

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

September 2016

Dear colleague,

Mission Council
Wednesday to Friday 19 – 21 October 2016
High Leigh, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire

I look forward warmly to seeing you at Mission Council, and write now to mention several practical matters as we prepare for the meeting.

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://www.urc.org.uk/images/General-Assemblies/Assembly2016/assembly_reports_16.pdf, from page 247 onwards.

2. In recent Mission Council meetings we have taken certain business *En Bloc*. Feedback has been very positive. 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 A sign-up sheet will be available at the meeting, where you can list the paper you wish to be withdrawn. If an item gets three signatures by close of business on the first day, it will be withdrawn from *En Bloc* and added to our agenda, with time allotted for discussion.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 a number of papers from the first mailing: a cover letter, an expenses form, directions to High Leigh, a list of members, and (for new members) 'What we are about in Mission Council.' If you are missing any of these, please contact Reception at Church House, 020 7916 2020, reception@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. I remind you that we are not expected to post on social media sites during business sessions. This restriction only applies when Council is in session; 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.
7. Below are the papers enclosed in this mailing listed according to the ways we mean to address them:

Category A: En Bloc

- A1 Assembly Arrangements
- C1 Communications: publications policy
- I1 Mission: the URC's Jewish fund
- J1 Nominations: trust and pension nominations
- M1 Mission and Discipleship: *Walking the Way*
- M3 Clerk: the future of General Assembly
- M4 General Secretary: same-sex marriage in the Isle of Man
- M5 Clerk: commissions for hearing Appeals
- O1 Human Resources Advisory Group: report on work
- O2 Human Resources Advisory Group: line management of the General Secretary
- U1 Mission Council Advisory Group: discharging the Human Sexuality Task Group
- X1 Northerly Synods: report on progress and learning

Category B: Majority Voting

- F1 Faith and Order: Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification
- G1 Finance: budget for 2017
- J2 Nominations: (late paper; to be tabled at High Leigh)
- L1 URC Trust: redevelopment of Church House

Category C: Consensus decision making

- H1 and H2 Ministries: deployment and call
- I2 Mission: new frameworks for local ecumenism in England

For information or advice rather than immediate decision

- M2 Clerk: consultation on Standing Orders

8. It is possible that two papers, which have to be prepared late, will only be available at High Leigh:
- D1 From Education and Learning, for information and consultation only
 - J2 Nominations (supplement), as noted above

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 one another with grace as together we seek the guidance of God.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,



The Revd John Proctor
General Secretary

Mission Council

High Leigh Conference Centre
19 to 21 October 2016



The
United
Reformed
Church



www.urc.org.uk

Set and published by communications team, Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT
on behalf of Mission Council.

Groups – October 2016

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>HELEN MEE <i>Leader</i> ROBERT JONES <i>Reporter</i> Jane Baird Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor George Faris Geoff Felton David Greatorex Jenny Mills Grace Pengelly Andrew Prasad Kevin Watson</p>	<p>B</p>	<p>NICOLA FURLEY-SMITH <i>Leader</i> PAUL ROBINSON <i>Reporter</i> Francis Brien James Breslin Melanie Campbell Anthony Haws Gwen Jennings Chris Reed Edward Sanniez Steve Summers Alan Yates</p>
<p>C</p>	<p>RUTH DIXON TREVOR JAMISON Richard Church Joan Grindrod-Helmn David Grosch-Miller David Herbert Brian Jolly Bill Potter Carol Rogers John Samson Alan Spence</p>	<p>D</p>	<p>SIMON WALKLING PAM DENT Stephen Ball Craig Bowman John Ellis Angela Gemmer-Snell Tony Lee Rosie Martin Andrew Mills Mark Robinson Mike Walsh</p>
<p>E</p>	<p>DICK GRAY HELEN LIDGETT Adrian Bulley Jacky Embrey Joan Grundy Rebecca Gudgeon Ian Hardie Michael Hopkins Keir Hounsome Philip Nevard Myra Rose</p>	<p>F</p>	<p>JIM MERRILEES CLARE DOWNING Steve Faber Peter Knowles Rachel Lampard Chris Parker Kim Plumpton John Proctor Vic Russell David Thompson</p>
<p>G</p>	<p>DAVID PICKERING GRAHAM HOSLETT Gwen Collins Rita Griffiths Frank Liddell Andrew Middleton Dan Morrell Karen Morrison Fiona Thomas Nigel Uden Paul Whittle</p>	<p>H</p>	<p>SANDY NUNN RUTH WHITEHEAD Sue Brown Jim Coleman Bernie Collins Derek Estill Simon Fairnington Margaret Marshall Peter Meek Neil Messer David Tatem</p>

Mission Council Agenda

19-21 October 2016

26/09/2016

Wednesday 19 Oct		
12:00 – 12:45	Introduction session for new MC members (Sycamore Room 3)	
12:00 – 12:45	<i>Registration in the Main House reception area</i>	
1:00	Lunch	
Session One		
2:00 – 3:30	Opening Worship with Communion	
3:30	Tea Break <i>Access to rooms available</i>	
Session Two		
4:15 – 6:15	Introductions and administration Minutes from March 2016 Matters arising: Greenbelt report; any others Call for nominations for a vacancy on Mission Council Advisory Group, for a committee convenor Clerk: consultation on Standing Orders Ministries: introducing the issues	M2 H1, H2
6:45 – 8:00	Dinner	
Session Three		
8:00 – 9:15	Faith and Order: <i>Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification</i> Evening prayers	F1
Thursday 20 October		
8:30	Breakfast	
Session Four		
9:15 – 10:45	Morning prayers Ministries: discussing the issues	H1, H2
10:45	Coffee	

Session Five 11:15	Finance: budget for 2017 URC Trust: development of Church House Items removed from En Bloc		G1 L1
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) Ministries: resolving some issues?		En Bloc J2 H1, H2
6:45 – 8:00	Dinner		
Session Eight 8:00 – 9:15	Local Unity in Mission: with intro by David Cornick of Churches Together in England Evening prayers		I2
Friday 21 October			
8:30	Breakfast		
Session Nine 9:30 – 11:00	Opening Prayer Elections for vacant places on MCAG Remaindered business		
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee		
Session Ten 11:30 – 12:45	Farewells and thanks Closing worship		
1:00	Lunch and departures		
1:45 – 3:00 (max)	Meeting of committee convenors (Sycamore Room 3)		

Paper A1

Assembly arrangements committee
GA2016 and plans for GA2018

United Reformed Church
Church 2016
2016
Church 2016



Paper A1

Assembly Arrangements Committee GA2016 and plans for GA2018

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd James Breslin member@newcastleurc.freeserve.co.uk
Action required	None
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Actions resulting from the previous assembly; plans for the next assembly
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council Paper M3, March 2016, and the discussion that arose from it. General Assembly Resolutions 10, 47 and 48, July 2016.
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of Impact

Financial	No budgetary demands, other than those already agreed.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

GA2016 and plans for GA2018

1. The Assembly Arrangements committee met on 14 September and, although there are still a few payments to be received, was happy to accept a final budget for Assembly 2016. Contrary to earlier expectations, and due in no small part to the hard work and negotiating skills of the assembly office staff, the final figure was slightly under budget. It was reported that accommodation costs had been met within the £50 pppn allowance and that there would be no need to seek further finance from the synods for additional accommodation costs. It was also reported that the budget could support the full cost of all evening meals thus negating the need to call upon the generous offer from the synods to contribute to this.
2. It was reported that the committee's decision to recruit up to four Interns had met with partial success in that while several expressions of interest had been received only one, Ms Katy Ollerenshaw, had been able to attend. Nevertheless, her contribution had proved immensely valuable and it was agreed to continue using Interns but to start the recruitment process earlier. This would allow those selected to participate more fully in the early planning and thus to gain a fuller picture of the whole work of the Assembly.
3. Since the Assembly, some members of the committee have met with the Moderators-elect in Nottingham in order that they might see the venue for the 2018 Assembly. The opportunity was also taken to visit the Nottingham Trent University conference centre – a modern city centre venue, and details resulting from this visit have been forwarded to the working party set up by the Assembly to consider future patterns of meeting.
4. The work of the AAC is such that it is always planning for at least two assemblies. Although the more detailed work for 2018 cannot be initiated until much nearer to the time of the Assembly, all basic planning is complete. (In this connection, tribute should be paid to St Andrew's with Castle Gate United Reformed Church, which has been identified as the venue for the pre-assembly 'What Do You Think?' event and as a base for young people and other activities during the assembly. The Church Meeting there has most generously made their facilities available to us at no cost.)
5. Preliminary planning for the Assembly of 2020 – which will be held in Scotland – has begun, but in order that the assembly working party on the future of the assemblies might have as free a hand as possible, no formal commitments will be entered into until after the autumn 2017 meeting of Mission Council, in response to the report that the working party is due to present on that occasion.

Paper C1

Communications committee
The URC's publications policy

United
Reformed
Church
Church 2016
2016
Church 2016



Paper C1

Communications committee The URC's publications policy

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Peter Knowles peter.knowles@bbc.co.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council thanks the communications committee for its work on the publications policy, and directs the committee to work on the basis of this policy until further notice.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	The communications committee sets out what type of publications it will publish, and the process authors should follow when submitting manuscripts
Main points	The publications process and the associated legalities
Previous relevant documents	None.
Consultation has taken place with...	The communications committee and departmental staff

Summary of Impact

Financial	None.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Publishing a range of 'faithful and thoughtful' books may raise our profile outside the denomination.

The URC's publications policy

1. Introduction

1.1 In the United Reformed Church decisions about what will be published are made by the publications board, a sub-committee of the communications committee. Details of what we will publish, and the process for authors seeking publication by the URC, are detailed below.

2. What we will publish

2.1 The United Reformed Church will prioritise the publication of books that:

- Resource the local churches
- Are relevant to 21st century life and ministry
- Celebrate the Good News of the Gospel
- Are of interest to Christians within – and ideally without – the United Reformed Church
- Are fiscally responsible
- Original works (noting that compilations including work already published will be considered).

3. The publishing process

3.1 'On spec' submissions of complete manuscripts will not be considered.

3.2 Authors are required to submit a synopsis and sample chapter(s) for consideration, to the publications office.

3.3 Synopses and sample chapters will be considered for publication by at least one member of the publications board.

3.4 If the initial feedback is favourable, two more members of the board will read it, before making a decision re publishing it. It may be that those considering manuscripts for publication will seek the views of others with specialist knowledge/experience of the manuscript's subject matter.

3.5 The publications board, in collaboration with the graphics office and the Head of Communications, will recommend both the most suitable medium for the manuscript, which may include online, self-publishing or print-on-demand publication, and the size of the print run(s).

3.6 The graphics and print office will, when asked, provide quotes for design and print costs.

3.7 The Head of Communications in consultation with the chair of the publications board will set the retail price for the publication.

3.8 The Head of Communications in consultation with the graphics office and the chair of the publications board will set the production schedule and publication date.

3.9 Editing the manuscripts will be done by suitable qualified/experienced volunteer editors.

3.10 Final decisions on all manuscripts will be made jointly by the Head of Communications and the convenor of the publications board – and may be referred to the communications committee convenor or full committee.

4. Commissioning original books

4.1 In line with the publications strategy, the communications department intend to commission original works, to meet identified needs and gaps in the market. We expect to begin by commissioning one or two new works a year. Final decisions with regard to commissioning (partially with regard to the production capacity of the department staff) lie with the communications committee and Head of Communications but it is expected that the chair of the publications board will actively participate in the process.

4.2 The communications committee agreed that commissioned titles should not only meet the criteria detailed in the 'what we will publish' section above, but will also aim to be faithful and thoughtful, focussing on:

- Bible studies
- Liturgy and;
- Reformed theology.

5. The legalities: contracts, copyright and fees

5.1 Contracts: The communications department will issue a short and simple contract to all authors.

5.2 Copyright: The standard contract will include shared copyright, where both the URC and the author have equal rights over the material. Other agreements may be entered into negotiation prior to the contact being signed.

5.3 Fees/royalties: Authors will receive six complimentary copies of their book, once published. Authors will only receive financial payment when the URC has recouped the production costs of the title – on this basis authors will receive royalties amounting to 20% of the sale price.

Paper F1

Faith and order committee
Joint declaration on justification

United Reformed Church
2016



Paper F1

Faith and Order Committee Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Before Mission Council: The Revd Elizabeth Welch minister@theroundchapel.org.uk After Mission Council: The Revd Dr Alan Spence alanandsheila@googlemail.com
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	<p>a) Mission Council welcomes the fact that the World Communion of Reformed Churches is considering association with the <i>Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification</i>.</p> <p>b) Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council instructs the Faith and Order Committee to communicate the United Reformed Church's warm and strong support for this association.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	The URC should support the proposal that the World Communion of Reformed Churches associate with the <i>Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification</i> .
Main points	As above.
Previous relevant documents	None in our councils.
Consultation has taken place with...	European Council of World Communion of Reformed Churches.

Summary of Impact

Financial	Nil.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Gain and growth in our contact with international partners in our own and several other Christian traditions.

Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

1. United Reformed Christians look back on the European Reformation of the sixteenth century with both gratitude and grief. We are grateful that Christians of that era found fresh confidence in important truths of the gospel, and that these have been handed on in our tradition across the generations. We grieve, however, that the Reformation divided the Church, for these divisions between denominations have also become part of our heritage.

2. The division in continental Europe between the Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches has been particularly blatant. Martin Luther's protest in 1517 both refreshed and split European church life. The churches that owe most to him split away from the Roman Catholic Church at that time, and have been divided from the Catholics ever since.

3. A major theme in Luther's writing was justification – how people can be right with God. It is a biblical idea, and was very important to Luther. It then became a core idea in the churches that he led, and has remained so through five centuries. Rightly or wrongly, it has seemed to many to be the big divisive issue – the main point that kept Lutherans and Catholics apart, because they thought of it in different ways. After the mid-1500s little was done to explore and address that apparently deep disagreement.

4. Churches of our Reformed tradition do not belong directly to the Lutheran strand of church life. But some would see our tradition as an offshoot of Luther's movement, and certainly we have always been closer to the Lutherans than to the Catholics. Like the Lutherans, we are children of the Reformation. Like them, we have had much to say about justification, and a great deal of this has resonated with what Luther said. Christians are justified by God's grace, through the death of Christ, and receive this right relationship with God through faith – these have been major themes of Reformed preaching.

5. There was a cautious coming together of Lutherans and Catholics from the 1960s onwards. Leaders and theologians of the two sides started to explore common ground, and by the 1990s they were ready to ask whether the big issue of justification need remain as divisive as it had been in the past. They decided it need not. In 1999 the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church drew up a *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*. This seemed to be a major landmark, a healing and reconciliation of an ancient division. Support for the *Joint Declaration* has since come from other quarters too, from the World Methodist Council in 2006 and from the Anglican Consultative Council in 2016. What, then, about the Reformed family? Would we like to associate with the *Joint Declaration* too?

6. In the last few years the World Communion of Reformed Churches has asked this very question: shall we associate with the *Joint Declaration*? The Communion's proposed answer is yes, and it has drafted a document of association. Now it wants to know what its member churches think about the matter. With a Luther quincentenary coming up in 2017 – which would be a symbolic moment to declare our support – time is pressed. Member churches have been given a few weeks to make up our mind, and must reply by the end of October.

7. Members of Mission Council may read the WCRC's draft document of association as an appendix to this paper. The *Joint Declaration* itself, and the WCRC's information letter to

member churches inviting us to consider this matter, may be found at the following address, then scroll down to 'Resources': www.wcrc.ch/jddj

8. Our Faith and Order Committee has considered the draft, and now asks for the mandate of Mission Council to reply warmly and positively. The Committee believes it would be very good for the World Communion to associate with the *Joint Declaration*.

9. A particular concern of the World Communion has been to stress the link between justification and justice. Justification concerns the way that people relate to God. Justice is about the way people relate to one another. If I care about one, I ought not to ignore the other. God's grace stirs me to love my neighbour. 'The fruits of a justified life' (to use a Reformed slogan) include a passion for truth and right in God's world. This is a significant part of the WCRC's draft response to the *Joint Declaration*.

10. However, the Faith and Order Committee would also like our Church's reply to the World Communion to be more than a simple word of support. It should include warm support, but the Committee would also like to write a covering letter. Among the points the Committee would be keen to make are the following.

11. We do not talk much about justification in the URC – not nearly as much as some of us can remember from a few decades ago. But even if we do not use the word itself, we need and value the truth it expresses. It affirms the hope and confidence that rise out of Christian belief; it is doctrine of assurance and challenge in a world of pain and anger; it energises and motivates us to care about right relationships, for Christ's sake. Therefore we welcome and strongly support the connection made by the World Communion between justification and justice. We hope that associating with the *Joint Declaration* will be more than a landmark for the world's Reformed churches. We shall rejoice if it can be a signpost to a journey, and to fresh exploration and discovery of the resources and challenge of the grace of God.

12. The Committee hopes that Mission Council will support the resolution, and that it will be content for the Committee to draft a covering letter, along the lines set out above. Members of Mission Council who have further points to suggest for the letter should write, by 27th October at latest, to the Revd Dr Alan Spence. alanandsheila@googlemail.com



LIVING GOD
RENEW AND
TRANSFORM US

World Communion of Reformed Churches

Called to communion, committed to justice

F1

United Reformed Church • Mission Council, October 2016

Revised Draft:

Association of the World Communion of Reformed Churches with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

[August 2016]

Preamble

1. In recent years a welcome degree of convergence on the doctrine of justification has been achieved. In 1999, after many years of committed dialogue, the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification was signed by the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation. This agreement, on what had been a central church dividing issue at the time of the Reformation, is a landmark achievement which we celebrate. In 2006, the World Methodist Council and its member churches affirmed their fundamental doctrinal agreement with the teaching expressed in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. The World Communion of Reformed Churches, after extended consideration and special attention to connections between justification and justice, now joyfully accepts the invitation to associate with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ). For the Reformed, justification by grace through faith is an essential teaching of the gospel.

2. We affirm our fundamental doctrinal agreement with the teaching expressed in the JDDJ, and we express profound gratitude for the great advance that has been made in this ecumenical consensus. We rejoice together that the historical doctrinal differences on the doctrine of justification no longer divide us, and we experience this as a moment of self-examination, conversion and new commitment to one another manifesting new unity and advancing our common witness for peace and justice. In keeping with the Reformed principle, "*ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda secundum verbum dei*," we embrace the new reality this shared agreement promises. We hope to not only affirm but also enrich and extend the existing degree of consensus. We embrace the model of differentiated consensus and the openness, diversity and richness of theological language it makes possible. We will here add our distinctive emphases to those already shared by others. We anticipate areas that invite further dialogue and clarification. We acknowledge the importance, in ecumenical dialogue, of listening to one another and listening to Scripture together.

3. There is a long and interesting history of dialogue on the matter of justification among Reformed, Lutheran and Catholic communions. In fact, a remarkable consensus on basic elements of the doctrine of justification was declared in the Regensburg Agreement of 1541 (Article V *de iustificatione*).¹ Calvin warmly welcomed this agreement (*Letter to Farel* 11.5.1541). However, because of the confessional struggle, the efforts failed and the agreement was nearly forgotten for more than 450 years.

We hear the consensus and agree.

4. We agree with the common affirmation that justification is the work of the triune God. The good news of the gospel is that God has reconciled the world to himself through the Son and in the Spirit. Justification presupposes and is grounded in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ. Justification means that Christ himself is our “righteousness (δικαιοσύνη – justice) and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30). According to Reformed understanding, justification and sanctification, which cannot be separated, both flow from union with Christ.

Entering into union with him through the Holy Spirit, by means of word and sacrament, we receive a share in his saving righteousness. By grace alone, through faith in Christ’s saving work—and not because of any merit on our part—we are accepted by God. In Christ the Spirit renews our hearts while equipping us to do the good works that God has prepared for us to walk in. (§15)

5. We also agree that God calls all people to salvation in Christ. When we receive this salvation by grace through faith, we are justified by Christ alone. Faith is God’s gift through the Holy Spirit. By word and sacrament in the community of faith, the Spirit leads believers into that renewal of life which God will bring to completion in eternal life. (§16)

6. We further agree that the message of justification directs us in a special way to the heart of the biblical witness. Based on God’s saving action in Christ, justification tells us “that as sinners our new life is due solely to God’s forgiving and renewing mercy. This mercy is imparted to us as a gift, which we receive through faith, and never can merit in any way.” (§17)

7. We agree with both Catholics and Lutherans that the doctrine of justification has a central place among the essential doctrines of Christian faith. It is an indispensable criterion for teaching and practice in the life of the church. We also affirm that historic differences in emphasis and interpretation on this doctrine are not a sufficient cause for division between them or between either party and the Reformed. (§18)

We particularly appreciate some of the distinctive insights in the JDDJ.

8. We appreciate the recognition in the JDDJ that we are powerless to save ourselves, incapable of turning to God on our own, and that the freedom we know is not freedom for salvation. Our response to God’s grace is itself the effect of God’s grace working in us. What Christ has accomplished by his saving obedience (*extra nos*) is made known and applied in us (*in nobis*) by the Spirit especially through God’s word and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. No one can respond to God’s call apart from God’s prior work of grace. (§19-21)

9. We appreciate the recognition that sin is both a guilt and a power; thus, God’s grace brings both forgiveness and liberation. God’s forgiveness absolves us of our guilt (justification) and God’s liberation frees us from bondage to sin so that our faith might be active in love (sanctification). Union with Christ, according to Reformed teaching, is the source of these two saving benefits. Sanctification does not entail attaining perfection in this life. We recognize the ongoing struggle—our situation of being at the same time justified and a sinner. Nevertheless, we believe that in our union with Christ “day by day, more and more” we are being conformed to his image and grow in grace. According to Reformed understanding, it is through our participation in Christ by faith that we receive a saving share in his righteousness before God (justification) and receive the gift of new life (sanctification) to be instruments of God’s love.). (§22-24)

10. We appreciate the clear presentation that sinners are justified by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8) and that faith is active in love. Grace is the source and ground of justification while faith is the instrument of its reception. The whole of the Christian life is a life of trust in the promises of God. Such faith cannot truly exist without love and hope in God. Union with Christ by faith entails both justification by grace and sanctification or growing in grace. “Faith is active in love and thus the Christian cannot and should not remain without works.” Faith without works is dead (Jas. 2:17). Love for God and the neighbour is therefore indispensable to faith. “But whatever in the justified precedes or follows the free gift of faith is neither the basis of justification nor merits it.” The grace we receive brings renewal of life. (§25-27)

11. We appreciate the honest recognition that even though we are justified we nevertheless continue a lifelong struggle against the contradiction to God which we must continually repent and for which we daily ask forgiveness in the Lord’s Prayer. This struggle, however, does not separate us from God in Christ. We remain ever dependent on God’s grace, through word and sacrament, throughout our lives. Grace never becomes something we merely possess. (§28-30).

The Reformed have particular emphases and additional insights to bring.

12. The Reformed agree with the strong conviction expressed that the law is fulfilled in Christ and is not a “way of salvation” for us. The law discloses our sin to us and leads us to seek God’s mercy in Christ. At the same time, we understand that it is the teaching and example of Christ (who fulfilled the law) that remains the norm for life in Christ. For this reason, the Reformed maintain that the commandments of God remain valid for us in our lives as believers. This is the guiding role of the law, sometimes referred to as “the third use of the law.” This is the primary use in Reformed understanding—even more central than the first two: the “civil” use (to curb wrongdoing in the public arena) or the “pedagogical” use in convicting of sin. “Law and gospel” are not sharply contrasted but viewed as connected by their grounding in God’s grace. This sense of connection between law and gospel echoes a Reformed emphasis on the continuity (rather than contrast) between the Old Testament and the New Testament as one covenant of grace. For the Reformed *sola scriptura* entails *tota scriptura*. Both law and gospel are God’s good gifts to us. The law is God’s gracious provision of a guide for living. Reformed sensibilities concerning the law resonate with those expressed in Psalm 19, “The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is clear enlightening the eyes....” The renewal of life (sanctification) that accompanies justification strengthens us to live (more fully) in gratitude and joyful obedience to God. This is a gift of God’s grace at work in our lives. We may have confidence that the good work God has begun in us will be brought to completion. “Through Jesus Christ God has mercifully promised to his children the grace of eternal life.” (§31-33)

13. We affirm the testimony given here to the utter reliability of the promises of God. We witness to the irrevocability of the gifts and calling of God (Rom. 11:29). God’s covenant of grace given to Israel is unbroken and is extended to us by faith in Christ. The gift of faith provides us assurance of salvation. Faith without assurance would be deficient or confused. Assurance is not based upon anything in ourselves—whether faith, works or evidences of the Holy Spirit—but upon the promises of God. Our God is a faithful God who keeps covenant with the people of God through the ages. God’s electing grace at work in the people of Israel is now at work in us also through Christ. For assurance we look to Christ and the promises of God in him. In times of doubt, temptation and anxiety we do not look to ourselves but to Christ. For the Reformed, assurance of salvation is particularly linked to the doctrine of election. Divine election is grounded solely in God’s electing grace. In the doctrine of election we recognize God who chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). We have nothing that we have not received. Even our capacity to respond to God is God’s gift to us. So

also, is our perseverance in faith. These insights evoke humility and gratitude in believers and provide assurance of salvation. God's calling and God's promises are sure. In Christ God has promised our salvation, and "the objective reality of God's promise" which cannot be considered untrustworthy grounds our assurance of salvation. (§34-36)

14. We value the careful nuancing of the place of good works among the justified. They are the fruit (and not the root) of justification. Good works reflect the effect of God's grace in us; faith that is active in love. Good works can only be done in dependence upon God's grace. The Reformed would add here a comment on how we have interpreted the place of good works among the justified. In the Second Helvetic Confession (Chapter XVI, paragraph 6) there is an explication which clarifies that good works are not done in order to earn eternal life, or for ostentation, or for gain. Rather they are "for the glory of God, to adorn our calling, to show gratitude to God, and for the profit of the neighbour." In this way, we have further elaborated the place of good works among the justified. (§37-39)

We wish to underscore the integral relation between justification and justice.

15. We wish to add a word on the relation we see between justification and justice. In 2001, representatives of the Catholic Church, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Methodist Council and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches met in Columbus, Ohio, to discuss the prospect of widening participation in the JDDJ. The thoughtful and constructive conversation held at the consultation led the Reformed to a deepened reflection on the JDDJ and to a commitment to inquire into one of our key questions: What is the relation between justification and justice? The similarity in terms invites reflection upon the nature of their connection. In the New Testament, the same Greek term (*δικαιοσύνη, dikaiosyne*) is used to convey both. It can be translated either as "righteousness" or as "justice." We began a series of consultations in our regional contexts about the nature of this connection. Our further discussions have been most profitable and we offer, in the paragraphs which follow, a few insights that have emerged.

16. For the Reformed, justice is not simply the ethical outworking of justification as a kind of second step; rather it is already entailed theologically in justification as such. This insight has now been elaborated in the final report of the fourth phase of the International Reformed–Catholic Dialogue, *Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an Agent of Justice*, "That both of these meanings are conveyed with the same word reflects the fact that they are profoundly related. The one who is justified by faith is called to act in a righteous way. As a consequence, the doctrine of justification cannot be seen in the abstract, divorced from the reality of injustice, oppression and violence in today's world" (paragraph 56). Justification is, both a "declaring righteous" and a "setting right." This insight may be at the root of John Calvin's insistence that justification and sanctification are inseparable (*Institutes*, III.2.1); they are to be thought of as a two-fold grace (*duplex gratia*).² We acknowledge that the discussion of justification (in JDDJ 4.2) as entailing both "forgiveness of sins" and "renewal of life" points in this direction. We also welcome the invitation offered in paragraph 43 to further clarification of "the relation between justification and social ethics." In what follows, the Reformed intend an initial offering on this relation.

17. In the Reformed emphasis on the sovereignty of God, we have affirmed that God is sovereign over all of life (not just the narrowly religious or spiritual aspects of individual lives). We affirm with the Psalmist that "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those that dwell therein" (24:1, KJV). God has entered into covenant with all of creation (Gen. 9:8-12), and God's covenant of grace intends a "setting right" that is world-embracing—including even political, economic and ecological realities. All of God's covenantal acts are acts of justification and justice. This emphasis has been lately underscored in the Accra Confession (Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth): "God has brought into being an earth community based on the vision of justice

and peace....Jesus shows that this is an inclusive covenant in which the poor and marginalized are preferential partners, and calls us to put justice for the 'least of these' (Mt 25.40) at the centre of the community of life. All creation is blessed and included in this covenant (Hos 2.18ff)" (paragraph 20).

18. This way of thinking has also been welcomed by the present partners. In the most recent dialogue with the Lutheran World Federation (*Communion: On Being the Church*, paragraph 56) we have affirmed, "There is no area in life, indeed in all creation which does not belong to Jesus Christ who sends us into all the world to be a sign of God's kingdom to preach and live the gospel of reconciliation in a common concern for justice, freedom, peace and care for the creation."³ Similarly, in the final report of the fourth phase of the International Reformed-Catholic Dialogue (*Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an Agent of Justice*), we together affirmed: "the theological doctrine and reality of justification by faith and sanctification impels the Christian community to act on behalf of justice. The imperative for justice flows necessarily from justification and from the call of the whole Church to holiness" (paragraph 79).

19. There is a sense in which justification and sanctification may be thought of as ordered toward justice. In God's saving work things are being "set right" in lives. We are drawn into right relationship with God and into the true worship of God (*soli deo gloria*). The true worship of God finds concrete manifestation in striving for justice and righteousness in society. Thus we are drawn into the work of setting things right in the larger social world. Calvin affirmed that "believers truly worship God by the righteousness they maintain within their society" (*Commentary on Matthew*, 12:7).

20. We maintain that "the doctrine of justification cannot be seen in the abstract, divorced from the reality of injustice, oppression and violence in today's world" (*Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an Agent of Justice* paragraph 56)." In the message and ministry of Jesus justice was central. This becomes even more obvious when we remember the frequency of the Greek term *dikaiosyne* in the gospels and realize that (as noted above) in the many places where it is translated "righteousness" it could equally well have been translated as "justice." The Belhar Confession expresses the imperative of resisting injustice even more strongly. In Christ, God is revealed "as the one who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among people... . We reject any ideology which would legitimate forms of injustice and any doctrine which is unwilling to resist such an ideology in the name of the gospel" (paragraph 4).

21. The doctrine of justification is vitally important for the Reformed. Calvin spoke of it as "the main hinge on which religion turns" (*Institutes*, III.2.1). We view it as being in essential connection with other doctrines. Our unity around this central doctrine is to be celebrated. We are grateful that Lutheran and Reformed Churches in some countries have recognized one another as belonging to the one Church of Jesus Christ and have declared full communion of pulpit and table. It is our deep hope that in the near future we shall also be able to enter into closer relationship with Lutherans in other places and with the Catholic Church, as well as with Methodists, in accordance with this declaration of our common understanding of the doctrine of justification.

Official Common Affirmation

In this Statement the World Communion of Reformed Churches affirms fundamental doctrinal agreement with the teaching expressed in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification signed at Augsburg on 31 October 1999 on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church. The World Methodist Council affirmed their fundamental doctrinal agreement on 23 July 2006.

The signing partners of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification join together in welcoming the above Statement of the World Communion of Reformed Churches which declares and demonstrates Reformed agreement with the consensus on basic truths of the doctrine of justification as expressed in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.

Building on their shared affirmation of basic truths of the doctrine of justification, the four parties commit themselves to strive together for the deepening of their common understanding of justification in theological study, teaching and preaching.

The present achievement and commitment are viewed by Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists and Reformed as part of their pursuit of the full communion and common witness to the world which is the will of Christ for all Christians.

¹ In the Article V *de iustificatione* Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed theologians (Contarini, Eck, Gropper, Melancthon, Bucer, Calvin) stated:

“But this happens to no one unless also at the same time love is infused [infundatur] which heals the will so that the healed may begin to fulfil the law, just as Saint Augustine [De spir. et lit., c. 9,15] said. So living faith is that which both appropriates mercy in Christ, believing that the righteousness which is in Christ is freely imputed to it, and at the same time receives the promise of the Holy Spirit and love. *Therefore the faith that truly justifies is that faith which is effectual through love* [Gal. 5:6]. Nevertheless it remains true that it is by this faith that we are justified (i.e. accepted and reconciled to God) inasmuch as it appropriates the mercy and righteousness which is imputed to us on account of Christ and his merit, not on account of the worthiness or perfection of the righteousness imparted [*communicatae*] to us in Christ.” (Translated by Anthony N. S. Lane, *Justification by Faith in Catholic-Protestant Dialogue. An Evangelical Assessment*, London/New York 2002, 234-235).

Paper G1

Finance committee
Budget for 2017

United
Church
Reformed
Church
2016
Church 2016
Church 2016

Paper G1

Finance Committee Budget 2017

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	John Ellis; Treasurer john.ellis@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council adopts the budget for 2017 as set out in the Appendix.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	The paper presents a budget for 2017 for decision, and financial projections for 2018 and 2019 for information.
Main points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&M giving in 2017 is likely to be 1% lower than in 2016. • Overall expenditure is expected to be lower than in 2016, mainly due to fewer stipendiary ministers. • The 2017 budget is in balance. • The principal unknown for the medium term is the effect of Brexit on the Ministers' Pension Fund.
Previous relevant documents	None
Consultation has taken place with...	Budget holders in Church House and the URC Trust.

Summary of Impact

Financial	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None

Budget 2017

1. Attached in the Appendix column 3 is the draft budget for 2017 which the Finance Committee presents to Mission Council. This budget has been reviewed by the URC Trustees and has their support.

Income

2. Our income comes predominantly from local churches through their Ministry and Mission Fund (M&M) giving. After recent signs that this might be stabilising, our best estimates of giving in 2017 suggest the total received will resume its downward trend. The budget assumes total M&M giving falls by 1% relative to 2016. With membership declining by around 4% per year, this will still require an increase in average giving per member.

Stipends and Ministers

3. Over two-thirds of our expenditure is paying for the stipends and directly related costs of Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church-Related Community Workers in local settings.

4. The current stipend is £25,248. Mission Council has delegated the task of setting the stipend to the Finance Committee in conjunction with the URC Trustees. The recommended rise for 2017, which is built into this budget, is 1.3%. This increase is mainly influenced by the rate of price inflation and the rate of earnings growth across the economy. Such a rise would take the stipend to £25,572 and cost the overall budget around £200k (ie £200,000).

5. With the number of retirements still substantially exceeding ordinations, the number of available ministers in 2017 is likely to be below the target set by the Assembly. As foreshadowed in the Ministries Committee report to the 2016 Assembly, the plan is to lift the moratorium on ministers of other denominations being given Certificates of Eligibility to enable them to transfer permanently to the URC Roll of Ministers. The budget assumes that there will be four of these in pastorates during 2017 to boost the ministerial workforce. Even with these additional ministers and the stipend increase, however, the fall in the overall number of ministers means that total spending on stipends will fall by 4%.

Other Expenditure

6. As indicated in Table 1, other expenditure has broadly been held to 2016 levels. The increase in the area of Discipleship relates to a larger average number of ministerial students in 2017 than in 2016.

Table 1: Expenditure by Area of Work

	2016 Budget £m	2017 Budget £m
Stipends & directly related costs	15.6	15.0
Discipleship	2.1	2.2
Mission	0.8	0.8
Admin & Resources	2.1	2.1
Total	20.6	20.1

7. Within overall stability, there are some individual costs that are budgeted to increase. The principal ones are described below.

8. Mission Council has agreed to Phase 2 of the Past Case Review. The staff costs for this work will depend on the number of cases that emerge needing scrutiny and are therefore currently unknown. A total Safeguarding budget of £123k is incorporated in the 2017 budget, compared with £79k in 2016.

9. When Mission Council discussed governance structures at its November 2015 meeting there was a widespread view that there should be a serious effort to streamline the central committee structures of the Church. Several Assembly Committees have since decided to reduce the frequency of their meetings and some consequent savings now appear in the budget. However this modest response is more than offset by the decision of the Assembly this year to increase the funding for its next meeting. As a result the total budget for running General Assembly, Mission Council and their committees in 2017 is £10k more than in 2016 at around £245k.

10. The United Reformed Church will be affected by the Government's new Apprenticeship Levy, for which £38k has been budgeted in 2017. Work is under way to explore whether some of this money can be recovered.

Overall 2017 Position

11. The 2017 budget shows a likely surplus of £78k. Within a budget of over £20m and given all the inevitable uncertainties, this effectively means the budget is in balance.

Resolution

12. Mission Council adopts the budget for 2017 as set out in the Appendix.

Projections for 2018-19

13. The final two columns in the Appendix show projections for 2018 and 2019. These are not based on detailed discussions with every budget holder but incorporate estimates of major items and known changes elsewhere. As projections the figures need to be treated as highly approximate.

14. The overall projection presented to Mission Council a year ago for 2017 was in fact quite close to the detailed budget as presented above. Similarly the projection for 2018 a

year ago was similar to the projection presented here, which implies continuing present policies will not bring any particular financial difficulty: a projected deficit of £111k at this stage can be regarded as near enough to a balanced budget not to prompt any drastic remedial action.

15. For the first time, however, numbers for 2019 are offered and these raise more questions. A projection based on current policies suggests a possible deficit of £866k. Furthermore the factors behind this deficit are not one-off elements that would fall away again in 2020. A new pattern of annual deficits of around £1m would not be sustainable.

16. There are two main reasons for the much wider deficit in 2019. The first is that current estimates for the number of stipendiary ministers in post in 2019 represent only a very slight reduction from the probable number in 2018. This would follow a sequence of years when the number of available ministers has normally fallen significantly each year. While this may be most welcome from a deployment perspective, it means the aggregate cost of stipends goes up at the same time as M&M giving is projected to continue to go down.

17. The second factor is less certain and more complex but potentially has a larger impact. An indirect consequence of the UK vote to leave the European Union has been a conjunction of economic and financial factors that make calculations of the notional deficit in the Ministers' Pension Fund produce a much larger number. This requires no immediate action ahead of the next formal triennial valuation of the Fund in 2018. Nobody can be sure what the Brexit impact on monetary policy and the relevant financial markets will be by 2018, but if the situation were similar to today, some additional funding for the Pension Fund would then be required. Any number at this stage can only be speculation but for the sake of the 2019 projection an assumption has been made that the total annual Church contribution to the Pension Fund would rise from the current £2.5m to £3m.

18. The 2018 and 2019 projections are to give Mission Council an indication of where the financial position might be heading. If in a year's time the projections were still to show a deficit of around £1m for 2019, Mission Council should expect to be asked to make some decisions about how to bring the 2019 budget back into balance. Then the preparation in 2018 of the 2019 budget could reflect clear Council instructions about where the available income should be spent.

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

SUMMARY BUDGET ESTIMATES 2016-2019

Department/ Project	2015 Actual £	2016 Budget £	2017 Budget £	2018 Projection £	2019 Projection £
Income					
34 Ministry and Mission contributions	(19,483,157)	(19,340,000)	(19,153,000)	(18,961,000)	(18,771,000)
35 Pensions - additional funding	(386,447)	0	0	0	0
31 Investment and other income					
Dividends	(846,074)	(827,000)	(827,000)	(842,000)	(860,000)
Donations	(785)	0	0	0	0
Specific legacies	(459)	0	0	0	0
Grants/Income - Memorial Hall Trust/Fund	(253,977)	(250,000)	(250,000)	(255,000)	(260,000)
Net other interest	(19,121)	(40,000)	(15,000)	(15,000)	(15,000)
Other income, including property rentals	(14,438)	(20,000)	(5,000)	(5,000)	(5,000)
	(1,134,854)	(1,137,000)	(1,097,000)	(1,117,000)	(1,140,000)
Total income	(21,004,458)	(20,477,000)	(20,250,000)	(20,078,000)	(19,911,000)
Expenditure					
A Discipleship Dept.					
A1 Ministry					
01 Local and special ministries and CRCWs	14,804,768	14,688,200	14,057,800	14,047,200	14,585,500
02 Synod Moderators - stipends and expenses	718,356	663,500	678,960	686,000	693,000
03 Ministries department	302,189	295,800	300,275	303,375	306,375
03P Pastoral & welfare	816	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
	15,826,129	15,649,500	15,039,035	15,038,575	15,586,875
A2 Education & Learning					
04 Initial training for ministry	720,025	641,500	730,000	730,000	730,000
04 Continuing training for ministry	108,577	107,500	107,500	107,500	107,500
04 Resource Centres support	574,953	571,000	606,500	616,000	625,000
	1,403,555	1,320,000	1,444,000	1,453,500	1,462,500
W Windermere RCL - net support	123,192	133,900	121,100	159,502	161,984
04L Training for Learning & Serving - net support	102,660	92,900	86,900	87,500	88,500
04P Lay preachers support	12,077	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
04T Education & Learning department	166,514	148,300	148,700	151,000	153,000
	1,807,997	1,705,100	1,810,700	1,861,502	1,875,984
A3 Children's and Youth Work					
06 Staff costs	195,702	206,600	207,517	211,000	214,000
06 Management, resources and programmes	63,944	86,130	78,700	78,700	78,700
	259,646	292,730	286,217	289,700	292,700
A4 Safeguarding					
07 Safeguarding policy and practice	68,563	78,800	123,083	93,000	94,000
Discipleship Secretariat					
Deputy General Secretary - Discipleship costs	0	0	51,000	52,000	53,000
B Mission Dept.					
10A-B Mission dept staff and core costs	436,095	483,800	501,400	508,500	515,500
10C-E Mission programmes and memberships	245,438	235,500	219,732	168,900	175,900
	681,533	719,300	721,132	677,400	691,400
11 National Ecumenical Officers	33,046	35,000	35,400	36,000	36,600
	714,579	754,300	756,532	713,400	728,000
C Administration & Resources Dept.					
20 Central Secretariat	323,329	309,800	241,100	243,500	246,900
24 Church House costs	334,712	336,000	276,900	278,500	280,200
24A Human Resources	66,755	78,800	113,000	115,000	116,500
23 IT Services	156,663	165,100	178,000	179,000	180,500
21 Finance	413,653	403,900	402,000	407,000	412,300
22 Communications & Editorial	383,922	386,800	404,000	411,500	418,200
	1,679,033	1,680,400	1,615,000	1,634,500	1,654,600
D Governance					
29 General Assembly	130,952	100,000	115,000	115,000	100,000
27 Mission Council	46,879	44,000	42,000	42,000	42,000
28 Professional fees	88,015	103,000	98,000	98,000	98,000
25 Other	81,422	59,000	58,000	58,000	58,000
	347,267	306,000	313,000	313,000	298,000
Apprenticeship levy	0	0	37,500	53,000	53,800
Irrecoverable VAT	142,145	120,000	140,000	140,000	140,000
Total expenditure	20,845,361	20,586,830	20,172,067	20,188,677	20,776,959
NET (SURPLUS)/DEFICIT	(159,097)	109,830	(77,933)	110,677	865,959

Paper H1

Ministries committee
Deployment

United
Reformed
Church
Church 2016
2016
Church 2016

Paper H1

Ministries committee Ministry issues

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Paul Whittle moderator@urceastern.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	To be formulated during group discussion

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To explore a 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	Various reports to General Assembly, notably Patterns of Ministry (1991), Patterns of Ministry (1995), Future Patterns of Ministry (2002), Equipping the Saints (2004), Challenge to the Church (2008), Resourcing Ministry (2012), and Stipendiary minister numbers and deployment (2016)
Consultation has taken place with...	The synod moderators

Summary of Impact

Financial	No impact on the budget
External (e.g. ecumenical)	No direct immediate impact

Ministry Issues

1. Questions around ministry have rightly always been a large part of church life. Back in Acts 6 they solved what was probably the first ministry crisis by appointing *seven men among you who are known to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom and we will put them in charge of this matter*.
2. Unsurprisingly, the United Reformed Church has frequently found itself considering various aspects of how to do ministry in order to engage in effective mission. Patterns of Ministry (1991, 1995), Future Patterns of Ministry (2002), Equipping the Saints (2004), Challenge to the Church (2008) and Resourcing Ministry (2012) are probably the best known and most influential reports to General Assembly on these matters during the last 25 years.
3. As we address questions about ministers and ministry it is important to remember that the essential task of the church is what many are now calling missional discipleship. We need to play our part in that, as only then will we be responding to God's call to be people walking the way. We need to discover ways of being an authentic missional presence in order to be the church that God has called us to be, and that is being emphasised by many within our denomination. Church life is rightly varied, but mission is foundational, giving us a purpose as a church. One of the key questions we need to address, though recognising that it is not a new question, is that of what ministers are for. However, it is unlikely we will be able to answer that question without taking into account the prior question of what churches are for.
4. Whether it is justifiable to suggest that these issues have recently become more urgent is a moot point, but there seems to be a degree of angst that has thrust them into particular prominence and led to suggestions, probably not entirely new, that 'something needs to be done'.
5. This paper seeks to gather the main potential issues for that agenda in order that Mission Council might consider which need to be addressed by the denomination, and how this might be achieved. They are not presented in detail, nor does the order indicate any priority. Mission Council is invited to consider which of these issues are matters on which it can usefully comment, and what decisions might be needed in order to address the challenges of ministry in 2016 and beyond.
6. The paper poses seven key questions. The thinking that has led to this particular framing has emerged from a number of recent conversations, mostly between the synod moderators and the ministries committee, but particularly a consultation held on 7th and 8th September, involving the synod moderators, representatives of the ministry committee and a representative of one of the resource centres for learning. That consultation was facilitated by the General Secretary with some support from the convenor of the ministries committee. Further consideration took place at the meeting of the ministries committee on 15 September.
7. At the beginning of the consultation the General Secretary identified three initial questions, then a number of sub-themes, then ancillary issues. These formed the context for the discussion and led to the identifying of more specific questions, which are largely contained in this document. Those questions, sub-themes and ancillary issues were as follows.

8. The three initial questions were: (i) how does the Church want to use its ministers?, (ii) how can better ways for stipendiary ministers to work with others be identified?, and (iii) how does the Church prepare people for the ministry it needs?

9. The sub-themes were identified as: (i) Mission (What are churches for?); (ii) Role (What are ministers for?); (iii) Collaboration (How do ministers relate to other people?); (iv) Models (What models of ministry can be identified?); (v) Deployment (How can available ministers be divided among synods and assigned to different tasks?); (vi) Call (Does the way in which ministers are called need to be adapted?); (vii) Scoping (How do synods work things out on the ground?) and (viii) Working together (Which issues ought to be addressed by the URC centrally and which belong to synods?)

10. The ancillary issues were suggested to be: (i) Change management (How does the church embark on the path from here to there?); (ii) Training (How do we prepare people for the ministry that will be needed?); (iii) Ecumenism (In what ways will partner churches help the URC address these issues?); (iv) Global links (What can the URC learn from global partners?); (v) Teams (Does team ministry need to become more widely featured?) (vi) Transitional ministry (Does transitional ministry need to become more widely featured?) (vii) Circumstances (How great is the impact of particular circumstances for certain ministers and do we need to address any of those in particular ways?); (viii) Policies (What central policies are needed?)

11. These broad questions were used to set the context and to develop more specific themes, and the seven key questions (mentioned above in paragraph 6) which Mission Council is asked to consider.

12. **Question 1** concerns call. Do we want to rework our theology and practice of call? Clearly being called and the various parties who engage with that are a highly important part of our understanding of God's engagement with us. However, could it be that God is inviting us to do some parts of this differently? This matter is explored more fully in a separate paper.

13. **Question 2** concerns ways of ministering. Do we want to develop new models of ministry which will enable us to operate our stipendiary ministry differently, but without a sense that we are trying to do more than we can? How do we recognise and share the imaginative and exciting ways of ministry that are happening in some places? How do we manage decline in a missional way? We might broadly identify four ministerial tasks – worship, pastoral care, mission and teaching (enabling a learning community). How do we develop these helpfully? How do we provide for 'go to' ministers, people being able to find one when a minister is needed? How can we explore different models that fit today's URC? Do we need different models of ministry in different circumstances and, if so, how can we enable that?

14. **Question 3** concerns the deployment formula. Do we want to adjust the formula for assigning numbers of deployable ministers to Synods? The formula currently includes three elements – the number of members, the number of churches and the population. Ministries Committee recommended to Assembly 2016 that the formula be adjusted, removing the population element. However, Assembly decided that no changes should be made to the formula until Mission Council has done more work on deployment. Doubtless there are other factors but, in summary, there are two opposite perspectives, both missional. One view suggests that the population element is crucial as it is the only outward-looking and external element in the formula, while the alternative view suggests that our mission is where our members and churches are present. They do the mission, and it makes sense for them to inform the formula.

15. **Question 4** concerns the use of the budget that is there for ministry. Most of the budget of the URC, let alone that of the ministries committee, is currently spent on stipendiary Ministers of Word and Sacraments. Should that change? Might some of it be spent on other forms of ministry? At the moment giving is reducing slowly as the membership reduces. The number of ministers is also reducing. On our best current guess we are moving towards having a greater amount that could be spent on ministry than will be needed for funding the predicted numbers of Ministers of Word and Sacraments. How should that money be spent? Should some, or all, of it be spent on providing additional ministers through Certificates of Eligibility or of Limited Service? Should synods be able to offer some funding to support other forms of ministry and, if so, how should available resources be shared?

16. **Question 5** concerns local leadership. How do we achieve what we have previously said (e.g. in 'Equipping the Saints') about local leadership in every congregation? Are there things we can learn from others, especially global partners? At the moment there is no common policy on local leadership. Should there be?

17. **Question 6** concerns non-stipendiary ministry (NSM) and special category ministry (SCM). Do we need to make adjustments to NSM ministry? (NOTE: There is already a working party on NSM, and it may prove sensible to refer issues to that group.) In the current situation, can we afford an allocation to SCM? If so, what should be the level of such posts? Should we be ensuring that every minister has a 'special' element in their role?

18. **Question 7** concerns the ministry and mission (M & M) covenant. Does this need to change? Does it need to be explained in a better way? Does it need to be re-worked? Can we nurture the M & M Covenant, and the sense of purpose that needs to go with it? Or is it time to move on from this system?

19. This paper seeks to identify key priorities but, of course there will be other issues. Not least will be questions about the training that is needed for the kind of ministry we seek. In the light of changing patterns, what do we want to say to the Education and Learning Committee and the Resource Centres for Learning (and others) about training, EM1, EM2 and EM3 for ministers, and the whole range of lay training? But they need to be part of that conversation!

20. You will have noticed that this paper contains a lot of questions. That is deliberate. Would that we had all the answers already! Mission Council will be invited to help us in the search for the solution to some of these. This is where we are. What is God saying to us?

Paper H2

Ministries committee

Understanding call and
its practical implications

United
Reformed
Church
Church 2016
2016
Church 2016



Paper H2

Ministries committee

Understanding call and its practical implications

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Paul Whittle moderator@urceastern.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	To be formulated during group discussion

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To explore the question of call as it relates to the practice of ministry and, in particular, how we call Ministers of Word and Sacraments to particular roles
Main points	This paper asks whether it is time to change the way we define the locus of call, especially with respect to stipendiary Ministers of Word and Sacraments serving in pastorates
Previous relevant documents	There are no documents of direct immediate relevance, though many that contribute to thinking on this matter
Consultation has taken place with...	The synod moderators

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None

Understanding Call and its Practical Implications

1. Being called is fundamental to any understanding of discipleship. If we see the church, at every level, as a community of disciples, then we need to consider how we are called and what a call may require of us. Clearly there are many things we may say about being part of the church, but this is essential and recognised in our talk of the 'priesthood of all believers' or the 'ministry of the baptised'.
2. However, we also need to take account of those specific calls that come to some. At induction services, and sometimes on other occasions, we normally say some variation of: *"Christians share, through their baptism, in the ministry of Christ, and all Christians are called to be ministers of God's love. God calls some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some to be pastors and teachers, to equip the Church for the work of ministry and to build up the body of Christ."*
3. We may see a call as something that can happen on the journey of faith. God has a role for each one of us. Recognising a call will be part of an ongoing discernment as to where God is taking us.
4. Biblically there are many stories that engage with the question of responding to God's call. To take just two examples of the many that would be possible, though involving fourteen people:
5. **Elizabeth and Mary:** The difference that God's call makes is reinforced in the stories of Elizabeth and Mary (Luke 1). Mary's response to Elizabeth's blessing is to sing the Magnificat with its clear message of reversal, change and justice. Although the best manuscripts attribute the song to Mary, as has the church traditionally, some suggest the song may be Elizabeth's and that ought to be considered possible. The form and content of the Magnificat closely resemble Hannah's song (1 Samuel 2:1-10) with its implications for Samuel's call and it is Elizabeth's story that parallels that of Hannah. The Magnificat is a radical reflection of the call to which both women responded, despite potential damage to their status, in view of Elizabeth's age and Mary's singleness. Their specific call is to motherhood, but it has wide-ranging implications. As Sharon Ringe points out, in her commentary on Luke, this song could "never be confused with a calming lullaby being rehearsed by two pregnant women ... God's faithfulness to God's promises, and to those people or peoples with whom God is joined in covenant, is at the heart of Luke's theology." This then raises the question of the link between call and covenant.
6. **Jesus' Call to Discipleship:** When we consider the call of Jesus to the twelve disciples we see that the original call is to the whole, unqualified, task of discipleship, but authenticated in terms of specific calls to specific tasks. This is well demonstrated in the passages recording the call to discipleship. In Mark 1:16-20, 2:13-17, 3:13-19 (and parallels) the general call to discipleship is made, but is subsequently particularised in various ways, for example in the sending out, recorded in 6:7-13. The original call is to commitment. As Ched Myers, in his commentary on Mark states: "The call of Jesus is absolute, disrupting the lives of potential recruits, promising them only a 'school' from which there is no graduation." The first call to discipleship in Mark is an urgent, uncompromising invitation to "break with business as usual." The call to specific tasks is the means of practising the general call to discipleship, but offers the possibility of variety in response whilst the general call requires only an affirmative commitment. The call described in Mark 6 is different from that in the

earlier passages which we have mentioned in its particularity. As Edwin Broadhead says in his commentary on *Mark*, referring to this section of chapter 6: “Their mission and message stands, in essence, in the place of Jesus ... The Twelve have thus been elevated to a decisive role in the arrival of God’s Kingdom; through their ministry the work of Jesus is multiplied and is broadcast to the villages of the Galilee.”

7. Many other examples could be cited, and the normal pattern, as in these ones, is of a broad view of call as a basis, then focussed in the particular.

8. 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 its 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.

9. We need to distinguish between the ‘call’ to the ministry within the church as a whole and the ‘call’ to a particular task. Additionally, we need to recognise that for most ministers the call will not come as part of the ‘one church, one minister model’, which provides the basis for current practice. A significant majority of ministers have pastoral oversight of two or more churches and a small, but not insignificant, number of ministers are being inducted to posts other than as minister of a church. Therefore, we need to recognise the possibility of moving the “locus” of the “commissioning” (i.e. the “call” to specific work).

10. This raises questions both of practice and theology. If calling is purely a cosmetic exercise, it is not worth doing. It also raises questions about how we understand God’s call. If what we want to suggest does not fit our theology of call, it should not be considered. However, if a change in how we arrange the calling process is both theologically appropriate and practically helpful, we should consider whether that is what God is now saying to the church.

11. In our conciliar structure it is important to ensure the appropriate role for each of the Church’s councils. We should not seek to achieve flexibility of ministry, however desirable that may seem, by disregarding the significant role of the local congregation. However, it is worth considering whether this can be sustained by other means.

12. We are disciples together. This theme of call relates to questions of collaboration. My call is a response to God and to a particular calling (or appointing) body. Call is for the moment, until needs change. Congregations are also collectively responding to the call of God. Would it make things easier (more appropriately flexible) for both ministers and congregations – and also perhaps for synods who have the role of overseeing the deployment of ministers – if the “normal” view of call were reversed, so that the call came from the synod and the local congregation or congregations were invited to concur, with the option of that concurrence being moved to a different pastoral configuration should that be needed and agreed in the light of changing circumstances?

13. This paper suggests that such a possibility is worthy of consideration. We recognise that such a change could be seen as nothing more than re-arranging the deckchairs on the

Titanic. However, we want to affirm that the intention is far more profound than that. Such a change in thinking, if taken seriously, could facilitate different models of ministry and allow us to get on more easily with many of the things that General Assembly has been saying over the past 25 years or so. Indeed, it might be the catalyst that really challenged us to do just that. Probably the two prime examples of such things are the impossibility of continuing to put stipendiary ministry in absolutely every congregation and the need to establish local leadership in every congregation.

14. At least five reasons may be posed in support of such a suggestion.

15. First, the general understanding is that the primary call is to ordination which is validated by a call to a particular task. Ordination and a first induction happen on the same occasion, but it is clear that the ordination precedes the induction. A minister is then inducted to subsequent pieces of work. Ordination is once, but inductions may be several. To focus the prime “locus” on call at a grouping wider than the current pastorate could be the logical implication of this understanding.

16. Second, this could recognise, and be of practical assistance, in coping with the rising variety of combinations of congregations and/or other tasks to which ministers are called. As groups, clusters, teams etc. continue to develop, it may prove necessary to modify certain aspects of the relationship between a minister and a particular congregation.

17. Third, popular thinking that the call is to the local church implies that this is the sphere of the prime relationship. Whilst there is a sense in which this must be so, there is, paradoxically, an ultimate sense in which it is not so. Ministers are responsible to the synod, which has the responsibility “to exercise oversight of all ministers.”

18. Fourth, we live in a society of rapid change and the church needs to change and adapt in response. Placing the prime “locus” of call at a wider level would increase the opportunity of a more rapid response to changing circumstances. This would enable a flexible response to the changing needs of churches and ministers and allow for a proper response to what God is saying to both the minister and the church, which will never be static, but retaining sensitivity to the circumstances of both.

19. Fifth, it might be a helpful way of moving towards a fuller and popular understanding of our (actual, rather than folk) ecclesiology – viz. that we are congregations of the one conciliar United Reformed Church.

20. If it did become the case that the synod issued the call and the local congregation(s) concurred that would involve change in both thought and practice, though it is probable that the initial practical difference would be minimal.

21. However, this could create a number of possibilities. For example, some ministers find the timing of a move is more heavily influenced by family considerations (e.g. spouse’s job, children’s education, elderly parents) than by ministry/church factors. This proposal would make it a lot easier to move to a new post without a geographical relocation for the family and may thus enhance stability in particular parts of a synod.

22. It would have helpful implications for churches in times of vacancy as the synod would need to introduce appropriate arrangements to cope with their vacancy. This ought to happen already though the system of appointing interim moderators, but anecdotal evidence suggests that, in many cases, local congregations are left floundering.

23. It should contribute a sense of cohesion. On the one hand, it is exciting that, in various synods, significant attempts to address questions of mission, ministry and

deployment are being made and we all ought to be ready to learn from each other. On the other hand, it is disturbing that, in a relatively small denomination, we may be heading towards such diversity that the church becomes unrecognisable from one part of the country to another. Policy that permits flexibility, with both creativity and cohesion, seems desirable.

24. Such a move would raise several practical questions. The key question is that of the effect on the process of seeking a new minister. It is already the case that there is a wide variety of forms of co-operation, so the requirement would be to extend this and, in part, simply to recognise the reality already existing. It is probable that synod (through its pastoral (or equivalent) committee) would appoint the church(es) that were part of the pastorate to form the substantial part of the searching process, though with wider representation and consultation.

25. One practical question would be around manses. Practice currently varies as to those synods which operate a manse scheme, those where local churches or pastorates retain full responsibility for manses, and those with a mixed economy. The possible change in the locus of call fits most easily with a wider adoption of the first of these.

26. Another question might be the possibility of still having one church, one minister in places and there is no reason why a one church pastorate would not still be possible. Problems would also arise when linked churches found themselves unable to work together. It is difficult to legislate for such situations which would need tremendous pastoral sensitivity – but it could not be claimed that such would be something new!

Paper 11

Mission committee

Redrafting the terms of
the Jewish Fund

United
Church
Reformed
Church
2016
Church 2016
Church 2016



Paper I1

Mission Committee Redrafting the terms of the Jewish Fund

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Bernie Collins bernie.collins@thecrocker.net The Revd David Tatem david.tatem@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Mission Council on behalf of General Assembly resolves:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to request and direct United Reformed Trust (URCT) as Trustee of the Jewish Fund (the fund) to amend the purposes of the fund to 'The promotion of contact, understanding and respect among Christians, Jews and members of other faith communities, in ways consonant with the beliefs and practices of the United Reformed Church' 2. that the Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, in conjunction with the convener and members of the Interfaith Reference Group draw up parameters for the application of the fund and a procedure for processing applications to be submitted for approval to the Mission Committee. 3. to authorize the Moderator and Clerk of General Assembly to sign any deed or memorandum required for and on behalf of General Assembly as required and directed in (1) above.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	The redrafting and widening of the terms of reference of the Jewish Fund to become a more widely applicable interfaith fund.
Main points	The original terms of reference of the Jewish Fund require to be updated and the narrow application of the fund should also be expanded to provide a more appropriate interfaith remit.
Previous relevant documents	URC Trust paper, The Jewish Fund change of purpose, May 2016. Paper I submitted to Mission Committee in June 2016.
Consultation has taken place with...	URC Trust, Mission Committee, Legal Advisor

Summary of Impact

Financial	Nil
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Improvement of the URC's ability to engage with and contribute effectively to interfaith initiatives.

Redrafting the terms of the Jewish Fund

1. There has been a lengthy period of discussion and consideration of the question of the terms of reference and application of what has for many years been known as 'The Jewish Fund' (the fund). This process, including conversations with the Charity Commissioners, has led to proposals both from the Mission Committee and the URC Trust the trustee of the fund which are being brought to Mission Council in order to complete the formal process of agreement required in order to bring the changes into effect.
2. The proposal to redraft the terms of reference for the Jewish Fund was first brought to the URC Trust in April 2015 by the Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations and was argued as follows:
3. According to what is known of the origins of the Jewish Fund it was established in 1913 to assist efforts on behalf of the then Presbyterian Church to evangelise the Jewish Community of the East End of London. On the surface then this would appear to be the primary purpose of the fund. Most churches would argue that this is not so much an end in itself as a means to an end. It would be argued by many then and by some still that evangelism is the means to the end of achieving the ultimate wellbeing of individuals and communities but that it is the achievement of this wellbeing that is the primary purpose.
4. A contemporary analogy might be the work being done in Africa in the fight against Ebola. In order to eliminate the threat effort has been put into persuading people in certain cultures particularly to change their behaviour with regard to dead bodies. This involves a process of education and persuasion. A charity engaged in this could be seen as having its purpose focussed on behavioural change whilst in reality the primary objective is the elimination of Ebola and the consequent enhancement of the well being of the community and its members. A change in understanding of what leads to that would bring about a change in the visible objective of the charity so that the development of an effective cure and vaccine would soon change the visible objective from behavioural change to the mass vaccination of every member of the community.
5. Following this analogy the same might be said of the purposes of the Jewish Fund. A high view of evangelism would see it as having the purpose of enhancing the life of Jews individually and collectively and the wider community of which both they and Christians are a part. For many years now, albeit with exceptions, the churches have rejected the view that evangelism is the way to achieve this and have recognised the damage that has been done to the Jewish Community, to individuals and to local community cohesion by attempts to convert Jews. The year 2015 sees the 25th anniversary of the seminal Vatican statement on interfaith relations and in particular the relations with the Jewish Community, *Nostra Aetate*, which has set the Catholic Church firmly against attempts to convert the Jews and committed them instead to mutual understanding and dialogue. Most mainstream churches whilst not signing up in any formal process to *Nostra Aetate* would see the Catholic Church as speaking for them too.
6. It can be argued therefore that the core purpose of the Jewish Fund is fulfilled not by evangelism but by initiatives that increase mutual understanding and enable dialogue in order to enhance relationships within the community. It is also clear that the context in which that is practised has changed from the time of the establishment of the fund when the Jewish community was the most significant other faith community. This is no longer the case with

the Muslim community being the largest other faith group along with Hindu, Sikh, Jain and an increasingly diverse range of other groups interacting with one another. Any core objective, therefore, that seeks the enhancement of community relations as one of its aspects needs to recognise this and be able to respond fully to it. It could, therefore, be argued that parameters to the use of the fund that limit its application only to Jewish-Christian relations, in the contemporary context, disables the original core purpose and should ideally be expanded at least to encompass work with the Muslim Community which is recognised as the other faith that has significant relations with both Christians and Jews. It should be recognised, however, that both nationally and at local level a lot of these relations exist within the wider interfaith set of relationships under local Inter-Faith groups and nationally the Inter-Faith Network.

7. In order to make it possible for the original purpose of the fund to be properly fulfilled in the 21st century the parameters of the fund ought therefore to be expanded to include relations with faiths other than Jewish.

8. The Trust agreed to explore ways of broadening the stated purposes of the fund to reflect two issues and concerns:

- a) the broader interfaith context in the UK. A century ago the Jewish community was the only large religious body apart from the churches. That is no longer the case;
- b) our concern that constructive engagement today requires the building of respectful and trusting community relations, rather than the narrow 'propagation' of one's own faith.

9. The Trust asked the General Secretary, Revd John Proctor, and Andrew Summers to take the matter forward. John Proctor spoke with Dr Ed Kessler MBE, Director of the Woolf Institute in Cambridge and an acknowledged leader in the study of relations among Jews, Christians and Muslims. Dr Kessler offered the following advice:

- a) It is normally better to expand an original trust responsibility, than to appear to change it entirely. Any new purpose should be set out, if possible, as an extension of what went before.
- b) In matters of interfaith work, the Charity Commission is much keener on words like understanding, community relations, contribution to society, than it would be on a term like mission.
- c) The Charity Commission's requirement to 'consult' about a change of purpose is, not best understood as a need to consult a lot of experts like himself. Dr Kessler thought it unnecessary for us to seek advice from Jewish bodies, or indeed from other interfaith institutions.
- d) We would be obliged to consult our own members. Perhaps we could do this representatively through consulting Mission Council.
- e) If we needed a letter to support an application to the Charity Commission, Dr Kessler would be willing to write to this effect.

10. John Proctor, Andrew Summers and David Tatem discussed this advice and proposed to the Trust in September 2015 that a change along the following lines be explored:

'the promotion of contact, understanding and respect between Christians and members of other faith communities, in ways consonant with the beliefs and practices of the United Reformed Church'

11. Such a change might be justified as follows:

- a) The United Reformed Church is the legal successor to the Presbyterian Church of England. Those who belong to it therefore represent in our day the 'doctrines ritual and disciplines' of that Church as these have been 'altered or added to' across the years.
- b) The multicultural picture in Britain is more varied than in 1913. Today Christians wish to relate responsibly to all our neighbours of faith, rather than particularly to the Jewish community. The original intention of the fund, to serve the well-being of Jewish people should now extend, as an extension of the original intention in a new context, to members of other faith communities.
- c) Today's context requires the building of respectful and trusting community relations, rather than the narrow 'propagation' of one's own faith. The United Reformed Church seeks to relate to communities of other faith with respect for their integrity, and with a concern to strengthen community relations through contact and understanding.

12. The Jewish Fund (the fund) came into existence by a deed dated 28th February 1913 (the deed). The purpose of the fund within the deed is "The propagation of the Christian religion among members of the Jewish race or religion in accordance with the doctrines ritual and discipline of the Presbyterian Church of England..."

Clause 9 of the deed provides a mechanism for amendments to be made to the deed by the trustee. URCT is the trustee of the fund.

Clause 9 provides that:

it is lawful for the trustee at the request and direction of General Assembly to alter revoke or add to the trusts powers and provisions so only that any such alteration revocation or addition shall not be inconsistent with the general trust contained in the first clause for "the propagation of the Christian religion among members of the Jewish race or religion."

In May 2016 URCT took the view that the proposed amendment to the purpose of the fund was not inconsistent with the general trust and believed that subject to the provisions of clause 9 of the deed it was free to amend the purposes of the fund as follows and resolved that it wished to do so:

'The promotion of contact, understanding and respect among Christians, Jews and members of other faith communities, in ways consonant with the beliefs and practices of the United Reformed Church'.

13. The Trust asked the Mission Committee to discuss this matter and bring an appropriate recommendation to the Mission Council.

14. The Mission Committee discussed the matter at its meeting in June 2016, and agreed to take the matter to Mission Council.

15. The Legal Advisor was then consulted, and his advice on the presentation of the matter is reflected in this paper.



Paper 12

Mission committee

Local ecumenical working

United
Church
Reformed
Church
2016
Church 2016



Paper I2

Mission Committee Local Ecumenical Working

Basic Information

Contact	The Revd David Tatem david.tatem@urc.org.uk
Action required	Discussion, and resolution
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Mission Council concurs with Recommendation 4b of the New Framework for Local Unity in Mission document:</p> <p>that the denominations involved in specific instances of local co-operative working (including existing local ecumenical partnerships) take responsibility for the oversight of that work;</p> <p>and that if they look to a sponsoring body to facilitate this they should nevertheless continue to hold that responsibility.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	A change in the understanding of the responsibility for the oversight of Local Ecumenical Partnerships in England.
Main points	Responsibility for the oversight of LEPs should be firmly located with the ecumenical partners involved.
Previous relevant documents	<p>'A New Framework for Local Unity in Mission' (March 2016)</p> <p>'A new framework for local ecumenism: Consultation with Member Churches and Intermediate Bodies' (March 2015)</p>
Consultation has taken place with...	Mission Committee (prior to the publication of the March 2016 document)

Summary of Impact

Financial	Nil	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Potential alignment and cooperation with ecumenical partners. Potential increased workload within synods, if synods are not already actively carrying these responsibilities.	

Local Ecumenical Working

The Oversight of Local Ecumenical Partnerships Introduction

- A. In the Spring of 2016 Churches Together in England (CTE) issued the document 'A New Framework for Local Unity in Mission' for consultation with the member churches of CTE. This originated from an initial consideration of the life of Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs), 400 of the roughly 900 involving the United Reformed Church with one or more other partner.
- B. The process of considering the whole document will take some while and initial responses to the document are being invited from the denominations in time for the meeting of the CTE Enabling group in February 2017. Over time, there are likely to be various resolutions that will come either to all the denominations for decision or which may be generated by reflection within individual churches. Our own consideration of the document is being pursued in a number of ways including inviting personal reflections. There will be a consultation to look at the document in general and also to begin to anticipate implications for the URC in the future, on February 1st and 2nd at the High Leigh Conference Centre.
- C. Despite the long term nature of this process there is one recommendation of the report which can be considered at an early stage and a concrete response given from the churches, in particular those that have been partners in LEPs. This concerns the oversight of LEPs.
- D. The relevant section of the report document is copied below along with the accompanying recommendation.

From: Section three: Honouring the past and being pastorally responsible for it paras 4-6

Oversight of Local Ecumenical Partnerships

4. We have come to the conclusion that one of the main difficulties around single congregation local ecumenical partnerships is to do with the structures of shared oversight that have developed over the last thirty years (since the proposals in *A Pattern for Local Ecumenism*¹ to establish a Sponsoring Body in each county for the oversight of all Local Ecumenical Partnerships). There are two main issues around this model of shared oversight. The first is that it relies on the Sponsoring Body having sufficient capacity to fulfil the role. A growing number of counties no longer have a functioning intermediate ecumenical body to support a Sponsoring Body and others do not have the resources to serve Local Ecumenical Partnerships. There are some intermediate ecumenical bodies which are well funded and supported, but are now working to a new set of priorities, engaging with the growing diversity

¹ *A Pattern for Local Ecumenism*, Consultative Committee for Local Ecumenical Projects in England, British Council of Churches (1984)

of churches and creating new opportunities for public witness and social engagement, achieved partly by reducing the sponsoring role of the intermediate ecumenical body.

5. The second issue to do with oversight of Local Ecumenical Partnerships is more fundamental. Shared oversight by a Sponsoring Body works as long as denominational authorities are represented on Sponsoring Bodies by the people – leaders or officers – who exercise oversight within their own churches, and take responsibility together for the Local Ecumenical Partnerships. Difficulties arise when denominational authorities have passed responsibility to the Sponsoring Body but have not been adequately represented on it. The effect is that the denominational authorities abdicate the role of oversight and at the same time render the Sponsoring Body ineffective. We suggest that oversight can only be delegated within a denomination, not from the denomination to another body. **The Sponsoring Body is only effective as long as the denominational authorities are fully engaged.**

6. In our paper, we have suggested the obvious – **oversight is the responsibility of the partners to any particular agreement, and it should be shared by them in the most appropriate and sensible way, noting that different partners will have different ways of delivering oversight.** We suggest further that dealing with the difficulties that single congregation partnerships experience will only be possible if the denominational authorities take up this responsibility, in line with what we say in Section 2 about oversight in general.

Recommendation 4 b of the report:

..that the denominations involved in specific instances of local co-operative working (including existing local ecumenical partnerships) take responsibility for the oversight of that work and that if they look to a sponsoring body to facilitate this they should nevertheless continue to hold that responsibility (Section 2:1(a));

Addendum

Section 2 of the New Frameworks Document is more broadly concerned with the question of oversight not simply of LEPs. Nevertheless its suggestions for the practice of oversight may answer some of the questions that can be asked about how taking responsibility for the oversight of LEPs might be put into practice.

Section 2: Oversight

1. All the different ways of working together co-operatively that require some form of agreement between the participating churches and the approval of denominational authorities need oversight. Oversight, as we have already said in our paper, is the expression of pastoral care by the wider church or denomination for its members and the way in which the local is connected to the wider church. We suggest the following principles of oversight for local co-operative working:

- a) Oversight is the responsibility of the partners to any particular agreement, and it should be shared amongst them in the most appropriate and sensible way, again noting that different partners will have different ways of delivering it.

- b) The agreement supporting local ecumenical working should be approved solely by the denominational authorities involved.
- c) The denominational authorities should be responsible for recording the agreement. We think there is some merit in having a system of registration of such agreements but recognise that the current system for registering Local Ecumenical Partnerships may not be appropriate. Further work is needed to establish a system which is robust, useful and manageable.
- d) The denominational authorities should be responsible for reviewing the agreement, especially if it is time limited.

Making oversight work

2. We suggest the following questions need to be addressed by those responsible for oversight to ensure it is carried out effectively:

- a) First, who makes sure the denominations fulfil their responsibilities of oversight?
- b) Second, how will senior leaders ensure that they have access to knowledge and understanding of ecumenical working?
- c) Third, who can be called on when things go wrong to act as arbitrator, facilitator and reconciler?
- d) Fourth, where is the bank of ecumenical expertise held which can be drawn upon in the development of local co-operative working? We believe that local co-operative working needs to be seen in developmental terms – new opportunities and issues present themselves at different stages of the life cycles of working together, which require sensitive and confident guidance in order to make sure that supportive and enabling rather than obstructive structures are developed.
- e) Fifth, there is also a particular question about how the process would work where many denominations may be involved.

3. The network of denominational ecumenical officers and county ecumenical officers is an important resource for addressing these questions. The network itself is supported nationally by the national ecumenical officers and by Churches Together in England, but relies totally on the denominational authorities at local and intermediate level for resourcing. As local co-operative working branches out into new areas, as we are suggesting, the need for this network will intensify.

Making appointments

4. Whatever the nature of co-operative working, the nurturing of relationships locally is essential, and key to that is making appointments of ministers who are willing and able to work collaboratively. Agreements alone do not guarantee continuity between appointments. So making decisions about deployment of ministry and making appointments are probably the most important things that those who exercise oversight actually do. Making good appointments is indicative of the denominational authorities working well together.

Review

5. **Formally reviewing** co-operative work concerns the longer term direction of the agreement and the work that flows from that. We recognise that reviewing local co-operative working is an important means of helping it to develop and to ensure it keeps its agreements

up to date. But as we noted in the consultation paper,² reviews have sometimes been rather cumbersome and difficult to staff. Although it is important to minimise the amount of bureaucracy associated with local co-operative working, it is also important to ensure that problems do not build up over time because the basic agreement on which the work is based is no longer fit for purpose.

6. We are aware that a variety of approaches to reviewing co-operative working (including local ecumenical partnerships) are developing on the ground. In one city,³ the denominations have taken full responsibility and there is a sense in which the denominational ecumenical officers have watching brief over the local ecumenical partnerships. Formal reviews are usually triggered when there is a change of leadership and involve key people from the denominations which participate in the partnerships under review.

7. If a more formal process for reviewing local co-operative working is needed, rather than relying on officers having a watching brief, we suggest a triage system for reviews, as used in another area,⁴ may be helpful.

- a) **Stage 1:** Initial self-review undertaken by the local participant churches, using a pro-forma (a number are now available).
- b) **Stage 2:** In the light of stage 1, the local churches may request a follow up conversation, or participating denominational authorities may insist that one is necessary, with a reviewer appointed by the participating denominations;
- c) **Stage 3:** If further follow up is needed (e.g. problems are revealed, a new appointment needs to be made, the work is at a crucial stage of development), then the third, more thorough, stage of review may be set in place, or a period of accompanying may be recommended.

8. Another approach which may help participating denominations provide the support for co-operative working is to make use of the normal annual cycle of reporting. Many local churches (and indeed chaplaincies and many other ways of working), must produce alongside their annual accounts, **an annual report** for their denominational authorities, and if they are registered charities for the Charity Commission. We suggest that when an Annual Report is required for a particular example of local co-operative working (for example, because it is a registered charity or it is an activity of local churches and should therefore feature in the local church's own Annual Report) it gives an opportunity for reviewing it as part of this annual cycle, and could include:

- a) checking that agreements, policies and authorisations of the local co-operative work are in place;
- b) reflecting on its ministry and mission in the previous year;
- c) looking ahead to its priorities for mission and formation in the year to come.

9. This annual check and reflection on its work would help to develop the work being done, and alert those involved, and the denominational authorities, to any issues or challenges that have arisen, or any major changes that need to be made.

² The full document can be downloaded from <http://www.cte.org.uk/Group/Group.aspx?ID=257506>

³ Birmingham

⁴ The North East

Paper J1

Nominations committee
Trust and Pension
nominations

United
Reformed
Church
Church 2016
2016
Church 2016



Paper J1

Nominations Committee Trustee nominations

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Carol Rogers carann@aol.com
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council nominates the persons listed to serve as Trustees of the URC Trust and of the URC Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd with immediate effect until the dates indicated.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Nomination of trustees.
Main points	See report
Previous relevant documents	Nominations report to General Assembly 2016
Consultation has taken place with...	Trust Secretary, General Secretary

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Proper oversight of the Church's assets and duties, and of its Ministers' Pension Fund.

Trustee nominations

1. Because of their formal responsibilities, the URC Trust and the URC Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd have particular rubrics for the nomination of Trustees. This paper amends and updates the portion of the Nominations Committee report to the 2016 General Assembly [on page 72 in the *Record of Assembly*] that dealt with these two bodies.

The URC Trust

2. The URC Trust has a standard term of service of four years, renewable once. Terms run to 31st August of the years indicated. 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.

3. The following have been nominated as members of the Trust. Those nominations marked * refer either to new names or to further terms of office, and so need the express approval of this meeting of Mission Council.

Chair:	The Revd Richard Gray [2018]
Secretary:	Ms Sandi Hallam-Jones
Deputy Secretary:	Mr Andy Bottomley
Members: Group 1 (Synods 1, 2, 3, 13)	Mr Neil Mackenzie (3) [2020] *
Group 2 (Synods 6, 8, 9, 12)	Mr Peter Pay (9) [2022] *
	Dr Ian Harrison (8) [2020] *
	The Revd Richard Gray (8) [2018]
Group 3 (Synods 4, 5, 7, 10, 11)	Mr Alastair Forsyth (4) [2020] *
	The Revd Michael Davies (11) [2018]
	Mr Andrew Summers (10) [2018]
	Mrs Margaret Thompson (7) [2020] *
URC Youth Appointee:	vacant
GA appointments:	Mr Emmanuel Osaе [December 2019] *
	Mrs Val Morrison [2018] *
Co-opted member:	Ms Catriona Wheeler [2020] *
<i>Ex officio:</i>	Moderators of General Assembly
	General Secretary
	Deputy General Secretary (A & R)
	Treasurer
	Clerk to General Assembly
In attendance:	Chief Finance Officer
	Minute Secretary
	Convener of Investment Committee

The URC Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd

4. The URC Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd has a standard term of service of four years, renewable once. Terms run until the AGM in September. The directors of the Trust appoint new directors from those appointed as members. The board members appoint the company secretary, and elect the chair from among their own number.

5. The following are nominated as members of the Pensions Trust.

Chair:	Mr Richard Nunn
Secretary:	Ms Sandi Hallam-Jones
Members of the URC:	Miss Margaret Atkinson [2018] Mr Andrew Perkins [2017] Mrs Bridget Micklem [2019]

6. The following have been nominated by members of the URC Ministers' Pension Fund to represent them on the URC Ministers' Pensions Trust Ltd. Mission Council may be glad to note these names, but the Church does not determine them:

The Revd James Breslin [2019]
The Revd Dr Janet Tollington [2019]
The Revd Paul Bedford [2018]
The Revd Derek Wales [2019]

7. The following are *ex officio* members of the URC Ministers' Pensions Trust Ltd:

Treasurer
Convenor of the Pensions Executive
Convenor, M of Ministry Subcommittee
Convenor of the Investment Committee

Paper L1

The URC Trust

Redevelopment of Church House

United
Church
Reformed
Church
2016
Church 2016



Paper L1

The URC Trust: Redevelopment of Church House

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Dick Gray, Chair of the Trust dickgray643@gmail.com
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council notes the information supplied by the Trust, and accepts the recommendation of the Trust that the redevelopment of Church House proceed on this basis.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Update on plans to redevelop Church House, with particular reference to planning permission and budget.
Main points	Planning permission has been granted. Budgetary estimates are somewhat higher than previously expected.
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council papers from March 2016: Paper L1 and minutes 16/14 and 16/20 (a)
Consultation has taken place with...	Finance Committee, General Secretariat, URC Trust.

Summary of Impact

Financial	See para 5 of the paper.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Mission Council has already agreed that the Church's central office should be within reach of our main partner churches.

Redevelopment of Church House

1. A series of Mission Council discussions and resolutions have directed the URC Trust to draw up plans for the redevelopment of Church House. There are various gains to be made from doing this, among them disability access, closer co-ordination of the work of staff, and the earning of a significant rental income from the part of the building that we shall not need for URC use. This last point is intended to make the building cost-neutral to the Church, with the rental covering upkeep and utility costs. At the last Mission Council meeting in March a budget of £2.5 million was authorised.

2. Over recent months staff and trustees have met frequently with our project manager Third Sector Properties and our selected builder Peldon Rose to refine the plans and costs for the project.

3. Planning permission was granted by the local authority, Camden Council, on 5th September.

4. The latest iteration of the costs, which reflects the agreed design and has been negotiated down through the efforts of Third Sector Properties, is £1,893,034 (including £20,000 contingency), and is rather higher than we were aiming for. It means that the overall project will exceed the approved £2.5m.

5. The cost has stretched beyond the initial tender, and the overall sums involved are now as follows (figures in thousands):

Contract	1,893
VAT	379
Project management	144
Temporary accommodation, and removals	160
Storage	40
Necessary new furniture	<u>40</u>
Total	2,656

There will be ancillary costs for IT and telephone wiring, and for video-conferencing equipment; also some costs for legal advice, insurance and meeting space for certain committees (some meetings are making arrangements which will not cost us; others will incur cost).

6. An additional feature that was considered but is not currently included in the plans was to open up the top floor completely, which would cost an additional £30,000. At the moment we plan to open up the cellular structure on that floor into three large rooms; we believe this gives us some flexibility for multiple tenancy; opening up further would be more costly, less flexible for letting, and would not gain much more working space.

7. The Trust believes that we have dealt carefully and diligently with the assigned task of making Church House more accessible, flexible and future-proof but have been unable to bring the figures within the agreed expenditure. The terms of the March 2016 resolution, and good faith, require us to consult Mission Council again.

8. The Church's Finance Committee has been consulted about these figures, shortly before the last Trust meeting, and has not discouraged the Trust from proceeding.

9. Mission Council was concerned that the Trust address properly the environmental impact of the design. To that end we have discussed at some length with our contractors four possible measures, and following their advice we believe that it is wise to adopt two (listed as c. and d. below):
 - a. Rainwater harvesting for toilets. While this can be effectively designed into a new building, we have been advised that retro-fitting it into a building of our age (60 years) is notoriously problematic.
 - b. Solar panels. The cost and likely repayment period have been quoted to us as £45k and 20-25 years. This does not seem a compelling economic option. Further it would claim the roof-space, which is a possible site for future development, should the Church ever wish to increase again the building's capacity to generate income.
 - c. Zonal automatic lighting. The lighting throughout the building will switch itself off, zone by zone, whenever an area is not being used. This feature of the design is well worth having.
 - d. A VRF (Variable Refrigerant Flow) heating, ventilation and air-conditioning system will meet our legal responsibilities and duty-of-care to staff. It can transfer heat from waste air to enable fresh air to be fed into the building at the correct temperature, thus saving on energy, emissions and expense. It will have a much better coefficient of performance than the current gas heating system (this coefficient being the ratio of the energy you burn to the heat it delivers). The equipment that will do this work, of which more detail can be provided on request, is on the UK's Energy Technology List, as approved kit for businesses to set against tax. That is one sign of its publicly recognised quality and credibility.

10. Subject to Mission Council approval of the increased budget, we now hope to begin the work in early January, and have known for some time that it would take six months to complete.

Paper M1

Walking the Way Steering Group
The Next Steps

United Church 2016
Church 2016
Reformed Church 2016
Church



Paper M1

Walking the Way Steering Group

The next steps

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Richard Church DGS (Discipleship) richard.church@urc.org.uk Ms Francis Brienen DGS (Mission) francis.brienen@urc.org.uk
Action required	For information
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To keep members of Mission Council abreast of developments since General Assembly
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council 11/15 Papers M1 & 2 Mission Council 3/16 Paper M1 General Assembly Reports p.11
Consultation has taken place with...	Steering Group London Institute of Contemporary Christianity

Summary of Impact

Financial	Employment costs of a project manager Consultancy costs of LICC consultancy Publicity Costs (all subject to CWM application)
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Walking the Way - the next steps

1. The steering group has met twice since General Assembly in July and September.
2. A ministers' consultation has been booked for 30 April to 3 May 2018 at Yarnfield Manor Conference Centre, Stone, Staffordshire. A planning group has begun its work.
3. Feasts & Festivals – a brochure has been produced with ideas of ways in which local churches can engage with events, mission opportunities, liturgies and Bible studies which have been produced to help the URC celebrate the centenary year of 2017. The brochure will be supplemented by a dedicated webpage and contact email address for sharing news of events and answering queries.
4. Work is progressing on a Walking the Way booklet to be circulated to churches in the autumn of 2017. It will include resources for reflection on and engagement with discipleship for personal and group use. It will also contain a guide to further useful resources.
5. Education & Learning have set up a task and finish group to set about the design of a new discipleship course, which will complement the other materials which Walking the Way is producing. The group will set the framework and commission writers to produce fresh materials which can be used by all those wishing to deepen their discipleship.
6. Resourcing the vision – a gathering has been held at Carrs Lane, Birmingham to consider how we can strengthen the common life of prayer within the denomination with particular reference to discipleship. We are heartened by the widespread interest in praying for this process as it unfolds in many parts of the church.
 - a. The steering group was pleased to hear of the development of an online daily devotional being written by writers drawn from across the denomination starting in Advent 2016. Plans are in hand for it to be available through the URC website as well as by email. This is being co-ordinated by Mr Andy Braunston.
7. The steering group decided to use the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity in a consultative role. They have invited Mr Neil Hudson to meet with them at their September meeting. LICC have worked with the Methodist Church to help local churches in their ethos to be better able to envision and equip local churches as communities of disciples.
8. An application for CWM funding has been made to fund the employment of a project manager, to fund publicity and advocacy materials and to ensure that the many different strands of the Walking the Way agenda are woven together in order that vision, task and accountability are properly dealt with so that local churches have confidence in the changes which it is hoped that this emphasis will effect.
9. Accountability – this emphasis has emerged from the work of the Mission Committee and the Education & Learning Committee. Mission Council appointed the Steering Group to carry forward this work. Recognising that the scope of the work will involve other committees in due course, it seems sensible that while the constituent committees hold the budget and the Steering Group directs and plans the work, the General Secretariat shall be responsible on a day to day basis for the conduct of this process.

Paper M2

Clerk

Standing orders consultation

United Reformed Church
2016



Paper M2

Clerk Standing Orders Consultation

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Michael Hopkins clerk@urc.org.uk
Action required	Completion of questionnaire by Thursday lunchtime
Draft resolution(s)	n/a

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Information gathering exercise
Main points	The Clerk seeks the views of Mission Council members, via an anonymous questionnaire, on whether, and if so what, changes might be desired in the Standing Orders
Previous relevant documents	n/a
Consultation has taken place with...	The General Secretary

Summary of Impact

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

Standing Orders Consultation

1. Feedback received by the Clerk after the 2016 General Assembly indicates clear and continuing dissatisfaction with the decision-making processes of the United Reformed Church from some members of the church.
2. However, I am cautious about suggesting rapid changes in response to any particular debate, because knee jerk reactions do not always make a sound basis for long term decision-making.
3. I am also aware that complaints from some members may or may not represent the views of a significant majority.
4. I am further aware that there can be an element of “peer pressure” both to like and to dislike Consensus Decision Making.
5. I am still further aware that there might be a wider range of views on a number of possible options.
6. Therefore, I am issuing an anonymous questionnaire to members of Mission Council, so that their views can be made known as openly as possible. This questionnaire is printed twice: once so that Mission Council members can keep a copy in their papers, and again so that a copy can be returned.
7. Please return your questionnaire to the box on the table at the back by the end of the morning session on Thursday, so that the results can be collated and analysed in time for a response to be given before Mission Council ends.
8. The questionnaire results will of themselves not be decision-making, it is **ADVISORY ONLY**. However, if any changes are proposed in future, the advice given will be used to shape those changes.

QUESTIONNAIRE – FILE COPY

For all questions:

1 = strongly disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 5 = strongly agree.

The Standing Orders are currently too complicated

1 2 3 4 5

Consensus Decision Making should be used for all business where it is legally possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Consensus Decision Making is a useful “tool in the box” amongst other methods

1 2 3 4 5

Consensus Decision Making is helpful for complex discussions, but not for decisions

1 2 3 4 5

Consensus Decision Making should be abandoned

1 2 3 4 5

En bloc business is a helpful way to agree matters that do not require discussion

1 2 3 4 5

It would be helpful if Consensus Decision Making and Majority Voting could somehow be integrated

1 2 3 4 5

Differences between Consensus Decision Making and Majority Voting should be standardized, e.g. time limits for speeches and for proposing resolutions

1 2 3 4 5

When Consensus Decision Making was agreed in 2007, that system was effectively inserted into our existing Standing Orders. How would you feel about an attempt to edit them into a more coherent whole?

1 2 3 4 5

Do you wish to make any other comments?

QUESTIONNAIRE – COPY TO RETURN

For all questions:

1 = strongly disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 5 = strongly agree.

The Standing Orders are currently too complicated

1 2 3 4 5

Consensus Decision Making should be used for all business where it is legally possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Consensus Decision Making is a useful “tool in the box” amongst other methods

1 2 3 4 5

Consensus Decision Making is helpful for complex discussions, but not for decisions

1 2 3 4 5

Consensus Decision Making should be abandoned

1 2 3 4 5

En bloc business is a helpful way to agree matters that do not require discussion

1 2 3 4 5

It would be helpful if Consensus Decision Making and Majority Voting could somehow be integrated

1 2 3 4 5

Differences between Consensus Decision Making and Majority Voting should be standardized, e.g. time limits for speeches and for proposing resolutions

1 2 3 4 5

When Consensus Decision Making was agreed in 2007, that system was effectively inserted into our existing Standing Orders. How would you feel about an attempt to edit them into a more coherent whole?

1 2 3 4 5

Do you wish to make any other comments?

Paper M3

Task Group of the future shape
of General Assembly

October 2016 Report

United
Reformed
Church
Church 2016
2016
Church 2016



Paper M3

Task Group on the future shape of General Assembly October 2016 report

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 on the work of the Task Group
Main points	Papers gathered, yet to meet at time of writing this report
Previous relevant documents	AAC Supplementary Report to General Assembly 2016, Friday 8 July's Order Paper
Consultation has taken place with...	n/a

Summary of Impact

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

October 2016 Report

1. General Assembly resolved:

Resolution 48

General Assembly resolves to appoint a Task Group to consider the documentation already available, to consult widely, particularly with Synods and Assembly Committees, and to bring to the General Assembly of 2018 proposals for the form, size, duration, location and funding of the Assembly in subsequent years from 2020 to 2030.

The Task Group of five people, including a former Moderator of General Assembly, a current or recent Synod Clerk, and the Clerk of the General Assembly, nominated by the Nominations Committee, and appointed by the Assembly Officers, to begin work immediately, and report to each meeting of Mission Council. A report to the autumn 2017 meeting of Mission Council should enable that meeting to make decisions that enable a venue to be firmly booked for the 2020 meeting of General Assembly.

2. At the time of submitting this report, the Nominations Committee have not yet met to recruit the other members, so there has been no meeting.
3. I have begun gathering all the relevant papers for the Task Group, and hope that the first meeting might at least have been arranged by the time that Mission Council meets.
4. I am willing to provide a verbal update to anyone seeking such, at Mission Council.

Paper M4

Mission Council Advisory Group
Same-sex marriage in the
Isle of Man

United
Reformed
Church
Church 2016
2016
Church 2016



Paper M4

Mission Council Advisory Group Same-sex marriage in the Isle of Man

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	John Proctor john.proctor@urc.org.uk
Action required	Resolution
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Following the passing of Resolution 7 of the Assembly of 2016, Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) notes that under the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2016 (Isle of Man), the marriage of same sex couples is now lawful in the Isle of Man; b) recognises that the competence and functions of Church Meetings in the Isle of Man are no different from those of any other Church Meeting in the United Reformed Church; c) accepts that the definition and role of a 'governing authority' in the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2016 are in essentials the same as those of a 'governing authority' under section 26(A)(1) of the Marriage Act 1949 in England and Wales; and therefore d) declares, for the avoidance of doubt, that paragraph B of Resolution 7 applies to Church Meetings in the Isle of Man in the context of the Manx legislation as it does to Church Meetings in England and Wales; and further e) directs that, in the Isle of Man, paragraphs C, E and F of Resolution 7 shall apply with the necessary modifications.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To place Church Meetings in the Isle of Man in the same position as those in England and Wales, following changes in Manx legislation in late July 2016.
Main points	Marriages between same-sex couples in the Isle of Man are now permitted on much the same terms as England and Wales, and this resolution seeks to place our Church Meetings there in the position as England and Wales.
Previous relevant documents	Reports General Assembly 2016. Minutes of General Assembly
Consultation has taken place with...	Moderator of the Mersey Synod.

Summary of Impact

Financial	n/a
External (e.g. ecumenical)	No difference to England and Wales

Same-sex marriage in the Isle of Man

1. Resolution 7 of the 2016 General Assembly declared that Church Meetings were the relevant “governing authority” for whether a local church of the United Reformed Church did or did not wish to apply for registration for the solemnization of marriages between same sex couples, according to the law of England Wales.
2. The Minutes of General Assembly, from the afternoon of Sunday 7 July, record that: “The General Secretary made a statement, being a post-script to the debate on marriage of same sex couples the previous day...Legislation was under preparation in the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, and it might be appropriate for Mission Council to deal with any URC response to that legislation”.
3. Legislation in the Isle of Man received royal assent on 22 July 2016, which provided for the marriage of same sex couples in terms almost identical to England and Wales.
4. As such, the following resolution is brought, so that Church Meetings in the Isle of Man are in the same position as those in England and Wales:

Following the passing of Resolution 7 of the Assembly of 2016, Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly:

- a) notes that under the **Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2016 (Isle of Man)**, the marriage of same sex couples is now lawful in the Isle of Man;
- b) recognises that the competence and functions of Church Meetings in the Isle of Man are no different from those of any other Church Meeting in the United Reformed Church;
- c) accepts that the definition and role of a 'governing authority' in the **Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2016** are in essentials the same as those of a 'governing authority' under section 26(A)(1) of the **Marriage Act 1949** in England and Wales; and therefore
- d) declares, for the avoidance of doubt, that paragraph B of Resolution 7 applies to Church Meetings in the Isle of Man in the context of the Manx legislation as it does to Church Meetings in England and Wales; and further
- e) directs that, in the Isle of Man, paragraphs C, E and F of Resolution 7 shall apply with the necessary modifications.

M4

United Reformed Church • Mission Council, October 2016

Paper M5

Clerk

Composition of Assembly Commissions

United
Church
Reformed
Church
2016
Church 2016

Paper M5

Clerk

Composition of Assembly Commissions

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Michael Hopkins clerk@urc.org.uk
Action required	Resolution
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council resolves that appeals heard by a Commission of Assembly (other than those relating to the Ministerial Disciplinary Process) shall consist of five people, who shall be appointed by the Assembly Officers:</p> <p>A current or former Moderator of the General Assembly (who shall act as chair), a Synod Moderator or Synod Clerk, and three other persons who shall be members of General Assembly.</p> <p>The Assembly Clerk and General Secretary, or their deputies, shall be present to advise all parties on procedure, and to facilitate the meeting and record the decision, respectively.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Clarifying commissions to hear appeals other than the Disciplinary Process
Main points	The Mission Council agreed principle for hearing appeals by a Commission in 1994, however subsequent structural changes in the church render those inoperable as literally written. The purpose of this paper is to agree formally how those principles operate within the structures that the URC now uses.
Previous relevant documents	n/a
Consultation has taken place with...	n/a

Summary of Impact

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

Composition of Assembly Commissions

1. Appeals, usually from decisions of Synods, come before the Assembly from time to time. These are usually dealt with by a Commission of Assembly, both so that they may be heard in a timely fashion, and so that an enormous body of people is not expected to make detailed decisions.

2. The Mission Council agreed principles for how such Commissions would be set up in 1994, however subsequent structural changes in the church render those inoperable as literally written.

3. The purpose of this paper is to formally agree how those principles operate within the structures that the United Reformed Church now uses. This paper is proposing no changes of principle, merely of practice in current circumstances. A resolution is proposed to safeguard the church in the event of an appellant not accepting the legitimacy of a Commission not appointed in accordance with the letter of the 1994 resolution.

4. Therefore it is proposed that:

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council resolves that appeals heard by a Commission of Assembly (other than those relating to the Ministerial Disciplinary Process) shall consist of five people, who shall be appointed by the Assembly Officers:

A current or former Moderator of the General Assembly (who shall act as chair), a Synod Moderator or Synod Clerk, and three other persons who shall be members of General Assembly.

The Assembly Clerk and General Secretary, or their deputies, shall be present to advise all parties on procedure, and to facilitate the meeting and record the decision, respectively.

Paper O1

Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG)
Report on work

United
Reformed
Church
Church 2016
2016
Church 2016



Paper 01

Human Resources Advisory Group Report on Work

Basic Information

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

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Report on the recent work of HRAG.
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of Impact

Financial	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Report on the work of HRAG

Current membership of HRAG:

Keith Webster (Convener),
Alastair Forsyth;
Bridget Fosten
Mike Gould,
Peter Pay,
The Revd John Proctor, General Secretary
Jane Baird, Deputy General Secretary (Administration & Resources)

These people bring a wide range of skills in diverse aspects of Human Resources (HR).

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) / the Trust and Church House personnel.

Routine work report

February 2016 – July 2016

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

Staff posts

Data Analyst & Administrator, Ministries
Past Case Review Administrative Assistant

2. **Assembly Committee Convener** – role descriptor
The final version of the role descriptor, taking account of the many helpful comments received, was agreed. Accordingly, arrangements were to be made for this document to be available on the website and for it to be sent to the Nominations Committee.

3. **Line Management, General Secretary**

3.1 A draft paper had been prepared by HRAG in which:

- the requirements for the line management of the General Secretary were summarised,
- options for line management were considered,
- a recommendation for a specific approach was made.

3.2 This paper was submitted to LPAG and was subsequently amended in the light of comments received.

3.3 The final version, with which LPAG is in agreement, is submitted to this Mission Council as a separate paper, setting out the recommendation for the line management of the General Secretary and the related issues together with the supporting resolutions.

Paper O2

Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG)

Line management of the General Secretary

United
Reformed
Church
Church 2016
2016
Church 2016



Paper 02

Human Resources Advisory Group Line Management of the General Secretary

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Keith G Webster kwebsterwms@btinternet.com
Action required	
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Mission Council resolves that:</p> <p>a) The line manager of the General Secretary should be a General Assembly Moderator, whether elect, current or immediate past.</p> <p>b) The GA Moderator who will undertake the role of line manager of the General Secretary will be selected by a group comprising the Officers of Assembly, but excluding the General Secretary.</p> <p>c) This group will also have the authority to seek advice from a person with line management experience and it is proposed that this should be a member of the HR Advisory Group.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Recommendation for the line management of the General Secretary
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	Resolution 38 Paper P1, Mission Council November 2014 – from LPAG
Consultation has taken place with...	LPAG Officers of Assembly

Summary of Impact

Financial	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Line Management of the General Secretary

1. Background

1.1 The response to Resolution 38 as set out in Paper P1 presented to Mission Council in November 2014 by the Law and Polity Advisory Group expressed the following concerns regarding the line management of the General Secretary:

12. ... with its infrequent sessions, Assembly is not well-placed to hold the General Secretary to account or to supervise her/his work. The question is whether the moderators are any better placed.

13. There is, of course, an issue of finite time: the moderators cannot at the same time be visiting local churches and hearing reports from Church House staff. Moderators of synods face a similar dilemma on a different scale. But there is a deeper issue of gifts and calling. To expect the moderators to 'manage' or 'supervise' the general secretary and simultaneously to discharge their representative role may not only expect more of their time than is fair, but also demand a combination of talents which few possess.

14. We feel the Commission's doubts about the moderators' suitability as the general secretary's 'line managers' are well-founded. Yet to designate some other individual for this role would simply move the problem up a notch – to whom would that individual then account?

1.2 Following discussion Mission Council passed by consensus the following resolution:

Mission Council requests the Law and Polity Advisory Group to consult with the General Secretary and Deputy General Secretaries (once the new and recent appointees are all settled in post) on an appropriate line management mechanism in the light of considerations at paragraph 14.

1.3 It was also agreed at Mission Council that LPAG would consult HRAG on this matter. Subsequently it was agreed between LPAG and HRAG that HRAG would take the lead in this review consulting with LPAG as appropriate.

1.4 During 2015 HRAG prepared a discussion paper for submission to LPAG which subsequently confirmed its agreement with the recommendation in the paper.

1.5 In February 2016 this same discussion paper was submitted to the Officers of Assembly as from General Assembly 2016 and they also agreed with the recommendation in the paper.

1.6 Finally, it should be noted that it has been confirmed that the concept of a General Secretariat is proving to be sound in practice and that the members are working well together. Being able to take an overview of the work of the URC and in turn ensure that the particular work of the various Departments is integrated as necessary is proving to be of value.

2. Current situation

2.1 HRAG, in its review of the Church House organisation structure, had proposed that the General Secretary should be line managed by one of the General Assembly Moderators – noting that there would be a choice from six possible people, two elect, two in post and two immediate past Moderators.

2.2 The considerations taken into account when advocating this approach can be summarised as follows:

- 2.2.1 Line management needs to be on a “one to one” basis rather than by a group of people; multiple reporting lines tend to be fraught with difficulties and unless meticulously organised generally result in the individual being over-managed, under-managed or receiving conflicting messages.
- 2.2.2 The General Secretary is ultimately accountable to General Assembly, and hence an Assembly Officer was seen the appropriate person to undertake this role since he or she already had the authority of General Assembly.
- 2.2.3 It would be possible to identify a suitable person from amongst the set of six GA Moderators to undertake this role bearing in mind the particular experience and skills required.
- 2.2.4 Since the time frame for a GA Moderator from becoming “elect” through to “immediate past” is six years there is the possibility of establishing a long term relationship.

2.3 With regard to the three Deputy General Secretary (DGS) posts the line management issue was rather more straightforward – to be precise the three DGSs are each line managed by the General Secretary.

2.4 Hence this discussion paper is concerned solely with the line management of the General Secretary.

3. What do we mean by line management at the General Secretary level?

3.1 The job description summarises the role of the General Secretary as follows:

To provide theological and pastoral leadership and operational oversight to the URC by:

- *Implementing the policies and decisions of General Assembly/Mission Council*
- *The management of Church House through the General Secretariat*
- *Ensuring links with the wider Church and the fostering and maintenance of positive external relations*

3.2 The ‘line management of someone at ‘Chief Executive’ (CE) level is quite different from that for operational staff in that the nature of the CE role is longer term and harder to measure in terms of output.’

3.3 Hence, the “line management” of the General Secretary is **not** concerned with routine operational matters such as:

- allocating work and rotas
- monitoring work and checking quality
- day-to-day people management
- managing operational costs.

3.4 Rather it is concerned with motivating, enabling and supporting the General Secretary, with a focus on strategic matters and the oversight of the denomination in general, including the oversight of the General Secretariat and the integration of the activities of the three Departments in order to support the wider work of the denomination.

3.5 The prime functions of a line manager for the General Secretary are therefore to

- a) Hold the General Secretary to account for their work
- b) Hold periodic 'performance reviews' (and share them as appropriate)
- c) Jointly reflect on priorities and achievement of objectives
- d) Act as a 'sounding board' when needed and offer feedback as appropriate
- e) Initiate or suggest suitable responses to any difficulties or issues arising in the performance of the role.

3.6 The test of whether appropriate line management is in place for the General Secretary is:

- It helps them to perform their role fully and well
- It can help to deal with performance issues, personal problems or relationship or organisational problems should they arise.

3.7 What the line management should **not** be is a "support group" in respect of the personal well-being of the General Secretary. Such a group if required must be established as a separate body.

4. Review of options

4.1 There appeared to be the following options for the line management of the General Secretary:

4.2 By an **Individual**:

4.2.1 GA Moderator as already proposed – is already an officer of General Assembly and so has the necessary authority and awareness of the strategic requirements and associated plans of GA.

The downside is that it might not be possible to identify a suitable GA Moderator out of the pool of six or the demand on the time is too great, though we believe both these concerns are of low probability.

4.2.2 AN Other – acting on behalf of and given that authority by General Assembly

- whether a named individual by virtue of meeting specified criteria such as experience, knowledge of the URC, etc.
or
- by virtue of position/appointment, for example an Assembly Committee convener or Committee member or a member of Mission Council or General Assembly, e.g. the Chair of the URC Trust with a focus on governance and related matters.

4.3 The benefit of an individual undertaking this role is that there is a clear reporting line and hence clarity with regard to communication and expectations.

4.4 It is however recognised there might be a general concern if an individual undertakes this role since it becomes possible for a significant amount of power to be held by that person on account of the direct access to the General Secretary.

4.5 By a **Group or Committee**

- A group or committee established specifically for that purpose
or
- An existing Assembly Committee - given an additional item for the terms of reference for this purpose

4.6 The assumption underpinning the “committee approach” is that since the URC is a conciliar church and the councils of the church have a primacy then a conciliar approach should be adopted in respect of the line management of a senior officer.

4.7 Although this approach does accord with the conciliar nature of the URC it does depend on the group being of one mind with regard to the work and performance of the General Secretary in order to ensure clarity in any discussions. The danger is the possibility of differing views being expressed and so sending out confused messages and hence leading to a lack of clarity.

4.8 A variation on the group/committee approach is that a nominated member of that group represents the group when meeting with the General Secretary and hence is the sole link between the group and the General Secretary

5. Conclusion and recommendation

5.1 This matter was discussed in considerable detail at the HRAG meetings held on 19 February 2015 and 20 April 2015. Both the General Secretary and the Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources) are members of HRAG and were present at those meetings. The General Secretary had also sought and received comments in advance from the other Deputy who was in place at that time.

5.2 The members of HRAG recognised the concerns expressed in the Paper P1 concerning not only, for various reasons, the feasibility of a General Assembly Moderator acting as the line manager of the General Secretary, but also the unanswered question – “who else?”.

5.3 For the reasons given above HRAG is still of the view that “*Line management needs to be on a “one to one” basis rather than by a group of people*”.

5.4 Furthermore, it also was felt to be important that the “line management” of the General Secretary had a strong link to Mission Council and General Assembly since there is an ultimate accountability to General Assembly.

5.5 Our attention was drawn to the model of the teaching staff at Westminster College in that there are five members of staff, who operate in some ways as equal colleagues, although the Principal line-manages the individual work of the others and reports to the Convener of Governors on the work of the staff as a whole. The Convener, in turn, can refer to other Governors if critical or urgent issues arise.

5.6 It was felt that this model could be replicated for the line management of the General Secretary but structured in the following manner:

- 5.6.1 The line manager should be a General Assembly Moderator, whether elect, current or immediate past.
- 5.6.2 The GA Moderator who will undertake the role of line manager of the General Secretary will be selected by a group comprising the Officers of Assembly, but excluding the General Secretary. This group will also have the authority to

seek advice from a person with line management experience and it is suggested that this should be a member of the HR Advisory Group.

- 5.6.3 The GA Moderator would be able to refer to the above group as necessary to discuss any important or difficult issues.
- 5.6.4 It is reasonable to assume that the group will be able to agree, on the occasions when critical or urgent action is needed.

5.7 HRAG recognises that this approach does not depart from its original recommendation that the line manager should be a GA Moderator. In this regard the response in Paper P1 had in effect stated that if the GA Moderator was a staff member at Church House then he/she would be precluded from being the line manager. With a pool of six GA Moderators to choose from this should not present a problem.

5.8 The major change however is the formalisation of the link between the line manager and the appropriate Officers of Assembly – and, in addition, the line manager would not be “on their own or isolated”.

5.9 It was therefore felt that this approach would not only provide sound line management of the General Secretary but would also provide the necessary link with General Assembly, at the same time ensuring that the GA Moderator so appointed had recourse to a wider group as necessary, since such a group already has the authority of General Assembly. Furthermore, it would enable the joint reflection on priorities and objectives to be undertaken more fully with the Officers of Assembly as a group.

Paper U1

Mission Council Advisory Group
Human Sexuality Task Group

United Reformed Church
2016



Paper U1

Mission Council Advisory Group Human Sexuality Task Group

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The General Secretary john.proctor@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Recognising that the Human Sexuality Task Group appointed in 2012 has completed its work, Mission Council resolves to thank and discharge the members of the Group.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	As resolution.
Main points	The Group has fulfilled its remit, and helped the Church come to a decision on the largest specific matter within that remit
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council minute 12/35, of October 2012. General Assembly papers 2014, 2015 and 2016
Consultation has taken place with...	Convenor of HSTG

Summary of Impact

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

Human Sexuality Task Group

1. The present group was set up by Mission Council in October 2012, in the context of a recent Assembly decision on civil partnerships and the prospect of new legislation on same-sex marriage.

2. The group's remit was as follows (quoting from Mission Council minute 12/35):

2.1 To raise awareness of the 2007 General Assembly Commitment, and to continue dialogue around the sensitive areas where members of the United Reformed Church acknowledge differences of view held in good faith.

2.2 To work together with the Law and Polity Advisory Group to ensure that advice and guidance is offered on the practical complexities that result from the present stance of General Assembly, not least in respect of its 2012 resolution on the registration of civil partnerships on religious premises.

2.3 To consider the issues arising from government proposals on 'marriage' between persons of the same gender and, in consultation with the Faith and Order Committee and the Law and Polity Advisory Group, to bring a report to Mission Council when appropriate.

3. The group reported to Mission Council in 2013, extensively and carefully to General Assembly in 2014, and again at length to General Assembly in 2015. The convenor advises that the group always saw its work in the context of recent and forthcoming legislation, and expected that its work would end, once the Church agreed a response to the 2014 legislation on same-sex marriage in England, Wales and Scotland.

4. The group's expectation for its life has therefore been fulfilled. It has done the three things it was set up to do. It is time for its members to be thanked and released. The resolution asks Mission Council to effect this.

5. In proposing the group's release, MCAG draws attention to the hard work, leadership, patience and care offered by members of the group, as they helped the Church come to terms with a number of important issues on which there are strongly-held and differing views. All of us are very deeply in their debt, and we name the members, in order that Mission Council may be aware of their contribution:

Elizabeth Caswell (convenor), Jacob Addo, Karen Campbell, John Hardaker, Val Morrison, Neil Riches, Justine Wyatt, and Alan Paterson (co-opted).

Paper X1

Northerly Synods collaboration
Report on progress and learning

United Reformed Church
2016

Paper X1

Northerly Synods Report on progress and learning

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Jacky Embrey – Moderator Mersey Synod David Herbert – Moderator Northern Synod Andrew Mills – Moderator North Western Synod David Pickering – Moderator National Synod of Scotland Kevin Watson – Moderator Yorkshire Synod Melanie Campbell – Synod Clerk Northern Synod Melanie.campbell@urc-northernsynod.org
Action required	none
Draft resolution(s)	n/a

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To share learning points from inter-synod collaboration, as experienced by the northerly synods.
Main points	Innovation, capacity and effectiveness can be derived from collaboration. Relationships characterized by trust and mutual support can engender the freedom to explore different ways to release potential. Dedicated resources enable the process.
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council Report X1 May 2015
Consultation has taken place with...	Moderators of the northerly synods Synod Clerks of the northerly synods General Secretary

Summary of Impact

Financial	Cost savings have not been calculated.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None

Northerly Synods Collaboration

Introduction

1. The five northerly synods comprising the Synod of Scotland, North Western, Northern, Yorkshire and Mersey synods are seeking to understand how collaboration may assist them to fulfil their duties and responsibilities more effectively. Since October 2014 this process has been facilitated by the Moderator of the Synod of Wales. At this time the meeting could see no medium term advantage to changing synod boundaries or numbers of synod moderators and this has continued to be the case.
2. The lessons learned and progress made to date are being shared with Mission Council, in the hope that they prove informative to others also.

Background

3. A meeting took place in February 2014, attended by synod representatives, nominated by their Executives. This meeting led to resolutions, which were agreed by Synod meetings in each of the northerly synods in March 2014, and enabling exploratory discussions.
4. Subsequent meetings in October 2014 and January 2015 led to the northerly synods establishing six task groups which sought to share practice in the priority areas of safeguarding, communications, human resources, finance, 'being Church' and listening and reconciliation. The groups were asked to explore how collaboration might help synods to become more effective in these fields.

Developing Ways Forward

5. The Task Groups' progress is summarized as follows:

5.1 Safeguarding Task Group:

Two dedicated safeguarding posts have been created and each post will be responsible for safeguarding activity in two synods. Sharing the posts affords greater capacity than an individual synod might achieve for a specialist role, gives scope for developing practice networks across local authority rather than synod boundaries and allows more efficient use of resources.

Additionally, training materials have been shared to enhance practice and understanding and prevent duplication of effort.

The Task Group will next be focusing upon further areas for collaborative action as well as specific safeguarding topics to ensure safe and consistent practice is developed and maintained.

5.2 Communications Task Group:

Much of the Northerly Synods activity has focused upon 'behind the scenes' priorities. However, the decision to establish a shared newsletter 'Over the Wall' has been welcomed as a tangible expression of the collaborative trust and support which has developed over the past 24 months.

The newsletter is produced by Chris Reed, Synod Clerk in Yorkshire together with the Communications group and they will continue to provide two editions each year. The

newsletter shares information from each synod as well as the latest news of the collaborative venture between the five synods.

The Communications Group has also looked to develop and share common policies such as Wi-Fi policies where appropriate, as well as recommending a platform for on-line meetings and communications.

5.3 Human Resources Task Group:

All synods were concerned about their Human Resources practice and documentation, both within synod offices and churches.

The HR Task Group has developed and agreed common HR policies and procedures for each of the five northerly synods together with shared Staff Handbooks, and contracts of employment. Developing common contracts and Staff Handbooks offers greater flexibility for future joint appointments, secondments and reciprocal sharing of staff should this be desirable. This has been facilitated with the support of an HR consultant and the next phase will be to offer an operational support service for churches across the northerly synods.

5.4 Finance Task Group:

This group comprises some synod finance staff and Synod Treasurers. They are continuing to explore how collaborative working may promote efficient and effective practice. The three synods using Sage accountancy systems are sharing templates and have developed some common processes which has led to significant time saving in some areas. There is an aspiration to have more consistent reporting of accounts across the synods for comparison of costs and expenditure.

5.5 Listening and Reconciliation Task Group:

Helping churches experiencing difficult times emerged as a priority for the northerly synods, acknowledging they could benefit from mutual support in this area. As discussions progressed, it was felt to be advantageous to develop a service to assist churches experiencing difficulty, with suitably skilled and experienced people to facilitate constructive dialogue. The service will be available to all of the northerly synods. Eighteen people have been identified and agreed to participate in the service. The first training event has been designed with Place for Hope, and took place in July 2016. The service will go live in 2017.

5.6 Being Church Task Group:

This task group sought to understand what it is to be church and to minister. It is their work that will become our focus over coming months.

6. Lessons learned

- a) Those involved with the collaboration have valued the trust and support which have developed. It is recognised that this trust has made possible the giving and sharing of resources.
- b) The synods are in agreement that the outcomes to date could not have been achieved as single synods working in isolation. This is because shared energies have fostered greater capacity and promoted innovative approaches unavailable to synods working alone. In this sense collaborative action has been effected to bring about concerted change in five synods.
- c) Sustaining what has been put in place is important and benefits from having the will, support and resourcing of all the northerly synods.

- d) Cooperation between the synods is based upon an understanding that synods are free not to participate in a particular activity, or to delay their involvement if that better meets their context and needs.
- e) Being clear about all practical arrangements for joint posts is necessary.
- f) Advertising in the national press becomes affordable when sharing costs, and produces a strong field of candidates.
- g) Dedicating time and resources to the process helps to ensure progress is made.

Next Steps

7. The task groups are continuing their work and as their activity matures the synod clerks will offer oversight and support to them. This frees up the wider northerly synods group to turn their attention to what it means to be church in the northern parts of the British Isles.
8. The next phase of the northerly synods collaboration will be upon learning and supporting each other as they address challenges relating to deployment, falling membership and finding new ways of being church.

