwined. This enmeshing began in Empire, in the period of resource extraction founded upon the labour of slaves. This colloquium brings us face to face with the colonial relationships of the past and the modern forms of slavery that arise in the Empire of the present. We commit to intentional engagement with each other, and across our regions, that is both honest and fully open to hear.
4. We have recognized that our churches are moved quickly to poverty alleviation, but that we must move not only towards poverty intervention, but to desire and seek poverty eradication. It is not enough even 'to teach a human being to fish' if the water in which it swims is polluted, and the pond has been land grabbed by the wealthy. We must cease to be complicit in subsistence.
5. There are radical alternative currencies we will wish to explore. There is also the radical availability of CASH: Compassion, Association, Selflessness and Heart. This CASH can be a mechanism to shape our service.
6. We affirm that the value of a human being is not determined by their wealth or their economic activity. We assert that wealth is not always created by hard work or honest means. We believe that inequality is itself a challenge to kingdom values and desire a structure that requires all the wealthy to be contributing to the good of the whole of society. We are scandalised that the wealth of the world's 8 richest men is equivalent to the earnings of the 3.6 billion poorest persons in the world, equivalent to half the

² The Revd Dr Collin I. Cowan, address to NIFEA Colloquium, 'A Theological Perspective on Poverty Eradication', 26 January 2017.

world's population. We hear again Jesus forcing us to choose between Caesar and God in the ordering of our money. We cannot affirm the accumulation of wealth as an end to be desired, we must desire an 'Economy of Life' that desires life in all its fullness for all God's creation.

7. A loud voice is speaking to us from heaven. It says to us "Now God's home is with human beings! God will live with them and they shall be God's people; God will be with them as their God... One day, the old things will have disappeared. And the one who sits on the throne says, 'And now, I make all things new'". (Revelation 21:3-5, paraphrased)

Paper 14

Mission Committee

New Framework for Local Unity in Mission

A response from the United
Reformed Church

United
Reformed
Church
Church 2017
2017
Church 2017



Paper 14

Mission Committee New Framework for Local Unity in Mission A response from the United Reformed Church

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Bernie Collins bernie.collins@thecrocker.net David Tatem david.tatem@urc.org.uk
Action required	Receive and take note
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	The United Reformed Church response to the discussion document from Churches Together in England, 'A New Framework for Local Unity in Mission'. To share the response that has been made from discussion within the church.
Main points	The response affirms the main recommendations that are contained in the report and offers observations from the perspective of the United Reformed Church.
Previous relevant documents	A New Framework for Local Unity in Mission.
Consultation has taken place with...	Mission Council Mission Committee Faith and Order Committee 24 Hour consultation of synod representatives.

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Contribution to ecumenical thinking and development.

New Framework for Local Unity in Mission ^[1]

A response from the United Reformed Church

Preamble

1. The document was circulated in the spring of 2016 to and through the synods, including the national synods of Wales and Scotland, with a request for responses. In addition, following a presentation by David Cornick at the meeting of the URC's Mission Council in November 2016 there was group discussion focussing on the most obvious positive aspects of the report, the questions that it raised and the suggestions for action that could be noted. The results of this, along with written responses from two synod discussions, were fed into a consultation held at High Leigh on 1 and 2 February 2017. The consultation included representatives from each of the synods, including seven synod moderators, and the General Secretary along with a number of ecumenical officers and members of the Ecumenical Reference Group. The meeting was joined by a representative of the Methodist Church, the ecumenical partner with which the URC shares the largest number of LEPs (some 300 in total). This draft for a response from the URC distils what emerged as the most important points at the consultation.

General comments, especially on points 1,2 and 3 'encouragement to the churches'^[2]

2. The consultation reflected on the ecumenical 'DNA' of the URC acknowledging its roots in the union of 1972 and was determined to express its continued and strong commitment to Christian Unity and its belief that unity for the sake of the Gospel is still one of its highest priorities and that mission and unity cannot be separated. This is especially true in these increasingly troubled times. The call to unity comes from God and requires us to continue to pursue unity with determination; as one participant put it, 'There is only one church and we need to be able to reveal that to the world.'
3. The document has been very much welcomed across the synods therefore, as offering a fresh and positive response to the changing ecumenical scene within England and in particular emphasising the need for patterns to be light and flexible. These two characteristics are seen to be of high importance. Its value within the different ecumenical landscape of Scotland and Wales is also recognised and welcomed.
4. The search for and growth of ecumenical partnership at local, intermediate and denominational levels ought to be encouraged and supported as strongly as possible. While our structures are expressions of identity and may contain deeply embedded patterns, we also acknowledge that these may at times be obstacles to unity in mission; as such we should be prepared to question, challenge and as necessary change them.

5. This challenge comes to the church at all levels and often extends to denominational leadership in particular, to make ecumenical cooperation the highest priority, recognising that in all our traditions this is not always the case. This is not a time to withdraw into denominational bunkers. This has implications both for the initial training of clergy in ecumenism and for appropriate continuing professional development, especially at times of movement into leadership roles.
6. Conscious of the fact that a good deal of the URC's ecumenical energy is focussed in LEPs, a considerable amount of discussion was focussed there. At the same time we are conscious of the fact that new ecumenical partners are increasingly coming onto the scene, for which we give thanks and recognise that the focus has to move out from the traditional partnerships with which we are familiar and in which we are experienced.
7. Nevertheless, concern was expressed that the document seemed to suggest that LEPs were a thing of the past, 'a failed experiment'. The consultation was keen to express the belief that this was not the case. **This was by far the strongest comment that emerged in response to the document.** LEPs present both the opportunity for creative synergy and a challenge to the churches to continue to pursue unity. In many cases they offer an uncomfortable model of a unity 'already achieved' which the denominations can struggle to respond to. We need to listen to the experience of LEPs, to recognise the gifts and the challenges they offer. In particular, those LEPs that see themselves as United Churches rather than Partnerships will not go away. And when Fresh Expressions, for example, become established as churches new expressions of 'United Churches' may emerge. Should the churches attempt to impose an external pattern of internal partnership on them when they experience something quite different? We recognise, however, the need for these churches to relate to their constituent denominations and at times to make decisions in a manner that is acceptable to them, especially where charity law is concerned. Who or what needs to change?
8. **Responses to the Recommendations^[3]**
 - a) **Visions of Unity.** The Theology and Unity group might have a role in developing this, especially in light of new ecumenical partners. It has already been doing this to some extent but its connection with the local level is tenuous at best. Useful work could be done on what it means to understand unity as an act of obedience to the Triune God. Experience elsewhere might help in this, e.g. Waldensian dialogues with Pentecostals over 10 years, in Italy; Reformed and Methodist interchange of ministers despite having separate churches, in Italy and Netherlands; other members of the World Communion of Reformed Churches; the Church of South India.
 - b) **Oversight.**
 - i. We want to reiterate the belief that LEPs have not run their course. The rationale of the denominations taking responsibility for oversight of existing and new LEPs as well as other expressions of local unity in mission is acknowledged and welcomed. For this to be effective the important element is the strength of relationship between the denominations at the appropriate level. This evoked the observation that both in dealing with problems that may arise and in establishing effective patterns, the key

element is the quality of relationship between all those that are involved especially people in key roles. Examples of places where these relationships are good and places where they are not good and the corresponding impact on the local situation, were shared.

- ii. Connected with this is the need for denominations to be accountable to one another in continuing to carry out what they agree. This can only work well when relationships are strong at all levels. Good relationships and clear communication are essential to maintaining partnerships, whether formal or informal. It will be important to establish some way of firmly embedding this mutual accountability.
- iii. This is a crucial area of focus and in association with 7 above illustrates the need for the careful appointment of personnel in the denominations in situations where ecumenical working is particularly common.
- iii. The URC's own Local Mission and Ministry Review process (LMMR) has been used ecumenically in a few places and could be offered as one possible approach to developing effective review procedures, noting that 'one size may not fit all'.

c) Approval of agreements.

The use of the word 'solely' was queried. Whilst it is important for denominational authorities to approve agreements, the work will also be in the context of local ecumenical 'communities' (local churches, and in some cases maybe trusts, agencies or other organisations) so it would also be important to have their approval albeit perhaps less formally. There needs to be a way of effectively communicating agreement between all the partners involved.

d) Registering / listing of agreements.

- i) It was recognised that an effective listing of agreements, especially constitutional agreements, is important. The system needs to be suitable for areas without CEOs. Nevertheless the centralising of information is important for reference purposes. A properly effective way of achieving this needs to be found.
- ii) A plea was also made for centralised collection of statistics rather than the duplication of requests from different denominations for effectively the same information. An attempt had been made in the past which only lasted one year.
- iii) Recommendation 4d refers to Section 2:1(c) of the document. That paragraph is about the denominational authorities being responsible for recording the agreements they have made, and needing an appropriate system of registration to enable them to carry out their regular responsibilities for oversight (pastoral care, and connection of the local to the wider church). The details in the lists held by different denominations need to be compatible, rather than each one working out its own system. Therefore, we would support recommendation 4d with the intention that CTE staff and CEOs with their experience help the denominational authorities to work out together a system of registering/listing all the agreements for working together locally that need denominational approval and oversight.

e) Use of Charitable Incorporated Organisation models.

The URC is advised at the moment that the use of CIOs is not appropriate for its polity and the Mission Committee will revisit this to check whether this is indeed the case. There is a desperate need for simple documents that can be understood

and easily applied. Clarity is needed especially on how structures are to work, on finance and on membership. The present Model Governing Document has been welcomed and used in various LEPs in which the URC is involved.

f) Guidance on agreements.

It was noted that the document does not contain detailed guidance and that this was not within its remit so we support the recommendation wholeheartedly. Once again the plea is for agreement to be as simple and as accessible as possible for people in the local situations.

[1] The CTE document “A New Framework for local Unity in Mission” with Preface dated 31 March 2016 is available in ‘full final amended’ version, dated 16 09 06, (pp. iii + 20) from this page of the CTE website: A brief version (pp. 3) is also available there.

[2] Points 1, 2, and 3 are those so numbered in Section 5 of the full document, p.20. The Preface of the full document, and the brief version, number the recommendations differently.

[3] The following subheadings, labelled **a)-f)** in bold, refer to the recommendations a)-f) of point 4 on p.20 of the full document ‘A New Framework for Local Unity in Mission’ dated 16 09 16.

Paper 15

Mission Committee

Issues for the URC arising from
the consultation on the document
'A New Framework for Local Unity
in Mission'

United
Church
Reformed
Church
2017
Church 2017



Paper 15

Mission Committee

Issues for the URC arising from the consultation on the document 'A New Framework for Local Unity in Mission'

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Bernie Collins bernie.collins@thecrocker.net David Tatem david.tatem@urc.org.uk
Action required	Discussion and advice on expanding and advancing the issues identified.
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	The New Frameworks document raises issues both for ecumenical co-operation and for individual denominations. To identify issues for future strategy and advise on how and when those issues should be responded to.
Main points	There are trends and ecumenical decisions that are being and will be made in which the URC needs to engage. Because of these there are also strategic decisions which the Church may need to make in order to respond or take creative initiatives.
Previous relevant documents	A New Framework for Local Unity in Mission
Consultation has taken place with...	24 Hour consultation of synod representatives. Mission Committee Faith and order Committee

Summary of Impact

Financial	To be determined. None at this stage.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Relationships and co-operation with ecumenical partners.

Issues for the URC arising from the consultation on the document ‘A New Framework for Local Unity in Mission’

1. Preamble

This is a starter document which others are invited to develop.

The consultation identified and to a limited degree discussed various issues for the URC in particular, arising from the consultation. The overall responsibility for ecumenical relations lies with the Mission Committee and many of the areas lay specifically within its remit but some of the issues are also clearly related to other areas of responsibility. These other responsibilities are indicated in italics in the notes following.

Please also note that the notes are essentially pointers and not attempts to expand or explore the issues except where it has seemed necessary to make the note clearer.

The abbreviation SER refers to the Staff Secretary (Secretary for Ecumenical Relations) and ERG to the Ecumenical Reference Group and is indicated where the particular responsibility for responding lies with that post.

2. LEPs

What do we, as the URC, expect there to be in LEPs. This is related to our sense of identity.

How do we respond to the issue identified in the response to CTE of ‘United Churches’ ? i.e. those LEPs that do not see themselves as partnerships but as single entity churches.

Eldership (*Ministries*)
Church Meeting

3. Oversight and reviews (*Ministries*)

There is an important question of the provision of training for reviewers and the provision of resources with which to carry out reviews.

LMMR: There could be a review of how this is applied. There is the opportunity for experience sharing.

Staffing Consultative Groups – in some places these have ceased to operate and need to be re-established. (*SER*)

Relationships with new ecumenical partners (e.g. Pentecostals, migrant churches)

Guidelines on good hosting / good practice is necessary and issues such as how to form a covenant.

Synods need to find out which churches are hosting which groups and this should be mapped across the country in order to be able to provide appropriate support and to learn from the experiences. So there needs to be a high degree of local and synod awareness of developments.

There needs to be a good level of knowledge about the new partners. What kind of partnerships may or may not be possible or appropriate. There may be issues of acceptability based on doctrinal or pastoral grounds. There is also the question of the authority of General Assembly in establishing a 'URC position' on particular issues. (*Faith and Order*)

There needs to be a centralisation of information for the sharing of wisdom. (*Discussion with Communications*)

4. Membership in LEPs

There are several issues: (*SER and ERG*)

In some LEPs the URC is almost invisible.

Who controls the assets?

Should we remain involved in or leave certain LEPs? How do we decide?

There is the legal issue of identifying URC people who need to make URC decisions.

We need to 'firm up' our identity. Trust law needs to be clarified.

Crucially we need to be able to clarify 'how membership works' in LEPs. What does it mean for different traditions and how / if it is possible to belong to more than one denomination?

5. Fresh Expressions and Church planting

We need to revisit our 'policy' on only planting churches ecumenically. [Comment from the Secretary of the Mission Committee: this is not an official URC policy, but a particular interpretation of an Assembly decision many years ago.]

There is a need for strategic thinking and planning for both.

6. Sharing of ministry (*Ministries*)

The question of fixed term appointments needs to be clarified. There is inconsistency. How long should a fixed term be agreed for?

There needs to be a balance between the URC and Synod approach to the terms.

The commitment of ministers to working ecumenically / in an LEP.

There needs to be better training on 'being ecumenical'. This needs to be linked with the colleges. (What about the next version of TLS?) (*Education and Learning*)

The 'Welcome to the URC' course could be reviewed (there are mixed experiences about its usefulness) (*Education and Learning*)

The mentoring of ministers is important (The document is being re-written) (*Ministries*)

7. Mission and Structure

The CTE page on the requirements of the URC in LEPs needs updating. It needs to contain reference to lay ministry and to 'URC gifts'. This needs to be done centrally. (*SER and ERG*)

There is a need to collect evidence of where ecumenical 'investment' has worked on the ground (for an example see Cumbria). (*Discussion with Communications*)

Episcopacy will need to be revisited at some point. (*Faith and Order*)

The personal liability of trustees needs clarifying and there needs to be guidance on the recruiting and training of trustees. (*Law and Polity Advisory Group*)

The visionary question of 'what do we believe the church to be?' (*Communications are dealing with this but conversation with Faith and Order*)

How do we recognise non-traditional ministers? Do we need greater flexibility in deployment? (*Ministries*)

Appendix

The following comments were received from John Bremner in response to the consultation report. They are appropriate to the continued conversation and are therefore reproduced here.

I was particularly concerned about the two paragraphs below:

1. *'We believe that the search for and growth of ecumenical partnership at local, intermediate and denominational level needs to be given as much encouragement and support as possible. We recognise that our structures and patterns are expressions of identity and may contain deeply embedded patterns but also acknowledge that these may sometimes be obstacles to unity in mission and as such we should be prepared to question, challenge and as necessary change them.'*
2. *'This challenge comes to the church at all levels and often extends to denominational leadership in particular, to make ecumenical cooperation the highest priority, recognising that in all our traditions that is not always the case. We believe that this is not a time to withdraw into denominational bunkers. This has implications both for the initial training of clergy in ecumenism and for appropriate continuing professional development, especially at times of movement into leadership roles.'*

It is, of course, true that the primary 'raison d'être' of the United Reformed Church is the search for unity within the Church universal; but it is also true that we are a Reformed Church and, as such, believe that our particular tradition has things of value to offer to the wider Church. We therefore need to be very careful when we are talking about those '*structures and patterns (which) are expressions of identity*'.

During the Consultation, the General Secretary outlined the five criteria which are essential if the United Reformed Church is to enter into any ecumenical partnership, these criteria being: Eldership, Church Meeting, Baptism of both believers and infants, the ministry of Word and Sacraments and a coherent relationship with the wider Councils of the Church. It seems to me that we must be much more careful about how we evaluate the relationship between our core values as a church committed to the ecumenical road and as a church which understands itself to be part of a tradition (the Reformed tradition) which has much to offer the wider Church.

It is also clear that the CTE 'New Frameworks' document is pointing us to some major challenges to established ecumenical thinking. The habit of launching out into experimental activity in the hope that some future church union (or some as yet unknown breakthrough in understanding) will sweep away the bothersome minutiae of ecumenical problems has to be changed into a much more honest approach to the divergences in ecclesiology which exist between us and many of our partners. The Consultation itself was warned that the Charity regulators, both north and south of the Border, are no longer willing to turn a blind eye to fudges regarding financial responsibility, which so often arise because of these divergences, and we owe it to future generations to address these and other concerns. So whilst this is not the time (is it ever the time?) '*to withdraw into denominational bunkers*', neither is it the time '*to carry on regardless*'. To ignore the very real challenges which are now apparent would be tantamount to burying our heads in the sand, when what is really required is a thorough assessment of what has been achieved and what the obstacles are to moving forward.

Paper 16

Mission Committee

Not Strangers but Fellow Travellers

United Church 2017
Church 2017
Reformed Church 2017
Church 2017



Paper I6

Mission Committee

Not strangers but fellow travellers: United Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Bernie Collins bernie.collins@thecrocker.net David Tatem david.tatem@urc.org.uk
Action required	Take note
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Report of the second phase of bilateral dialogue with the Roman Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales
Main points	Mission Committee has received and commended the work of the dialogue group and approved the move to a third phase of work to commence in 2018.
Previous relevant documents	Report of phase one of the dialogue submitted in 2012
Consultation has taken place with...	Mission Committee Faith and Order Committee

Summary of Impact

Financial	Travel and meeting costs for group members
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Continued and improved relations with Roman Catholic Church

United Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue

1. For the last decade a representative group from the United Reformed Church has met for dialogue on matters of Christian faith and practice with a group representing the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. The dialogue has worked in five-year phases, and a report on the second phase has recently been submitted by the members of the dialogue to the URC's Mission Committee. This report is set out in full below, under the title 'Not Strangers but fellow Travellers'.
2. Members of the dialogue have found the experience fruitful and believe it is of value to the Churches that commissioned it. They have therefore urged that a third phase be commissioned. The Mission Committee has the authority and budget to respond to this request on behalf of the United Reformed Church, and it has approved the move to a third phase of the work, to commence in 2018.
3. No decision is needed from Mission Council about this. The report is put before Mission Council because it is a matter of interest and importance.

Not strangers but fellow travellers

1. At an ecumenical encounter in Malmo, Sweden, in October 2016 Pope Francis commented: *'We remember [the Lutheran Reformation]... with a renewed spirit and in the recognition that Christian unity is a priority, because we realise that much more unites us than separates us. The journey we have undertaken to attain that unity is itself a great gift that God gives us.'*
2. In the 2016 General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, Rev Kevin Watson, current Moderator of Assembly, encouraged the URC to become 'people of the way': *'Go plant your footprint, one step at a time into your community; walk with your neighbour and you will find the living Lord Jesus walking with you and ahead of you.'*
3. The metaphor of pilgrimage is nothing new in the Christian life or even the ecumenical venture. It may however be significant that it has recently been used by leaders representing both our traditions (see above). The second phase of discussion between the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales and the United Reformed Church described below can no longer be seen as the beginning of our walk together as churches, but it may helpfully be understood under the rubric of 'conversations on the way'. As a URC contributor commented: *'We... saw [through the first phase] that the idea of travelling together was one of the most popular images of the way in which our local relationships have matured.'*

Conversations on the way

4. The first five years of dialogue explored overarching theological themes of our two traditions. This second five-year phase focussed more closely on how our Christian journey is experienced at ground level. As one of our co-chairs commented: *'In the first phase we discussed together what it meant to us to belong to the local church; and those discussions were lively as well as sharing with one another at a deep level. Nevertheless, precisely because the question was, 'What does belonging to the church mean to me?' we did not engage in a great deal of description of the life of the local congregation. Much of this we so much take for granted that we never think it necessary to describe or explain it; yet it is precisely in these differences of local practice, which we all take for granted, that some of our most significant assumptions about the nature of the Church, and particularly the local congregation, lie.'*
6. The report of the first phase was drafted by David Thompson and made available in January 2012. Its introduction describes the reason for and history of the beginning of the dialogue;

'The Committee for Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales under the late Bishop Michael Evans suggested that the scope of the Catholic Church's ecumenical conversations be widened beyond the discussions with the Anglicans and the Methodists to include the United Reformed Church. The URC welcomed the approach in 2006, and two Co-chairs and Co-Secretaries were appointed to plan the work for an initial period of five years. We knew that there were international links between us, but nothing at the national level; we also knew that in several places, particularly, but not only, new housing areas, there were areas of mission where we are closer than perhaps we think.'

7. This second report, therefore, describes the second five-year stage of dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales and the United Reformed Church, taking place between 2012 and 2016. There has been both continuity and change among the dialogue participants. Archbishop Bernard Longley and the Revd Professor David Thompson have continued to be our co-chairs, and Mgr Timothy Galligan and Revd David Tatem our co-secretaries. Malcolm Townsend was replaced in 2012 by Revd Lindsey Sanderson, minister in pastoral charge of the URC congregations of Righead and East Mains in Scotland, while on the Roman Catholic side Anne Doyle was replaced in 2015 by Canon John O'Toole, the National Ecumenical Officer for the Catholic Church in England and Wales. An approach was made to the Bishops Conference of Scotland which has not yet resulted in a Scottish Roman Catholic member of the dialogue.
8. We have continued to meet twice a year for 24-hour sessions at different locations within England and Wales, usually connected with one or other of our traditions, sharing morning and evening prayer and a celebration of the Eucharist alternating according to the form of each Church, as well as hearing something of work done locally within the hosting community. This social and liturgical framework has continued to promote fellowship as well as dialogue between us. Initial plans to look more closely at current working examples of ecumenical cooperation between our traditions (e.g., in Milton Keynes or Cokeremouth), however, came to nothing – maybe this is something that a third phase of dialogue could pursue (see below).
9. Starting from an examination of congregational life at the local level, we have explored similarities and differences (sometimes both exhibited in the same instance) in our local practices.

We have reflected on how we understand and value in our churches: Scripture; the Eucharist; ministries; baptism; marriage; and sacramentality more generally.

This approach resonates with the spirit of Receptive Ecumenism, which we encountered in the first five years of dialogue through input from the Receptive Ecumenism project at Durham University); [1] as well as with a recent Churches Together in England leaflet *Sharing our Spiritual Treasures* [2], which suggests as a format for local ecumenical discussion:

- Bring to the meeting something which is significant for you, and which you want to share.
- Say why the contribution you have brought is important to you.
- Listen to other people without comment.
- Reflect on the spiritual treasures that people have shared. Have any of them chimed with your experiences, or have they been different?

10. Similarities

a) Mutual struggles

1. As in our previous dialogues, we have identified similarities in the way both our traditions are endeavouring to relate to the surrounding culture, both in the experience of not being state churches and also noting the countercultural experience of living as people of faith in a post-Christian society.

2. In our divided world it can be hard for each of our traditions to maintain and strengthen a sense of community. The increasing arrival of migrants in both our churches (e.g Polish Catholics, Ghanaian Presbyterians) with their own experiences of being church can strengthen or fragment more established indigenous communities of faith.
3. Though we approach authoritative interpretation of the Bible from somewhat different perspectives (see also below), for both traditions, the reception of Scripture may be less than ideal among our local congregations.

RC member: *'Many Catholics may not be reading / praying scripture in their personal life as they may not feel that this is what they are called to do.'*

URC member: *'Many URC people are afraid to expose how little they know about the Bible.'*
4. We are grappling with an increasing shortage of ordained ministers, and the consequent necessity, practically as well as theologically driven, of greater lay participation in both our churches. This requires responding to an overdependence on ordained clergy in both traditions.

b) Mutual encouragement

1. Our core understandings of Baptism (immersion or the threefold pouring/sprinkling of water, with the Trinitarian invocation) are mutually recognised and recognisable; a RC participant commented: *'this helped to correct the misconception that in the URC "anything goes".'*
2. A URC participant reflected on understandings of marriage: There are differences in particular practice [e.g., varying positions between our churches on the use of annulment, divorce, remarriage]. Is the rationale behind these practices as different as the practices themselves are? The URC does not adopt a policy of 'anything goes' but normally expects one of the partners to be a member of or attendee at a United Reformed Church. Similarly, with the possibility of dispensations, the Catholic Church does not have a policy of 'nothing goes unless certain other conditions are met'.
3. 'Sacraments emerge and are possible because God's creation is full of signs, some natural, some human activities; this makes it possible to take certain signs and endow them as specific sacraments'. At the same time, sacraments are about relationships, with God and with one another. The reformed tradition has always wanted to stress this to avoid any possible mechanistic view of sacraments. The social position of RC priests and URC ministers within the local community can be very similar, and both can still play an effective role within largely secular society.

11. Differences – both actual and perceived

11.1 The group found that a useful method of discussion was to be honest about the caricatures of each other's positions that sometimes existed in local churches, and to move from there to a discovery of what each church actually believed or did. In some parts of Britain there is little contact between our church traditions, which proceed in parallel; in other places the relationship is close. We also often inherit mutual suspicion and caricatures of each other rather than true understanding. These differences, actual or merely perceived, can helpfully be addressed, as one of our URC members has suggested, under three headings: authority, liturgy and ministry.

a) Authority

1. From the RC point of view, Scripture and sacred tradition make up a single deposit of the Word of God, interpreted by an acknowledged teaching authority. In the interpretation of Scripture, it was asked from a RC perspective, how without such an authority could one be sure of correct understanding? All interpretation is provisional and subject to correction, came a URC response, referencing the question of slavery in the Bible.
2. For the URC authority, subject to the Word of God, lies in councils within the local church, the region and ultimately General Assembly. The local minister represents the wider United Reformed Church in the local community. For Roman Catholics the focus of unity and authority alike is the diocesan bishop, acting as a member of the college of bishops in communion with the Bishop of Rome. The local priest acts as the bishop's representative in the parish.
3. It is too easy to caricature each other's positions on authority! URC can hold that RCs have no mind of their own and just do what they are told, and that all children must be brought up in the Catholic tradition. RCs can imagine URCs believe what they like – anything or nothing!

b) Liturgy

1. In Catholic worship, the Mass obviously plays a more central role than Holy Communion does for the URC:
2. RC member: *some Catholics might say 'As a community, how do we witness? We go to Mass!'*
3. Within the URC, preaching of the word and Holy Communion are regarded as equally sacramental while social action beyond worship is also viewed as part of the church's witness.
4. URC member: *Presence is a witness in a busy [city-centre] place.*
5. Though officially baptism is mutually recognised (see above), baptism as a 'Catholic' may be required to enable entry of children into a Catholic school if there is great demand for places.
6. In caricature mode, URCs can sometimes be suspicious of what they see as 'magic' words in the Mass and apparent superstition relating to sacramental practices; and may ask themselves why there is ritual but no freedom in worship; yet there is no celebration of Holy Communion in the URC that would not include the words of institution. RCs can suspect that URC ministers and other worship-leaders are permitted to make their liturgy up as they go along.

c) Ministry

1. Apart from the obvious difference in gender roles in our churches' ordained ministry, although both have a variety of ordained and non-ordained ministries, trying to make direct comparisons is unhelpful, even though there are similarities in the training procedure for priests and ministers. For the URC, there is less focus on continuity

through individuals: ordination is carried out by a council where continuity is to be found. There is a clear difference in the call and appointment of priests / ministers, and differences too in disciplinary procedures. A RC member commented on the URC emphasis on the role ministers have in enabling the gifts of others. The Catholic focus on this is not perhaps so strongly highlighted.

2. Caricatures of our differing positions can hold here too. At local level URCs can perceive that the Roman Catholic Church sees itself as big enough not to bother with ecumenism. RCs can hold that URC ordination is not valid and its ministers only work on Sundays.

12. Where do we go from here?

1. After ten years of dialogue, it is time to check our bearings. If there is to be a third phase of dialogue, it is noted that most members of the group will be standing down for various reasons, though it is hoped a few exceptions will allow some continuity. Input from both Wales and Scotland has been much appreciated and it is hoped that this will continue in the third phase.
2. A third five-year stage of dialogue could helpfully be tasked with producing resources for use in local ecumenical conversations, building on the pattern of similarities and differences offered in this report. It might also be worth drawing others beyond the immediate group into the process – for example, encouraging schools as well as local churches to reflect on RC-URC relations, and also building on the already flourishing teaching relationship between the Margaret Beaufort Institute and Westminster College in Cambridge[3]. It was noted that there are few examples of such bilateral dialogue; most ecumenical situations generally involve more than two partners. A URC participant highlighted the greater complications inherent in multilateral dialogue.
3. A RC participant commented that there has been a shift in our relationship as dialogue participants, during our journey together, from ‘face to face’ to ‘side by side’. It is to be hoped that further dialogue will build on this achievement and share it more widely.

Membership of the Group

Roman Catholic

Fr Colin Carr, OP, ecumenical theological consultant to the North East of England Churches

Ms Anne Doyle, member of the Catholic Bishops' Conference Committee for Christian Unity (until 2014)

Mgr Timothy Galligan (Co-Secretary), Parish Priest at Bearsted (2006-11) and Battersea (since 2011)

The Most Revd Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham (Co-Chair)

Sr Dr Patricia McDonald, SHCJ, The Pontifical Beda College, Rome.

Canon John O'Toole, the National Ecumenical Officer for the Catholic Church in England and Wales (since 2015)

Dr Clare Watkins. Lecturer in Ministerial Theology, University of Roehampton.

United Reformed

The Revd Dr John Bradbury, Vice Principal, Westminster College, Cambridge

The Revd Dr Sarah Hall, Minister of the South-West Hants Group of URC churches, Southampton

Ms Ann Shillaker, Elder, Trinity URC/Methodist Church, Porthcawl. A URC representative on the Commission of the Covenanted Churches in Wales

The Revd Lindsey Sanderson, Minister of Righead and East Mains URCs

The Revd David Tatem, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations (Co-Secretary)

The Revd Professor David Thompson, Emeritus Professor of Modern Church History, University of Cambridge (Co-Chair)

[1]

(<https://www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/ccs/constructivetheology/receptiveecumenism>)

[2]

http://www.cte.org.uk/Groups/240589/Home/Resources/Local_Ecumenism/Resources_for_local/Sharing_our_Spiritual/Sharing_our_Spiritual.aspx

[3] It is suggested that the next group might involve one participant each from Westminster College and the Margaret Beaufort Institute.

Paper 17

Mission Committee

Worlds Council of Churches
Glasgow Assembly bid

United Church 2017
Church 2017
Reformed Church 2017
Church 2017



Paper 17

Mission Committee

World Council of Churches Glasgow Assembly bid

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Bernie Collins bernie.collins@thecrocker.net David Tatem david.tatem@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	<p>a) Mission Council endorses the Mission Committee's support for the principle of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland bidding to host the 2021 General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Glasgow, and asks the Mission Committee and the Synod of Scotland to take this forward.</p> <p>b) Mission Council asks Mission Committee to clarify what financial contributions would be required from URC Assembly funds, and to consult the Finance Committee on whether, and if so how, such money could be provided. Pending a future recommendation from the Mission Committee, Mission Council is not able to make any financial commitment yet regarding a possible WCC Assembly in Scotland.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	The hosting of the World Council of Churches Assembly in Glasgow: to agree the URC's support for the bid.
Main points	Glasgow is hoping to bid to host the World Council of Churches General Assembly in 2021. Churches Together in Britain and Ireland is inviting churches to support this bid.
Previous documents	None
Consultation has taken place ...	Within Mission Committee

Summary of Impact

Financial	There will be a need to make some financial commitment to costs as yet unspecified.
External/ecumenical	Potentially considerable in raising the profile of the work of the World Council in the UK. Engagement with ecumenical partners.

World Council of Churches Glasgow Assembly bid

Preamble

- 0.1 At its meeting in February, the Mission Committee considered a request sent to churches by Bob Fyffe, General Secretary of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI), asking for their support for a bid by the City of Glasgow to host the 2021 Assembly of the World Council of Churches.
- 0.2 Conscious of various uncertainties at this stage concerning finance and the call on resources that could ensue, the committee nevertheless recognised the great opportunity that hosting the assembly could afford to raise the profile of the work of the World Council, to work together with ecumenical partners, to communicate the broad range of concerns of the churches within British society at a time of fragmentation and challenge and to present the gospel in important and relevant ways. It gave its support to the bid in principle and asked those involved to ensure that should the bid succeed, it would be followed up with a broad ecumenical involvement and sharing of resources.
- 0.3 The briefing paper that follows was provided by CTBI in January 2017.

Briefing paper

Introduction

1. The World Council of Churches' (WCC) Central Committee commissions its General Secretary to initiate the search for an adequate venue for the next WCC Assembly, an event that takes place every 7 to 8 years. There has been some discussion since autumn 2015 as to whether churches in the British Isles might submit a bid to host the next WCC Assembly, scheduled for 2021.
2. At a meeting in November 2016 convened by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI), it was agreed by the representatives of member churches that CTBI should:
 - a) indicate interest in submitting a bid to the WCC, to initiate formal communication
 - b) commence work on a consultation document to be finalised at the CTBI trustees' residential meeting in January 2017 and then sent to member churches and partner organizations
 - c) seek a decision from member churches and partner organisations at its AGM in May 2017 as to whether they wish to continue developing the bid. There will be a final decision by member churches at a special meeting in October 2017.

The final decision on the venue will be taken by the WCC Central Committee in summer 2018. It is believed that Churches in Germany are also likely to be making a bid.

Why support a bid?

3. Meetings of the WCC Assembly are landmarks in the modern history of the global church. The Assembly has never taken place in the British Isles, and was last held in Europe in 1968. It would be very significant opportunity for the churches in Britain and Ireland to engage with the worldwide church that is increasingly represented in our own communities. Coming together to plan such an event could be a catalyst for transforming relations between the churches here, and indeed for enhancing contact between the churches and government at various levels.
4. The churches in Britain and Ireland would have much to offer to the worldwide church. We contain some of the key axes of diversity for global Christianity in a way that is, for the most part, constructive and positive. We have 'national' churches that continue to exercise a significant political, social and cultural role. Anglican and Protestant churches have had a leading political role since the Reformation, but the Roman Catholic Church has a strong presence in all four nations, and relationships here have been profoundly transformed over the past century. We have been affected in far-reaching ways by successive waves of revival since the eighteenth century, including more recently Pentecostal movements that have renewed the historic churches and generated new ones. The diversity of the Christian presence in these islands continues to grow, matching the increasing diversity of our societies.
5. At a time when there is a significant reworking of international relationships around the world (in the British context the effects of Brexit and the European Union) it is appropriate that we should continue to offer a warm invitation to the World church, both to continue giving and receiving. Even in contexts where it might seem that local projects have greater immediacy and need, it remains true that we require a broad vision that includes our partners and the wider Body of Christ.
6. Specific outcomes could include:
 - a) Dynamic, diverse and global character of Christianity brought to public attention, through national media coverage and engagement with government at all levels
 - b) Strength highlighted of the commitment of the global church to justice, including issues relating to climate change, and its expression in practical action
 - c) Dynamic, diverse and global character of Christianity in these islands affirmed and better understood by the churches themselves
 - d) Lasting and transformative relationships established between individuals and churches here and individuals and churches in other parts of the world
 - e) Deepening of understanding and trust between the churches in these islands through shared responsibility for a major undertaking of international significance.

Who would be involved?

7. Churches in Britain and Ireland, primarily as defined by the member churches and partner organisations of CTBI, with CTBI acting as the lead organisation. In addition, however, the suggestion within the bid suggests that all the Christian traditions across Britain and Ireland be invited to attend and participate in a celebration of shared witness and faith. This has never been attempted before across these islands and nations and could provide a legacy and momentum for new engagements and reconciliation.
8. The initial proposal suggests that the WCC Assembly delegates continue with the programme work and decision making that takes place at every General Assembly. In parallel however, there would be a programme of engagement between the different Christian traditions from around the British and Irish Churches. This engagement would take the form of shared participation in worship, shared programmes of speakers and discussion groups. The primary focus of this programme is to deepen fellowship in the Gospel and to generate a shared sense of prayerful concern for the world.
9. If the Assembly bid should be successful in June 2018, we will invite member churches to become more involved. This will mean utilising the skills and resources of each member Church can offer. This might mean offering the skills of some staff through secondment or might involve offering skills for use in a more local context through volunteering e.g. during the pre-Assembly phase. It might also mean some local fundraising to support local events that celebrate the Assembly. Plans are already advanced in terms of a Four Nations Co-ordinating Committee who will have oversight of the local Assembly planning process, and will work closely with the WCC Assembly Planning Committee (APC). In the event of a successful bid we will have places on the APC.
10. It is possible that not every member church will want to be part of the process towards an Assembly bid. It will be up to other member churches and the CTBI Trustees to discern whether the bid should progress through to the meeting of the WCC Central Committee in June 2018. There will clearly be an additional burden on the Scottish churches who will be more directly involved in hosting the main event. However, the broader vision for the Assembly bid is that this is an opportunity to bring together WITH the WCC delegates, the breadth and diversity of Christian life and witness from across the British and Irish Churches. It will require an effort and indeed a movement of the Holy Spirit to bring such a diverse group together to worship, share and listen to one another.
11. It is envisaged that Churches Together in Britain and Ireland will act as the body that brings together representatives from the member churches and from across the four nations. This is predicated on an understanding that CTBI acts as “a shared expression of the Churches”. It also means that Churches Together across the four nations are totally involved in this process. It is hoped and indeed expected that members will be involved in every aspect of the Assembly preparations and programme.

Why Glasgow?

12. A number of possible venues within Britain and Ireland were mentioned in informal discussion. Glasgow has emerged however as the venue under consideration, not least because initial consultation with the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre (SECC) there indicates that the detailed list of requirements from the WCC could be met, at a cost that would be very reasonable in terms of expected budget for an event of this size within the British Isles. There has been enthusiasm from potential civic partners as well as indications of support from the Church of Scotland and the Scottish Episcopal Church for exploring this possibility. Staff from the Glasgow City Marketing Bureau (GCMB) and the SECC have already proved generous with their time and expertise in thinking through the feasibility of making a bid.
13. Crucially, Glasgow has a particular historic role in linking the two islands through transport and through immigration, and continues to be a place from which it is easy to access the other three nations (as well as the rest of the world). On the middle weekend it is hope (and budgeted) to hold a linked televised event bringing together historic partners, initially Glasgow, Belfast and Liverpool with additional centres perhaps in Cardiff. At the same time, Glasgow itself reflects the 'dynamic, diverse and global character of Christianity' noted above, with good cooperation already existing between the churches and a serious engagement with issues of e.g. poverty, immigration and sectarianism that can provide a fitting context for reflection on the WCC's key theme of 'pilgrimage of justice and peace'.

What would it cost, and where would the resources come from?

14. The Central Committee of the WCC has indicated that it is not expecting the next Assembly to match the scale of the last one, in Busan in 2013, but has instead indicated a possible event cost of CHF 4.7 million (£3.88 million). Due diligence has been undertaken and Professional Conference Organisers engaged to draw up a realistic budget for the hosting programme.
15. Of the total costs, some will be met by WCC central funds and some by the hosts. The latter would certainly include infrastructure costs (e.g. venue hire, interpretation equipment), and the costs of transport within the host country. There is however scope for further clarity on this score, not least with regard to the number of people to be provided for. While there might be up to 7000 people on site in total on a given day, for instance, not all of these would be the direct responsibility of the hosting churches in terms of hospitality.
16. It is suggested that the total cost to the hosting churches of an event based in Glasgow to the WCC specifications would be likely to be a maximum figure of **£2.3million**. This figure covers a significant number of areas where it would be hoped that actual figures would be reduced. The remaining sum could be covered through:
 - Direct financial support from CTBI;
 - Grants from government at various levels, beginning with Glasgow City Council;

- Diversion of normally requested additional WCC contributions from member churches to defray Assembly costs to direct support of the Assembly in Glasgow;
 - Other fund-raising activities.
17. Host churches would be expected to bear the costs of 'church' based events, e.g major services organised at cathedrals and arrangements for delegates to participate in worship and fellowship with local congregations.
 18. It is certainly the case that significant work will need to be undertaken with the Border Agency in advance of both the bid and the Assembly itself.
 19. In addition to the immediate financial costs, there would be some demands on staff time. It is clear that the local organising committee would hope for support from members, but staffing the planning process, and delivery of the event, would be provided by CTBI staff (the budget provides for 10 full time staff employed for one year prior to the event), while using the services of a Professional Conference Organiser (PCO) to take on certain aspects of administration and management.
 20. Host churches will also need to form various working groups to accompany preparations and to liaise with local service providers. There is a specific request from the WCC for participants to be met at and returned to the airport. In terms of supporting the Assembly on the ground with volunteer labour, the burden of course is likely to fall on the Scottish churches and particularly those in the Glasgow area.
 21. Such an event might seem daunting, but provides an opportunity and a vision for Christian unity that many argue is sorely needed as we all endeavour to find our way in new political landscapes. Welcoming the World Church to these islands is a positive expression of our desire to remain open and welcoming.

Bob Fyffe 18 January 2017

Paper 18

Walking the Way steering group

Walking the Way – living the life
of Jesus today

UPDATE

United Church 2017
Church 2017
Reformed Church 2017
Church



Paper 18

Walking the Way steering group

Walking the Way – living the life of Jesus today - UPDATE

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Richard Church richard.church@urc.org.uk Francis Brien francis.brien@urc.org.uk
Action required	Take note
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To keep members of Mission Council abreast of developments since the October 2016 Mission Council meeting
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council 11/15 Papers M1 and M2 Mission Council 3/16 Paper M1 General Assembly Reports 2016, p.11 Mission Council 10/16 Paper M1
Consultation has taken place with...	Steering Group, Mission Committee

Summary of Impact

Financial	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Walking the Way – living the life of Jesus today

1. The Steering Group has met on three occasions since the last Council meeting, including a residential meeting in February 2017.

Communicating the vision clearly

2. At its November meeting, mindful of the need for clear communication, the steering group agreed the following description of *Walking the Way: Walking the Way, living the life of Jesus today* aims to refresh and grow our habits of discipleship and mission.
3. The Communications staff have worked with the steering group to produce a logo and livery to identify the *Walking the Way* materials. A high-resolution version is available from Communications on application.
4. A *Walking the Way* PowerPoint presentation has been produced and made available to synods for their spring meetings. The response to these presentations has been positive. The presentation is freely available to be used in other contexts.
5. A project has been started to gather video clips of members of the public talking about what discipleship means to them. These will be edited to form conversation starters for use at synod and in local churches, and will be available in the autumn of this year.
6. An animated sequence to further thinking about *Walking the Way* will be made available for use at the autumn synod meetings.
7. Next year it is hoped to encourage churches with a film of good stories from around the United Kingdom of churches who are developing fresh ways of faith development in their contexts.

Supporting local churches

8. In February the steering group heard about the progress being made to develop Holy Habits as a congregational resource which is shared between the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church. Each of the ten habits has a booklet accompanying it for local churches to use in any order they wish. The Holy Habits material was due for publication in September this year. However, since the meeting of the steering group we have been informed that due to a change in strategy Methodist Publishing will no longer publish the resource. The BRF have expressed an interest in publishing Holy Habits instead and a final decision on this is due in early April.
9. Leaflets will be distributed to local churches in September to explain *Walking the Way: living the life of Jesus today* to local congregations and to encourage participation. Accompanying the leaflet will be a brief liturgy which could be used on Advent Sunday, 3 December 2017, to mark the beginning of this emphasis within the life of the United Reformed Church.

10. Work is progressing on the successor programme to TLS and more information will be made available.
11. Some thought is being given to producing materials for Lent 2018 themed around *Walking the Way*.

Resourcing the process

12. A meeting is to be held in Birmingham during July to draw together practitioners from the synods and from the Resource Centres for Learning to listen to the initiatives which are taking place around the country and to share news on developments in *Walking the Way* which are taking place. We hope that this will strengthen links between all the various groups and help to ensure that we pursue a common vision.
13. Reference was made in our last report to a *Walking the Way* development manager being appointed to hold all the strands of *Walking the Way* together. The post was advertised in April and interviews for this post will be held on 23 May.
14. Bookings for the Ministers Conference 2018 have now opened and it is hoped that it will prove a significant occasion to hear from ministers directly about their hopes and concerns for this emphasis. We are delighted that the main speakers at this conference will be the Revd Dr Peggy Kabonde, General Secretary of the United Church of Zambia and the Rt Revd Dr Rowan Williams, currently Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge. Both of our speakers have a wealth of experience in being disciples and encouraging the life of discipleship in others.
15. It has for several years been Mission Council's wish that funding from the Council for World Mission's Mission Support Programme should be used for discipleship development in our Church. Indeed this has been a significant feature of our thinking around costs and possibilities, but we could not be granted the money until clear plans were in place. The Steering Group is now very pleased to report that our application for funding was approved in December. We are grateful for this generous support from the worldwide CWM family for *Walking the Way*.

Paper J1

Nominations Committee
Report to Mission Council

United Reformed Church
2017
Church 2017



Paper J1

Nominations Report to Mission Council

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Carol Rogers carannrog@aol.com
Action required	Current list: note. Fresh nominations: decision.
Draft resolution(s)	<p>1. Mission Council extends the tenure of the the Revd Peter Meek as Moderator of East Midlands Synod for a further five years, until 31 August 2023.</p> <p>2. Mission Council appoints the Revd Philip Brooks as Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations from 1 July 2017 for an initial term of five years.</p> <p>3. Mission Council appoints according to the list of fresh nominations in the report.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To appoint members of various committees and posts
Main points	A full listing of committees and nominations is given. Some fresh nominations are made.
Previous relevant documents	
Consultation has taken place with...	The Committee, on which all the synods are represented. In regards to Resolution 1 there was extensive consultation with and within the East Midlands Synod. In regards to Resolution 2, there was due consultation with representatives of Mission Committee.

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None

Nominations Committee

Current List of Committees and Representatives

To be read in conjunction with the Nominations Report and Supplementary Report to Mission Council in May 2017.

1 Mission Council

Mission Council acts on behalf of General Assembly. It consists of the Officers of Assembly, the Synod Moderators and three representatives from each synod, one of whom is usually, but not necessarily, 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, Moderators' Chaplains and others as appropriate

1.1 Mission Council Advisory Group

Convenor: Moderators of General Assembly

Secretary: General Secretary

The Revd Ruth Whitehead [2020]

Mr Peter Knowles [2020]

Moderators elect and immediate past Moderators of General Assembly

Honorary Treasurer

Mrs Helen Lidgett [2020]

The Revd Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor [2019]

1.2 Human Resources Advisory Group

Convenor: Mr Keith Webster [2017]

Mr Mike Gould [2017]

Mr Alistair Forsyth [2017]

Vacancy

General Secretary

Mr Peter Pay [2017]

Mrs Bridget Fosten [2019]

Deputy GS (Admin and Resources)

1.3 Law and Polity Group

Convenor: The Revd Prof David Thompson [2018]

Secretary: Mr Neil Mackenzie [2020]

Ms Morag McLintock [2020]

Mr George Faris [2020]

General Secretary

[*ex officio*: Clerk to General Assembly

Ms Denise FitzPatrick [2021]

Mrs Kath Fowler (PLATO)

Legal Advisor]

1.4 Listed Buildings Advisory Group

Convenor: Mr Peter West [2019]

Secretary: The Revd James Mather

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)

General Secretary, Clerk to Assembly, Secretary for Ministries, Legal Adviser

Mr Michael Williams (2)

The Revd David Figures (4)

Mrs Rachel Wakeman (6)

Mr Roger James (8)

Mr Christopher Buckwell (10)

Mrs Sue Cole (12)

1.6 Resource Sharing Task Group

Convenor: The Revd Paul Whittle [2017]

Secretary: Mr Chris Atherton

Miss Margaret Atkinson

[*ex officio*: Honorary Treasurer]

Treasurer: The Revd Dick Gray

Mr Mike Gould

1.7 The Church's Engagement with 20 to 40 year olds Task Group

Mr Stewart Cutler	The Revd David Downing
Ms Sabrina Groeschel	Ms Victoria Paulding
Ms Emma Pugh	The Revd Mike Walsh
The General Secretary	

1.11 Methodist/United Reformed Church Faith and Order Conversations:

These conversations are not presently active.

1.12 General Assembly Task Group

Convenor: Mrs Val Morrison
 The Revd Adrian Bulley The Revd Dick Gray Mrs Margaret Marshall
 together with the Clerk to General Assembly.

1.13 Environmental Task Group

Convenor; The Revd Rob Weston
 The Revd Trevor Jamison Ms Charis Ollerenshaw Mr Tom Veitch

2 General Secretariat

2.1 Faith and Order Committee

(Members normally serve for six years)

Convenor: The Revd Dr Alan Spence [2023]
 Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
 The Revd Dr Malachie Muneyeza (6) [2018]
 The Revd Tim Meadows (3) [2018] The Revd Dr Catherine Ball (7) [2020]
 Ms Anna Briggs (13) [2020] vacancy

2.2 Nominations Committee

(Synods appoint and decide terms for their representation)

Convenor: The Revd Ray Adams [2021]
 Secretary: Mr George Faris [2021]
 Mrs Melanie Campbell (1) The Revd Martin Smith (2)
 Mr John Grundy (3) Mr Chris Reed (4)
 Mrs Helen Lidgett (5) Mrs Margaret Marshall (6)
 The Revd Paul Whittle (7) vacant
 Mrs Sue Brown (9) Mr Simon Fairnington (10)
 The Revd Derrick Sena Dzandu-Hedidor (11)
 The Revd Shelagh Pollard (12) Miss Morag Donaldson (13)
 The General Secretary

2.2.1 Panel for General Assembly Appointments

(Members usually serve for five years as training is required)

Retiring 2018

The Revd Viv Randles (10)	Mrs Helen Renner (3)
Mr Bill Robson (13)	Mrs Lesley Richmond (13)
The Revd Liz Shaw (10)	The Revd Mike Shrubsole (9)
The Revd Martin Smith (2)	The Revd Geoffrey Clarke (5)

Retiring 2019

Mrs Sue Brown (9)	The Revd Nick Adlem (9)
The Revd Paul Bedford (9)	The Revd Sohail Ejaz (7)
The Revd Raymond Singh (11)	The Revd Reginald Mudenda (11)

Retiring 2020

Mrs Sheana Dudley (4)	Mr Clive Curtis (12)
Mrs Gwen Jennings (8)	The Revd Dick Gray (8)
The Revd Samuel Silungwe (5)	The Revd Bill Young (6)

Retiring 2021

The Revd David Sebley (7)
Mrs Kate Yates (10)

Mrs Val Morrison (4)

2.3 MIND (Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline) Advisory Group

Convenor: The Revd John Durrell [2020]

Secretary: Dr Jim Merrilees [2018]

Convenor of the Assembly Commission:

Secretary of the Assembly Commission:

Convenor of the the Review Commission of the Incapacity Procedure

Secretary of the the Review Commission of the Incapacity Procedure

Consultant for Ministers and CRCWs: The Revd Ken Chippindale

Consultant for Mandated Groups: The Revd Alison Davis

Training Coordinator: Mr Keith Webster

Co-opted: Mr Hartley Oldham; General Secretary; Clerk to Assembly;

Secretary for Ministries; Legal Advisor.

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: Ms Judith Houghton BEM

Deputy Convenor: The Revd Dr Janet Tollington

Secretary: Mrs Gwen Jennings [2017]

Members

Retiring 2018

The Revd Pauline Calderwood (4)	The Revd Bill Bowman (11)
Mr Peter Campbell-Smith (11)	Mr Roger Tucker (1)
Mrs Wendy Dunnett (9)	

Retiring 2019

The Revd Debbie Brown (3)	Mrs Sue Bush (1)
Mrs Mary Cummings (6)	Mr Peter Etwell (1)
The Revd Peter Flint (11)	Mrs Barbara Goom (8)
Mr Andrew Harvey(8)	The Revd Naison Hove(10)
The Revd Graham Maskery(2)	The Revd Deborah McVey(7)
The Revd Sue McCoan(6)	The Revd Sarah Moore (2)
Mrs Pat Poinen (1)	The Revd Wendy Swan (9)

Retiring 2020

The Revd Martha McInnes (6)	The Revd Rachel Poolman (1)
The Revd Hilary Collinson (1)	The Revd Peter Stevenson (11)
Mr Patrick Smyth (13)	Mr Andy Braunston (2)

Retiring 2021

The Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe (2)	The Revd David M Miller (6)
Mrs Diane Moverley (12)	Mrs Janet Virr (4)
Mr David Jones (5)	Mr Ian Corless (9)

2.5 Standing Panel for the Incapacity Procedure

(This panel is normally convened by the member with legal experience)

Secretary:

The Revd Ruth Whitehead (Synod Moderator) [2018]

Past Moderator of General Assembly: The Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe

David Nash (Legal experience) [2018] Dr Ewen Harley (GP) [2018]

Commission Office for the Incapacity Procedure: Dr David Westwood [2018]

2.6 Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee

Convenor: Mrs Wilma Frew [2018]

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary, Discipleship

The Revd Clare Downing (Synod Moderator) [2018]
 Mrs Pam Sharp (9) [2019]
 The Revd Camilla Veitch (6) [2020] 1 vacancy
 [ex officio: Honorary Treasurer; General Secretary; Secretary for Welfare]

3 Mission Department

3.1 Mission Committee

Convenor: The Revd Bernie Collins [2020]
 Secretary: Deputy General Secretary for Mission
 The Revd Ron Forster (1) The Revd Stuart Nixon (2) [2018]
 The Revd Hilary Smith (3) Mr John Cornell (4) [2019]
 The Revd Leslie Moseley (5) [2019] Mr John Davey (6) [2018]
 The Revd David Sebley (7) [2019] The Revd Stephen Newell (8) [2019]
 Vacant (9) Ms Vivian Andrews (10) [2019]
 Mr Martin Hayward (11) [2015] vacant (12)
 Mr John Collins (13) [2019]

3.1.1 International Exchange Reference Group

Convenor: Mrs Judith North (5) [2020]
 Members: The Revd Paul Whittle (Synod Moderator)
 Ms Angela Bogg [2019]
 Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries

3.1.2 Commitment for Life Reference Group

Convenor: The Revd Alan McGougan [2020]
 At least 2 CfL Advocates Representative of Mission Team
 Representative of Mission Committee Representative from Christian Aid
 Representative of Global Justice Now Mrs Linda Mead (Programme Coordinator, CfL)

3.1.3 Methodist/URC Interfaith Reference Group

(Members normally serve for six years in parallel with Methodist terms)
 Co-Convenor: The Revd Clare Downing [2019]
 Mr John Mellor (4) [2020] The Revd Ann Jack (10) [2021]
 The Revd Bob Day (2) [2021]

3.1.4 Joint Public Issues Team Strategy and Policy Group

Deputy General Secretary, Mission, and one other.
 (Other members appointed by the Methodist Church and the Baptist Union of Great Britain)

3.1.5 Rural Strategy Group (United Reformed Church/Methodist)

Co-Chair: The Revd Ruth Whitehead The Revd Ron Forster

4 Discipleship Department

4.1 Ministries Committee

Convenor: The Revd Paul Whittle [2020]
 Secretary: Secretary for Ministries
 The Revd Dr Martin Camroux (7) [2021] Mr Stuart Dew (9) [2018]
 The Revd Sally Thomas (12) [2018] The Revd Allison Claxton (3) [2020]
 Vacancy
 Leadership in Worship Advocate
 The Revd Peter Meek (Synod Moderator) [2018]
 Convenor, Assessment Board

4.1.1 Ministries – Accreditation Sub-committee

Convenor: The Revd Fran Ruthven [2017]

Convenor-elect: The Revd Russell Furley-Smith [to serve as Convenor 2018-22]

Secretary: Secretary for Ministries The Revd Mark Robinson (4) [2018]

The Revd Dr Andrew Prasad (Synod Moderator) [2020] 2 vacancies

4.1.2 Ministries – CRCW Programme Sub-committee

Convenor: Mr Simon Loveitt [2020]

Secretary: CRCW Development Worker

Mrs Rosie Buxton (12) [2018] Mr Derek Estill (1) [2019]

The Revd Ruth Maxey (5) [2020] The Revd Leonora Jagessar Visser t’Hooft (10) [2021]

One vacancy The Revd Simon Walkling (Synod Moderator) [2018]

4.1.3 Ministries - Maintenance of Ministry Sub-committee

Convenor: The Revd Pamela Ward [2018]

The Revd Sue Kirkbride(13) [2018] Mr David Black (6) [2018]

Mr Keith Berry (7) 2019 1 vacancy

4.1.4 Ministries – Retired Ministers’ Housing Sub-committee

(Members normally serve four years but appointments may be extended for two more years)

Convenor: The Revd Anne Bedford [2020]

Secretary: Secretary of Retired Ministers’ Housing Society Ltd

Mr Peter West (7) [2019] Mr Malcolm Lindo (10) [2018]

The Revd Ken Summers (3) [2020] The Revd Nicola Furley-Smith (Synod Mod) [2018]

ex-officio: Honorary 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)*

4.1.5 Assessment Board

(Members usually serve for five years as training is required)

Convenor: Dr Ewen Harley [2019]

Retiring 2018

The Revd Ruth Allen (5) The Revd Kim Plumpton (11)

The Revd Mary Thomas (9)

Retiring 2019

The Revd Stuart Radcliffe (2) The Revd Sohail Ejaz (7)

The Revd Peter Rand (1) Ms Pat Oliver (9)

Retiring 2020

The Revd Lesley Charlton (11) Mrs Jill Shelton (12)

Retiring 2021

Ms Karen Campbell (10) The Revd Sue McCoan (6)

2 vacancies

4.2 Education and Learning Committee

Convenor: The Revd Dr Neil Messer [2020]

Secretary: Secretary for Education and Learning

Mrs Sheila Telfer (4) [2018] The Revd Ros Lyle (10) [2018]

The Revd Jennifer Millington (11) [2018] The Revd Dr Jill Thornton (9) [2020]

Mr Robert Pettigrew (3) [2020] Mr Rudolph Wontumi (10) [2021]

The Revd Dr Jack Dyce (Resource Centre) The Revd Mary Thomas (Synod Devt Officer)

4.2.1 Windermere Management Committee

Convenor: The Revd Mitchell Bunting [2017]; The Revd John Smith is presently acting as an alternate

Minute Secretary: The Revd Tony Haws [2020]

Miss Margery Pitcher (2) [2018] Mr Andrew Guthrie (2) [2018]
 Mr Clifford Patten (7) [2019] Mr Kevin Mantle (5) [2018]
 Ms Sandra Wellington [Training and Development Officer]
 Mrs Ruth Clarke (representative of Carver Uniting Church)

4.2.2 Education for Ministry Phase 2 and 3 (EM2/3) Sub-committee

Convenor: The Revd Dr Robert Pope
 E&L Programme Officer: The Revd Elizabeth Gray-King
 The Revd Dr Phil Wall (EM2 Minister) Ms Marie Trubic (CRCW)
 The Revd David Downing (EM3 Minister)
 The Revd Anne Sardeson (Training and Development Officer)
 The Revd Dr James Coleman (Training and Development Officer)
 Secretary for Education and Learning

4.2.3 Education and Learning Finance Sub-committee

Chair:
 Minutes Secretary: Secretary for Education & Learning
 Member:
Ex-officio: The Honorary Treasurer
Staff in attendance: Chief Finance Officer, Education & Learning Finance Officer

4.3 Children's and Youth Work Committee

Convenor: The Revd Jenny Mills [2021]
 Secretary: Head of Children's and Youth Work
 Mrs Ruth Roddison (4) [2018] The Revd Heather Cadoux (9) [2018]
 Mrs Alison Tansom (12) [2018] Mr Alan Kendall (4) [2018]
 Mr Adam Woodhouse (4) [2019] Mr Sam Brown (11) [2019]
 The Revd Jake Tatton (13) [2020] 1 vacancy
 URC Youth Moderator URC Youth Moderator Elect

4.3.1 Pilots Management Sub-committee

Convenor: Mrs Soo Webster [2016]
 Member:
(Other members of the Sub-committee are appointed by the Children's and Youth Work Committee.)

5 Administration and Resources Department

5.1 Assembly Arrangements Committee

Convenor: The Revd James Breslin [2020]
 Secretary: Facilities Manager
 Assembly Moderators Moderators elect
 General Secretary Clerk to General Assembly
 Convenor, Local Arrangements Committee

5.2 Communications

Convenor: Mr Peter Knowles [2019]
 Secretary: Head of Communications
 The Revd Dr Kevin Snyman (6) [2018] Mrs Heather Carr (1) [2019]
 The Revd Kate Gray (2) [2018] Ms Rebecca Gudgeon (2) [2019]
 Mr Tim Llewelyn (9) [2019] Ms Eilidh Cameron (13) [2020]

5.3 Equalities Committee

Convenor: The Revd Helen Mee [2018]
 Secretary:
 Mr Clive Curtis (12) [2018] Mrs Ruth Clarke (2) [2018]
 Ms Rosie Martin (9) [2020] 2 vacancies

5.4 Finance Committee

Convenor: Honorary Treasurer

Chief Finance Officer

Chair of URC Trust

The Revd Iain McLaren (11) [2019]

Mr Gordon Wanless (1) [2020]

Deputy Treasurer

The Revd David Walton (6) [2018]

Mr Brian Hosier (10) [2019]

3 vacancies

5.4.1 Stewardship Sub-committee

Convenor: Mr Keith Berry [2017]

Mr Bob Christie (13) [2020]

Ms Liz Shaples [2020]

Mr David Greatorex (5) [2020]

The Revd Colin Bones [2020]

5.5 United Reformed Church Trust

(Members normally serve for six 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:

The Revd Richard Gray [2018]

Secretary:

Ms Sandi Hallam-Jones

Deputy Secretary:

Members:

Group 1 (Synods 1,2,3,13)

Mr Neil Mackenzie (3) [2020]

Group 2 (Synods 6, 8, 9 12)

Dr Ian Harrison (8) [2020]

Mr Peter Pay (9) [2022]

The Revd Richard Gray (8) [2018]

Group 3 (Synods 4, 5, 7, 10, 11)

The Revd Michael Davies (11) [2018]

Mrs Margaret Thompson (7) [2020]

Mr Andrew Summers (10) [2018]

Mr Alastair Forsyth (4) [2020]

URC Youth Appointee:

vacant

GA appointments:

Mr Emmanuel Osae [Dec 2019];

Mrs Val Morrison [2018]

Co-opted member:

Ms Catriona Wheeler [2018]

[ex officio: Moderators of General Assembly, Clerk to General Assembly, Treasurer General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary (Admin and Resources)]

In attendance: Convenor, Investment Committee; Minute Secretary; Chief Finance Officer

5.5.1 Church House Management Group

Convenor: Deputy General Secretary Administration and Resources

Mr Mike Gould

Mr Derek Jones

Mr Doug Maxwell

Mr Robert Buss

[ex officio: General Secretary; Chief Finance Officer; Head of Communications]

5.5.2 Remuneration Committee

Convenor: Mr William McVey

Ms Sushila Jetha (Methodist HR)

Honorary Treasurer

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary, Admin+Res.

Church House Staff representative

Chief Finance Officer

5.6 The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd

(Members normally serve for six years. 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: Mr Richard Nunn [2018]

Secretary: Ms Sandi Hallam-Jones

Members of URC:

7.7 Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) Members Meeting
Appointed by Synod

7.8 National Sponsoring Body for Scotland
Appointed by Synod

7.9 Churches Together in Wales (CYTUN)
Appointed by Synod

7.10 Commission of Covenanted Churches
2 vacancies

7.11 Free Church Education Committee
Mr Graham Handscombe, Mrs Gillian Kingston

7.12 European Churches' Environmental Network
Mr Charles Jolly

7.13 Churches' Refugee Network
The Revd Fleur Houston

7.14 Churches' Committee on Funerals and Crematoria
The Revd Sally Thomas The Revd Kate Hackett

7.15 Churches' Forum for Safeguarding

7.16 Churches' Network for Non-Violence
Head of Children's and Youth Work

7.17 Fresh Expressions
Deputy General Secretary Mission

7.18 Churches Visitor and Tourism Association
Mrs Valerie Jenkins

8 Representatives on formal bi-lateral and multi-lateral committees

8.1 Methodist/United Reformed Church Liaison Group
Co-Convenor: The Revd Nicola Furley-Smith (Synod Moderator) [2020]
The Revd Kay Alberg, The Revd Roy Fowler,
The Revd Sally Thomas, Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

8.1.1 Methodist/ United Reformed Church Strategic Oversight Group
The General Secretary An Assembly Moderator
Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

8.2 Church of England/United Reformed Church Bilateral Dialogue
This dialogue has, for the moment, been completed.

8.3 EMU Partnership (Scottish Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church in Scotland and the United Reformed Church Synod of Scotland) [see note 7]
Appointed by Synod

8.4 Conversations between the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe and the Anglican Communion
The Revd Dr Julian Templeton

Nominations Committee: Fresh Nominations

Resolution 1

Mission Council extends the tenure of the Revd Peter Meek as Moderator of East Midlands Synod for a further five years, until 3 August 2023.

Resolution 2

Mission Council appoints the Revd Philip Brooks as Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations from 1 July 2017 for an initial term of five years.

Resolution 3

Mission Council appoints according to the list below:

C.1 Accreditation Sub-committee

The Revd Dr Susan Durber 2017-2021

C.2 Assessment Board

Mrs Faith Paulding 2017-2022 The Revd Lis Mullen 2017-2022
Mr Keith Reading 2017-2022

C.3 Children's and Youth Work Committee

The Revd Paul Robinson 2017-2021

C.4 Communications Committee

The Revd Kevin Snyman for a further term until General Assembly 2018

C.5 Disciplinary Commission Panel 2017-2022

Mr Alan Kirby The Revd Ian Kirby
Mrs Cathy Glazier Mrs Irene Hudson
The Revd Craig Muir The Revd Jane Campbell
Mr Keith Webster

C.6 Equalities Committee

Secretary: The Revd David Salisbury 2017-2021
The Revd Anne Lewitt 2017-2021

C.7 Faith & Order Committee

The Revd Samuel Silungwe 2017-2023

C.8 Finance Committee

Mr William Potter 2017-2021

C.9 General Assembly Appointments Panel 2017-2022

Mr John Ellis The Revd Mary Irish Ms Angela Coxon

C.10 Human Resources Advisory Group

Convenor: Mr Geoff Shaw 2017-2021

C.11 Law and Polity Group

Ms Denise FitzPatrick 2017-2021

C.12 Ministries Committee

Mr Sam Elliot 2017-2021

The Revd Dr Martin Camroux 2017- 2021

C.13 Mission Committee

The Revd Ray Stanyon rep. Wessex Synod

C.14 Pilots Management Sub-committee

Mr Derek Goodyear 2017-2021

C.15 Pensions Executive

Dr Chris Evans to continue as Convenor, 2017-2021

C.16 Standing Panel for Incapacity Procedure

Secretary: Dr Augur Pearce

Past Moderator of General Assembly: The Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe

C.17 Education and Learning Committee

C.17.1 The name of the Revd Jennifer Millington as a member of the committee has not yet been agreed by Mission Council or General Assembly. Mission Council is asked to recognize her service since 2014 and agree her appointment until General Assembly 2018.

C.17.2 The Revd Mary Thomas succeeds the Revd David Salsbury as Synod Development Officer on the committee.

C.18 Congregational Fund Board

Mrs Jackie Haws

C.19 Other names will be listed in a supplementary report, Paper J2.

Paper M1

Clerk

Minutes Secretary

United Reformed Church
2017
Church 2017



Paper M1

Clerk

Minutes Secretary

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Michael Hopkins clerk@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Mission Council appoints Andy Braunston as minutes Secretary for this meeting of Mission Council. Mission Council appoints the Revd Ken Forbes as Minutes Secretary from November 2017, for the time being.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Appointment of people to take minutes.
Main points	Miriam Webb was not able to continue in the role. Ken Forbes expressed an interest in returning to the role that he had previously occupied, but is unavailable for the May 2017 meeting.
Previous relevant documents	
Consultation has taken place with...	General Secretary

Summary of Impact

Financial	n/a
External (e.g. ecumenical)	n/a

This paper is complete. All that needs to be said is evident above.

Paper M2

Clerk

Standing Orders consultation

United Reformed Church 2017
Church 2017
United Reformed Church 2017
Church 2017

Paper M2

Clerk

Standing Orders consultation

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Michael Hopkins clerk@urc.org.uk
Action required	Note
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Update
Main points	Work in hand, but not complete.
Previous relevant documents	Paper M2 of Mission Council, October 2016
Consultation has taken place with...	Mission Council

Summary of Impact

Financial	n/a
External (e.g. ecumenical)	n/a

Standing Orders consultation

1. Detailed analysis of the questionnaires from the last meeting of Mission Council has revealed a desire for an attempt to simplify the Standing Orders, and to standardise matters such as the permitted length of speeches across all modes of decision-making.
2. A number of people also expressed interest in an attempt to combine the best of Consensus Decision Making and Majority Voting. This may prove to be the worst of both worlds, or quite a nifty idea.
3. I am planning, therefore, to attempt two possible new versions of Standing Orders, which I shall “road test” privately with a few folk. Depending upon the results of this testing, I plan to bring either one proposal, or a choice of two proposals to Mission Council in November 2017.

Paper M3

General Secretary

Youth representation in councils
of the Church

United Church 2017
Church 2017
Reformed Church 2017
Church 2017



Paper M3

General Secretary

Youth representation in councils of the Church

Basic Information

Contact	John Proctor, john.proctor@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council gives final approval to the amendments to the Structure of the URC set out in Paper M3.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Offering more flexible and practical criteria for the representation of URC Youth in Synod meetings and General Assembly.
Main points	Following reference to the Synods, the changes to the Structure are now ready for a final vote.
Previous documents	General Assembly papers 2014, Resolution 19B(1) (which was eventually deferred). Record of General Assembly 2016, Resolution 42.
Consultation has taken place with...	All of the Synods.

Summary of Impact

Financial	Nil.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Nil.

Youth representation in councils of the Church

Content of the resolution

- 1.1. We value very highly the URC Youth representation on our councils, and realise that many young people who are heavily involved in the life of the United Reformed Church have not yet become Church Members. Can these young people be appointed to represent URC Youth at Synod or Assembly, if they are not members of the URC? This resolution provides a way of allowing them to do so, if they have the appropriate confidence of their Local church or their peers.
- 1.2. The resolution also corrects an anomaly over the age limit that defines youth.

Process of the resolution

- 2.1. The proposed changes to the Structure were passed unanimously by the General Assembly in July 2016 (as Resolution 42), and were then referred to the Synods. All of the Synod Clerks have replied to the General Secretary by the due date of 31st March, and none of the Synods has asked that the matter be not proceeded with.
- 2.2. The changes are now presented to Mission Council for approval, and this requires a two thirds majority. Mission Council is free to accept or reject the changes, but cannot amend them at this stage. Should Mission Council accept the changes, these will have completed their process of approval, and will be part of the Structure of the URC with immediate effect.
- 2.3. The changes are set out overleaf, affecting paragraphs 2(4)(i), 2(6)(b) and 2(6)(k) of the Structure of the URC. Paragraph 2(4)(i) concerns the membership of Synods, and paragraphs 2(6)(b) and 2(6)(k) concern the membership of General Assembly,

Changes to the Structure of the URC proposed in paper M3

a) Membership of Synods

Current wording of paragraph 2(4)(i):

2(4)(i) Two young people, being members of the United Reformed Church, nominated by the Synod's youth forum, committee or equivalent;

Proposed new wording:

2(4)(i) Two young people, *actively involved and engaged with the United Reformed Church at local, synod or assembly level, who have the confidence of their local church or the confidence of the Synod's youth forum, committee or equivalent;*

b) Membership of General Assembly

Current wording of paragraph 2(6)(b):

2(6)(b) Among the representatives of Synods shall be included at least two from each Synod aged 26 or under, at the date of appointment. Should a Synod prove unable to make such an appointment it may appoint from another Synod but these persons must be 26 or under at the date of appointment;

Proposed new wording:

2(6)(b) Among the representatives of Synods shall be included at least two from each Synod aged 25 or under, at the date of appointment. *These representatives need not be members of the United Reformed Church, but must be actively involved and engaged with the United Reformed Church at local, synod or assembly level, and have the confidence of their local church or the confidence of the Synod's youth forum, committee or equivalent;* should a Synod prove unable to make such an appointment it may appoint from another Synod but these persons must be 25 or under at the date of appointment;

Current wording of paragraph 2(6)(k):

Such number of representatives of the Fellowship of United Reformed Youth, being members of the United Reformed Church, as the Assembly shall from time to time determine (at present three);

Proposed new wording:

Such number of representatives of *United Reformed Church Youth, associated with a young people's group in a local church or United Reformed Youth groups at Synod or Assembly level, who have the confidence of their local church or the confidence of URC Youth,* as the Assembly shall from time to time determine (at present three);

Paper M4

Law and Polity Advisory Group
Appeal, Reference, and
Constitutional Review

United Church 2017
Church 2017
Reformed Church 2017
Church



Paper M4

Law and Polity Advisory Group Appeal, Reference, and Constitutional Review

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	David Thompson, dmt3@cam.ac.uk Michael Hopkins, clerk@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Resolution 1: Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council adopts the following amendments to the Structure of the URC: <text as in paper>.</p> <p>Resolution 2: Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council makes the changes to the Rules of Procedure as set out in paper M4 of Mission Council May 2017.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Updating and clarifying appeals procedure.
Main points	Following reference to the Synods, the changes to the Structure are now ready for a final vote. The consequent changes to the Rules of Procedure are now also brought to Mission Council. Following legal advice (in part three of this paper), LPAG do not recommend making mediation a formal part of these processes, but this does not prevent its informal use.
Previous relevant documents	Reports to, and Record of, General Assembly 2016. Paper P1 of Mission Council, March 2016.
Consultation has taken place with...	Synods, and the Legal Advisor.

Summary of Impact

Financial	Nil.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Decreases possibilities for reputational damage.

Appeal, reference, and constitutional review

1. Changes to the Structure.

1.1. The proposed changes to the Structure were passed unanimously by the General Assembly in July 2016, and referred to the Synods. One Synod (Thames North) has resolved that they be not proceeded with. The National Synod of Scotland has not so resolved, but has asked that the matter be discussed at Mission Council.

1.2. The changes are now presented to Mission Council for approval, and this requires a two thirds majority. Mission council is free to accept or reject the changes, but cannot amend them at this stage.

1.3. This the proposed new version of the relevant section of the Structure. The numbers reflect the numbers that the clauses will have in the Structure:

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council adopts the following amendments to the Structure of the URC:

5. Appeal, Reference and Constitutional Review

5.1. Any decision of a Church Meeting within an area of ecumenical experiment may be taken by way of appeal to the area meeting. A decision of any other Church Meeting may be taken by way of appeal to the synod on which the local church concerned is represented. Any decision of an ecumenical area meeting having implications for the United Reformed Church or any part thereof may be taken by way of appeal to the synod on which local churches in the area are represented. Any decision of a synod may be taken by way of appeal to the General Assembly.

5.2. A Church Meeting may itself refer any dispute or difference arising within the local church for resolution by the synod. An ecumenical area meeting may refer any dispute or difference arising within the area for resolution by the synod. A synod may refer any dispute or difference arising within the province or nation under its oversight for resolution by the General Assembly.

5.3. The synod may declare any decision of a Church Meeting within the province or nation under its oversight, or any decision of an ecumenical area meeting within that province or nation having implications for the United Reformed Church or any part thereof, which is (or has been reached by a procedure) incompatible with the Basis of Union, the Structure of the URC, the constitution of the ecumenical area (where applicable) or any rule or resolution of Assembly binding on the local church or the ecumenical area to be a nullity. The General Assembly may declare any decision of a Synod to be a nullity on analogous grounds. The review of any decision with a view to declaring it a nullity shall be known as constitutional review.

5.4. Appeals, references and constitutional review under this paragraph shall be subject to conditions and processes laid down by the Assembly in Rules of Procedure. A wider council determining an appeal or reference may either substitute its own decision for that of the more local council, or remit the issue to the more local council for reconsideration. No procedure governed by this

paragraph shall be used to review decisions reached under the ministerial disciplinary process or the incapacity procedure.

5.5. The decision of the General Assembly on any matter which has come before it on appeal, reference or constitutional review shall be final and binding.

2. Changes to the Rules of Procedure.

2.1 The following changes to the Rules of Procedure are proposed, to enable the changes to the Structure to be put into effect. A simple majority is required.

2.2 The proposed changes to the Rules of Procedure are set out below. The numbering reflects the numbering to be used in the Rules of Procedure:

9. Appeal, Reference and Constitutional Review (Structure, paragraph 5)

9.0 Limit of applicability. In single congregational Local Ecumenical Partnerships and Union Churches, these rules shall only apply to business that clearly comes under the jurisdiction of the United Reformed Church, or when it has been agreed by the participating denominations that these rules be used. In such a case, ecumenical representatives may serve on a Commission, as agreed by all parties.

I – Appeals

9.1 The right to appeal from a decision of a Church Meeting belongs to (a) the Elders' Meeting of the local church concerned and (b) any dissident.¹

9.2 The right to appeal from a decision of an ecumenical Area Meeting belongs:
 9.2.1 In the case of a decision in appeal proceedings, to (a) the appellant in those proceedings, (b) the respondent council in those proceedings and (c) any dissident;
 9.2.2 In the case of any other decision, to (a) the Church Meeting of any local church of the URC subject to the oversight of the Area Meeting and (b) any dissident.

9.3 The right to appeal from a decision of a Synod belongs:
 9.3.1 In the case of a decision in appeal proceedings, to (a) the appellant in those proceedings, (b) the respondent council in those proceedings and (c) any dissident;
 9.3.2 In the case of any other decision, to (a) the Church Meeting of any local church subject to the oversight of the Synod, (b) any ecumenical Area Meeting subject to the oversight of the Synod and (c) any dissident.

9.4 The following time limits apply to appeals governed by rules 9.1 to 9.3:
 9.4.1 The potential appellant must, within fourteen days of the decision, request the Clerk of the respondent council, in writing, to supply a copy of the minute of the decision.
 9.4.2 This copy minute must be supplied within fourteen days of the request.
 9.4.3 Within fourteen days of receiving such copy minute, the appellant must notify his or her desire to appeal, in writing, to the Clerk of the council with jurisdiction.

¹ For definitions see rule 9.20

- 9.4.4 For the purpose of rule 9.4.1, the date of a decision shall be
- (i) in the case of decisions taken at a plenary meeting of the synod, the date of that meeting;
 - (ii) in the case of decisions taken by officers or committees under powers delegated by the synod, the earliest of the following:
 - (a) the date on which the decision is communicated in writing to the appellant (or to Church Secretaries, if the appellant is a local church);
 - (b) the date of the next plenary meeting of the synod after the decision.

9.4.5 An appellant may appeal out of time, giving reasons for the delay, but such an appeal shall only be entertained if the Moderator and Clerk of the council with jurisdiction, after considering the reasons given for the delay and (if they think fit) inviting comments on behalf of the respondent council, so directs in the interests of the Church or of fairness.

- 9.5 On receiving due notice of a desire to appeal, the Clerk of the council with jurisdiction must forthwith notify the Clerk of the respondent council. The effect of this shall be to stay the action of the respondent council pending the decision in the appeal proceedings, unless the council with jurisdiction, on the application of the respondent council, lifts the stay.

II – References

- 9.6 A council of the church wishing to refer a dispute or difference for resolution by a wider council under paragraph 5.2 of the Structure may do so either without taking any decision of its own on the subject-matter, or by submitting a decision it has already taken to the wider council's judgment.
- 9.7 The effect of a resolution to refer shall be to stay any action or further decision of the referring council on the subject-matter of the reference pending a decision on that reference, unless the council with jurisdiction, on the application of the referring council, lifts the stay.
- 9.8 In either case the Clerk of the referring council must, within fourteen days of the resolution to refer, transmit to the Clerk of the council with jurisdiction a copy minute of the resolution and the names of any members of the referring council who appear willing and able to present the issues to the council with jurisdiction.

III – Constitutional review

- 9.9 A decision of a Synod or any more local council of the church which seems to be in contravention of the Basis of Union or the Structure of the URC, the Rules of Procedure, or a binding resolution of the General Assembly, and which is not already the subject of an appeal or reference may be considered for constitutional review on the application of
- 9.9.1 in the case of a Synod decision,
 - (a) any three members of the General Assembly or
 - (b) a majority decision of the Assembly Officers
 - (c) the resolution of any two Church Meetings within the Synod taking the decision
 - 9.9.2 in the case of any other decision,
 - (a) any three members of the Synod having oversight of the council taking the decision who are not also members of the council taking the decision or

9.9.3 in any case, of a council or person who would be entitled to appeal from the decision.

- 9.10 A council or person wishing to apply for constitutional review of a decision must request the Clerk of the respondent council, in writing, to supply a copy of the minute of the decision. This must be done within fourteen days after the applicant has become aware of the decision. The copy minute must be supplied within fourteen days of the request. Within fourteen days of receiving such copy minute, the applicant must notify his or her request for a review, in writing setting out their reasons, to the Clerk of the council with jurisdiction. In case of urgency the request may be notified in advance of receiving the copy minute.
- 9.11 The Clerk of the council with jurisdiction must forthwith notify the Clerk of the respondent council of the application, and the effect of this shall be to stay the action of the respondent council pending the decision on the review.

IV – Commissions, their procedure and their reports

- 9.12 As soon as the Clerk of the council with jurisdiction has received due notice of an appeal or reference the Officers of Assembly (in the case of the General Assembly), the Executive Committee or other body charged with the Synod's business between sessions (in the case of a Synod), or the corresponding organ of an ecumenical Area Meeting (in the case of such Meeting) shall appoint a commission to hear the case and report to the full council. The commission shall consist of five members of the council with jurisdiction representing at least three different churches within that council, except that one person who is not such a member may be appointed in respect of some particular relevant expertise. That person must be a member of the United Reformed Church or, in the case of an ecumenical Area Meeting only, of one of the other denominations represented on the Meeting. No individual personally concerned with the case may serve on the commission. The commission shall proceed as it sees fit subject to the following principles.
- 9.13 An appellant, or the applicants for constitutional review, shall have the right and may be required to appear at a meeting of the commission. A council referring a dispute or difference for resolution must also appear, unless the individuals named under rule 9.8 appear and the commission considers itself adequately informed regarding the issues in dispute. A respondent council must also appear in support of its decision.
- 9.14 Individual parties appear in person; a council of the church appears by two or more members authorised by the council to represent it.
- 9.15 Appeals, references and applications for constitutional review shall be accompanied by all relevant records and papers. Appellants and applicants shall be entitled to see such papers as they deem necessary in order to bring their case before the commission.
- 9.16 Commissions proceed in the matter in the following order:
- (a) call for and read minutes and papers relevant to the case
 - (b) hear and question the parties
 - (c) consider and decide upon their report in the absence of the parties
 - (d) the parties being recalled, intimate the decision to them
 - (e) report in writing to the council with jurisdiction through its Clerk, who supplies copies of the report to the parties.

- 9.17 The decision of the commission shall have effect as a decision of the full council that commissioned it. The commission's report shall be presented to the council with jurisdiction for information only, at the council's next meeting.
- 9.18 Decisions of the council in 9.17 may be appealed to the next wider council according to 9.1 above.
- 9.19 If a decision of any council of the church is reversed or declared a nullity on appeal or constitutional review, or the decision of a wider council substituted for it, the Clerk of the respondent council must annotate accordingly the record of the decision in that council's minute book, and enter in the minute book a copy of the wider council's decision.

V – Definitions

- 9.20 Throughout rule 8:
- 'appellant' means the person or council appealing to a wider council of the church
- 'Clerk', in relation to a Church Meeting, means the Church Secretary, and in relation to an ecumenical Area Meeting, means its Secretary
- 'constitutional review' has the meaning ascribed in paragraph 5.3 of the Structure of the URC
- 'council with jurisdiction' means the council competent to hear a particular appeal, reference or constitutional review
- 'decision' of a council of the church includes an express decision not to take any action, or the refusal by any council (or by the person presiding at its meeting) to consider a proposal for such action
- 'decision in appeal proceedings' means the decision of a wider council of the church on appeal from a more local council
- 'dissentient', in relation to any decision of a council of the church, means a member of that council who dissents from the decision.
- 'ecumenical area meeting' means an area of ecumenical cooperation as defined under paragraph 2(5) of the Structure.
- 'general decision' means any decision of a council of the church except a decision in appeal proceedings.
- 'minute' of a decision includes, where no formal minute was made, a record of the decision made by the Clerk of the respondent council at the request of an appellant or a person applying for constitutional review
- 'Moderator', in relation to a council with jurisdiction, includes the presiding member, by whatever title, of an ecumenical Area Meeting. In relation to the General Assembly, the Moderators shall agree between themselves which one is to act in relation to a particular appeal as soon as it is notified, and the term 'Moderator' in this rule shall thereafter apply only to the Moderator so acting. A Moderator in the sense of this rule may however appoint a deputy to act under the rule throughout a particular appeal.

'respondent council' means the council of the church whose decision is currently under appeal to a wider council or has been referred for constitutional review.

2.3 Resolution: **Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council makes the changes to the Rules of Procedure as set out in paper M4 of Mission Council May 2017.**

3. Mediation

3.1 LPAG spent considerable time at several meetings considering how mediation could be incorporated into the appeals procedure. LPAG was aware that this has never been a formal part of any appeals procedure since 1972. Although LPAG spent a good deal of time trying to meet this request, it was simply unable to do so, because every attempt to do so created more problems than it solved.

3.2 LPAG was guided in reaching this conclusion by formal legal advice, received from the Legal Advisor, in November 2016, which we accepted, and which is reproduced here for Mission Council:

I have been looking at how mediation can be introduced to the Church Appeal process. I know that this is something that Mission Council has said that it wants to have as a feature of the amended appeals procedure but I have reservations about the practicality of introducing it for an appeal or indeed if introducing mediation at such a stage would be workable in practice.

In my view Mediation is better suited to primary decision making in respect of disputes between individuals or a group where one person has authority to make decisions on behalf of the body they represent preferably applied before the decision that is being appealed is made. In saying this I think it could have a role where an appeal is between individuals who have the power and authority to make decisions without the need to refer to another body. The court of appeal runs a mediation service whose function is to either resolve appeals or to narrow the issues in appeals which will then go to a formal hearing to resolve. Although this may at first look attractive my view is that unfortunately Mediation will not work well in a church context unless the appeal related to a dispute is between two individuals or an individual and a body that is represented by an individual who has the full authority of that body to make concessions and decisions on its behalf. For this reason I do not think that Mediation will work where the appeal is between an individual and a council of the church as it would not be possible for the individual representing that Council to make concessions and decisions on behalf of that council. To do so would mean that the individual would be able to vary a decision of a council reached as a result of discussions by the whole council as part of a democratic decision making process. In my view they could not have the authority they need to take part in a mediation in a meaningful way and the process would not accord with the democratic way in which the primary decision was made.

In my view if Mediation is to be used it would be better as a tool to aid primary decision making. It could be that a mediator is made available in advance of a meeting so that issues can be talked through and hopefully resolved before the meeting takes place. Alternatively it might be that during a meeting once differences to a proposal are identified which can't be resolved by general discussions within the meeting the making of the decision in respect of that particular piece of the business could be delayed until those involved have gone through a mediation process. This could be difficult to work in practice and would only do so if those involved agreed to enter into it and be bound by the outcome. If not then either mediation would not happen or it would be gone through with the risk that the outcome is disregarded by those that remained determined to oppose a particular decision which would or certainly

could be counter productive. This would also be a way of adding further delay to the making of a decision.

A better way in such a situation in my view would be to use the consensus decision making process (as currently used) which largely achieves all that mediation would, and will result in a decision being made much sooner than would be the case with mediation and also without the risks.

It seems to me that if an appeal is to be what it says then the appeal has to be heard by a body that has the power to make a decision. The appellant is able to make the same points within their appeal that they would have done in mediation but clearly the process would be different. One of the decisions available to the appeal body may be to refer the matter back for reconsideration by the original council if there has been a procedural irregularity or alternatively to make a decision that resolves the matter one way or the other. The important thing in my view is that the appeal body is vested with the authority to make a decision whereas a mediation is not and those taking part may not be. An appeal hearing also means that in terms of timing there will be more certainty as to when an issue is likely to be resolved.

In short I do not see that mediation assists the appeal process in that it can't make a decision. That is not the function of mediation although that is the purpose of an appeal. I appreciate that it could be used to narrow issues in dispute but in my view that would only assist where the parties are in a position with authority to make decisions. Even then if the parties agreed a position within the mediation it would not necessarily be binding on the original decision making body as the mediation does not have the authority to do this. In such a situation as a result of a mediation my view is that the issue could only be referred back to the original decision making body to reconsider which could then lead to a continuing loop developing between the decision making body and mediation without the issue being resolved. (I appreciate that both parties have to agree to a mediation, and so would probably be concluded by one party withdrawing consent. Any process would also need to be time limited so that it could not go on and on).

As a result my view is that despite the view expressed by Mission Council it would be best if mediation is not introduced into the appeals process. If mediation is to be introduced then this should be at an earlier stage although my preference would be to continue with consensus decision making over mediation as mediation builds in an unnecessary delay. If it is decided to delay a decision then it is better that this occurs as a result of a decision that this should happen rather than it happening by default through mediation.

*Andrew Middleton
Legal Advisor
3 November 2016*

Paper M5

Clerk

Updating Nominations Committee
rubrics

United Reformed Church
Church 2017
Church 2017
Church 2017



Paper M5

Clerk

Updating Nominations committee rubrics

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Michael Hopkins, clerk@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council updates the rubrics of the Nominations Committee as set out in paper M5 of Mission Council May 2017

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Updating rubric
Main points	The rubric was accidentally not updated when the DGS posts were created. An additional rubric is proposed, to clarify the status quo and codify best practice.
Previous relevant documents	GA Record 2016, page 65
Consultation has taken place with...	The General Secretary

Summary of Impact

Financial	nil
External (e.g. ecumenical)	nil

Updating Nominations Committee rubrics

1. The notes at the start of the Nominations Committee table of nominations contain the general principles concerning all appointments.
2. These were, in error, not updated when the DGS posts were created.
3. The first point currently reads:
“The Moderators, the Moderators elect, the immediate past Moderators, and the General Secretary are members *ex officio* of every standing committee.”
4. It is proposed that this be updated to:
“The Moderators, the Moderators elect, the immediate past Moderators, and the General Secretary are members *ex officio* of every standing committee. The 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. The Treasurer and/or the Chief Finance Officer may attend any committee where the business so requires.”
5. At the time of writing, the Moderators, Moderators-elect, and immediate past Moderators, currently work to a pattern of dividing up Committee attendance between at particular points of the cycle of their service. It is not proposed to update the rubric to take account of this, as situations may arise that justify greater attendance than current practice.
6. The question has been asked about whether someone has to be a member of the URC to serve on a Committee, and what staff members, who may or may not be members of the URC, should or should not be able to do. The proposed additional points, which will be numbered in sequence, set this out:
 - a) “Nominations to Assembly committees and their sub-committees, and to advisory and task groups serving Assembly and Mission Council, should be of members of the United Reformed Church, or of Youth representatives who meet the criteria for membership of the General Assembly. A term of service may normally be completed if someone ceases to be a member of the URC during their term.”
 - b) “Nominations of URC representatives to external bodies should either be of members of the United Reformed Church, or of Youth representatives who meet the criteria for membership of the General Assembly, or of staff of the United Reformed Church who have relevant expertise. The nomination of a staff member would automatically lapse if the person concerned ceased to hold a post in the URC.”

Paper O1

Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG)
Report on Recent Work

United Reformed Church
Church 2017
2017
Church 2017
Church



Paper 01

Human Resources Advisory Group

Report on Recent Work

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Keith G Webster kwebsterwms@btinternet.com
Action required	
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Report providing an update on the recent work of HRAG
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	Previous HRAG reports to Mission Council
Consultation has taken place with...	Officers of Assembly and senior staff at Church House.

Summary of Impact

Financial	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None

HRAG: report on recent work

1. Membership

Keith Webster (Convenor), Alastair Forsyth, Bridget Fosten, Mike Gould, Peter Pay, Revd John Proctor, General Secretary, Jane Baird, Deputy General Secretary (Admin & Resources). These people bring a wide range of skills in diverse aspects of Human Resources (HR).

2. Remit

HRAG was established in October 2012 and its remit was renewed by the May 2015 meeting of Mission Council. The remit is to provide a unified reference point on HR matters for Mission Council (General Assembly) / Trust and Church House personnel.

3. Routine work report, September 2016 – February 2017

3.1 The following job descriptions and posts have been reviewed:

Under the renewed remit HRAG reviews job descriptions and person specifications for Assembly Appointments. Other staff posts are only reviewed as a consequence of major changes.

Assembly Appointments: Head of Children and Youth Work

Staff posts: Programme Coordinator, Commitment for Life

3.2 Policies and Procedures Review

The review of the HR policies and procedures which apply at Church House has continued with the ratification of the following five policies:

- Personal Development Review
- Company Car
- Home working
- Recruitment and selection – including a new application form
- Salary Policy and Procedures

Appropriate training at Church House with regard to the policies and procedures continues to take place and this has involved not only Church House staff but also staff from the Synods and the Resource Centres for Learning.

3.3 Criteria for the Appointment of the General Secretary

HRAG was asked by MCAG to gather background views regarding the criteria for the appointment of the General Secretary and so provide input to MCAG in the preparation of a paper on this subject for the November 2017 Mission Council.

A questionnaire was prepared, sent to the identified recipients and the responses were collated and analysed in order to ascertain the views regarding the appointment criteria and these findings were forwarded to MCAG.

Paper R1

Safeguarding Advisory Group
Safeguarding Update





Paper R1

Safeguarding Advisory Group

Safeguarding Update

Contact name and email address	Cassi Wright – Safeguarding Officer Cassi.wright@urc.org.uk
Action required	No specific action is requested or required by the information in this paper.
Draft resolution(s)	N/A

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Safeguarding
Main points	Update on safeguarding practice within the URC
Previous relevant documents	N/A
Consultation has taken place with...	Richard Church

Summary of Impact

Financial	N/A
External (e.g. ecumenical)	N/A

Safeguarding Update

1. The last twelve months have seen the implementation of national safeguarding team meetings which have provided information, training and support to Synod Safeguarding Officers. This has also provided an opportunity to network and create peer support relationships to help develop and promote safeguarding within the denomination. To further that some synods have employed, or intend to employ, Synod Safeguarding Officers to work specifically on a safeguarding remit, as opposed to the current arrangement which sees CYDO's undertaking that responsibility also. This has allowed those officers to focus solely on safeguarding and provide a planned delivery of training to churches, along with advice and guidance around safeguarding concerns.
2. The Safeguarding Advisory Group (SAG) meets regularly to look at the development and progression of safeguarding within the URC. SAG have approved a process for managing DBS disclosures with content, an extension to the phase two open call for the Past Case Review and are currently working on developing a three-year strategic plan for safeguarding within the URC, which will accord with the annual risk assessment. The Synod Safeguarding Officers have been offered an opportunity to attend a meeting with SAG in May 2017, to understand the role of SAG and offer a perspective of safeguarding from a regional level.
3. In November 2016, Synod Safeguarding Officers were asked to complete a safeguarding return and report this to Church House by the end of February 2017. This was the first time this data has been collected by Church House. The basis for requesting this data was to establish an overview of the standard of safeguarding throughout the denomination and areas of concern to be identified prior to training being delivered by CCPAS around working with offenders and risk. Some synods collect this data on an annual basis and in other areas this exercise had not been completed. Good Practice 4 provides a safeguarding return as an appendix for use and Synods were specifically asked to respond to the following questions:
 - How many safeguarding concerns has the church had in the last twelve months and what referrals were made because of those concerns? (Including LADO and Charity Commission referrals)
 - How many known offenders in the church, current and previous, and number of contracts in place to manage this?
4. Seven synods responded by the requested date and reported a 60-80% response rate from their local churches. It was identified that within these synods in the last twelve months there have been 37 safeguarding concerns raised, seven of which have led to external referrals to statutory agencies. There have been 27 offenders identified and 26 'contracts' put in place to manage these offenders. In two synods, it was reported that no safeguarding concerns had been raised in the last twelve months. This task also identified a need for training in local churches, to which the Synod Safeguarding Officers are responding.
5. Responses from the outstanding synods will be obtained to feed into understanding the picture of safeguarding within the denomination and producing standardised documents for synods related to risk assessment and contracts for offenders within the church.

Paper R2

Safeguarding Advisory Group

Past Case Review Update

United Church 2017
Church 2017
Reformed Church 2017
Church 2017

Paper R2

Safeguarding Advisory Group Past Case Review Update

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Richard Church richard.church@urc.org.uk
Action required	For information
Draft resolution(s)	none

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Update on phases 1 and 2 of the Past Case Review
Main points	Emerging recommendations from phase 1 Data from phase 2
Previous relevant documents	Paper R2 March Mission Council 2016
Consultation has taken place with...	Cassi Wright, Safeguarding Officer Elizabeth Gray-King, PCR Project Manager Safeguarding Advisory Group Julie Ashby Ellis, external Safeguarding Consultant

Summary of Impact

Financial	none
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Past Case Review Update

Phase 1 Update

1. All the files from Phase 1 have been read, however there is still a review and recommendation process underway, finishing the work from reading files which were held in Church House. Of the files which were read in Synods, there is a report with recommendations.
2. From Phase 1, Synods, there were 24 recommendations from the external safeguarding consultant in the following themes:
 - Record Keeping (9 recommendations)
 - Review regularly and map incidents (1 recommendation)
 - Adhere to policy (6 recommendations)
 - Investigate with no conflict of interest (2 recommendations)
 - Refer to Safeguarding Officers in case of any suspicion (1 recommendation)
 - Refer to outside agencies, including sharing information (4 recommendations)
 - Ensure ministerial supervision (1 recommendation)
3. Many of the recommendations indicate poorer practice in the past than safeguarding practice in place now, meaning that some of the recommendations have already been met, or that processes were in place to meet the recommendations before the recommendations were known. Notable is a recommendation that when a minister is faced with an allegation, the investigation is carried to its conclusion, no matter if the minister resigned.
4. Two key areas of work are significant and already on-going:
 - consolidate and update the way ministers' records are kept, including ensuring consistent information and single file records for each minister
 - ensure that the URC's good practice policies are updated and consistent, then that they are actively, effectively and consistently carried out

Phase 2 Update

5. Awareness and Publicity
Phase 2 was launched on the 4th of October, 2016. However, information was not shared as widely as anticipated and some URC members had still not heard of the PCR by January 2017. In February, a renewed publicity drive was supported by more sharable documents on the PCR section of the URC website.
6. Extension
It had been agreed to bring the public advertising effort to a conclusion at the end of March 2017. As a result of the delay in information sharing, the Safeguarding Advisory Group (at its February meeting) agreed an extension of the public advertising to the end of June 2017.

7. **Cases**
There have been 19 cases in total, arriving from 8 synods. As not all cases have finished the listening stage, it is not possible to give figures which add up to the total of cases. Of that which is known so far, there have been 6 cases with an allegation against an organisation/group and 2 with an allegation against an individual. Enquiries about making a complaint have arrived relatively evenly across the methods of communications, with 11 contacts made by telephone, 12 made by email, and 10 made by web form. Not all enquiries continued in the process to make a complaint. October and November showed the most enquiries made in any one month, with numbers going down over December, January, and February then rising again in March.
8. **The types of cases are:**
- sexual/abuse of power
 - bullying/ harassment/ defamation of character
 - bullying/ harassment/ failure to execute procedure or process
 - financial/ abuse of power
 - sexual/ failure to execute procedure or process
 - failure to execute procedure or process
9. **The progress of cases varies depending on the time it takes to prepare and process a complaint. By the time of writing, no case is ready to refer to a synod. Progress is:**
- Cases to Listeners - 15
 - Cases returned by Listeners - 8
 - Case referred to Allegations Panels - 7
 - Cases referred to Allegations Reference Group - 4
 - Cases referred to External expert - 2
10. **Comments**
There is a need for more members of the Allegations Reference Group. To date, there are four members, all of whom have been clerks of synod. The role requires wisdom, knowledge of the URC structures and practice and professional empathy.

Many thanks are given to the safeguarding and administrative support in the PCR team. In the early stages, there were many issues to set up procedures and ensure that guidelines are understood. Particular thanks go to the many volunteers who make up our teams of listeners, allegations panels and the allegations reference group. None of them has an easy task and the URC is deeply grateful for their commitment to this review.

Finally, the PCR is grateful for the now assembled learning group, comprised of a church historian, a Bible scholar, a colleague denomination's safeguarding lead with a background in social work, and a professor of abuse studies. This group will review the findings of Phase 1, the complaints made in Phase 2 and historic Section O cases which have had safeguarding issues. We anticipate that systemic improvements that can be identified will be made as part of our attempts to prevent further distress/abuse.

Paper T1

MIND Advisory Group

Ministerial Disciplinary Process:
Report from MIND Advisory
Group to Mission Council

United Church 2017
Church 2017
Reformed Church 2017
Church 2017



Paper T1

MIND: Ministerial Disciplinary Process

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Dr Jim Merrilees, Secretary, MIND Advisory Group jmerrilees@urcscotland.org.uk
Action required	Resolution
Draft resolution(s)	On the recommendation of the MIND Advisory Group and on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council approves the changes to the Disciplinary Process shown below with immediate effect:

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Changes to the Disciplinary Process
Main points	Detail of necessary changes
Previous relevant documents	Ministerial Disciplinary Process
Consultation has taken place with...	Members of the MIND Advisory Group at its meeting on 8 February 2017 – Group is representative of all aspects of the process

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None

Ministerial Disciplinary Process: Report from MIND Advisory Group to Mission Council

1. This is the report from the MIND Advisory Group to Mission Council in May 2017 and it contains a request that Mission Council should consider and, if thought fit, pass the Resolution which appears at the end of this report.
2. During 2016 the Advisory Group has met twice. At the start of 2016 there were two cases within the Disciplinary Process and one case reached conclusion in 2016. No new cases entered the Incapacity Procedure during 2016. Three cases under the Disciplinary Process were discontinued in 2016.
3. The Advisory Group keeps both the Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure under constant review.
4. The Training Team continues to provide regular training days and guidance in the form of Training Packs for those involved with these procedures. Two training events were held for the members of the Joint Panel. Also this year the team held its usual meeting with the Synod Moderators. All these events provide important exchanges of information and this in turn helps the Advisory Group to keep the Disciplinary Process up to date. Training events are being planned for the members of the Assembly Commission later this year.
5. Four important issues have arisen out of cases passing through the Process and discussions at the training events, as a result of which the Advisory Group recommends that certain changes are made to the Disciplinary Process. These relate to:
 - a) **Suspension** At present the Process provides that, once a minister has been suspended, that suspension remains in place until the conclusion of the case. To bring the Church's procedures into line with good practice, changes to the Process are brought forward to provide for all suspensions to be reviewed on an ongoing basis throughout the case.
 - b) **Joint Panels** To ensure that the Mandated Groups have the requisite experience and training to fulfil their key role in the Process, changes are brought forward to increase the number of Joint Panel members on every Mandated Group from one to two and increase the size of the Joint Panel from 26 to 39 members.
 - c) **Assembly Commissions – Authority to issue Directions** Where an Assembly Commission decides to retain the name of the minister on the Roll but with a written warning against the repetition of the conduct which has led to the case being brought, changes are brought forward to allow the Assembly Commission to add to that warning a Direction or Directions to the Synod Moderator setting out the steps to be taken by the minister to ensure compliance with the warning.
 - d) **Mandated Groups – Recommendation that a case be referred back to the Caution Stage** In a case which has bypassed the Caution Stage and proceeded directly with the calling in of the Mandated Group, the Mandated Group may come

to the view that the case should have been commenced at the Caution Stage. At present there is no direct mechanism to deal with that situation, so changes are brought forward to enable a Mandated Group to recommend to the Synod Moderator that s/ he refers the case back into the Caution Stage.

6. The detailed amendments to give effect to these changes and to other miscellaneous changes which are also needed are set out in the five Appendices attached to the resolution set out below.
7. The Guidelines were last reviewed in November 2013, since when important changes have occurred. During 2016 the Group has already carried out substantial work to bring the Guidelines up to date. However, this is simply a “work in progress”, because the Group recognises that the Guidelines will need further amendment if and when Mission Council approves the recommended changes to the Process in May. So, the work on the Guidelines will be resumed after that meeting and the aim is to complete this exercise later this year.
8. So, in conclusion, the MIND Advisory Group formally commends the resolution set out below to Mission Council for approval at its May meeting.

“On the recommendation of the MIND Advisory Group and on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council approves the changes to the Disciplinary Process shown below with immediate effect:”

[Note for members of Mission Council.

The changes are set out in the five appendices A to E below. A to D relate to particular aspects of the Process and E contains some miscellaneous amendments. The Advisory Group considered that this would be the simplest way to present the proposed changes. If they are approved, the Group will then re-order them in their correct paragraph sequence for entry into Section O of the Manual.]

APPENDIX A

CHANGES RELATING TO SUSPENSION

8.1.3 Add a new sub-clause as follows:

“References in this Section B to the Synod Moderator can also be taken as a reference to the General Assembly Representative except where precluded by the context.”

B.3.6 Add the following paragraphs:

“B.3.6 Any queries of a procedural nature which the minister wishes to raise during the Pre-Commission Stage shall be addressed to the Synod Moderator.”

B.7 Replace the whole of B.7 with the following:

B.7.1 In every case where the Synod Moderator calls in a Mandated Group, s/he may at the same time at his/her discretion, if satisfied that reasonable grounds exist, suspend the minister with immediate effect, such suspension to remain under review. In deciding whether to impose a Suspension or not, the Synod Moderator shall have in mind (i) the nature of the allegations made against the minister and/or any admissions made by him/her which, if proven, would indicate that misconduct of a gross or

otherwise serious nature had occurred, (ii) ongoing risks to individuals or the reputation of the Church, (iii) the risk of interference with evidence or witnesses, (iv) the length of time which has elapsed since the occurrence of such alleged/admitted misconduct and the conduct of the minister during the intervening period and (v) more generally whether it would be reasonable in the particular circumstances of the case to impose a Suspension on the minister.

B.7.2 During the Pre-Commission Stage and continuing (if a Referral Notice is issued) until the appointment of an Assembly Commission under Section C, the Synod Moderator shall keep the issue of suspension under review and at his/her discretion may take the following steps:

B.7.2.1 Having in mind the consideration mentioned in Paragraph B.7.1, s/he may impose a Suspension on the minister where one had not already been imposed, applying the criteria specified in Paragraph B.7.1, or

B.7.2.2 If in all the circumstances s/he deems it reasonable, s/he may remove a Suspension previously imposed on the minister.

B.7.3 Once an Assembly Commission is appointed, the authority of the Synod Moderator as regards all matters relating to the minister's Suspension shall immediately pass to the Assembly Commission at which point the authority of the Synod Moderator shall cease (see also Paragraph E.1.3.1)

B.7.4 In suspending the minister, either at the outset or during the period specified in Paragraph B.7.2, the Synod Moderator shall inform the minister immediately of his/her Suspension. This can be done orally or in writing. Suspension given orally must be immediately confirmed in writing. The corresponding procedure shall apply to the removal of a Suspension under Paragraph B.7.2.2. The written Notice of Suspension should contain the following statements: (i) a statement of the reasons for the minister's Suspension, (ii) a statement that Suspension does not imply any view about the correctness of any allegations made concerning the minister and that it does not affect the minister's stipend or the CRCW's salary or the minister's or CRCW's pension arrangements under the relevant United Reformed Church Pension Scheme and (iii) a statement that any conduct on the minister's part during the Suspension which breaches or contravenes either Paragraph 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union or the fourth paragraph of Part II of Schedule F to the Basis of Union, whichever is relevant, may be taken into account by the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, by the Appeals Commission in reaching its decision under Section F or Section G as the case may be. The Synod Moderator shall also serve on the Mandated Group a copy of any notice served on the minister under this Paragraph.

B.7.5 The Synod Moderator shall forthwith notify the local pastorate(s) of the suspension of their minister within the Disciplinary Process, or of the removal of their minister's suspension as the case may be.

B.7.6 The person imposing the Suspension under Paragraph B.7.1 shall forthwith (i) give written notice of the minister's Suspension to the Moderator of the Synod (if s/he is not the person calling in the Mandated Group), the Synod Clerk, the General Secretary, the Press Officer, the Safeguarding Officer and the Secretary for Ministries, and (ii) make a written disclosure of the minister's Suspension to the responsible officer of any relevant Outside Organisation. The Notice shall stress to all the recipients the sensitive nature of the Information imparted and the need to exercise care and discretion as to how it is used. In order to preserve confidentiality, any notice or disclosure given under this Paragraph shall not disclose any reason for the

imposition of the Suspension. However, any such notice or disclosure shall contain a statement explaining the effect of Suspension as outlined in either Paragraph 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union or the fourth paragraph of Part II of Schedule F to the Basis of Union, whichever is relevant, and shall (if such be the case) state that the Police have been apprised of the matter giving rise to the Suspension.

B.7.7 If a minister entering the Disciplinary Process has already been suspended under the Incapacity Procedure, the authority with regard to that suspension shall pass to the Synod Moderator who shall forthwith give notice of the continuance of the Suspension (or of the removal of the Suspension if such be the case) within the Disciplinary Process to the persons specified in Paragraph B.7.6. Thereafter the Suspension shall be governed entirely by the Disciplinary Process.

B.7.8 In the event that the Pre-Commission Stage terminates without the issue of a Referral Notice, the minister's suspension under this Paragraph B.7 (if one has been imposed) shall automatically cease on the issue of a Notice of Non-Continuance under Paragraph B.8.8.2, whereupon the person imposing the suspension under this Paragraph B.7 shall give written notice of the cessation of the suspension both to the minister and to the persons specified in Paragraph B.7.6. That person shall also inform the local pastorate(s) in the manner deemed most appropriate.

B.8.2.2 In the text of this paragraph replace "Paragraph B.7.2" with "Paragraph B.7.6" and after the words "...proceedings against the minister..." delete the words "...and the minister's suspension..."

B.9.1 Replace the existing paragraph with the following:

"B.9.1 Whenever the Mandated Group, having as a result of its Initial Enquiry become aware of any information relating to the minister which might require further disciplinary investigation, concludes unanimously or by a majority that this is indeed so, it shall forthwith in the name of the Synod (or in the name of General Assembly or Mission Council on its behalf where it has been called in under Paragraph B.3.2) initiate the Commission Stage in accordance with Paragraph B.10."

B.9.2 Delete this paragraph as this is now covered by new Paragraph B.7.4.

B.9.2 Replace the existing Paragraph B.9.3 with the following:

"B.9.2 The Mandated Group shall forthwith supply a copy of the Referral Notice to the person who called it in and give him/her written notice of the date on which the Referral Notice was served on the minister. The recipient of the Notice shall in turn forthwith (i) give written notice thereof to the Moderator of the Synod, (if s/he is not the person calling in the Mandated Group) the Synod Clerk, the General Secretary, the Press Officer, the Safeguarding Officer and the Secretary for Ministries. The Notice shall stress to all the recipients the sensitive nature of the information imparted and the need to exercise care and discretion as to how it is used."

B.9.4 The existing B.9.4 now becomes B.9.3.

B.10.1 Replace the words "...under either Paragraph B.7.2 or Paragraph B.9.3..." with the words "under Paragraph B.7.6".

In (iii) after the word "information" remove the comma and replace the words "reports and documents" with the words "...available at this point, including reports, written statements and other documents..."

At the end of the Paragraph, add the words **“(iv), if applicable, copies of any notices of suspension or of the revocation of suspension served on the minister under paragraph B.7.4 and...”**.

B.10.2 Replace the existing paragraph with the following:

“B.10.2 Serve on the minister notice of the issue of the Referral Notice and supply him/her with a copy thereof.”

B.11 Delete this paragraph as this is now covered by new Paragraph B.7.4.

B.12 The current B.12 now becomes B.11.

C.1.2 After the words **“...serve on the minister a...”** insert the words **“further copy of”**.

E.1.3 Add new sub-paragraphs under a new E.1.3 as follows:

“E.1.3.1 As soon as the appointment of the Assembly Commission has been completed, all matters pertaining to Suspension affecting the minister shall be under the sole authority of the Assembly Commission.

E.1.3.2 During the Commission Stage the Assembly Commission shall review the issue of Suspension from time to time to ascertain whether, in the light of the Suspension criteria specified in Paragraph B.7.1, any action should be taken under Paragraph E.1.3.3 or whether the status quo can be maintained. To assist the Assembly Commission in this regard, it may seek further information from the parties and issue any directions which it considers appropriate.

E.1.3.3 Consequent upon Paragraph E.1.3.2, the Assembly Commission may at its discretion (i) impose a Suspension on the minister where one had not already been imposed or (ii) remove a Suspension previously imposed on the minister.

E.1.3.4 If the Assembly Commission suspends the minister in accordance with Paragraph E.1.3.3, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall give written notice to the minister immediately of his/her suspension. The corresponding procedure shall apply to the removal of a Suspension under that Paragraph. The written Notice of Suspension should contain the following statements: (i) a statement of the reasons for the minister’s Suspension, (ii) a statement to the effect that Suspension does not imply any view about the correctness of any allegations made concerning the minister and that it does not affect the minister’s stipend or the CRCW’s salary or the minister’s or CRCW’s pension arrangements under the relevant United reformed Church Pension Scheme and (iii) a statement to the effect that any conduct on the minister’s part during the Suspension which breaches or contravenes either Paragraph 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union or the fourth paragraph of Part II of Schedule F to the basis of Union, whichever is relevant, may be taken into account by the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, by the Appeals Commission in reaching its decision under Section F or Section G as the case may be. The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall also serve on the Mandated Group a copy of any notice served on the minister under this Paragraph.

E.1.3.5 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall forthwith send or deliver to the person who called in the Mandated Group notice of the minister’s suspension and shall accompany this with a copy of the notice served on the minister. The notice to the recipient shall (i) instruct him/her to notify the local pastorate(s) of the minister’s suspension as specified in Paragraph B.7.5 and (ii) instruct him/her to give written

notice of the minister's suspension to the persons specified in Paragraph B.7.6 in the terms of that Paragraph.

E.1.3.6 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall forthwith send or deliver to the person who called in the Mandated Group notice of the removal of the minister's Suspension (if such be the case) and shall accompany this with a copy of the notice served on the minister. The notice to the recipient shall (i) instruct him/her to notify the local pastorate(s) of the removal of the minister's Suspension as specified in paragraph B.7.5 and (ii) instruct him/her to give written notice of the removal of the minister's Suspension to the persons specified in Paragraph B.7.6."

E.5.3.17 Replace the words "The suspension of the minister will, however,..." with the words "If the minister is under suspension, that suspension will..."

G.1.3 The existing G.1.3 becomes **G.1.3.1** and add a new sub-paragraph **G.1.3.2** as follows:

"G.1.3.2 As soon as the appointment of the Appeals Commission has been completed, all matters appertaining to Suspension affecting the minister shall be under the sole authority of the Appeals Commission and the powers and provisions set out in Paragraphs E.1.3.2 to E.1.3.6 shall thereupon apply to the Appeals Commission as fully as if that Commission had been named in those paragraphs in place of the Assembly Commission."

APPENDIX B

CHANGESTO ALLOW AN ASSEMBLY/APEALS COMMISSION TO ISSUE DIRECTIONS

A.5 Add a new definition as follows in its correct alphabetical position.

"Direction" shall mean a direction/directions which an Assembly Commission or Appeals Commission may add to a Written Warning by which it directs the Synod Moderator/General Assembly Representative to set in motion certain steps with regard to the minister/CRCW the subject of the case. For the avoidance of doubt, a Direction can only be issued if appended to a written warning and any such Direction shall (along with the written warning) form part of the decision under Sections E or G as the case may be."

F.1.2 After the words "written warning" insert the words "(with or without a Direction as defined in Paragraph A.5)".

F.2.2 Add a new final sentence as follows:

"It may also issue a Direction as defined inn Paragraph A.5 to the Synod Moderator/ General Assembly Representative."

F.3.2 Replace the existing paragraph with the following:

F.3.2 It shall set out the terms of any written warning issued to the minister under Paragraph F.2.2 and (if such be the case) the terms of any direction issued to the Synod Moderator/General Assembly Representative under that Paragraph. Any such direction shall include a requirement that, should the minister subsequently move from the oversight of one Council to another, the First Council shall pass to the Second Council the written warning and the direction and supply such information

and documents as is necessary to enable the Second Council to take over the monitoring process in respect thereof.

F.5.2 After the words “**written warning referred to in Paragraph F.2.2,**” replace the words “**...(ii)send a copy thereof...**” with the words “**...including a copy of any direction issued to the Synod Moderator/General Assembly Representative, (ii) send copies thereof...**”.

G.8.3 Add the words “**...including a copy of any direction issued to the Synod Moderator/General Assembly Representative**”.

G.11.2 After the words “**to the minster under Paragraph F.2.2**” insert the words “**...(with or without a direction)...**”.

G.11.3 After the words “**to the minister under Paragraph F.2.2**” insert the words “**...(with or without a direction)...**”.

G.11.4 After the words “**written warning**” the first time they appear insert the words “**(with or without a direction)**” and after the words “**written warning**” the second time they appear replace the words “**...be withdrawn or...**” with the words “**(and any accompanying direction) be withdrawn or it may itself vary the terms of any written warning issued by the Assembly Commission and/or any direction appended thereto or...**”.

G.11.6 After the words “**to the minister under Paragraph F.2.2**” insert the words “**... (with or without a direction)...**”

G.13.2 At the end of the paragraph add the words “**and any direction appended thereto.**”.

G.14.2 After the word “**Paragraph**” the first time it appears insert **G.11.2,**”.

After the words “**...referred to in those Paragraphs**” insert the words “**...and any direction appended thereto...**” and replace the words “**a copy**” with the word “**copies**”.

G.14.6 Add a new G.14.6 as follows:

“G.14.6 If the Appeals Commission decides to confirm a written warning issued by the Assembly Commission (Paragraph G.11.2) or to issue a written warning where the Assembly Commission has not already done so (Paragraph G.11.3 or Paragraph G.11.6) to which, in any of those cases, it adds a direction to the Synod Moderator/General Assembly Representative, the General Secretary shall, at the time of compliance with paragraph G.14.3, send copies of the written warning and the direction to the Synod Moderator/General assembly Representative, who shall take the necessary steps to comply with the terms of the direction.”

G.14.7 The existing G.14.6 shall become G.14.7.

APPENDIX C

CHANGES TO JOINT AND SYNOD PANELS

A.5 In the definition of “**Joint Panel**” change the paragraph reference in the text from “**B.2.2**” to “**B.2.3**” and remove the words “**which shall serve the purposes set out in that paragraph**”.

AA.1.5.2 After the words “**...the second Synod Appointee...**” at the end of the penultimate sentence, add the words “**...(but see Paragraph AA1.5.5)**”.

AA.1.5.4 Replace the words “**...this would not be appropriate in any particular case...**” in the final sentence with the words “**...it would not be appropriate in the case concerned to adopt either the procedure outlined above or the procedure set out in Paragraph AA.1.5.5...**”.

AA.1.5.5 Add a new Paragraph AA1.5.5 as follows:

“AA.1.5.5 Should there be a vacancy which is required to be filled by appointment from the Synod Panel, whether arising under Paragraph AA1.5.2 or Paragraph 1.5.4, the Synod Moderator may, if s/he considers that any delay in making such an appointment would unduly retard the progress of the case, appoint as the second Synod Appointee either a member of the Joint Panel or another United Reformed Church member considered suitable by him/her but, in the latter case, only if reasonable attempts have first been made to appoint the second Synod Appointee from one or other of the Panels.”

AA.1.5.6 The existing AA.1.5.5 shall become AA.1.5.6.

B.2.1.1 and B.2.2.1 In both these Paragraphs replace the words “**...(i) the appointment of two persons in accordance with Paragraph B.3 to act as members of...**” with the words “**(i) the appointment of one person in accordance with Paragraph B.3 to act as a member of...**”

B.2.3 In the first sentence replace the number “**twentysix**” with the number “**thirtynine**” and the number “**two**” with the number “**three**”.

After the words “**on account of some legal, tribunal....**” Replace the word “**or**” with the words “**...safeguarding or other...**”

B.3.1 Replace this paragraph in its entirety with the following:

“B.3.1 In disciplinary cases arising under Paragraph 2(4)(A)(xvii) of the Structure (Synods) in respect of any minister in membership or under the authority of the Synod in question, if the Moderator of that Synod either (i) believes that there may be a disciplinary issue involving Gross Misconduct or misconduct of a sufficiently serious nature as to justify his/her taking action under this Paragraph without first initiating the Caution Stage or (ii) resolves (where the case has already passed through the Caution Stage) to act on the recommendation from the Synod Appointees to call in a Mandated Group, s/he shall forthwith in the name of the synod appoint two persons from the Joint panel, as provided in Paragraph B.2.3, and one person from the Synod Panel or Shared Synod Panel (or in an emergency from the Synod Panel or Shared Synod Panel of another Synod or Group of Sharing Synods), as provided in Paragraph B.2.1 or paragraph B.2.2, to constitute the Mandated Group for the particular case. The Synod Moderator may depart from the strict terms of the preceding sentence if

s/he considers that any delay in making an appointment from the Synod Panel or Shared Panel would unduly retard the progress of the case and, in such a situation, s/he may appoint the third member of the Mandated Group from the Joint Panel. As soon as the appointments have been made, the Synod Moderator shall inform the minister of this and follow the procedure laid down in Paragraphs B.6.1/4.”

B.3.2 After the words “...Gross Misconduct...” insert the words “...or misconduct of a sufficiently serious nature as to justify his/her taking action under this Paragraph without first initiating the Caution Stage...”.

B.3.3 After the words “three persons” replace the remainder of the sentence with the following wording: “of whom two shall be appointed from the Joint Panel and one from any of the Synod Panels or Shared Synod Panels, as provided in Paragraph B.2.1 or Paragraph B.2.2, to constitute the Mandated Group for the particular case. The General Assembly Representative may depart from the strict terms of the preceding sentence if s/he considers that any delay in making an appointment from a Synod Panel or Shared Synod Panel would unduly retard the progress of the case and, in such a situation, s/he may appoint the third member of the Mandated Group from the Joint Panel. As soon as the appointments have been made, the General Assembly Representative shall inform the minister of this and follow the procedure laid down in Paragraphs B.6.1/4.”

APPENDIX D

CHANGES TO ALLOW THE REFERENCE OF A CASE BACK INTO THE CAUTION STAGE

AA.2.1.1/2 At the beginning of these paragraphs insert the words:

“Subject only to Paragraph B.8.4 and its sub-paragraphs (if applicable),...”

AA.2.6 In Paragraph AA.2.6 continue the first sentence as follows:

“, save only in a case which has been referred into the Caution Stage as a result of a recommendation of the Mandated Group under the Paragraph B.8.4 procedure, in which case Paragraph B.6.3 applies.”

AA.2.7 Add a new Paragraph AA.2.7 as follows:

“In pursuing their enquiry in a case referred to them under the Paragraph B.8.4 procedure, the Synod Appointees shall have no direct personal contact of any kind with any member of the Mandated Group in that case.”

AA.2.8 The existing Paragraph AA.2.7 to become Paragraph AA.2.8.

AA.2.9 “The initiation of the Caution Stage will not normally involve the suspension of the minister.”

AA.2.10 “Cases being considered by the Synod Appointees after referral under the paragraph B.8.4 procedure shall be subject to the provision of this Section AA in the same manner as other cases, save only as regards any differences mentioned in any of the preceding sub-paragraphs of this Paragraph AA.2.”

AA.5.3.1, AA.6.4.3.1 and paragraph AA.7.4.2

Add the following sentence at the end of all three of these paragraphs:

“In cases entering the Caution Stage after referral under the Paragraph B.8.4 procedure, see also Paragraph AA.12.3.”

AA.12.3 Add a new paragraph as follows:

“In a case which entered the Caution Stage after referral under the Paragraph B.8.4 procedure, a recommendation made by the Synod Appointees in accordance with the Caution Stage procedure that the person calling them in should appoint a Mandated Group and move the case into Section B of the Process shall, even though the notice does not state so specifically, be construed as a recommendation that, should it be accepted, the recipient of the Notice should in turn give notice to the existing Mandated Group that the Caution Stage has been concluded and that it is required to resume its Initial Enquiry forthwith.”

B.8.1 At the end of this Paragraph, continue with the following wording:

“...or it may, so long as the case has not already passed through the Caution Stage, adjourn its own Initial Enquiry in accordance with the Paragraph B.8.4 procedure.”

B.8.4 Add a new Paragraph B.8.4 as follows:

“B.8.4 This paragraph B.8.4 and its sub-paragraphs sets out a procedure (“the paragraph B.8.4 procedure”) which shall apply to cases which commence with the calling in of a Mandated Group, where that Mandated Group, during the course of its Initial Enquiry but not once a Referral Notice has been issued, reaches the conclusion that on the information presently before it, although there appears to be prima facie evidence that a breach of discipline has or may have been committed by the minister, the case should have first of all been initiated within the Caution Stage.

B.8.4.1 In such a case, the Mandated Group may, if it deems it appropriate so to do, adjourn its own Initial Enquiry and give written notice with reasons to the person who called it in recommending that that person should initiate the Caution Stage in the same case by calling in Synod Appointees in the manner and for the purpose prescribed in Section AA of this Disciplinary Process.

B.8.4.2 On receipt of such a Notice the person who called in the Mandated Group may choose either (i) to act on the recommendation and initiate the Caution Stage in the prescribed manner and, in so doing, shall pass on to the Synod Appointees all statements, papers, information, correspondence and other documentation received from the Mandated Group to assist the Synod Appointees in their enquiry or (ii) give written notice to the Mandated Group rejecting its recommendation and calling upon the Mandated Group to continue with its Initial Enquiry.

B.8.4.3 On receipt of a Notice under Paragraph B.8.4.2 (ii), the Mandated Group shall after due consideration respond either by giving written notice that it is continuing with its Initial Enquiry or by serving a Notice of Non Continuance.

B.8.4.4 If, in a case to which the Paragraph B.8.4 procedure applies, the person who called in the Mandated Group receives a recommendation from the Synod Appointees at the conclusion of the Caution Stage that the case should proceed further and

resolves to act on that recommendation, s/he shall direct the Mandated Group to proceed with its Initial Enquiry and s/he shall also make available to the Mandated Group such additional papers, information, correspondence and other documentation, including Cautions (if any), as s/he may have received from the Synod Appointees arising out of their enquiry at the caution Stage.

B.8.4.5 If, in any of the situations provided for in Section AA of this Disciplinary Process, the case does not proceed beyond the Caution Stage, the person calling in the Mandated Group shall notify that Group of the discontinuance of the case, whereupon its Initial Enquiry shall come to an end and the Mandated Group shall forthwith be discharged from further involvement in the case, save only as to compliance with Paragraph H.4.

B.8.4.6 The Paragraph B.8.4 procedure shall not be capable of repetition in the same case.”

APPENDIX E

MISCELLANEOUS CHANGES

A.4.2 Replace the words “Independent Safeguarding Authority” with “Disclosure and Barring Service”.

A.5 Replace the existing definition of “Gross Misconduct” with the following:

““Gross Misconduct” shall carry the following meaning: Since the criteria for ministerial discipline are the vows taken at ordination, in particular the commitment to a holy life, gross misconduct would be (a) conduct that undermines the credibility of that commitment so gravely that the Church’s confidence in the integrity of that person’s ministry is called into serious question, and therefore (b) conduct that requires a formal scrutiny for that serious question to be addressed.

This would not mean that the person could never recover a viable ministry. But it would reflect a concern so serious that the consultative and constructive process of the Caution Stage (Section AA) could not reasonably expect to restore the Church’s proper confidence in that minister.”

A.5 Remove the definition of the Independent Safeguarding Authority in its entirety and replace it with the following definition at its correct alphabetical position:

““Disclosure and Barring Service” shall mean the Disclosure and barring Service established in accordance with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 or any other body which in the future may assume the statutory functions of the Disclosure and Barring Service and shall be taken to include any corresponding body operating in accordance with Scottish law.”

A.5 Insert the following definition at its correct alphabetical position:

““Safeguarding Officer” shall mean the person appointed to act for the Church in the overall discharge of its safeguarding responsibilities.”

A.6.1 After the words “mental health” insert the word “safeguarding”.

A.6.2 Add the following sentence at the end of the Paragraph:

“A person who has stood down having served for two consecutive periods of five years shall be eligible for re-appointment at the end of twelve months from the date of termination of his/her second term.”

A.6.3 Add the following sentence at the end of the Paragraph:

“They shall have the following responsibilities, namely (A) to monitor the periods of service of the members of the Commission Panel regularly and advise the Church’s Nominations Committee as to (i) the number of prospective new appointees required to keep the Commission Panel up to strength, and (ii) the areas of expertise required to replace those of the retiring members and (B) to act as Appointors in appointing members of the Commission Panel to serve on Assembly Commissions in accordance with Paragraph C.2.”

A.14 Replace the words **“Independent Safeguarding Authority”** with **“Disclosure and Barring Service”** and replace the word **“Authority”** (the second time it appears in that paragraph) with the word **“body”**.

AA.1.4.1 The existing Paragraph AA.1.4 shall become AA.1.4.1

AA.1.4.2 Add a new paragraph AA.1.4.2 as follows:

AA.1.4.2 All written notices required to be given by the Synod Appointees to the Synod Moderator and/or the minister under the provisions of this Section AA shall set out the reasons for the giving of such notice.

B.8.2.1 After the words **“...notice to that effect...”** insert the words **“...which shall set out the reasons for its decision...”**.

C.1.4 Change the paragraph reference in the text from **“A.5.2”** to **“A.5”**.

C.1.5 After the words **“the Press Officer”** insert the words **“the Safeguarding Officer”**.

E.3.1 and E.3.2 Replace the period of **“14 days”** in these two paragraphs with the period of **“28 days”**.

E.3.3 Replace the period of **“14 days”** with the period of **“21 days”**.

E.5.1.1 After the words **“compliance with such directions,”** insert the words **“...including, if thought necessary, the imposition of a timetable for the carrying out of procedural actions through to the Hearing,...”**.

E.5.3.16 After the words **“the Press Officer”** insert the words **“,the Safeguarding Officer”**.

F.2.2 After the words **“disciplinary matters”** replace the words **“complained of”** with **“considered by the Assembly Commission to have been proven to its satisfaction.”**

At the end of the paragraph add the words **“or Appeals Commission”**.

F.2.3 After the words **“the Press Officer,”** insert the words **“the Safeguarding Officer,”**.

F.6.1 After the words **“the Press Officer,”** insert the words **“the Safeguarding Officer,”**.

F.7.2 At the end of these two paragraphs, add the words “(see also Paragraph H.4.3)”.

G.1.2.2 After the words “the Press Officer,” insert the words “the Safeguarding Officer.”.

G.11.3 and G.11.6 At the end of each of these paragraphs before the word “or” insert the following words: “(the words “the Assembly Commission” at the beginning of Paragraph F.2.2 being construed for the purpose of this paragraph as a reference to the Appeals Commission)”.

G.13.4 After the words “the Press Officer,” insert the words “the Safeguarding Officer.”.

G.14.5 After the words “the Press Officer” insert the words “, the Safeguarding Officer”.

G.16.2 and G.16.3 At the end of these two paragraphs, add the words “(see also Paragraph H.4.4)”.

H.4 Remove the existing Paragraph H.4 and replace it with the following:

“H.4.1 In cases which have bypassed or have proceeded beyond the Caution Stage, within one month of the conclusion of each case the Mandated Group shall, pursuant to its reporting obligation noted at Paragraphs B.8.2.1, F.6.3 or G.17, whichever is applicable, lodge a written report of the case with the Secretary of the Assembly Commission, who shall, in order to preserve confidentiality, remove from the report the name and address of the minister, the name of the minister’s church(es) and any other information which might lead to the identification of the individuals involved in the case.

H.4.2 In cases which have been discontinued at the Caution Stage, the Synod Moderator shall lodge a written report of the case with the Secretary of the Assembly Commission, who shall, in order to preserve confidentiality, remove from the report the name and address of the minister, the name of the minister’s church(es) and any other information which might lead to the identification of the individuals involved in the case.

H.4.3 In all cases, whether concluded under Paragraph F.7.1 or F.7.2 or Paragraph G.16.2 or G.16.3, the Convener of the Assembly Commission shall, after consulting the other members thereof and within one month of the case, lodge a written report of the conduct of the hearing and of any other issues relating to the case which s/he deems appropriate with the Secretary of the Assembly Commission who shall, in order to preserve confidentiality, remove from the report the name and address of the minister, the name of the minister’s church(es) and any other information which might lead to the identification of the individuals involved in the case. The General Secretary shall notify the Secretary of the Assembly Commission when a case under appeal has been concluded to enable compliance with this paragraph.

H.4.4 In cases which have been concluded in accordance with Paragraph G.16.2 or G.16.3, the Convener of the Appeals Commission shall, after consulting the other members thereof and within one month of the conclusion of the case, lodge a written report of the conduct of the appeal and of any other issues relating to the case which s/he deems appropriate with the Secretary of the Assembly Commission who shall, in order to preserve confidentiality, remove from the report the name and address of the minister, the name of the minister’s church(es) and any other information which might lead to the identification of the individuals involved in the case.

H.4.5 The purpose of the reports is to help those charged with the review of the ongoing operation of the Disciplinary Process to monitor the performance of those involved with the case and to highlight issues arising for consideration by the MIND Advisory Group and thus to ensure that all appropriate training, assistance and guidance are provided and that the highest standards are maintained.”

J.4 After the words “concluded cases” insert the words “(including any which were discontinued at the Caution Stage or the Pre-Commission Stage)”.

Appendix 1, Paragraph 1 Replace the words “in the form contained in this Appendix” with the words “in the format set out in Appendix 1 to the Ministerial Disciplinary Process”.

.....

Paper U1

Task Group on the future of General Assembly
Report

United Church 2017
Church 2017
Reformed Church 2017
Church



Paper U1

Task Group on the future of General Assembly Report

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Val Morrison Valmorrison7@btinternet.com
Action required	Note
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Update
Main points	Work progressing.
Previous relevant documents	GA 2016 Reports and Record
Consultation has taken place with...	Whole URC consultation underway

Summary of Impact

Financial	Not yet
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Not yet

Report

1. The group consists of Val Morrison, Adrian Bulley, Margaret Marshall, Dick Gray, and Michael Hopkins, with John Proctor attending on behalf of the General Secretariat. Val Morrison was appointed Convener, and Michael Hopkins was appointed Secretary.
2. The group has met on 19 December 2016 and 20 February 2017. These meetings have considered a thorough exploration of all the issues involved, and sought initial feedback from committees.
3. All our work is set in the context of the ongoing sequence of reports and resolutions since 2011, which clearly indicate that the church wishes to reduce expenditure. We note that attempts to implement these decisions have not been popular, and our remit is to take a broader and longer view to try and find a way to provide an Assembly which the Church wishes, at a price it can afford.
3. A questionnaire has been devised, which has been widely circulated in the URC. At the time of writing this report that consultation is ongoing. It closes on 28 April, and the Task Group are meeting on 5 May to begin their analysis of the results.
4. Without prejudice to the results of the advisory consultation, it would be unfair to the Church not to highlight some key issues in the group's thinking at this stage:
 - a) The current pattern of geographical rotation has some important strengths. However, it does not always make for efficiency. We sometimes find ourselves using venues that are not entirely suitable or are too costly. Travel costs vary widely between one year and another. We have wondered whether Assembly can take better account of the various diversities in the Church without rotating its venue. At the moment it is too early to say what the Task Group might wish to say about venues for the period 2020-2030. However, the Group's remit means that it is not bound to recommend venues that fit the present rotational pattern.
 - b) Since the Mission Council meeting in November 2017 will be asked to make a decision about Assembly 2020, the Group asks if the Assembly Arrangements Committee can keep open until November more than one option for that Assembly. Specifically the Group may want to ask Mission Council in November whether it would prefer to continue with the rotational pattern and go to Scotland in 2020, or to seek a cheaper venue that year, possibly in a suitable place that we have been to before.
 - c) The Assembly of 2018 will be asked to take decisions about the venue of Assembly for the years 2022-2030. The Group has no particular recommendations in mind at the moment.



Paper X1

National Synod of Scotland
The Fourth Scottish Church
Census

United Church 2017
Church 2017
Reformed Church 2017
Church 2017

Paper X1

National Synod of Scotland

The Fourth Scottish Church Census

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	David Pickering dpickering@urcscotland.org.uk
Action required	For information
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To set the scene for a presentation on selected outcomes, particularly in relation to URC life, of the 2016 Scottish Census of churches, following publication of the Census outcomes in April 2017
Main points	Introducing the census (in this paper) At Mission Council in May 2017, a presentation giving: A snapshot of Scottish church life in 2016 Trends in Scottish church life 2002 to 2016 Key outcomes of the Church Census Selected insights for the URC
Previous relevant documents	Minutes of Mission Council, March 2016, referring to Paper M4 on Church Census
Consultation has taken place with...	The author, Peter Brierley The General Secretary, John Proctor

Summary of Impact

Financial	n/a
External (e.g. ecumenical)	n/a

Report on Outcomes of the Fourth Scottish Church Census

The Census was held

1. In May 2016 a Census was held of Scottish Church attendance. This was the fourth such census in Scotland, following previous Scottish Church censuses in 1984, 1994 and 2002.

The Rationale

2. The rationale for holding this census included assessing the impact on church attendance of some trends revealed in the government Population Censuses of 2001 and 2011. These show that whilst the population of Scotland grew by 4.6% to a record 5.3 million people, those who identified themselves as Christian fell from 65% in 2001 to 54% in 2011, however, the government's census didn't record attendance. A new Scottish Church Census would give an insight into attendance and trends, according to denomination and potentially what is termed 'churchmanship' referring to the broad approach of the church such as charismatic, pentecostal, liberal etc, and an insight into trends in demography, gender and other factors. Such information is likely to provide a vital picture of church life for local and national church leaders, which would help them to plan strategically.

Methodology

3. Planning and preparation were undertaken by a Steering Committee including representatives of a number of denominations in Scotland who prepared a budget and agreed costs, with some organisations sponsoring questions. The Census was conducted by Brierley Consultancy, www.brierleyconsultancy.com. Work was undertaken to identify every church in Scotland, including their contact details. It drew on information from previous church censuses, contemporary denominational data and web searches. Each church identified was subsequently sent a census form comprising two sides of A4, with 24 main questions, several with options and subsections. The chosen date was Sunday 8 May 2016, selected because it was a regular Sunday, not being a Bank Holiday weekend nor in school holidays, and less likely to be at risk of inclement weather which might skew results on a one-off basis. Churches with an anomalous congregation that day, for example due to having many visitors for a baptism, were invited to undertake their count on a Sunday which more normally represented their congregation.

The Results

4. The results are due to be published in April 2017. Permission has been granted to the URC to share pertinent insights at our May 2017 Mission Council.

Paper X2

West Midlands Synod
Stipendiary Ministry Numbers

United Church 2017
Reformed Church 2017
Church 2017

Paper X2

West Midlands Synod Stipendiary Ministry Numbers

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Steve Faber moderator@urcwestmidlands.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council asks the finance and ministries committees to examine the implications of releasing sufficient money from reserves in order to maintain stipendiary ministry at the 2017 levels for the next five years and the next ten years in order to promote growth, and to bring proposals to the November 2017 meeting of Mission Council

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To ask the relevant Assembly committees to carry out work on the implications of drawing down monies from Reserves in order to maintain stipendiary ministry levels for a limited period, and bring specific proposals to the next Mission Council meeting.
Main points	We will need skilled leadership to implement and embed the cultural change under "Walking the Way". We recognize the current policy is to track stipendiary ministry numbers with M&M Fund income. Assuming that there will not be a significant increase in giving to M&M, we ask that serious consideration be given to releasing monies held on reserves to enable the current level of stipendiary ministers to be deployed in our churches.
Previous relevant documents	Various reports to General Assembly – most recently "Walking the Way" (2016) and ministries committee report on stipendiary minister numbers and deployment (2016)
Consultation has taken place with...	General Secretary.

Summary of Impact

Financial	None at this stage, then to be determined by ministries and finance committees: potentially significant reduction in reserves
External (e.g. ecumenical)	No direct immediate impact

Stipendiary Ministry Numbers

1. At the Spring 2017 meeting of the West Midlands Synod, we received a resolution from Baxter URC, Kidderminster asking that denominational reserves be released in order to maintain the Stipendiary Ministry at 2017 levels for a period of five years.
2. After discussion under Consensus Decision Making procedures, the following resolution was passed recognizing disagreement (two people remained blue card-holders, so full consensus was not reached, but both were content that they had been properly heard without the need to register dissent.)

“The West Midlands Synod requests Mission Council to ask the finance and ministries committees to examine the implications of releasing sufficient money from reserves in order to maintain Stipendiary Ministry at the 2017 levels for the next five years and the next ten years in order to promote growth, and to bring proposals to the November 2017 meeting of Mission Council.”

3. The Synod recognizes and supports the current policy of tracking the number of stipendiary ministers with the giving to the Ministry & Mission Fund. It is good stewardship that we should only commit to paying stipends that we can afford.
4. However, it has been well said that, ‘there is no point in “saving for a rainy day” when it is pouring outside.’ The denomination continues to lose members at an alarming rate, with a consequent drop in giving to the M&M Fund, and therefore the number of ministers that we can afford.
5. We believe that Walking the Way, living the life of Jesus today, is an opportunity to turn around the denomination and recapture the essence of what the Church of Jesus Christ should always have been – full of growing disciples who are in turn making new disciples. Sadly, we believe that the URC needs a significant cultural change to embed this renewed theology of church, and it will need skilled leadership to enable this. At such a time as this, it would be negligent to focus on managing decline. Rather, it is time to invest in trying faithfully to turn the Church around.
6. On the current projections for deployment, all Synods are facing incredibly difficult choices about how and where to commit ministers. In some areas, the choices are so hard as to be impossible. Within the West Midlands we face a single stipendiary serving a whole county (Herefordshire), no stipendiary ministry at all in the Forest of Dean, and in other areas we simply have not been able to identify workable solutions that will enable us to meet the targets set before us. These struggles are by no means a feature of this synod alone.
7. Walking the Way seeks to equip the saints to do the work of mission. Stipendiary ministers will be key in this early phase, although of course not the only resource. Our non-stipendiaries, local lay leaders, Elders and others will do their part and do it well, and increasingly so. But the time that our stipendiaries are free to give will be of particular importance.
8. We will need our stipendiaries to build up capacity for local leadership. This is a repeated challenge that has been put before the denomination for over two decades. We have so far failed to respond to that challenge. We are all but out of time. As Walking the Way produces growing disciples, we will need to work hard and fast to

develop our lay leaders. As General Assembly has previously affirmed, we believe that each local church deserves dedicated leadership. In the long term we accept that this cannot come from stipendiaries. But whilst we have them, we must focus on using them well to develop the next phase of leadership.

9. Quite separately from the number of ministers that we can afford to pay through M&M, we are aware that the number of retirements, along with others coming out of stipendiary ministry, exceed the number answering vocations and being formed for this form of service. We anticipate that both Certificates of Eligibility and Certificates of Limited Service will be needed to overcome the “natural” decline in the number of available ministers. We invite ministries to guide us as to the best way in which to maintain numbers available for deployment in our local churches, and we ask those charged with managing the Church’s finances to advise what impact it will have both on reserves and on future revenue if investment income is reduced as a result of decreased capital held in reserves.
10. We are clear that simply bringing in Ministers from other denominations and cultures to serve URC congregations isn’t a simple solution. We need any ministers brought into the URC to be those who can “hit the ground running.” They will need to be high-calibre individuals, ready to lead God’s people into the new reality of our greatly reduced circumstances. They need to be encouragers, enablers, and change agents. They need to help us regain confidence in the Gospel and in our God-given talents. We are not asking for a supply of private chaplains to our congregations, who will merely help them serve their time until the last funeral is taken. This could offer an opportunity for the URC to continue to serve God and continue to work towards the full vision of God’s kingdom on earth, and do so in a new and re-energised way.
11. We ask that this investigation is carried out urgently and that the results, along with specific proposals, are brought to the next meeting of Mission Council. This is work that cannot wait.

Paper Y1

Private members' resolution

Moderators and Clerks of the Mersey and North Western Synods. Proposer: Brian Jolly; seconder: Jacky Embrey

The Future of Lay Training in the URC and, in that context, the Future of the Windermere Centre

United Church 2017
Church 2017
Reformed Church 2017
Church 2017



Paper Y1

Moderators & Clerks of Mersey & NW Synods.
 Proposer Brian Jolly; seconder Jacky Embrey.
 The Future of Lay Training in the URC and, in that context, the
 Future of the Windermere Centre

Basic Information

Contact	Brian Jolly brianjolly322@btinternet.com
Actions required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Mission Council:</p> <p>a) believes that there is an increasingly apparent and urgent need for a viable, costed strategy for lay training and congregational development across the URC, and calls for the development of such a strategy;</p> <p>b) agrees that this strategy needs to take account of existing lay training and development resources and opportunities available within and beyond the URC and needs to be sensitive to the varied geography and the uneven distribution of financial and human resources across the Synods;</p> <p>c) asks the Education and Learning Committee to facilitate the development of this strategy, with the active involvement of relevant people from the Synods and the URC Resource Centres for Learning;</p> <p>d) recognises that such training and development needs to be delivered in a variety of ways which are likely to include on-line, face to face and residential components; it must be easily accessible to all in the URC; and it is therefore likely to require the use of several locations across our three nations;</p> <p>e) agrees that the Windermere Centre should continue to operate as one of the URC Resource Centres for Learning while this strategy is being developed and agrees that during this period the primary foci of the work of the Centre should be on providing hospitality to URC people and events and on the development of its commercial hospitality business; and</p> <p>f) welcomes the generous offer from North Western Synod of up to £250,000 over three years to reduce the net cost of the Windermere Centre to the URC during this period of review.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Subject: Lay training and congregational development in the URC and, in that context, the future of the Windermere Centre. Aim: A good process that will produce a lay training strategy for the URC, after which the future of the Windermere Centre can be properly considered.
Main points	This resolution recognises the need for the development of a coherent and comprehensive strategy for lay training and congregational development across the URC and, in that context, proposes that the Windermere Centre should continue as a URC Resource Centre for Learning while that strategy is being developed and agreed.
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council, November 2015, Paper D1 and Minute 15.34 Mission Council, October 2016, Paper D1 and Minute 16.58
Consultation has taken place with...	The future of the Windermere Centre has been under review by the Education and Learning and Finance Committees since the October 2016 meeting of Mission Council. However, this review has not included adequate consultation with the Synods and the consultation period ended prior to any of the spring Synod meetings. This resolution reflects resolutions passed at the March 2017 meetings of Mersey and North Western Synods. These Synod resolutions, with the reports that accompanied them, are attached to this paper as appendices.

Summary of Impact

Financial	It is hoped that the financial support offered by the North Western Synod will keep the net cost of the Windermere Centre to the central URC budget below the level previously agreed by Mission Council for 2017 and 2018. It may also allow for some of that budget to be spent on other lay training provision (including <i>Walking the Way</i>) during the period of development of a comprehensive lay training strategy. Other Synods, in particular Mersey, may be willing to contribute to or add to this financial support. There has been no opportunity to discuss this.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	The development of a strategy for lay training and congregational development across the URC should include consideration of where and by whom that strategy should be delivered, including the URC Resource Centres for Learning, and other URC and ecumenical facilities and resources.

The Future of Lay Training in the URC and, in that context, the Future of the Windermere Centre

1 Format and content of this paper

1.1 This paper comes to Mission Council on behalf of Mersey and North Western Synods. Both Synods passed relevant resolutions at their March 2017 meetings. The officers of the two Synods have worked together on this joint paper, following advice from the General Secretary that Mission Council would find it easier to deal with one paper with resolution(s) rather than separate papers with different resolutions covering similar ground.

1.2 The constraints of process and timetable mean that this paper is actually presented to Mission Council by the Moderators and Clerks of Mersey and North Western Synods in their capacity as personal members of Mission Council.

1.3 The Mersey Synod met on 11 March 2017. In response to a request made at the previous meeting of Synod (following the reporting of the October 2016 meeting of Mission Council) for a discussion on the future of the Windermere Centre, its Executive Committee had prepared a draft resolution from the Mersey Synod for Mission Council. This resolution was, after debate and some slight amendments, passed by Synod. The report from the Mersey Synod Executive to its Synod in March 2017 and the resolution passed by that meeting of Mersey Synod are attached to this report as Appendix One.

1.4 Officers of the North Western Synod had a long awaited meeting with Assembly staff in London on 16 March 2017. It was only after this meeting that the Synod Executive Committee could finalise a report plus resolutions for the North Western Synod meeting on 25 March 2017. These were Synod resolutions but they included permission given to the Synod officers to frame appropriate resolution(s) for the forthcoming meeting of Mission Council. The two reports from the North Western Synod Executive to the March 2017 meeting of its Synod and the resolutions passed by North Western Synod at that meeting are attached to this report as Appendix Two.

1.5 It was only after the meeting of the North Western Synod on 25 March that it was possible for the officers of the two Synods to start talking about the possibility of making a joint presentation to Mission Council. Although there was no problem in principle, the format of the Mersey Synod resolution made this problematic. After consultation with the General Secretary and the Clerk to Assembly it was agreed that this joint paper could be presented with the two separate Synod reports and resolutions attached as appendices. This will enable members of Mission Council to read those reports as background to this paper, and it will enable members of the two Synods to see that this paper is consistent with and true to the resolutions passed by Mersey and North Western Synods at their March 2017 meetings.

2 It is too soon for a 'final decision' on the future of the Windermere Centre

2.1 In October 2016, Mission Council resolved that a 'final decision' about the future of the Windermere Centre should be made at its meeting in May 2017. There is no decision

that would truly be final apart from a decision to close the Centre. We strongly believe that, for a number of reasons, it is too soon for such a decision.

2.2 The process and timetable during and since the October 2016 meeting of Mission Council have felt as though the decision to close the Windermere Centre has already been taken when that is not the case. It is apparent that the Education and Learning and Finance Committees came to a settled view on this matter in December 2016. Alternative views have been received and published but there has been no real dialogue with those wanting to consider other options.

2.3 In the same resolution of the October 2016 meeting of Mission Council, the Finance and Education and Learning Committees were instructed to look at the implications of ceasing to use the Windermere Centre, “mindful of the need to consult with [among others] the North Western Synod”. Requests from officers of the North Western Synod for a meeting with relevant Assembly personnel eventually resulted in such a meeting taking place on 16 March. This was after the official deadline for papers for the May 2017 meeting of Mission Council (we are grateful for the extra time we have been given) and after the papers for the Synod’s March 2017 meeting had been issued. It meant that there has been no opportunity for North Western Synod to discuss this matter with the other northerly synods, except for this very late co-operation with Mersey Synod over this paper. This process feels very different from the one recently used in relation to the Westminster College appeal.

2.4 This has been a seriously faulty process which could have been so much better had Assembly staff and Synod officers been able to work together towards an agreed outcome. If an inevitably controversial decision is taken after such a flawed process, there is a real risk of serious fracture in relationships within and across the denomination.

2.5 We have been told that one good reason for making a decision to close the Windermere Centre at the May 2017 meeting of Mission Council is that it would remove the uncertainty for the staff. We find it incredible that the uncertainty for the staff created by the actions of Mission Council in October 2016 is now offered as justification for a decision which the Windermere Centre staff definitely do not want.

2.6 The most important reason why it is too soon for a decision to close the Windermere Centre is that we do not have an agreed strategy for lay training and development in the United Reformed Church. We, therefore, don’t know what the future use of the Centre by the denomination might be. It is our view that such a strategy needs to be developed and agreed before a proper discussion about the future of the Centre can take place.

3 Lay Training and Congregational Development in the United Reformed Church

3.1 It is our view that there is a clear and urgent need for a viable, costed strategy for lay training and congregational development across the United Reformed Church. Some of the factors that suggest the need for such a strategy are: the URC’s major drive towards developing the missional discipleship of all its members and congregations under the banner of *‘Walking the Way’*; the work being done on a replacement of the very successful *‘Training for Learning and Serving’* programme; the much talked about significant and rapid decline in the number of deployable stipendiary ministers in the URC; and the disparity among synods in their ability to provide their own resources to support lay training and development.

3.2 The aim of such a strategy should be, so far as possible, to provide equal access for every member and congregation of the URC to high quality training that meets their particular needs. It is likely that such provision will require a mixture of on-line, residential and locally delivered face-to-face opportunities. This is likely to need a number of locations around the

country where face-to-face and residential training can be provided. (For example, Westminster College is no easier to access from the north-west than the Windermere Centre is to access from the south-east.)

3.3 The main responsibility for facilitating the development of this strategy will be with the appropriate Assembly committee, but it is vital that there is proper consultation with and appropriate involvement of the Synods and the Resource Centres for Learning as well as other potential partners. It is also crucial that such a strategy embrace the training and development resources and materials that already exist within and beyond the denomination.

3.4 It is our view that it could take up to two years to develop and agree such a strategy. It is also our view that it would be inappropriate and unwise to make any change to the status of the Windermere Centre while this work is being done.

4 Practical and financial issues

4.1 We are aware that both the current Transitional / Interim Director and the Operations Manager of the Windermere Centre are on short-term contracts that are about to end.

4.2 We have argued that there should be no change in the status of the Windermere Centre while a lay training strategy for the denomination is being developed. On the other hand, it seems to us that it would also not make sense to invest a lot of time or money during this period in growing the Windermere Centre's own programme of training courses. It would be better during this period for the Windermere Centre to focus on providing hospitality to other people from the URC who want to provide or facilitate training at the Centre. That suggests to us that it is probably not necessary to appoint a new Director of the Windermere Centre at this time, but instead to cover such residual responsibilities as there are in other ways until the lay training strategy has been developed, and its implications for the Windermere Centre are known.

4.3 It is our view that the other major focus of the Windermere Centre during this period should be on maximising the net income it can generate from commercial hospitality business, at those times when the Centre is not required by URC people or events. Commercial hospitality business includes but is not limited to bed and breakfast business. We don't believe that this opportunity has been properly explored or exploited thus far. It is possible that this could totally change the perception of, and the net cost of, the Windermere Centre by the time that the lay training strategy has been developed. This suggests to us that a new Operations Manager should be appointed soon, possibly on a fixed term contract.

4.4 The offer of significant financial support from the North Western Synod is intended to take the financial pressure off the central URC budget sufficiently to allow the time for this lay training strategy to be developed. There has been no time to discuss this matter with other Synods. It may be that other Synods, in particular Mersey, might be prepared to contribute to or add to this offer of financial support. It may be that this financial support could enable the Education and Learning Committee to spend more of its budget on new forms of lay training, including *Walking the Way*, during this period of review and development.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Readers of this paper should note that neither Mersey Synod nor North Western Synod is advocating that the Windermere Centre stay open indefinitely or unconditionally. We are advocating that there be a proper process that, first, produces and agrees a strategy for lay training and congregational development across the denomination and then, in that context, decides on the future of the Windermere Centre.

Paper Y1: Appendix one

Report from meeting of Mersey Synod on 11 March 2017

1 Extract of report from Synod Executive Committee

Windermere Centre

A decision will be made at the May meeting of Mission Council on the future of the Windermere Centre. Members had the opportunity to send comments by 1st March to a dedicated website set up by Revd Fiona Thomas. At this Synod meeting you will have the opportunity to put forward your thoughts concerning the Windermere Centre, and these views will be used by the Synod Mission Council representatives to inform them before they go to the May Mission Council.

2 Mission Council papers

Members of Synod were provided with Papers D1 and D2 from the October 2016 meeting of Mission Council plus the relevant part of the report of that meeting including the agreed resolutions - redacted, as they appear on the URC website.

3 Resolution

The Executive Committee presented the Synod meeting with a draft resolution for Mission Council. The final wording, after slight amendment during discussion, was:

Mersey Synod:

- a) **commends the work of the Windermere Centre**
Synod voted to accept this resolution (1 abstention)
- b) ***seeks a pause in the closure decision, pending further detailed discussion of what the URC will need for lay training and congregational development in the future;***
Synod voted to accept this resolution (13 opposed)
- c) ***believes that there is an increasingly apparent and urgent need for a viable, costed, national strategy for lay training and congregational development to be in place in the URC, and calls for the creation of such a strategy;***
Synod voted to accept this resolution (1 abstention)
- d) **believes that, regardless of where in the country such training might be provided, it should incorporate residential, teaching and IT components, as currently provided at the Windermere Centre;**
Synod voted to accept this resolution (1 opposed, 3 abstentions)
- e) ***believes that a positive strategy for the future may well utilise more than one existing URC centre, and one or more of those owned or run by our ecumenical partners.***
Synod voted to accept this resolution (2 opposed, 1 abstention)

Paper Y1: Appendix two

Report from meeting of North Western Synod on 25 March 2017

1 Extract of original report from Synod Executive Committee (issued before meeting with Assembly officers on 16 March)

The Windermere Centre

26 Most members of the synod meeting will have some awareness of the discussions at the last meeting of Mission Council concerning the future of the Windermere Centre.

27 The Executive Committee has concerns over the adequacy of the process being used to prepare for a further discussion at the May meeting of Mission Council, where it is envisaged that a decision about the future of the Centre will be made, and the nature of the information shared by Church House with the wider church.

28 Representatives of the committee have been in dialogue with the Secretary for Education and Learning, and others, and on Thursday 16 March have a meeting with the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary (Mission), the Secretary for Education and Learning, the Interim-Director of the Centre and others to consider whether this synod might be involved with committees of the General Assembly to enable a longer and more thorough review of the life of the Centre over recent years, and research and analysis of the potential of the Centre to continue to serve the United Reformed Church in the future.

29 It is anticipated that a resolution for consideration by the synod meeting on 25 March may arise from the meeting on 16 March and further consideration of the matter by the Synod Executive Committee in the following days. If this is so, the text of the resolution (numbered Resolution 5 on the agenda) will be emailed to members of the synod meeting as soon as possible in the week before the synod meeting on 25 March, and paper copies of the text will be available at the synod meeting.

2 Supplementary report from Synod Executive Committee including resolution sent to members of Synod on 23 March 2017

SUPPLEMENTARY PAPER FROM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CONCERNING THE FUTURE OF THE WINDERMERE CENTRE

to be read in conjunction with section 8 of the report of the Executive Committee in the *Book of Reports*

Bad process leading to bad feeling

1. Most members of the synod meeting will have heard of the discussions about the future of the Windermere Centre at the October 2016 meeting of Mission Council. Following that meeting, this matter was discussed at the November 2016 meeting of the Executive Committee. It was agreed that the Clerk should write to Fiona Thomas, the URC Secretary for Education and Learning, to express our concerns. These concerns were about the process being used, about the status of the consultation requested by Mission Council and how we in the Synod might engage with it, and about the pastoral care of the staff at the Windermere Centre. It was made clear that the Synod Executive Committee was not arguing blindly that the Windermere Centre should remain open indefinitely but was arguing for a thorough and inclusive process of review.

2. Correspondence has continued between Synod officers and Assembly officers. We have been keen to do more than complain about process. We have been trying to find a good way forward. It has to be reported that the Synod officers have concluded that “consultation” has mainly been between the two Assembly committees, and that the URC Education and Learning Committee came to a settled mind about the closure of the Windermere Centre at its meeting in December 2016. Synod officers were not offered a meeting with Assembly officers until March 2017. Resolutions for the meetings of our own synod meeting and for the May meeting of Mission Council should already have been submitted by the time this meeting took place. We have now been allowed one week after our Synod meeting to finalise any resolution to go to Mission Council.

3. Another concern about process has been to do with the way this matter is being handled compared with the way the Westminster College situation was dealt with just a few years ago. The North Western Synod gladly contributed a significant amount to the Westminster College appeal, even though most of its members have never visited that College, nor are they ever likely to do so. Had the two conversations been taking place at the same time there might have been different responses.

4. These concerns about process are important not just in relation to the matter being considered, but because of the potential harm that could be done to the peace and unity of the United Reformed Church. Even if the closure of the Windermere Centre is the right decision for Mission Council to make, if the decision is made after inadequate consultation and consideration then it could do serious and lasting harm to the church.

Need for Pause in order to properly Review

5. It may be that the resources currently being spent on the Windermere Centre could be spent more effectively. But we do not know this for sure. The decision about the future of the Centre is currently being taken in a vacuum. There are at least two aspects of this that need proper investigation:

Lay training and development strategy

6. The Mersey Synod meeting which met 2 weeks ago, has agreed a resolution for Mission Council which calls for the development of a “viable, costed, national strategy for lay training”. They suggest, and we agree with them, that no decision about the future of the Windermere Centre should be taken until such a strategy has been developed and agreed.

Interim financial strategy for the Windermere Centre

7. The potential of the Centre to make income from commercial bed and breakfast business has not been fully explored. It is our view that this should be the short term priority at the Windermere Centre, whilst it continues to offer hospitality and give priority to those from the URC who want to use it. Any net income generated by this commercial business reduces the net cost of the Centre to the Church.

8. It must be acknowledged that the finances of the Windermere Centre have been a real challenge for the central URC for many years and they have recently deteriorated. For this reason, it was necessary for Mission Council in October 2016 to extend the previously agreed budget deficit for the Centre from £150k to £200k (the actual outturn was slightly better than this). But it was not, in our view, necessary for that meeting of Mission Council to be asked to make a decision about the future of the Centre without proper review, discussion and notice.

9. It is the view of the Executive Committee that, in order to encourage Mission Council to agree to the period of review we are requesting, the Synod should make a substantial financial offer to the central URC to carry a share of the ongoing deficits at the Centre during this period.

10. Therefore, the Executive Committee offers the following resolution for consideration by the synod meeting. The four sections of this resolution will be voted on separately in order to test the mind of the synod meeting.

Resolutions

5A The North Western Synod expresses its deep concern to Mission Council about the process by which the future of the Windermere Centre has been and is being considered. The Synod fears that if these shortcomings are not addressed they could cause significant harm to the peace and unity of the United Reformed Church. In particular:

- i) **At the meeting of Mission Council in October 2016, members were presented with a paper concerning the future of the Windermere Centre. They had no notice of this paper. It had been prepared in haste and lacked vital information. There had been no opportunity for proper consultation. Members were put under considerable pressure to make a quick decision, when such an issue deserved careful and reasoned consideration.**
- ii) **Our representatives at that meeting of Mission Council thought that no decision was taken there and that the matter was deferred to the next meeting. Some of the announcements and actions after that meeting suggested that the decision to close the Centre had been taken in principle. This affected the Centre staff personally and affected their ability to generate business.**
- iii) **The consultation process requested by Mission Council in October, constrained by the deadline of the next meeting of Mission Council, has not engaged properly with those beyond the two Assembly committees and the Windermere Management Committee. The timetable has not allowed other interested parties to properly consider the matter or engage with this process. For example, the consultation with the North Western Synod, requested by Mission Council, has been inadequate; and there has been no formal consultation with other synods.**

Synod voted to approve this resolution (none against, two abstentions).

5B The North Western Synod urges Mission Council to allow a period of, say, two years during which two different reviews should be carried out:

- i) **a strategy for lay training and development across the denomination should be prepared, with wide consultation, aiming at equality of access for all and taking account of existing resources and provision in Synods and in the central URC; and**
- ii) **the ability of the Windermere Centre to generate commercial bed and breakfast business alongside its work as a Resource Centre for Learning should be properly explored.**

There should be no change in the status of the Windermere Centre during this period.

Synod voted to approve this resolution (none against, one abstention).

5C The North Western Synod recognises that the financial situation at the Windermere Centre is putting significant strain on the central URC budget. The Synod therefore offers to contribute up to £100,000 per year up to a maximum of £250,000, to share some of this financial strain during this review period.

Synod voted to approve this resolution (two against, two abstentions).

5D The North Western Synod authorises its Moderator, Clerk and Treasurer to continue working with Assembly officers and colleagues from Mersey Synod on this matter, and to frame such resolution(s) as they think fit for the meeting of Mission Council in May 2017, taking account of the views expressed by Synod at its meeting on 25 March 2017.

Synod voted to approve this resolution (none against, one abstention).

Paper Z1

Synod Moderators

Where is God calling the URC?

United
Church
Reformed
Church
2017
Church 2017



Paper Z1

Synod Moderators

Where Is God Calling The URC?

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Nicola Furley-Smith moderator@urcsouthern.org.uk
Action required	For information and discussion
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To open up a discussion with members of Mission Council on where God is calling the URC.
Main points	As a denomination we need to a) acknowledge that we are not the church we once were but that we still have an important part to play in being the people of God; b) commit to clear and precise communication between the different councils of the church; c) learn to do a few things and do them well.
Previous relevant documents	
Consultation has taken place with...	The General Secretary

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Where is God Calling the URC?

1. In September 2016, the Synod Moderators met with The General Secretary, The Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship), Secretary for Ministries, two members of the Ministries Committee and the Principal of Northern College for a 24 hour consultation on Ministry and Deployment. It is out of the discussion from that meeting, that we, the 13 Moderators, feel Spirit-led to write to Mission Council of our concern and hopes for the Church.
2. At the outset we wish Mission Council to know that our comments stem from a genuine desire to galvanise the church into action and to address some of the weaknesses which we believe are hindering the growth of God's Kingdom. We are aware that some of the issues we raise here also relate to the interaction between local churches and synods. Often we experience the URC not as a hierarchy of councils, but as circles of belonging, which are linked through personal contact and where authority is experienced through pastoral relationships. There are positive initiatives moving forward God's mission arising from local Church Meetings, Synod Meetings and General Assembly; we do not always pay sufficient attention to the 'gears' that link the different councils and which mesh together to transfer movement from each council to the others.
3. We offer our reflections from the position of those who have a key responsibility for the linkage both between synod and local churches, and of that between denomination and synod. We wish to focus here on the latter in order to help the work and effectiveness of Mission Council. Our reflections arose from a Moderators' Meeting where the Biblical reflections fed into our broader conversation.

Firstly, we are not what we were.....

"By the rivers of Babylon....we wept"

Psalm 137

One of the jobs of the Levites was to sing songs in the Temple. Travellers arriving in Jerusalem could hear their haunting and inspiring voices from miles away as they approached the Holy City. Their renown was far and wide – so much so that when they arrived as exiles in Babylon, the Babylonians ask them to, "Sing for us the songs of Zion." "How can we sing the songs of God on foreign soil?" Although Jews would eventually make a home and thrive in Babylon, it is important not to have any romantic notions or false impressions regarding what the exile was like. Babylon was no picnic.

4. It is said that, when the United Reformed Church came into being in 1972 with 192,136 members and 2080 churches, it was never intended to be a denomination in its own right but was always looking for future opportunities of union. Now, 45 years later with 56,000 members and 1500 churches our memory still holds fast and we are, even now, lamenting 'singing the Lord's song in a strange land.' We acknowledge we are still called to be both servants in the world and citizens of the kingdom but we have not let go of the old ways in order to be able to look beyond the church of yesteryear. As a church we are still engaged in many of the activities we were engaged in 1972, and more. We need to stop acting foolishly as if we are a big church and be honest with who we are. Indeed, since 1972 we have tried many 'inspiring songs' some of which have generated signs of the Kingdom but our honesty with who we are needs to lead us to the conclusion that we, the Church, are not what

we were. We are tiny lights which we need to keep burning bright in local communities. And that is OK.

Secondly, we need to be....
 Jesus washes the disciples' feet
 John 13:1-17

Walking in sandals on the filthy roads of Israel in the first century made it imperative that feet be washed before a communal meal, especially since people reclined at a low table and feet were very much in evidence. When Jesus rose from the table and began to wash the feet of the disciples he was doing the work of the lowliest of servants. The disciples must have been stunned at this act of humility and condescension, that Christ, their Lord and Master, should wash the feet of His disciples, when it was their proper work to have washed His. The humility expressed by His act with towel and basin foreshadowed His ultimate act of humility and love on the cross. And the disciples are once again renewed with this simple act of servanthood.

5. There appears a lack of understanding centrally of what it takes to galvanise the grass roots. The answer to a declining membership seems to invoke a flurry of initiatives (for want of a better word). Vision 4 Life, Vision 2020, What is the Spirit saying to the Churches? and now Walking the Way are all cases in point. Yet we know that, if initiatives are to work, they have to swell up from the grass roots giving a sense of ownership, otherwise they will seem like they are being imposed upon us from 'on high'. Some of these have caught the imagination of the few but often our 'good ideas' are not bedded in the needs of the churches. Meanwhile many churches are struggling with fewer, older members and increasing demands from legislation and aging buildings, so that such initiatives are not seen as an imposition but also as proof that their concerns are not properly understood by the wider church.
6. We need desperately to look again at the way the church at Assembly level
 - communicates with Synods and local churches in a way which is clear and precise;
 - listens to Synods and local churches especially about what is being asked of them in terms of personnel and finance. There are times when having 13 different ways of doing something is right but there are times when a process needs to be denominational;
 - retains personnel and committees which might once have been appropriate for a denomination 3 times our size and instead makes more use of the wider gifts available from people by gathering people to do significant pieces of work when needed.
7. Listening to each other would have underlined the fact that, in a small church, we simply do not have the capacity to find a plethora of people to fulfil all the roles that are being asked of us. We need to consider whether the church, and its committees, may be asking people to do more than they can cope with.

Third, we need to claim our future...
 "Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice"
 Romans 12:1-9

After the call to present our bodies as living sacrifices by deliberately turning from the world's pull to the renewed thought patterns God has for us, Paul's first concern for people who offer service to God is that these people live as full members of the body of Christ, contributing to the life of the church according to the measure of faith God has given them.

8. Perhaps part of our dilemma is that we are losing sight of why the central structures exist. We know that the theological key to what we do as the church is service but too often we do not practice what we preach. As we listen to each other we need to be constantly asking ourselves what is it that we have to offer that will serve the church (and not the other way round) in order to keep ourselves accountable to one another and to God.
9. Our practice thus far at Mission Council has been to be given the broad principle of what a committee wants to happen but does not allow the members of Mission Council to 'buy into' the programme or initiative further down the line. We need processes that will see things through. In 2011 we were asked to give consideration to 'shaving' £1 million off the budget. We abandoned that responsibility when we handed the task to the committees themselves but did not follow up whether the 'cuts' that had been made were those the church wanted to make. Perhaps we need to revisit the exercise but this time to prioritise for the denomination. It could be as simple as a denominational Church Life Review (CLR). After all, we ask this of our local churches. This will inevitably be as painful now as it was then but perhaps our offering is to a call to be bold in order to grow God's kingdom.
10. To misquote Cardinal John Henry Newman, "Growth is evidence of life." If we are truly to grow as God's people then our growth should be about quality (health) and not just quantity (numbers). At the heart of our thinking is the Scriptural picture of the church as a living organism, not just an organisation (albeit a spiritual one). Looking at the church "organically" gives us a different perspective on what "health" and "growth" mean. The growth of organisms focuses on their health, their capacity to reproduce, and how the individual 'body' parts interact. Disciples are grown, not built; they are nurtured, not assembled¹.
11. Thus, if church growth is about growing an organism, the health (quality) of the organism will have a direct impact on its size (quantity). If a church becomes increasingly healthy over time, it is more likely and better able to reproduce disciples and the plethora of ministries required to be God's church in the 21st century. We are indeed grateful to those working diligently on all our behalf on Walking the Way and watch with bated breath at its unveiling.
12. Yet, the 7th mark of a healthy church teaches us to do a few things and to do them well². It requires the church to be focused rather than frenetic. It requires the church to do the basics well and to come across to the world outside its doors as good news in its attitudes and ways of working. Above all it enjoys what it does and is relaxed about what is not being done.
13. That takes us full circle to where we started. We are a small church with a big heart. We are tiny lights which need to keep on burning brightly in our local communities for the sake of the Kingdom not for our sake.
14. Given that we hear the voices in our Synods urging our denomination to
 - a) commit to clear and precise communication between the different councils of the church
 - b) learn to do a few things and do them well
 - c) acknowledge we are tiny but need to be bright.

¹ Natural Church Development

² Robert Warren *The Healthy Churches Handbook* 2005

We ask Mission Council to explore the following questions in order to discern where God is calling the URC.

- A. We need to commit to clear precise communication between the different councils of the church.
Where has communication been good between the councils of the church?
What made it good?
What needs to be avoided?
- B. The denomination has often been accused of initiative overload.
Which programmes and initiatives of the last 10 years have you found beneficial?
Why?
Which have not been so helpful? Why?
- C. As a denomination we have made a conscious decision to have 'the ecumenical question' at the top of all our agendas.
Is this still the question that should have primacy. Or is there an alternative or additional priority that we should focus on?
What might we, as a denomination, need to receive or to give up for the sake of more effective mission by the whole church to the whole world?
How might we achieve this?
- D. We are not the size we once were. We acknowledge that we are small but bright lights shining across three nations.
We need to do fewer things and do them well. Looking at
 - a) this Mission Council's present agenda
 - b) General Assembly meetings, structures and committee work.
 What three things might we stop doing? (These might be changes you could make yourself and/or changes you would like others to make).
Are there three essential things we should value the most?.

It is our hope that this is the start of a growing conversation.

The Synod Moderators

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