

Agenda and Timetable

The General Assembly has agreed that every agenda should be headed with the question, what are the ecumenical implications of this agenda?

Friday 22 November 2013		
		PAPER/S
11.00 – 12.00	Introduction session for new Mission Council members	
12.00 – 12.45pm	Registration	
1.00 – 2.00pm	<i>Lunch</i>	
2.00pm	<i>Room keys available</i>	
2.00 – 4.00pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Session 1</p> <p><i>Worship and Bible study</i></p> <p>Welcomes and introductions</p> <p>The agenda before us</p> <p>Minutes – to be amended as follows: p. 16 middle - Item 13/16 “Concerning the nomination of the Revd Gethin Rhys as Convener-elect of the Ministries Committee, Mr Durell reported that the possibility of a conflict of interest given Mr Rhys’ work with the Unite union had been considered, and that it was believed that this would not be an issue given that Mr Rhys would appoint a deputy if necessary.” Change to, “given that Mr Rhys had undertaken to ensure that any potential conflict of interest was appropriately mitigated.” p. 19 Item 13/10 (CYDO employment) The decision was by agreement, not consensus.</p>	

	<p>Matters arising not otherwise on the agenda p. 10 3rd paragraph from bottom – 13/10 – to note correct name “Children’s & Youth Work Committee” p. 20 top 13/18 to note officer action in appointing the Revd Lis Mullen as Interim Synod Moderator, Northern Synod; update on the Five Synods Consultation</p> <p>Updates from the Communications & Editorial Committee</p> <p>Introduction of the URC/Baptist Safeguarding Officer, Amy Slennett</p> <p>Pastoral Reference & Welfare Committee</p>	
<p>4.00 – 4.30pm</p>	<p><i>Tea</i></p>	<p>U</p>
<p>4.30 – 7.00pm</p>	<p>Session 2</p> <p>Faith & Order Committee: Future of the Church</p>	<p>F1</p>
<p>7.00– 8.00 pm</p>	<p><i>Dinner</i></p>	
<p>8.00 -</p>	<p>Session 3</p> <p>Human Sexuality Task Group</p> <p>Law & Polity Advisory Group</p>	<p>N P</p>
<p>9.00pm</p>	<p><i>Prayers</i></p>	

Saturday 23 November 2013

		PAPER/S
8.15 – 9.15am	<i>Breakfast</i>	
9.15 – 11.00am	<p style="text-align: center;">Session 4</p> <p><i>Prayers</i></p> <p>Proposal for a Department of Discipleship</p> <p>Human Resources Advisory Group: review of the general secretariat</p> <p>Vision2020 updates from the synods</p>	<p>M5</p> <p>O2</p> <p>X2</p>
11.00 – 11.30am	<i>Coffee</i>	
11.30 – 1.00pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Session 5</p> <p>Strategic Oversight Group</p> <p>URC response to The Gathering</p> <p>Equal Opportunities: Introduction to a discussion on inclusive language</p>	<p>W1</p> <p>X1</p>
(no later than) 12.50pm	En bloc items (as listed in the cover letter)	
1.00 – 2.00pm	<i>Lunch</i>	

2.00 – 4.00pm	<p>Session 6</p> <p>Additional and remaindered business; (if possible, this will be free time)</p>	
4.00 – 4.30pm	Tea	
4.30 – 6.30pm	<p>Session 7</p> <p>Finance: Budget and predictions</p> <p>Other updates from the Treasurer</p> <p>URC Trust: Future of Church House</p> <p>Medium Term Strategy Group: Even Better Synods</p>	<p>G1 & G2</p> <p>L</p> <p>S</p>
6.30 – 7.30pm	Dinner	
7.30pm -	<p>Session 8</p> <p>Changes to the Structure</p> <p>Nominations Committee</p> <p>Equal Opportunities Committee</p> <p>Faith & Order: The church meeting</p>	<p>T2</p> <p>Verbal</p> <p>E1</p> <p>F2</p>
9.00pm	Prayers	

Sunday 24 November 2013

		PAPER/S
8.15 – 9.15am	<i>Breakfast</i>	
9.15 – 11.00am	<p style="text-align: center;">Session 9</p> <p>Additional and remaindered business</p> <p>Feedback and proposals arising from previous discussions</p> <p>Farewells</p>	
11.00 – 11.30am	<i>Coffee</i>	
11.30 – 12.45pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Session 10</p> <p>Holy Communion, including the induction of Dr. Andrew Bradstock as Secretary for Church & Society</p>	
1.00 – 2.00pm	<p><i>Lunch</i></p> <p><i>Departures</i></p>	
2.00 – 3.00pm	Meeting of committee conveners	

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

<p>A</p>	<p>Jacky EMBREY <i>Leader</i> Simon WALKLING <i>Reporter</i> Kathleen CROSS Michael JAGESSAR Elizabeth LAWSON Tim MEADOWS Peter PAY Simon PETERS Jenny POULTER Jill TURNER Nigel UDEN</p>	<p>B</p>	<p>John HUMPHREYS <i>Leader</i> Sarah LANE CAWTE <i>Reporter</i> Melanie CAMPBELL John ELLIS Michael HOPKINS Karen MORRISON Shelagh POLLARD Chris REED Edward SANNIEZ Ruth WHITEHEAD</p>
<p>C</p>	<p>Nicola FURLEY-SMITH Robert JONES Connie BONNER Andrew BRADSTOCK Richard CHURCH George FARIS Ruth GEE Graham JONES Colin MACBEAN Margaret MARSHALL Elizabeth NASH</p>	<p>D</p>	<p>Peter MEEK Morag McLINTOCK Derrick DZANDU-HEDIDOR Andrew EVANS Judith HAUGHTON Romilly MICKLEM Lis MULLEN Roberta ROMINGER Andrew PRASAD Steve SUMMERS Sheena YOUNG</p>
<p>E</p>	<p>Kevin WATSON Gethin RHYS Linda AUSTIN Dougie BURNETT Joan COLWELL David GROSCH-MILLER Tim MEACHIN Val MORRISON Carol ROGERS David TATEM</p>	<p>F</p>	<p>Howard SHARP Tracey LEWIS Margaret CARRICK SMITH Andrew GRIMWADE Jenny MILLS Tony PORTER Duncan SMITH John SMITH Melanie SMITH Alistair WILSON</p>
<p>G</p>	<p>Catherine BALL Francis BRIENEN Lee BATSON Clare DOWNING Simon FAIRNINGTON John GORDON Rita GRIFFITHS Roy LOWES Andrew MIDDLETON David ROBINSON Rebecca WHIFFEN</p>	<p>H</p>	<p>Lawrence MOORE Linda HARRISON Matthew BARKLEY Ruth HENRIKSEN Clifford PATTEN Alison TERMIE David THOMPSON Marie TRUBIC Elizabeth WELCH Paul WHITTLE</p>

Paper C

Update on the Yearbook 2014

Communications & Editorial Committee





Paper C

Communications & Editorial Committee: Update on the Yearbook 2014

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd John Humphreys jhumphreys@urcscotland.org.uk
Action required	None – for information
Draft resolution(s)	n/a
Alternative options to consider, if any	n/a

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Update on the United Reformed Church Yearbook 2014
Main points	The October meeting of communications & editorial reversed the previous decision to cancel the print version of the Yearbook. Printed versions will be offered in 2014 & 2015. The online Yearbook project is near completion and will be available by the end of 2013. A full consultation about the future of the printed Yearbook is planned at some point in the next 18 months.
Previous relevant documents	None
Consultation has taken place with...	The communications and editorial committee, Church House staff working in the communications and ministries departments. Also feedback from people across the Church who received notice that the printed Yearbook was to be discontinued.

Summary of Impact

Financial	In previous years the Yearbook has made a small profit, thus we are not expecting a negative financial impact to flow from this decision.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	n/a

Update on the United Reformed Church Yearbook 2014

Some, but not all, members of Mission Council will have heard that a decision had been taken to cancel the 2014 (and all subsequent) print versions of the Yearbook and move to an online version only. When this decision was discussed at the communication & editorial committee meeting on 9 October 2013, it was reversed. There *will* be a print copy of the 2014 Yearbook.

Reversing the decision at such a late stage of the year means that we are not able to produce the 2014 Year Book in time for January 2014. Those involved in the production of the 2014 Yearbook have now met and agreed a production schedule – and we are all working to produce the Yearbook by Easter.

At the time of writing order forms were being prepared and a mail out was being planned. A verbal update can be given during Mission Council if necessary.

Work on stage one of the online version is near completion and will be available before the end of this year. As soon as we have a confirmed launch date for that we will let you know.

The committee decision was to commit to a printed Year Book for 2014 (delivered by Easter 2014) and 2015 (to be delivered in January 2015). No decisions were made beyond that **but** at some point in the next 18 months (dates and details to be confirmed) we will run a full consultation across the denomination asking for comments and feedback on both the online Year Book and the printed version. The results of this consultation will be reported to Mission Council and Mission Council will be asked to decide whether or not we continue with a printed Year Book for 2016 and beyond. *Celebrated Lives*, the book of obituaries, will be included in the 2014 and 2015 hard copy Yearbook.

The communications and editorial committee is to undertake a thorough review of the work undertaken in the department and the management of that work and is grateful for Gill Nichol's willingness to be the interim director for at least a 10 month period.



Paper D

Safer Sacred Space

Education & Learning Committee





Paper D

Education & Learning Committee: Safer Sacred Space

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Revd Fiona Thomas fiona.thomas@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council agrees that URC-approved Safer Sacred Space training should be mandatory for every Minister of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Worker, and asks the Education and Learning Committee to put provisions in place.
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To raise the awareness of ministers/CRCWs to appropriate boundaries in interpersonal relationships within the Church
Main points	Appropriate training, by the URC or other approved providers, should be mandatory. Sanctions are listed.
Previous relevant documents	General Assembly 2012 resolution 16 (Book of Reports p. 250) Preserving the Integrity of the Body (May 2006)
Consultation has taken place with...	Former Sexual Ethics Advisory Group Synod Training & Development Officers, Ministries Committee, Education for Ministry Phase 2/3 Committee

Summary of Impact

Financial	Training costs will be covered in the usual way.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Courses offered by ecumenical partners may be authorised to fulfil the requirement for URC ministers/CRCWs.

EM3 Mandatory Learning

Safer Sacred Space (safe sexual boundaries)

1.1 Introduction: Mandatory Training

- 1.1.1 At General Assembly 2012, the United Reformed Church agreed the resolution:
- 1.1.2 “General Assembly accepts that it will sometimes be appropriate to make certain additional training mandatory under our EM3 provisions for Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers. It will be for Mission Council to agree the nature, expected outcomes, and monitoring of such training.” (General Assembly Book of Reports 2012 p 250)
- 1.1.3 All Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs) serving in URC pastorates or other recognised posts in the URC shall be required to undertake whatever EM3 Mandatory Training has been agreed by Mission Council.
- 1.1.4 “EM1” is initial training prior to the ordination of Ministers of Word and Sacraments and commissioning of CRCWs. “EM2” refers to training given in the first years of ministry. “EM3” refers to continuing education for experienced ministers/CRCWs.

1.2 Introduction: Safer Sacred Space background and training

- 1.2.1 The Sexual Ethics Steering Group (SESG) was formed in January 2006 with a remit to oversee the implementation of recommendations passed by Mission Council and published in Preserving the Integrity of the Body: Sexual Ethics within the United Reformed Church (May 2006). In August 2007, the final meeting of the All-Synods Group for Declaration of a Safe Church was held. The initial meeting of Sexual Ethics Advisory Group (SEAG) was held in June 2008 with the remit “to oversee all the systemic (not individual case-based) sexual ethics matters in the church, focused on all levels of the church.” It anticipated setting up systems and training, working toward activities to be incorporated into URC structures. Mission Council in May 2013 accepted the final Report of SEAG, setting out that each person within the URC shall be made aware of safe sexual boundaries and should pursue best practice.
- 1.2.2 The name given to the overall issue is Safer Sacred Space, indicating a desire that all sacred space becomes safer sacred space. This document sets out the kind of training required for all EM3 ministers to fulfil the requirement of training towards Safer Sacred Space. The requirement is that EM3 ministers should receive training and updates at regular intervals.
- 1.2.3 It is not required that this training is either created or delivered by members of the URC, but that EM3 ministers engage with training which is approved by the URC as that which meets the requirements following.

2. Safer Sacred Space Purpose and Outcomes

2.1 Learning Purpose is to

- 2.1.1 Understand safe sexual boundaries so that the EM3 minister exercises best practice.
- 2.1.2 Understand safe sexual boundaries in order that EM3 minister’s place of ministry exercises best practice.

- 2.1.3 Understand safe sexual boundaries in order that, where influence is possible, best practice is exercised within the EM3 minister's wider community and the wider URC.
- 2.1.4 Understand safe sexual boundaries and their impact upon the URC, including the risk to the URC of a minister not undertaking this training and any potential negative consequences of failure to exercise best practice in observing safe sexual boundaries.

2.2 The expected outcome will be for the EM3 minister to gain

- 2.2.1 A better understanding of safe sexual boundaries and potential personal behaviour change
- 2.2.2 Increased understanding of URC and non-URC support for safe sexual boundaries
- 2.2.3 Strategies to manage safe sexual boundaries within the local pastorate, within the wider URC and where possible, within the wider community
- 2.2.4 Strategies to manage safe sexual boundaries within URC procedures
- 2.2.5 Important professional development

2.3 Timing

- 2.3.1 The time limits below have been set in order to provide a feasible schedule of training and reporting.
- 2.3.2 If they have not received the mandatory training within EM1, ministers will engage in Safer Sacred Space training during their EM2. They must have engaged in Safer Sacred Space training within the first four years of recognised ministry.
- 2.3.3 Existing EM3 ministers must have satisfied the requirements of mandatory training on Safer Sacred Space within a maximum of four years from the passing of the Mission Council resolution, taking into account point 3.6.4 below.
- 2.3.4 Refresher updates of material are required at no more than four year intervals.

3. The Nature of Safer Sacred Space Education

3.1 Learning Content areas

- 3.1.1 awareness of the importance of boundaries in pastoral care
- 3.1.2 the practical and emotional effects of poor or good boundaries
- 3.1.3 boundaries in specific pastoral situations including an understanding of transference and counter-transference
- 3.1.4 models of pastoral care and their implications for power and vulnerability in pastoral contexts
- 3.1.5 self awareness and understanding of personal and theological issues relating to boundaries, power and vulnerability within a pastoral setting
- 3.1.6 listening and responding skills.

3.2 Learning outcomes

- 3.2.1 an understanding of the importance of effective boundaries, and the consequences when boundaries break down
- 3.2.2 an ability to reflect on their own practice in pastoral care, and their own areas of strength and vulnerability.
- 3.2.3 an awareness of participants' own emotional needs, and the motivations which they bring to pastoral care.
- 3.2.4 a basic understanding of the concepts of projection, transference and dual/multiple relationships in the pastoral context
- 3.2.5 listening and responding skills

3.3 Existing training available to EM3 Ministers

- 3.3.1 URC Safer Sacred Space Training modules
- 3.3.2 Safe Space Training created by other denominations and faith groups
- 3.3.3 Other safe sexual boundary training which meet the URC requirements

3.4 Recommended training delivery methods and materials

- 3.4.1 Module One Pastoral Boundaries from the training programme Creating Safer Sacred Space for Pastoral Encounter, commissioned by the URC from the face2face project, Holy Rood House, is recommended.
- 3.4.2 Other training delivery and modules which meet URC requirements may be used.

3.5 Preferred Trainers

- URC Training and Development Officers
- URC Resource Centres for Learning
- Accredited non-URC Providers

3.6 Learning Structure areas

- 3.6.1 Course length should be substantial enough to deliver content in a meaningful way to optimise EM3 engagements.
- 3.6.2 Courses should be interactive with the provision of support if sensitive issues arise. It is not recommended that course delivery is by distance or e-learning.
- 3.6.3 Alternative training to URC training is acceptable provided that
 - The suggested course meets the URC outcomes
 - The Learning Provider was accredited/authenticated by the provider's relevant accrediting/authenticating body
 - The presenters/teachers/facilitators were shown to have relevant expertise, knowledge and skills
 - The subject information was up-to-date and accurate
- 3.6.4 Prior learning by the EM3 minister is acceptable as long as it has met the criteria in 3.1 and 3.2.

3.7 Finance

- 3.7.1 The cost of any course or training will be set by the course provider.
- 3.7.2 EM3 ministers will agree appropriate courses and costs with their relevant Synod EM3 Officer and course fees and expenses will be met by the usual procedures for EM3 funding. In some cases, as with any training, the costs may be met through other sources (chaplaincy or other employer funds, for example).

4. Monitoring of Safer Sacred Space Learning

4.1 Evidence of Safer Sacred Space learning will be kept in

- 4.1.1 Synod Records
- 4.1.2 EM3 Minister Records
- 4.1.3 Assembly Records

4.2 Effectiveness of Learning will be seen by

- 4.2.1 Initial Feedback, reflection and evaluation with the course provider
- 4.2.2 Follow up reflection and evaluation at intervals throughout ministry, especially at refresher/update courses

4.3 Sanctions may be imposed by

- 4.3.1 Referral to the Synod as a disciplinary matter
- 4.3.2 Referral to the Caution Stage of the Disciplinary process
- 4.3.3 Potential referral to the Mandated Group stage of the Disciplinary Process
- 4.3.4 Potential recording within the minister's profile
- 4.3.5 Potential suspension from ministry

5. Resolution

Mission Council agrees that URC-approved Safer Sacred Space training should be mandatory for every Minister of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Worker, and asks the Education and Learning Committee to put provisions in place.

Paper E1

United Reformed Church Policy in relation to the Equality Act 2010

Equal Opportunities Committee





Paper E1

Equal Opportunities Committee: United Reformed Church Policy in relation to the Equality Act 2010

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Revd Elizabeth Nash, convener elizabethjnash@gmail.com
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council accepts the document, 'United Reformed Church Policy in relation to the Equality Act 2010' and recommends its use throughout the United Reformed Church.
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To encourage awareness of the Equality Act and compliance with its provisions across the United Reformed Church
Main points	The paper gives advice on disability access, both in terms of buildings and other issues of participation and inclusion. It outlines the protected characteristics covered by the Act and spells out some of the implications for the Church.
Previous relevant documents	Equal Opportunities policy (attached as appendix A)
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of Impact

Financial	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Synod & United Reformed Church Policy in Relation to the Equality Act 2010

with contact information for
England, Scotland and Wales

What is the Equality Act?

The Equality Act 2010 brings together a number of pieces of legislation relating to discrimination in respect of age, race, sexuality, gender, disability, etc. In respect of people with disability the Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against disabled people in connection with employment, the provision of goods, facilities and services, or the management of premises.

Previous law on disability concentrated on employment issues rather than the broader issue of discrimination; by making discrimination unlawful, the Act aims at full inclusion of disabled people in society.

Previous legislation subsumed under the Act is primarily:

- the Equal Pay Act 1970
- the Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- the Race Relations Act 1976
- the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- and 3 major statutory instruments protecting discrimination in employment on grounds of religion or belief, sexual orientation and age.

The Act protects people who have protected characteristics. The relevant characteristics are:

- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Pregnancy & Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Age
- Marriage & Civil Partnerships

Service Providers

Duties under the Act are placed on 'service providers', the definition of which includes churches; it does not matter whether the service is provided free or not.

A THE CHURCH'S DUTY IN RESPECT OF DISABLED PEOPLE

This duty is covered in significant detail because of statutory implications.

A church's primary purpose is for worship and in the eyes of the Act; this is regarded as a service which the church provides for all people. Additionally most churches also have wider activities, whether these are activities for groups (perhaps in a church hall), concerts, education, etc. All such are covered by the Act.

The Act covers many forms of disability such as hearing and visual impairment, reduced mobility, manual dexterity and learning disability. The Act is therefore about making activities accessible to everyone – a theme fully consonant with the Christian faith.

Duties

Provision in the Equality Act is built upon previous legislation in the Disability Discrimination Acts of 1995 and 2005. Synod Guidelines in relation to Disability Discrimination, produced in response to these Acts are included as an Appendix and should be read carefully and acted upon.

From October 2010 service providers have had to take reasonable steps to change a practice, policy, or procedure which makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for a disabled person to make use of its services. For instance, if a person with impaired vision was unable to read a screen on which hymn words are projected at a church service, that is unlawful.

Service providers also have a duty:

- **to take reasonable steps to provide auxiliary aids where these would enable better use of a service by disabled people;**
 - Auxiliary aids are things like induction loops for hearing-aid users, handrails, or large print service sheets that enable people to take part in the service to the same degree as everyone else.
- **to have considered which physical features of a building inhibit use of services by disabled people and to take reasonable steps to remove the feature, alter it, provide a way of avoiding it, or provide a reasonable alternative method of making the service available;**
 - For churches this could include looking at access to the church and parts of the interior, use of WCs, noticeboards, churchyard, halls, etc.

The implications of these duties for churches have, understandably caused concern. However, only reasonable alterations are required, and it is quite lawful to make services available whilst avoiding physical features or providing a service in a different way. The important principle is that all people are included in the provision of the service.

The Act does not remove the need for planning legislation. Synod approval processes will be required in the usual way. Likewise planning and building regulations approval will also be required where necessary.

Action Required

Initially an **Access Appraisal** of all premises should be undertaken. The appraisal requires an assessment of various factors, as follows:

- Service-provision: What services do we provide and how and where do we provide them?
- Accessibility: What are the barriers to people wishing to use our services?
- Significance: How is the church (along with its fittings and furnishings) significant?
- Experience: What do disabled people in your congregation or community feel would best respond to their needs?

These factors need to be balanced and a list of priorities for action drawn up; this becomes your **Access Plan**.

The Act also requires that you **anticipate** that disabled people will want to use your premises; you should not wait until a disabled person turns up and then make arrangements.

Similarly, the Act applies to **all church premises** – the church itself, the hall, and any other buildings that are used for church activities (including clergy housing if appropriate).

Cost

The issue as to whether it is reasonable to undertake a particular scheme will be dependent on what can be afforded; this would need to be set against other priorities. **However, lack of funds is not an excuse not to think about what can be achieved and to investigate options.** It may be that, as a result of your **Access Plan**, it is agreed that various things can be phased in on a particular timescale relating to finances and other objectives. If this decision is made, however, it would need to set a realistic and justifiable timescale rather than putting things off indefinitely.

Many of the things that can be done will not necessarily be very expensive:

- providing large print copies of service sheets may make a big difference to a large number of people;
- reception of visitors at the door at a time of service may be very much part of plans for addressing the issues.

It is important to ensure that any access audit, whether professional or informal, includes consultation with existing disabled users of the church and any local disability groups.

Who carries out access audits?

A building surveyor may be able to offer this service. However, there is no formal recognised qualification for an access auditor so you will need to make sure that the person you entrust with the audit has relevant and up-to-date knowledge of construction and is familiar with the appropriate building regulations as well as disability issues. You may choose to check their credentials by speaking to previous clients or seek advice from the Synod Office. The Centre for Accessible Environments and many of the major disability organisations offer training to access auditors and maintain a list of access auditors that they have approved.

Alternatively, “Widening the Eye of the Needle” (see below) provides guidance and a checklist of such an audit which could be used by suitably knowledgeable members of the congregation, perhaps with the advice of a relevant professional.

What happens when we need to make physical changes to the church building?

The normal Synod procedures relating to building alterations still apply.

What if the church is a listed building?

The Equality Act does not override other legislation. You will still have to comply with planning or Ecclesiastical Exemption procedure (Ø661) as well as United Reformed Church procedures.

Access Appraisal

Access appraisal requires an audit process and the following may be consulted:

- *Widening the Eye of the Needle: Access to Church Buildings for People with Disabilities* John Penton: publication by the Church Buildings Council available from Church House Publishing, Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3AZ priced £16.99 (01603 785 923 for orders)
- Helpful documents and leaflets on approaches to considering access for disabled people and on audits and training from *Through the Roof* (PO Box 353, Epsom KT18 5WS Tel: 01372 749955) <http://www.throughtheroof.org>
- The Diocese of London has useful guidance and a model access audit form at www.london.anglican.org/DACInDepthAdvice
- The Diocese of Chichester has a guidance document (*Getting to Grips with Disability*) and an Access Appraisal guide at www.chichester.anglican.org/disability
- Accessibility and Disabled People
http://www.churchcare.co.uk/images/access_and_disabled_people.pdf

More detailed advice on the audit process and a church’s responsibilities under the Act is available in an advice note produced by the Church Buildings Council (formerly the CCC) and the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England (CFCE): *Advisory Note 5 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995: Taking Account of its Implications for the Fabric of Churches and Cathedrals (2003)*

General advice on disability issues is available on the Government’s information website Directgov at: <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/index.htm>

A booklet, *Easy Access to Historic Buildings* can be downloaded from: www.english-heritage.org.uk or www.historic-scotland.gov.uk

More information on providing access to historic buildings is available from:

Historic Scotland
Longmore House
Salisbury Place
Edinburgh
EH9 1SH

Telephone: 0131-668 8600

General advice on the Equality Act 2010 is available on the website for the Government Equalities Office at: www.equalities.gov.uk. The section on “Equalities Act 2010 – What do I need to know?” is a useful starting point but if in doubt further advice should be sought from your Synod Office or a solicitor.

Other useful addresses and contacts:

Centre for Accessible Environments
4th Floor
Holyer House
20-21 Red Lion Court
London
EC4A 3EB
Tel: 020 7822 8232
www.cae.org.uk

Construction Industry Research and
Information Association
Classic House
174-180 Old Street
London
EC1V 9BP
Tel: 020 7549 3300
www.ciria.org

ENABLE Scotland
2nd Floor
146 Argyle Street
Glasgow
G2 8BL
Tel: 0141 226 4541
www.enable.org.uk

Mencap
Mencap National Centre
123 Golden Lane
London
EC1Y 0RT
Tel: 020 7454 0454
www.mencap.org.uk

MIND

15-19 Broadway
London
E15 4BQ

Tel: 020-8519 2122
www.mind.org.uk

RADAR – Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation

12 City Forum
250 City Road
London
EC1V 8AF

Tel: 020 7250 3222
www.radar.org.uk

RNIB Scotland – Royal National Institute of Blind People Scotland

12-12 Hillside Crescent
Edinburgh
EH7 5EA

Tel: 0131 652 3140
www.rnib.org.uk/scotland

RNID Scotland – Royal National Institute for Deaf People Scotland**Name changed 9 June 2011 to Action on Hearing Loss**

Tel: 0808 808 0123 (freephone)

Textphone: 0808 808 9000 (freephone)

www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/community/in-your-area/scotland.aspx

Action on Hearing Loss Cymru

16 Cathedral Road,

Cardiff,

CF11 9LJ

Telephone: 02920 333 034

Textphone: 02920 333 036

Fax: 02920 333 035

Email: cymru@hearingloss.org.uk

wales@hearingloss.org.uk

Diverse Cymru is an innovative equalities organisation in the Welsh Third Sector, created in recognition of the difficulties and discrimination faced by people experiencing inequality in Wales.

Diverse Cymru

3rd Floor, Alexandra House,
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CF5 1JD

029 2036 8888

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<http://www.diverseecymru.org.uk/>

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CF24 5TD

Tel: 029 2045 0440

Fax: 029 2044 9550

Email: cymruevents@rnib.org.uk

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT (DDA) CAPITAL FUNDING (Welsh Government)

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/circulars/FEFCL0413?lang=en>

Changes to the Disability Discrimination Act – Equality Act 2010

<http://www.disabilitywales.org/1168/2290>

Disability Wales,
Bridge House, Caerphilly Business Park,
Van Road,
Caerphilly CF83 3GW

Tel: 029 20887325

Fax: 029 20888702

email: info@disabilitywales.org

Learning Disability Wales
41 Lambourne Crescent
Cardiff Business Park
Llanishen
Cardiff
CF14 5GG

Telephone: 029 2068 1160

Fax: 029 2075 2149

Email: enquiries@learningdisabilitywales.org.uk

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Wales
Ground Floor
1 Caspian Point
Caspian Way
Cardiff Bay
CF10 4DQ

Telephone 02920 447710 (non helpline calls only)

Textphone 029 20447713

Fax 02920 447712

wales@equalityhumanrights.com

Making everyone welcome

For many years it has been unacceptable in practice and in law for anyone to be deterred from entering our buildings and participating in church life as a result of a lack of adequate facilities where they could reasonably be provided. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 had implications for churches in terms of internal and external adaptation of buildings but also wider implications in rethinking the way we carry out our activities. These provisions have been extended in this new Act.

Disability is defined as “a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”. The Act protects anyone who has or has had a disability, or who is associated with a disabled person, or who is mistakenly perceived as being disabled.

Think broadly, do not make assumptions, and consider those with less obvious disabilities. It is not just the obviously disabled such as the elderly, the ambulant disabled with their walking frame, or the wheelchair users but also those who have poor strength or dexterity; have learning difficulties; have impaired vision or impaired hearing or who have an illness which gives rise to a disability or is likely to do so; and people who have a temporary disability.

In addition to those directly and obviously included in the legislation, churches should be aware that a difficulty in accessing certain facilities or services may also be experienced by people such as heavily pregnant women; those particularly large or small in stature (including children); parents or others in charge of small children; or those emotionally distressed or unstable.

Churches should think in terms of the concept of risk as people interact with their environment. The challenge is to assess and respond to that risk so that we may meet, as fully as possible, the needs of people as they really are and not as they might wish to be or as we might wish them to be.

Why does it affect the church?

In relation to people with disabilities the general principle is that individuals or service providers must not treat disabled people less favourably than they would treat other people, for a reason related to their disability, when offering or providing access to goods, facilities or services.

It makes no difference that the services provided by a church are free of charge, churches are service providers. We should recognise ourselves as such and make every effort to make our activities and buildings accessible to all.

What are our responsibilities?

The new Equality Act sets out three core responsibilities or requirements in relation to those with disabilities;

The first requirement is that, where the way that things are done puts a person with disabilities at a substantial disadvantage to people who are not disabled, then reasonable

steps should be taken to avoid the disadvantage. In other words, this is about how things are done or how information is supplied. This might include such things as large print hymn books and notice sheets, people available to help someone from a car or into or around a building, and so on.

The second requirement is that, where a physical feature puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared to people who are not disabled, then reasonable steps must be taken to remove, alter or ensure users can avoid it. This might include such things as providing a ramp to allow wheelchair users to gain access to premises otherwise reached by steps, widening an entrance or providing a hand rail.

The third requirement applies specifically to employment and so applies only to churches where they employ someone, for example a caretaker, administrator or youth worker. This third requirement is that where a disabled person would be put at a substantial disadvantage compared to someone who is not disabled without the provision of an auxiliary aid, then reasonable steps must be taken to provide that aid. This might include special software to allow use of a computer by a visually impaired administrator.

What action should we take?

If you have not already done so you must review the access and facilities your church provides for ALL its users but particularly those with disabilities. You need to consider both the inside and outside of the church building including approaches to and from the building, movement around the building and all of the services inside the building as well as exit routes and means of escape in case of an emergency.

Some measures are relatively simple to implement now and will give immediate benefit. For instance, providing (and maintaining) colour contrast to assist the visually impaired (e.g. highlighting changes in level and the nosings on steps, etc.), rearranging furniture such as desks or tables, making sure routes are well signed and clear of obstacles, providing handrails etc. Simple things like clear signs around your building, easy to use door handles, large print copies of your magazine and notice sheets can be implemented at little cost with some thought and modest effort.

Whenever you are planning and carrying out building or refurbishment works, such as extending premises or making structural alterations to an existing building, you should consider whether this is the opportunity to remove or alter any physical features which create difficulties for access or to provide a reasonable means of avoiding the feature.

For some buildings this may seem to present a considerable challenge, especially if your building is of historic interest but every church should have a prioritised, planned method of achieving the appropriate level of facilities in the longer term. This may be achieved by an access audit and through consultation with disabled users, the Local Authority's Access Officer or assistance from bodies or resources listed below.

It is important to think through what is provided for disabled visitors. Take a look at guidance under Welcoming Disabled Visitors

It is good practice to produce an Access Statement which gives information on the suitability of buildings for people with a wide range of disabilities. Such a statement can

be published and displayed by the church and handed out with acknowledgments of church bookings or lets by outside organisations and wedding or baptism bookings, etc. so that people know what to expect when they arrive at church. In this way people know what the situation and provision is in advance and should not have unwelcome surprises.

Useful People and Places to Contact

ENABLE Scotland

Leading the way in learning disability: Tel: 0300 0200 101; www.enable.org.uk

Churches for All

Telephone: 0118 9516971; makeadifference@churchesforall.org.uk

The Baptist Union Initiative for People with Learning Difficulties (BUILD)

David Buckingham, Secretary, 37, Sandon Avenue, Newcastle under Lyme, Staffs ST5 3QB
buildtogether@northern.org.uk

Disability Discrimination Information

www.directgov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/index.htm

The other Protected Characteristics deserve some mention here and are covered by the Equal Opportunities Policy of the United Reformed Church

B GENDER REASSIGNMENT

Where a person proposes, has started or has completed a process to change his or her sex.

C PREGNANCY & MATERNITY

Discrimination because of a woman's current or previous pregnancy.

D RACE

Race

- Colour
- Nationality
- Ethnic or National Origins

E RELIGION or BELIEF

- Religion means any religion
- Belief means any religious or philosophical belief
- A reference to religion includes a reference to a lack of religion, and
- A reference to belief includes a lack of belief

F SEX

Males and Females (Gender)

G SEXUAL ORIENTATION

- Persons of the same sex
- Persons of the opposite sex
- Persons of the same and of the opposite sex

H AGE

People belonging to a particular age group. Includes people of the same age and people of a particular range of ages.

I MARRIAGE & CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS

- People who are married
- Civil Partnership
- People who are not married or civil partners do not have protection in terms of:
 - association or perception
 - harassment
 - education or services

URC/ Synod Policy on Civil Partnerships should be consulted.

The Equality Act 2010 applies to all of the above and can be consulted at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

The Equality Act 2010 is the law which bans unfair treatment and helps achieve equal opportunities in the workplace and in wider society. It is therefore central to the Church's work and practice both in being an employer and in its concern for people and society.

As an employer the Church seeks to care for and protect its employees, volunteers and members who take on positions and responsibilities within the fellowship.

In terms of its employment responsibilities the Synod of Scotland provides protection for employees and others under the **Guidelines for responding to allegations of bullying or harassment** as agreed by General Assembly in 2012 and published in the Book of Reports, pages 187-912 and under the **Synod Grievance & Discipline Policy** currently being finalised by the former Synod Clerk, Synod Moderator and College Principal.

The following Appendix completes this paper:

Appendix A: **United Reformed Church Equal Opportunities Policy (updated May 2011)**

This Appendix outlines the Equal Opportunities Policy of the United Reformed Church as agreed by General Assembly in 2008 and updated in May 2011, together with guidance in recognising responsibility and applying the policy.

Appendix A

United Reformed Church Equal Opportunities Policy (updated May 2011)

Introduction

The United Reformed Church believes that all people are created in God's image and are loved by God. In his ministry Jesus showed God's love by his openness to all people, including those who were marginalised in his day.

Statement of intent

The United Reformed Church affirms its commitment to show the same openness to all people in today's world. It intends, in spirit and in deed, to promote equality of opportunity and diversity in all spheres of its activity and is committed to behaving as an equal opportunity organisation. It acknowledges that people are called to be diverse and lively, inclusive and flexible through the sharing of the gospel.

Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy Statement

Exclusion and discrimination can occur on many grounds including those recognised in law, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, colour, ethnic or national origin, age, marital status and disability. The United Reformed Church seeks to eradicate less favourable treatment in these areas by endeavouring to:

- build inclusive communities where all will be treated with dignity and respect and have equality of opportunity to contribute their gifts to the common life;
- identify and remove barriers to participation in employment, training, promotion, leadership and representation on church committees and in the attitudes and actions of every congregation;
- take positive action to counter attitudes and practices contrary to this statement of intent;
- define within the law when being of a particular religion or belief is or is not a requirement for any post within the church;
- develop detailed policies to give effect to these requirements; and
- monitor and report on progress in fulfilling these requirements.

This policy is the overarching equality and diversity direction of the United Reformed Church and should be read in conjunction with the United Reformed Church's declaration that it is a multicultural Church and its equality policies on employment, church activities, membership, committees and councils.

Appendix B

Equal Opportunities and Diversity Guidance

An Equal Opportunities Policy: What does this mean and what are its implications for the United Reformed Church?

Such a policy affects the United Reformed Church as a whole as we strive to celebrate and implement God's all-encompassing love. His justice demands that we do this inclusively and equally with all people in Christ, regardless of human distinctions.

It must be remembered that there is the potential for discrimination to occur in every aspect of the life of the Church, whether in the construction of buildings, the delivery of the service and services, employment of individuals and running of projects, to name a few.

This guidance is intended to provide a greater understanding of how an equal opportunities and diversity policy works, the issues involved, general considerations and where to find further help and advice if required. It is important that if in doubt the law as a whole is considered and appropriate advice obtained.

What does Equal Opportunities mean?

This is about treating everybody equally and providing the same opportunity to all, irrespective of their gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, race/colour, age, marital status or disability.

Discrimination explained

In a nutshell, discrimination is the actual behaviour towards members of another group. It involves treating one particular group of people less favourably than others because of their race, gender, age, etc.

Types of discrimination

This occurs in a number of ways: direct, indirect, perceptive and associative. When considering whether discrimination is present, remember that what may be considered to be well-established, tried and tested procedures should also be questioned.

Direct: This is where one person is deliberately treated less favourably than another, the reason being because of their sexual orientation, race, disability, etc., e.g. there are two people with equal qualifications who are both equally capable of performing a job/ task, the job/ task is given to the man and not the woman, solely because of her sex.

Indirect: Such discrimination often occurs as an unintended consequence. It occurs where the effects of certain requirements, conditions or practices have a disproportionately adverse impact on one group/ individual as opposed to another, e.g. a post is advertised and it is specified that only mature applicants need apply. Such an advert constitutes age discrimination against younger applicants.

Perceptive: This is where discrimination occurs against someone because the discriminator thinks the person is of a particular racial group or sexual orientation, etc., even if they are not.

Associative: This type of discrimination can occur against someone because they have an association with someone who is of a particular sexual orientation or racial group, etc.

What if we believe that there is a particular need for a specific type of person? In a situation where a particular post or project specifically requires a particular type of person in relation to any of the 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010 (this Act harmonises previous discrimination law – e.g. the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, etc.) and seeks to strengthen the law to support progress in equality. These protected characteristics are: age, sexual orientation, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, sex or race. It needs to be demonstrated that there is an 'occupational requirement (OR) which is crucial to the post, then the law can recognize this as an exception to the general position in relation to discrimination, e.g. a woman is required to work with women who have been subjected to physical/ sexual abuse. It is also possible in some situations to discriminate in relation to age if there is a good 'business' reason for doing so, e.g. a task may require specific experience and qualifications which a younger person would not have. In the case of religion/ belief this need is also referred to as an 'occupational requirement' (OR). (See ANNEX C)

Diversity

This is the taking into account and encompassing the values, attitudes, cultural experiences and differences of individuals in order not only for them to be included within the operations of an organisation but also to enrich the operation and values of that organisation by the knowledge and experience that is brought by all and also to encourage open-mindedness, flexibility and respect for all.

Discrimination in relation to people with a disability

The Equality Act 2010 provides that the Church should take reasonable steps to alter or remove features of their premises which make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for a person with disabilities to make use of the facilities that the Church provides.

The Church is therefore under a duty to:

- i) take reasonable steps in all circumstances to remove any practices, policies or procedures or to make the necessary changes which make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to take part in Church activities; and
- ii) provide reasonable alternative methods of taking part in Church activities where they are unable to do so by reason of physical features or, if appropriate, to provide aids or services as may be reasonable to enable or make it reasonable for them to take part in Church activities.

What is meant by 'reasonable?'

There is no legal definition of 'reasonable' within the act. When considering if a failure to make adjustments was reasonable, issues that can be considered are:

- could anything reasonable have been done to remove the obstacle;
- how practicable would it have been to do it;
- what financial and/ or other resources were available to achieve this.

It must be remembered that disability or impairment has a wide application and includes problems with mobility, visual impairment, speech, dyslexia, hearing, mental illness and learning disabilities. It is therefore important that not only are the physical features of church premises considered, but also the way in which services are provided and the general practices, policies and procedures that need to be considered so that it can be demonstrated that the legal obligations provided by the Equality Act 2010 have been met, e.g. the provision of a ramp to enable wheelchair access to a building would be considered under the Equality Act 2010 as providing a reasonable means of providing disabled access to the building, as would the provision of an induction loop to assist those with hearing difficulties. For further issues for consideration please refer to **ANNEX A**.

How to try and ensure that the equal opportunities and diversity policies (including disability discrimination) are being followed

It is recommended that an audit is carried out of practices, policies, procedures and buildings. This can be done in a variety of ways. Outside organisations can be used and/or materials obtained which will provide resources to enable an audit to be made. This can identify both immediate and more long-term needs.

Alternatively, an audit/assessment can be made using the template shown at **ANNEX B**. This template is intended as a guide and can be amended as appropriate. The intention is that it will enable issues to be identified which can be considered further and if appropriate positive steps then taken to amend/correct the situation. An access audit on buildings should also be considered. Assistance can be provided by the Church's Action on Disability (CHAD) on this.

If your church is a community building, then it may be the case that other user groups will have suggestions and be able to provide assistance with this. Assessments should also be considered under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and the Workplace (Health Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992.

Develop detailed policies to give effect to these requirements

A number of policies have already been developed and are available for churches to access on contacting the Human Resources office at Church House and discussing their needs with the staff.

Policies available include:

Adoption leave, Age Discrimination, Alcohol Policy, Capability Procedure, Data Protection, Disciplinary Procedure, Employment Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy, Flexible Working Policy, Grievance Procedure, Guidelines on leave, Harassment Policy, Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave policies, Religion or Belief Discrimination Policy, Sexual Orientation Discrimination Policy, Stress Management Policy and Violence and Abuse Guidelines.

Future Prevention

- Provide or review existing training to all those involved in areas where discrimination may occur.
- Encourage those with responsibilities in these areas to attend training courses and obtain appropriate resources in support.
- Constantly review and up-date procedures so as to be compliant with changes in the law (monitoring).
(See **ANNEX C**)

ANNEX A

Examples of particular disabilities or impairments and issues for consideration

Matter for consideration	Issues
Employment Advertisement	(i) worded so as to avoid potential discrimination (ii) if there is a GOQ, can this be justified before being specified?
Job Application Form	Should avoid references to: (i) age (ii) marital status (iii) disability
Interview	Avoid same issues as with advertising and asking health related questions. Exceptions relating to health include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to find out whether reasonable adjustments are needed for the interview or practical test; • to find out whether an applicant can carry out a function intrinsic to the job; and • for equal opportunities monitoring purposes. Once the job has been <u>offered</u> , health related questions are permitted.
Terms of Employment	There should be equality in terms of benefits, etc., to ensure no discrimination on grounds of sex, etc.
Management of Project/ Membership of Committee/ etc. In order to avoid causing disadvantage/ discriminating against a certain group, consider	(i) timing of meeting, e.g. to avoid school run (ii) location of meeting, e.g. on 1st floor where there is no lift (iii) access, e.g. public transport?
Training	Available to all on equal basis
Mobility	(i) Lightweight doors (ii) Rails (iii) Ramps or lift (iv) Chair with armrest available (v) Steps highlighted (vi) Good lighting level (vii) Accessibility for wheelchairs and walking frames (viii) Space in sanctuary for wheelchairs to be accommodated

Mobility <i>continued</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (ix) Aisle lighting and highlighting (x) Explore the possibility of having a wheelchair/ walking stick/ walking frame available in church (xi) Ensure torches are available for power cuts/ lighting failure (xii) Easy-use taps (xiii) Flooring suitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs
Visual Impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Level of lighting (ii) Handrails (iii) Steps highlighted (iv) Large Print hymn books and Bible (v) Use of coloured paper (vi) Large font size on acetates and PowerPoint (vii) Simple background rather than busy or picture
Hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Loop systems (ii) Speak clearly (iii) Level of lighting appropriate for lip reading (iv) Use microphones whenever possible especially during services and meetings
Learning Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) A greater use of visual resources (ii) Greater use of drama, music, dance, the arts (iii) Develop an awareness within the congregation to need (this also applies in all the above situations) (iv) Pastoral Support network (v) A service outline which has a familiar pattern particularly at the start and finish; try to avoid being patronising, remember that when these people are involved in worship it is as participants too and they are not just performers
Dyslexia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Familiar pattern to service (ii) Use of the arts – less reliance on written word (iii) Colour of paper e.g. yellow preferred (iv) Easily accessible font as recognised by British Dyslexia Association e.g. Arial or Comic Sans font size minimum 12
Race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Seek, as with other minority groups to ensure that the councils of the Church at all levels represent the composition of the congregation (ii) Work through the Racial Justice and Multicultural Toolkit
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Suitability of the service for all age worship (ii) Suitability of the building for all ages
Members unable to attend church for health reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Pastoral visits for support and/or prayer (ii) Sacramental visits for communion (iii) Business visits to update on important issues – this may be done during a pastoral visit (iv) Taped services (v) An invitation to send in views – on important issues – to church meeting

Car Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) No hazards or obstructions to visually impaired people (ii) The surface should be smooth and level (iii) Parking spaces for the disabled near accessible entrance
Physical access to and within the building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Handrails or ramps to steps (ii) Sufficient width of access and doors (iii) Remove obstacles (e.g. especially at low level or not easily visible) (iv) Marking edge of steps (v) Replace worn out steps
Toilets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Have a toilet suitable for disabled people with or without wheelchair (ii) Level and close to main meeting area (iii) Thermostatic control on temperature of water, (iv) For young children, have steps available to help with toilet height
Seating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Spaces for wheelchairs (ii) Some chairs with arms should be available
Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Well lit access (ii) Suitably sited for book and lip reading
PA System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Regularly maintained loop system or infra-red system (ii) Recording for people confined to home
Books, OHP and PowerPoint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Large print (suitable typeface at least 16 point and Braille if required) (ii) OHP acetates at least 30 point type (iii) Clear visibility of screen (iv) Uncluttered background for PowerPoint
Noticeboards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) For text use both upper and lower case (ii) Contrasting colour paper (e.g. black on white or black on pale yellow). Matt paper helps people with dyslexia (iii) Clear signs (iv) Consider font size and clarity of information displayed
Church Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Keep number of fonts to a minimum (ii) Backgrounds white or pale pastel colours (iii) Fonts should be large enough (iv) Accessibility for visually impaired/blind

ANNEX B

Access/General Audit Assessment

Draft can be amended to suit particular needs

Matter under consideration	Hazards	Who might be harmed and how	Steps to reasonably remove hazard	Further action necessary	Action Plan

ANNEX C

Detailed Legal Explanations

Discrimination on grounds of sex, race, religion or belief is not an easy one for churches to address. However, it would be unlawful to have a general policy of discriminating by preferring church people when recruiting staff.

Religion and Belief

The Equality Act 2010 makes discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief unlawful in employment. The Equality Act 2010 regulations allow a limited exception to the general duty not to discriminate. This may apply in cases where being of a particular religion or belief is an occupational requirement (OR) for a particular post. A typical example where this applies would be the appointment of a Christian Chaplain by a hospital trust to tend to the needs of patients who are mainly Christian.

The United Reformed Church may well have a post to fill that has an OR. If so, care will need to be taken that this is really the case, such a requirement can be justified and that the job description and terms and conditions reflect them. There are obviously many posts within the United Reformed Church for which there is clearly no OR, (for example, a receptionist's position).

Volunteers are not employed and therefore the law about employees does not strictly apply to them. However, good practice should be followed which is to equate the conditions under which they work and are recruited with those of employees.

Sex and Race

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of sex or because you are married.

Exceptions: There are situations when it is appropriate for a job only to be offered to a man or woman – these are referred to as an 'Occupational Requirement' (OR)

Some examples:

- for reasons of privacy and decency
- where a person has to live on work premises and there are no separate sleeping areas
- job in single sex institution
- jobs in private homes
- job has real physical need
- where job requires married couple

Discrimination due to race

Under the Equality Act 2010:

A complaint does not have to show an intention to discriminate on racial grounds but only that it took place.

Racial grounds include

- colour
- race
- nationality
- ethnic or national origins

Exceptions as to when it *may* not be discriminatory:-

Employment – an occupational requirement (OR), e.g. hostel for Asian women who suffered violence requires Asian women on grounds that they would be able to easily communicate and relate to people of the same racial group

Facilities and services – Clubs, associations and charities set up for people of a particular ethnic/national group allowed to discriminate on basis of nationality, ethnic/national origin; **NB not colour.**

Monitor and report on progress in fulfilling these requirements

Why do we need to monitor?

By having an Equal Opportunities Policy we acknowledge not only our need to comply with the law, but also our responsibility and commitment to be better informed whether or not black and minority ethnic groups, women, people of all ages and people with disabilities are fairly represented in the many different facets of the life of the church. Sometimes this can be done informally but in other situations formal monitoring will be needed. Monitoring also helps us to make informed decisions about what needs to be changed or improved to ensure that our policies are effective both now and for the future.

Asking people to complete monitoring forms may seem a chore, but they are very important. When all the data from the individual forms is collated we can begin to see a clear picture of how the Church is made up in all its parts. Monitoring from year to year allows us to make comparisons and see how things are changing over time.

Monitoring gives evidence to ensure that we are carrying out the policies we have agreed and that we are also complying with the law.

Just as with any accounting process creating an ‘audit trail’ is important. Keeping records to show what you have done to ensure that you have followed the United Reformed Church’s Equal Opportunities Policy is as important as your financial accounting.

Every synod and church should have an Equal Opportunities Policy and a record of all that they have done to operate it and to ensure that it is working.

Checklist

- Has your church/synod adopted an Equal Opportunities Policy? General Assembly Equal Opportunity policy is available on the United Reformed Church website?
- Has your church/synod explored the implications of this policy and applied it?
- What ‘positive action’ does your church/ synod need to take?
- What ‘detailed policies’ does your church/ synod need to adopt and implement?
- What steps does your church/synod need to take to ensure effective ‘monitoring’ takes place?
- Do your church/synod structures and committees reflect the make up of your community?
- What good employment practices does your church/synod need to adopt and implement?

Sources of further information

The Commission for Equality and Human Rights (formerly the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality)

Glasgow: The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow, G2 8DU
Telephone 0141 228 5910; Fax 0141 228 5912
scotland@equalityhumanrights.com

Churches for All

Telephone 0118 9516971
makeadifference@churchesforall.org.uk

The Baptist Union Initiative for people with Learning Difficulties (BUILD)

David Buckingham, Secretary, 37, Sandon Avenue, Newcastle under Lyme, Staffs, ST5 3QB
buildtogether@northern.org.uk

Department for Work and Pensions –

www.dwp.gov.uk

Disability Discrimination Information –

www.directgov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/index.htm

Equality Act 2010 – for further information see:

www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/

Paper E2

Change of name

Equal Opportunities Committee





Paper E2

Equal Opportunities Committee: Change of name

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Revd Elizabeth Nash, convener elizabethjnash@gmail.com
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council agrees to change the name of the Equal Opportunities Committee to the Equalities Committee.
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To change the name of the Committee
Main points	Equality of opportunity is not enough. Underlying prejudices still prevent people from making their full contribution. The URC needs its Committee to focus on these wider issues.
Previous relevant documents	Equal opportunities policy 2008 Remit of the committee, Mission Council minutes March 2012
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Other denominations have taken similar steps

Change of name: Equalities Committee

The United Reformed Church has affirmed its commitment to show the same openness to all people in today's world and is committed to behaving as an equal opportunity organisation. It recognizes that exclusion and discrimination can occur on many grounds, including those recognised in law: gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, colour, ethnic or national origin, age, marital status and disability. (Mission Council 2008)

However, the expectation that given equality of opportunity those who have been discriminated against in the past will no longer be discriminated against, has turned out not to be true. Discrimination is much more deep seated in our society, in our church and in ourselves. We discovered the reality of this at our last Mission Council when we realized how unbalanced were the URC Trustees as a group. I don't know how long it will take us to right the balance of our Trustees, but even when we have done that, the task will not be finished because unless we keep working on it, we will lose the balance again. Opportunity is not enough. Another example is research into the position of women in science which shows how inbuilt is our discrimination. 127 faculty members from Yale University, both women and men, were given an identical completed application form and asked to rank the candidate in terms of competence, starting salary, their willingness to mentor and likeability. The only difference on the forms was that half were identified as from John and the other half from Jennifer. John was offered more money and more respect than Jennifer, but Jennifer was more likeable. (Guardian 15.01.13) Opportunity is a beginning but more is needed.

The remit of Equal Opportunities Committee includes:

1. reminding the United Reformed Church that equality is enshrined in its theology, life and work,
2. the development of detailed policies and the monitoring of their implementation,
3. the promotion of training programmes in equality and diversity and
4. the encouragement of the United Reformed Church's contribution to equality in the wider life of our society.

(Mission Council March 2012)

So if we don't want an Equal Opportunities Committee, what do we want? The Methodists have an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the Church of England have Equality and Diversity Issues. We decided that we would prefer to go for something much simpler.

We would therefore like to change the title of the Equal Opportunities Committee to the Equalities Committee.

Resolution

Mission Council agrees to change the name of the Equal Opportunities Committee to the Equalities Committee.

Paper E3

Inclusive and Expansive Language

Equal Opportunities Committee



Paper E3



Equal Opportunities Committee: Inclusive and Expansive Language

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Elizabeth Nash elizabethjnash@gmail.com
Action required	Discussion and reporting to Equal Opportunities Convener
Draft resolution(s)	None
Alternative options to consider, if any	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	The aim is to consider language in worship, for both human beings and God and to reflect on a wider range of people excluded by our language.
Main points	<p>General Assembly 1984 agreed by a small majority to use gender inclusive language in our publications but not for the deity. Nothing significant has happened on this subject since.</p> <p>Some worship leaders use inclusive language for both people and God and some use exclusive language for both.</p> <p>The aim is to open up discussion on those who can be excluded by our language in worship and to look at ways in which we can move from inclusive to expansive language.</p> <p>Following this discussion the Equal Opportunities Committee will look at the way forward and find ways in which the whole of the United Reformed Church can be involved in the discussion and in using expansive language.</p>
Previous relevant documents	None recent
Consultation has taken place with...	Equal Opportunities Committee

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None at this point

Discussion on Inclusive Language and Expansive Language

God comes to us gender-neutral. It is we who impose gender upon “Him”.

Genesis 1.27, So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female God created them.

St Paul said, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”

Different societies and cultures have treated people differently depending on their gender, skin colour, disability, language, class, faith or caste.

If God loves us all can we not push out the boundaries and expand our language so that no-one is excluded?

General Assembly 1984 received a report from the Community of Women and Men, which contained the following paragraph:

As a Reformed Church, claiming to follow Scripture, the URC must be prepared

1. to face up to the generally ‘patriarchal’ tone of the Bible, and the difficult texts in the epistles which subordinate women to men;
2. to ask ourselves whether we are doing justice to the richness of the Biblical image of God which on the one hand includes both feminine and masculine characteristics and on the other hand transcends both;
3. to make clear through the language we use that the people of God comprises both men and women.

A resolution followed: “The Assembly asks Departments and Committees to take steps to ensure that all future publications use inclusive language.” On a point of order the Moderator ruled that ‘inclusive language’ excluded the deity. The vote required tellers and the resolution passed by 226 votes to 205 with 23 abstentions.

1. **Looking at the 3 points made by the Community of Women and Men, what has and has not changed in the almost 30 years since they were discussed by General Assembly?**

Michael Jagessar, as a teacher of worship and liturgy, has said, ‘what I have found very helpful is shifting the conversation from “inclusive language” to “expansive language” underscoring how words and symbols matter and the healing power of faith language.’

2. **What image does ‘expansive language’ give you?**
3. **In what ways have words and symbols influenced your faith?**

The 1984 resolution was about publications, what about our worship? We have worship leaders who use expansive language for both people and God, and worship leaders who still use man as a generic term for both women and men.

4. **What difference does it make to you if the language used for God in worship is the same as the language you use for yourself?**
5. **What are the consequences for men?**
6. **What difference does it make to you if the language used for God in worship is never the same as the language you use for yourself?**
7. **What are the consequences for women?**
8. **What is your experience of expansive language in worship?**
9. **What do you feel when exclusive language is used?**

What does inclusiveness mean for people with disabilities?

Professor John Hull, who is blind, has said that he found John 9.2,3 – Jesus healing a blind man very difficult. “Teacher, whose sin caused him to be born blind, this man or his parents? Jesus answered, neither..., he is blind so that God’s power might be seen at work in him.” John Hull asks, ‘is there a God who will receive me in my blindness? Where is the God who will take me just as I am?’

The Bible does not always treat people with disabilities equally.

10. **What should we do to enable people with disabilities to know that God takes them just as they are?**
11. **What does your local church do to ensure that everyone feels welcomed and included in worship?**
12. **What should the United Reformed Church do?**

Paper F1

Future of the Church

Faith and Order Committee



Paper F1

Faith and Order Committee: Future of the Church

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Elizabeth Welch, convener of the Faith & Order Committee (FAOC) minister@theroundchapel.org.uk
Action required	Discernment by Mission Council with regard to where the Spirit is leading the United Reformed Church in terms of our particular gifts
Draft resolution(s)	No
Alternative options to consider, if any	No

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	‘Will these bones live?’ This paper outlines issues with regard to the characteristics and identity of the United Reformed Church, in order to continue the discussion from the May 2013 Mission Council about the future of the church and of the United Reformed Church
Main points	Focus on the areas that were identified in the Mission Council discussion about which United Reformed Church people are passionate and which URC people value about the URC, rather than the larger number of issues about which people were critical, on the grounds that the renewal of the church arises out of God’s generosity and the gifting of the Holy Spirit. Raises issues and questions that need more focussed attention in order to consider the way forward, particularly with regard to URC identity, URC passions and values, where the Holy Spirit is already discerned, the longer strands of history that shape the URC and the call to ecumenism. Questions are offered for discussion. A section on the nature of the church from the Basis of Union is appended.
Previous relevant documents	Several FAOC discussion papers on the future of the church, a summary of which came to the May Mission Council
Consultation has taken place with...	The Faith and Order Committee, across several meetings; interested individuals, through social media and wider consultation; and the May 2013 Mission Council

Summary of Impact

Financial	If the URC discovered more confidently God’s purpose for this church, perhaps she might discover more of God’s generous provision
External (e.g. ecumenical)	This paper starts to raise questions about the nature of the URC’s ecumenical engagement and the level of the URC’s commitment to this.

Future of the Church

Looking at the 'Purpose and Goal of the Church'

Introduction

This paper pulls out and summarises the positive themes that were raised in the May 2013 Mission Council discussion on the future of the Church. (In the comments it is clear that 'church' is understood in variety of ways, including the local congregation, the United Reformed Church as a whole, different churches of different traditions across the United Kingdom, or the church universal across time and nations. This raises an issue about the need for clarity with regard to which meaning is being discussed at any one time, and the need for attention to the interconnectedness of the body of Christ.) There were many critical comments expressed, but these are not the subject of this paper. This is on the grounds that the renewal of the life of the Church (in any of the forms mentioned) arises out of God's generosity and the gifting of the Holy Spirit and that the discernment of these is critical.

A number of scenarios about the future of the United Reformed Church as a whole, and its congregations in particular, were brought to Mission Council. A helpful discussion was had about these scenarios, with no one scenario being seen as describing the way forward, but many fruitful comments being offered about a variety of options. A particular strand of thinking addressed the issues of the identity and characteristics of the United Reformed Church, in relation to other Churches and in terms of the URC's own identity. The paper offers some further areas for discussion in order to take forward the United Reformed Church's reflection on where the Holy Spirit is leading this particular church next. Key comments included: 'We need to be attentive to where change comes from; do we see the Holy Spirit as more active in the local, the regional, the national, the central life of the church?' 'We need to regain confidence in the faith.'

A comment has been made that addressing these issues is hard work, but doing nothing is not an option!

Questions asked

There were a range of questions asked in the group discussion:

Identity

A much asked question was whether we have a United Reformed identity which holds congregations together, and if so, whether it both celebrates our diversity and also holds us together across congregations and nations. A corollary to this was whether we need a United Reformed Church identity. Some were strongly in favour, others disagreed. Others made a plea for discovering the United Reformed Church's USP (unique selling point) and some argued that our USP is in our particular combination of gifts

Our passions

A number of passions were mentioned: synergy, realism, energised vision, use professionalism, cooking, church buildings used well, youth work, singing, Christ should be enjoyed, organic unity, Liverpool (FC & team work)

What we value about the United Reformed Church

The freedom to decide, the freedom to worship and freedom of conscience, each one tested against authority of scripture and Church Meeting; the decision making processes; a vision for governance based on Elders and Church Meeting; the URC enshrines meetings which are empowered to discern the working of the Holy Spirit, even against a majority view; Informality and lack of 'respect' (difference); The way we related to the word of God in the Bible; our commitment to social justice; our willingness to die as a denomination; inclusivity and tolerance; the Eldership; lively, imaginative local churches; Allowing individuals to express faith commitment (bottom-up); Local church decides who members are; Children and young people equal partners; Holy Spirit is working through all/any; Discernment re call of minister; flexibility – try it and see, liturgical flexibility too; the sovereignty of God (can we find our way of saying 'God gave me this word?'), Does our worship reflect the joy that should flow from that awareness? Sharing of gifts a URC characteristic – M&M and resource sharing more than political! (and need to work on how we offer and receive gifts in a range of ways)

History

Are we sufficiently attentive to the history of the United Reformed Church, that history as it arises out of the sources of our faith, in the scriptures and the early church, from the Reformation and the 17th century in England, and from the strands of the church which have formed the United Reformed Church? Are we a church that lives in the present rather than builds on the past – but does this lead to a loss of confidence in our faith and our church as we lose touch with our roots? An argument was made for the desirability of a greater familiarity with the founding United Reformed Church statements with regard to our faith and the church in the Basis of Union. (see excerpt in Appendix A)

Discovering the Holy Spirit

There were a range of comments about where people experienced the Holy Spirit, individually and collectively, including: in our shared discernment: when we come together: listening to one another, prayer, moving into grace; when a person is at peace with him or her self; awareness of learning and growth; in times when inspired and excited; there at the edges of experience; when people are ready to be courageous; in being disturbed, in openness; in excitement and caution

Many moments of revelation were identified: Hungary – Being ecumenical in worship in 1989: An act of holy passion; Mission Council – October 2002, the Church Life Survey and Finance – so dire that something had to be done and Catch the Vision emerged; Churches gel and build vision, responding to community needs; Church Secretary – neighbour coming to church: Church meeting – shut the building and become the worshipping heart of the village; Church re-ordering – happened by fire: new appreciation of true essentials; Elder from Sierra Leone spoke of true stories of faith igniting action spontaneously; Bible, where stories connect with real life; 1996 – deep debates on contentious issue dividing the church: transformation through real life stories.

The comment was made that the Holy Spirit seems not to work through programmes or restructuring; we discern the Holy Spirit in many and varied ways, in seeing signs, and possibilities of growth, but we begin by seeking to discern together

Ecumenism

There were many questions raised as to the current state of play with regard to the United Reformed Church and ecumenism. Some felt that the URC should have the courage to die, this being translated as losing her identity within another Church; others felt that the URC needs to reclaim its own sense of identity, and offer this as a gift to other Churches. The model from Cumbria was mentioned positively on several occasions. General comments included ‘There’s no energy for organic union, but it raises some important questions. Are local people really interested in what is happening?’ Among the practical points made was the need to look further at the nature of LEPs, especially in terms of the ‘double denominational requirements’ on LEPs and to suggest that we need to review the agreement that we cannot plant a new church unless it is ecumenical.

A small selection of ongoing issues

- Need to identify our priorities (e.g. increasing numbers? spreading the word?) and accept that we cannot do everything.
- Look at greater use of technology – cyber church? skype? services online, intimations on web.
- How far do we do with ‘tent ministry’?
- Need to work on the theology behind our buildings.
- Re-visit the nature of ministry and the relation between lay and ordained ministry, particularly in the light of deployment.

Questions for Mission Council discussion

Start by sharing what each member of the group means when the word ‘church’ is used, (e.g. congregation, the United Reformed Church, Churches of other traditions, the Body of Christ) and look at the implications of these different levels of meaning for the wider discussion.

1. What do you identify as the core characteristics of ‘Church’ that need to be present in a denominational body or a congregation for Church to be Church?
2. What do you identify as the distinguishing characteristics of the United Reformed Church that give life and health to this Church and are our gift to other Churches and to the world around us?
3. Do you discern the Holy Spirit bringing the URC to the point of being ‘ready to live’ or ‘ready to die’? Outline the reasons for your answer.

A practical suggestion: Bearing in mind the need to be attentive to the Holy Spirit’s leading in taking us forward, would it be helpful to suggest that each council of the United Reformed Church (Elders, church meeting, Synod, committees, Mission Council, Assembly) spent the first hour of its meetings in 2014 in theological reflection, asking where the people of that council discern the presence of God in their lives and where they see the Holy Spirit’s leading for the future of their work?

Appendix A

Excerpt from the United Reformed Church Basis of Union

The Church and The United Reformed Church

1. There is but one Church of the one God. He called Israel to be his people, and in fulfilment of the purpose then begun he called the Church into being through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. The one Church of the one God is holy, because he has redeemed and consecrated it through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and because there Christ dwells with his people.
3. The Church is catholic or universal because Christ calls into it all peoples and because it proclaims the fullness of Christ's Gospel to the whole world.
4. The Church is apostolic because Christ continues to entrust it with the Gospel and the commission first given to the apostles to proclaim that Gospel to all peoples.
5. The unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity of the Church have been obscured by the failure and weakness which mar the life of the Church.
6. Christ's mercy in continuing his call to the Church in all its failure and weakness has taught the Church that its life must ever be renewed and reformed according to the Scriptures, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
7. The United Reformed Church humbly recognises that the failure and weakness of the Church have in particular been manifested in division which has made it impossible for Christians fully to know, experience and communicate the life of the one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church.
8. The United Reformed Church has been formed in obedience to the call to repent of what has been amiss in the past and to be reconciled. It sees its formation and growth as a part of what God is doing to make his people one, and as a united church will take, wherever possible and with all speed, further steps towards the unity of all God's people.
9. The United Reformed Church testifies to its faith, and orders its life, according to this Basis of Union, believing it to embody the essential notes of the Church catholic and reformed. The United Reformed Church nevertheless reserves its right and declares its readiness at any time to alter, add to, modify or supersede this Basis so that its life may accord more nearly with the mind of Christ.
10. The United Reformed Church, believing that it is through the freedom of the Spirit that Jesus Christ holds his people in the fellowship of the one Body, shall uphold the rights of personal conviction. It shall be for the church, in safeguarding the substance of the faith and maintaining the unity of the fellowship, to determine when these rights are asserted to the injury of its unity and peace.

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH AND THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

11. Within the one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church the United Reformed Church acknowledges its responsibility under God:- to make its life a continual offering of itself and the world to God in adoration and worship through Jesus Christ;- to receive and express the renewing life of the Holy Spirit in each place and in its total fellowship, and there to declare the reconciling and saving power of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ;- to live out, in joyful and sacrificial service to all in their various physical and spiritual needs, that ministry of caring, forgiving and healing love which Jesus Christ brought to all whom he met;- and to bear witness to Christ's rule over the nations in all the variety of their organised life.

Paper F2

The Church Meeting

Faith and Order Committee





Paper F2

Faith and Order Committee: The Church Meeting

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Elizabeth Welch, Convenor of Faith and Order Committee (FAOC) minister@theroundchapel.org.uk
Action required	Discernment by Mission Council of the present and future role of the church meeting within the United Reformed Church, and of the particular spirituality that undergirds the URC's understanding of the church meeting.
Draft resolution(s)	No
Alternative options to consider, if any	No

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	This paper looks at the role of the church meeting, as part of a discernment as to whether this is one of the defining characteristics of the United Reformed Church.
Main points	A range of theological reflections are offered for consideration, and a number of issues are identified. Questions for discussion are raised.
Previous relevant documents	This paper is based on the paper on the future of the church that went to the May 2013 Mission Council, and emerges out of the summary of the group discussions at that Mission Council, during which the church meeting was identified as one of the URC's particular distinctive gifts.
Consultation has taken place with...	Mission Council and the Faith and Order Committee

Summary of Impact

Financial	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Clarification of one of the gifts of the URC offered in ecumenical encounter.

The Church Meeting as one of the distinctive characteristics of the United Reformed Church

Introduction

In the discussions about the future of the church at the May Mission Council, the church meeting was identified as both a distinctive characteristic of the United Reformed Church, and as an area in which more work needs to be done. This paper looks at comments made in Mission Council and the subsequent Faith and Order Committee discussion. It notes two papers that are in the process of being offered on particular aspects of the church meeting and offers some theological reflections on the role of the church meeting as a further stimulus for Mission Council discussions.

Discussion at Mission Council, May 2013

The church meeting was clearly identified as one of the distinctive characteristics of the United Reformed Church, e.g. 'The Church Meeting – a gathering when at its best is something to cherish'; and 'we need to reclaim the importance of Church Meeting and find our place in it.' Critical comments were made, e.g. 'Some meetings 'play safe' and questions were asked, e.g. 'Can we bring 'Church Meeting' more to the focus or has its centrality gone? Do people realise that it is fundamental?' A comparison was made to the Occupy movement – "'Occupy' – passionate people who knew their subject had daily 'church' meeting". It was clear in the discussions both that church meetings are valued in our tradition and also that there are some critical issues to be addressed as to the role of the church meeting.

Discussion at the Faith and Order Committee July 2013

The comments from Mission Council were looked at further in the Faith and Order Committee meeting in July. The committee had a prolonged discussion about the local church, including questions of the call, purpose and vocation of the local church and contextual and theological issues around this. An issue was identified as to the way in which congregations feel less able than they might have at one time to articulate their vision and purpose. The nature of membership was also identified as an area which needs more work. It was agreed to start by looking further at one of the areas that had clearly emerged from the Mission Council, the role of the church meeting. Further work was commissioned and drafts of two papers have been written, one by Augur Pearce and one by David Thompson. It is also hoped that this area can be addressed through the pages of Reform, to invite a wider conversation on the church meeting.

Augur Pearce prepared a helpful and extensive (25 pages) statement of the Church Meeting's various roles, powers, functions, limitations etc., based on the Scheme of Union, the URC Acts and his own experience of Church Meeting operation in three flourishing city churches. The plan is for this paper to be finalised as a paper available across the URC addressing the practical and legal matters with regard to the role of the Church Meeting.

David Thompson prepared an equally helpful paper (4 pages) on some of the historical issues around church meeting, e.g. the way in which its effectiveness has been perceived over the centuries and issues in terms of its relationship to the Elders Meeting. The plan is for this paper to be available to those who would like to take a longer historical look at the church meeting and the way in which the issues from previous generations are still issues for the church today.

Theological reflections

It is interesting to note that in the founding documents of the United Reformed Church, the overall theological considerations with regard to the nature of the church are held separately from the particular functions of the various parts of the structure. Where the Church Meeting is written about, it does so in terms of a list of the functions of the church meeting, e.g. who is a member, what is the church meetings role re the call of a minister, and the relationship between the Elders and Church meetings. While the first functions listed are about outreach, mission, and considering the Christian faith, the issue about the particular nature of the church meeting as part of God's purpose for the church and the world, the place where the mind of Christ is discerned and the church meeting's dependence on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, are not spelt out.

What follows are particular theological reflections for Mission Council to consider:

1. The church meeting is a defining characteristic of the United Reformed Church, but not on its own **the** defining characteristic.
2. The church meeting reflects the underlying spirituality of the United Reformed Church in terms of discerning the mind of Christ by the whole people of God. It connects with a range of other expressions of this spirituality, particularly with regard to the discernment of God's purpose. These expressions include the regular worship life of the church, prayer, study of the scriptures, and small group discussions.
3. The church meeting is rooted in prayer, worship, and listening to the Holy Spirit.
4. The church meeting is a place in which people listen for the voice of God in the multiplicity of different voices that are spoken.
5. The church meeting is based on scriptures and has been reinterpreted over the centuries in response to different ways of discerning the mind of Christ. Scriptural interpretation as, for example, in Acts 15, offers a picture in which an issue arises, there is much heated discussions, agreement is reached and then the decision is disseminated. It is worth revisiting the scriptural interpretation for our understanding of church meeting.
6. The church meeting symbolises God's affirmation of each person, where the worth and value of each person is celebrated, and each person is seen as a vehicle for hearing the Holy Spirit.
7. The church meeting is the place in which people (lay and ordained) hold each other to account with regard to mutual faithfulness to the Gospel.
8. The church meeting at its best is a place of dealing with the conflicts between different personalities and different view-points and working these through.
9. The church meeting is inspirational, in that it depends on the Holy Spirit who energises, renews and equips the whole people of God.

10. The church meeting is about discerning God's path for that particular local community, which means developing an understanding and connection with the people of the place.
11. The church meeting is about wrestling with the issues of the day.
12. Church meetings in any given locality are shaped and informed by their connectedness to other church meetings and the wider councils of the church. As the network of relationships is built, so the mind of Christ is discerned.

There is a range of issues that arises with regard to church meetings: (FAOC would like to keep the focus on constructive comments on church meetings and on the undergirding spirituality of the URC, but acknowledges that there is a range of issues that needs identifying in order to look at more positive ways forward.)

1. The way in which the spirituality which undergirds the church meeting is reflected across the whole church, either in terms of the local congregation or the wider church, is not always clearly understood and easily made visible.
2. The relationship between Elders and the church meeting; it is not always clear what the role between each of these is and which topics are best addressed by each one (bearing in mind that trustee legislation has opened up a new raft of issues for trustees to discuss).
3. The relationship between personal charismatic leadership and conciliar charismatic leadership – have we got the right balance between the charisms of personal leadership and the charisms of conciliar leadership? There is an argument to say that leadership through the church meeting too diffuse for the rapidly changing times in which we live. On the other hand, there is a counter argument which says that what we demonstrate in our attentiveness to the different voices in church meeting, is part of our offering of an alternative style of leadership in these changing times.
4. Do those attending church meetings feel affirmed, enthused, and confirmed in their vocation in God's world?
5. Church meetings are not always attentive enough to power struggles and conflicts and are sometimes insufficiently equipped with regard to ways in which to resolve these.
6. Does the church meeting meet too often and too regularly, so that it is in danger of looking into greater detail of practical business rather than being attentive to the Holy Spirit and the time in which the Holy Spirit moves? Or should the church meeting meet more frequently, so that it has sufficient time for the whole community to wait upon God?
7. In larger congregations, a small percentage of people attend church meetings. Does more work need to be done on the nature of scale in relation to congregations and the consequent effectiveness or otherwise of church meetings?
8. Church meetings are not always seen as connected to the wider councils of the church and vice versa. If it is not just a matter of handing things down or handing things up, what is the connection and the interplay?
9. The younger generations are not always enthused by church meetings. Are there ways of developing the use of social media such as Facebook, to encourage another kind of level of mutual connectedness?
10. Many different views have emerged about church meetings and their role in practice. Would it be helpful to undertake more research into church meetings and the issues as they are perceived on the ground?

Questions for Mission Council to discuss

The results of this discussion will be fed in to further work by the Faith and Order Committee on the role of the church meeting and on the undergirding spirituality of the URC as it is reflected, not only in the church meeting, but across the life of the church.

1. You are invited to start by reflecting on the ways in which you have experienced the discernment of God's Spirit in the setting of the church meeting and in other parts of the life of local churches of which you have been part.
2. In the list of theological understandings above, which do you give priority to? What new ones would you add?
3. In what ways do you see the spirituality that undergirds the understanding of the church meeting more widely reflected and lived out across the life of the United Reformed Church?
4. What do you see as the most pressing issues that the URC needs to face with regard to the church meeting? Which issues would you add to the list above?

Paper G1 + G2

Budget 2014 and Beyond

Finance Committee



Paper G1 + G2



Finance Committee: Budget 2014 and Beyond

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	John Ellis; Treasurer john.ellis@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decisions on 2014 Budget
Draft resolution(s)	<p>1. Mission Council notes with gratitude the continuing Pensions support from the synods and requests synods to continue this support in 2014 at a reduced level which will yield a total contribution of £300k.</p> <p>2. Mission Council adopts the budget for 2014 set out in Appendix 2.</p>
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	The paper presents a budget for 2014 for decision; and financial projections for 2015-16 for information
Main points	<p>M&M giving is expected to fall again in 2014</p> <p>The 2014 budget is balanced, provided synods continue Pensions Support funding</p> <p>Minister numbers fall significantly during 2013 but are then more stable</p> <p>Projections for 2015 suggest another balanced budget</p> <p>Projections for 2016 suggest either an increase in M&M giving or a reduction on programme expenditure will be necessary</p>
Previous relevant documents	None
Consultation has taken place with...	Budgetholders in Church House Education & Learning Committee URC Trust

Summary of Impact

Financial	A balanced budget maintains our reserves above the minimum target level
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Nothing specific

Budget 2014 and Beyond

- 1) Attached as Appendix 2 Column 3 is the draft budget for 2014 which the Finance Committee presents to Mission Council. This budget will be reviewed by the URC Trustees between the date of writing this paper and the meeting of Mission Council.

Income

- 2) Ministry and Mission (M&M) Fund offers from the synods are the predominant source of income for the budget. The latest information from the synods, on behalf of local churches, suggests that the M&M offering in 2014 will be a reduction of around £200,000 (£200k) relative to 2013. This continues the trend of M&M giving falling by around 1% a year. With inflation at around 3% this means a reduction of about 4% a year in what the money will buy.

Expenditure on Ministry

- 3) The largest part of the expenditure side of the budget is the funding for stipends of Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church-Related Community Workers. The current stipend is £24,180.
- 4) Mission Council has delegated the task of setting the stipend to the Finance Committee in conjunction with the URC Trustees. The Finance Committee recommends a rise of 1.6% for 2014. This represents a return to the traditional formula for setting stipend increases of taking the average of the annual rate of inflation and the annual average increase in earnings. Currently the growth in earnings across the economy is well below the rate of price inflation.
- 5) Due to a bulge in retirements, there is likely to be a marked reduction in the number of full-time stipendiary ministers during 2013 from 433 to 413. Taking account of the proposed stipend increase and the smaller number of ministers serving in 2014, the budget includes £15,821k to cover stipends and related payments. This means over three-quarters of the total budget is directly supporting front-line ministry, in line with the desire of the General Assembly that this should be the priority.

Other Expenditure

- 6) Mission Council worked hard and sometimes painfully to achieve significant reductions in the overall costs of the programme and infrastructure support budgets in 2013. It is important that these budgets do not creep up again unless the Church asks for that to happen. For 2014 there is an increase from £4,886k to £4,991k. This is a smaller increase than if these budgets had grown in line with inflation but the Finance Committee would have preferred there to be no growth at all.
- 7) There are two principal factors behind the increase of £105k in the programme and support budgets.
 - (i) The Education and Learning Committee's budget is higher by £58k. In May Mission Council encouraged the Committee not to make piecemeal changes in its budget but to delay changes until a more major review, as promised in 2012, could take place at the 2014 Assembly. In view of this and assurances the Committee has given

to the Finance Committee that they are working on significant cost reductions for 2015 and beyond, the Finance Committee recommends that Mission Council accepts this very temporary rise in the Education and Learning budget.

- (ii) The new Safeguarding Officer, whose costs are shared 50% by the Baptist Union, represents a further £17k of the additional budget. The Finance Committee accepts that this post is now essential.

Pensions Support

- 8) Following the large rises in pension fund contributions needed after the 2008 economic crash, Mission Council asked the synods to provide extra funding to avoid too great a dislocation of other parts of the budget. Mission Council agreed in 2011 that this should be phased out by 2016.
- 9) In the 2014 budget some support is still needed but only £300k from the synods has been assumed, compared with the £1m provided in 2011 and the £600k expected in 2013. A breakdown of this proposed total between the synods based on membership figures is given in Appendix 1.

Resolutions

- 1. Mission Council notes with gratitude the continuing Pensions Support from the synods and requests synods to continue this support in 2014 at a reduced level which will yield a total contribution of £300k.**
- 2. Mission Council adopts the budget for 2014 set out in Appendix 2.**

Looking Further Ahead

- 10) For the first time, the Finance Committee offers Mission Council a look three years ahead. Inevitably there are more uncertainties the further ahead we consider, so the figures for 2015 and 2016 are much less reliable than for 2014. While some known factors have been taken into account, essentially these figures are a projection of what the budget would look like if present trends continue.
- 11) The projections are set out in Appendix 2 Columns 4 and 5. The same figures are summarised in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1

Budget Projections 2014-16

£m	2013 Budget	2014 Budget	2015 Projection	2016 Projection
Income				
M&M Fund	19.8	19.6	19.4	19.2
Pensions Support	0.6	0.3	0.3	-
Other	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0
Total	21.3	20.8	20.7	20.2
Expenditure				
Ministerial stipends, pensions, etc	16.6	15.8	15.8	15.6
Programmes & infrastructure	4.9	5.0	4.9	4.9
Total	21.5	20.8	20.7	20.5
Deficit	0.2	-	-	0.3

- 12) The first key assumption behind these numbers is the trend in M&M giving. For lack of contrary evidence, and remembering the likely further fall in membership, it is assumed it continues to fall by 1% pa. The 2016 budget could look very different from this projection if the total giving were to start rising.
- 13) The second key projection is the number of stipendiary ministers. Best current estimates are that after the marked drop during 2013, there is only modest further change in 2014-16. This means the total cost of ministry remains relatively static over those three years. Over the five years 2011-16 it would have fallen by around 10%, rather less than would be required to meet the Assembly guideline of changing the overall costs of ministry in line with the changes in overall URC membership (c 15%).
- 14) The overall picture is a projection for a balanced budget again in 2015, assuming there is some synod Pensions Support for one final year. In 2016, however, if the prediction for M&M giving proves correct, a deficit starts to emerge again. This would imply some further reduction in the resources used by the programme committees, or in the infrastructure support work, will become necessary.
- 15) Had the reduction in minister numbers in 2013 been likely to recur in subsequent years, there might have been an argument for reopening the option of recruiting ministers onto the URC Roll of Ministers from sister Churches via the granting of Certificates of Eligibility. But noting the relative stability in minister numbers in 2014-16 and the fact that a deficit threatens to emerge in 2016, adding permanent new costs by granting new certificates cannot be recommended at the moment.

Appendix 1

Possible Pensions Support from Synods

Synod	2014 Request
	£k
Northern	15
North Western	30
Mersey	19
Yorkshire	18
East Midlands	19
West Midlands	26
Eastern	25
South Western	19
Wessex	32
Thames North	28
Southern	39
Wales	12
Scotland	18

	300

Summary Budget Estimates 2014-2016

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Comments on Projections
	Actual	Budget	Draft Budget	Projection	Projection	
	£	£	£	£	£	
Income						
Ministry and Mission contributions	(20,230,406)	(19,752,000)	(19,550,000)	(19,360,000)	(19,165,000)	Assumes trend continues
Pensions - additional funding	(1,050,603)	(600,000)	(300,000)	(300,000)	0	Phased out
Investment and other income						
Dividends	(660,220)	(652,000)	(678,000)	(700,000)	(720,000)	3% dividend growth
Donations	(7,341)	0	0	0	0	
Specific legacies	(589)	0	0	0	0	
Grants/Income - Memorial Hall Trust/Fund	(223,911)	(213,000)	(230,000)	(235,000)	(240,000)	
Interest - New College Trust /Fund	(23,785)	0	0	0	0	
Net other interest	(51,399)	(40,000)	(50,000)	(50,000)	(60,000)	
Other income, including property rentals	(20,625)	(20,000)	(10,000)	(10,000)	(10,000)	
	(987,871)	(925,000)	(968,000)	(995,000)	(1,030,000)	
Total income	(22,268,881)	(21,277,000)	(20,818,000)	(20,655,000)	(20,195,000)	
Expenditure						
A Ministries of the Church						
A1 Ministry						
Local and special ministries and CRCWs	16,490,943	15,918,000	15,181,000	15,128,000	14,912,000	1.5% stipend inflation
Synod Moderators - stipends and expenses	590,702	633,000	640,000	646,000	653,000	
Ministries department	311,678	259,068	260,900	263,500	266,500	
Pastoral & welfare	1,897	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	
	17,395,220	16,812,068	16,083,900	16,039,500	15,833,500	
A2 Education & Learning						
Initial training for ministry	634,516	628,000	657,500	632,000	602,000	Savings from Sept 2015
Continuing training for ministry	156,648	110,000	104,000	106,000	106,000	
Resource Centres support	538,131	459,500	466,000	470,000	475,000	Aiming to restore 2012 level
	1,329,295	1,197,500	1,227,500	1,208,000	1,183,000	
W Windermere RCL - net support	128,071	114,250	112,240	115,000	118,000	
Training for Learning & Serving - net support	94,736	85,700	99,500	95,800	96,000	
Lay preachers support	5,577	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	
Education & Learning department	156,529	157,000	172,900	169,000	171,000	
	1,714,208	1,564,450	1,622,140	1,597,800	1,578,000	
A3 Children's and Youth Work						
Children's and Youth work, including Pilots	321,875	303,640	302,250	300,000	303,000	
A4 Safeguarding	26,296	35,000	52,200	52,500	53,000	
B Mission						
Mission programmes and team	689,129	670,000	688,000	675,000	670,000	
National Ecumenical Officers	28,199	35,000	35,000	35,000	36,000	
	717,328	705,000	723,000	710,000	706,000	
C Administration & Resources						
Central Secretariat	356,635	444,800	421,800	416,400	420,700	
URC House costs	249,740	285,000	286,500	285,000	285,000	
IT Services	152,186	155,800	154,100	155,000	155,000	
Finance	524,917	499,400	516,400	507,000	515,500	
Communications & Editorial	402,450	361,800	344,800	345,000	347,000	
	1,685,928	1,752,800	1,723,600	1,708,400	1,723,200	
D Governance						
General Assembly	144,674	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	
Mission Council	65,447	44,000	46,000	46,000	46,000	
Professional fees	166,359	105,000	99,000	103,000	100,000	
Other	65,185	52,000	60,000	60,000	60,000	
	441,664	301,000	305,000	309,000	306,000	
Total expenditure	22,302,519	21,436,958	20,812,090	20,717,200	20,502,700	
NET (SURPLUS)/DEFICIT	33,638	159,958	(5,910)	62,200	307,700	

Paper G3



Ministries and Finance Committees: Plan for partnership amendments

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	John Ellis, Treasurer John.ellis@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council agrees the amendments to the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration set out in this paper.
Alternative options to consider, if any	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To amend The Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration
Main points	The Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee has agreed that there are a number of minor amendments required to tidy up the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration and these are set out in the attached document.
Previous relevant documents	Current Plan for Partnership: available on URC website in the Finance section under 'Library'.
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None

Proposed Amendments to The Plan for Partnership

inserts shown in italics **deletions** shown in bold

para 5.2.2 Ministers for whom remuneration for specific periods has been authorised by the **Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee** *Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee* and such other special cases approved by the Ministries Committee.

para 5.3 Lay missionaries serving in posts recognised and designated by the **Ecumenical Committee** *International Exchange Reference Group*.

The above two changes are as a result of name changes to committees.

para 6.3.4.3 Where a minister/ CRCW does not provide a car but the regular use of a car is considered necessary, it is the responsibility of the local church to provide a suitable vehicle. The costs of private **motoring** *mileage* shall be **borne** *reimbursed* by the minister/CRCW under locally agreed arrangements *in line with the Advisory Fuel Rates issued by the MoM Office*.

The above amendment is intended to clarify the existing wording and make reference to the Advisory Fuel Rates which change regularly and are distributed to all ministers.

para 10.1.6 Where a minister/CRCW has not received a retirement resettlement grant at the time of retirement, they shall be entitled to a resettlement grant upon the first change of residence (subject to the three years' restriction in para **9.1.1** *10.1.1*).

para 10.4.1 Notwithstanding what is written above in paras **9.1 and 9.3** *10.1.1 and 10.3*, in the case of a husband and wife being ministers/CRCWs, their combined entitlement to a resettlement grant and retirement removal grant shall not exceed that of one full-time minister/CRCW.

The above two changes correct errors identified in the cross referencing.

para 12 The payment of stipend, together with any allowances, shall be made monthly on or before the **26th** *25th* day of each month.

The above change reflects the reality that all payments are now made on the 25th of the month. Historically building societies needed one further day; this is now not the case.

APPENDIX A – APPROVED RATES UNDER THE PLAN

Para 11	Maximum weekly <i>Weekly</i> payments to students (6 April 2012 - 5 April 2013) Maximum of 10 weeks paid.	£120
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This change reflects the fact that it is no longer necessary to align this payment rate to the tax year and in the future this will be aligned to the calendar year in line with stipend increases.



Paper 11

Update on CWM Mission Support Programme proposal

Mission Committee

Church 2013
United
Church **Reformed**
Church Church 2013



Paper 11

Mission Committee: Update on CWM Mission Support Programme proposal

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Francis Brienen, Secretary for Mission francis.brienen@urc.org.uk
Action required	None – the Mission Committee will bring this matter to Mission Council for decision in 2014
Draft resolution(s)	
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	The Council for World Mission (CWM) makes grants to all its 31 member churches according to an agreed budget through its Mission Support Programme. Each new funding round is designated as a new “phase” and the United Reformed Church is now in the process of discernment as to the best use of the grant, which is designated for strategic mission work and encourages the member churches to undertake new ventures addressing the challenges of their mission contexts.
Main points	After wide consultation, the Mission Committee agreed that its previous proposal for this grant should be altered. This paper gives the full background and explains why the Committee decided to do further work on their proposal before returning to Mission Council.
Previous relevant documents	Paper F from May 2013 Mission Council
Consultation has taken place with...	Many URC constituencies, as listed in the paper

Summary of Impact

Financial	Ongoing consultation and redrafting of the proposal are covered by the existing Mission Committee budget.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	



Mission Council – November 2013

Update on the CWM Mission Support Programme Phase 3

Introduction

The United Reformed Church Mission Committee started discussions on Phase 3 of the Mission Support Programme in October 2012. The Committee identified the need for evangelism and how to equip people in the United Reformed Church for this task (within the broader context of discipleship) as a focus to be explored for a new mission programme. The Committee also thought about how a consultation process with the church might take place. A small group (Andrew Willett, Janet Sutton Webb, Louise Franklin, Michael Jagessar and Francis Brienen) was asked to do further work and to report back to the Committee in February 2013.

The group met twice between October 2012 and February 2013, on both occasions joined by the CWM European Regional Secretary Wayne Hawkins, and also gathered information from the Synods about their past and current involvement in evangelism, at local and Synod level. Based on this, an initial proposal was developed for discussion by the Mission Committee and for subsequent consultation with potential stakeholders in the programme.

The proposal

The group formulated a proposal for a **three-stage process** with the overall aim to create a culture of evangelism in the United Reformed Church.

- The first stage focused on the leadership of the church at Assembly and Synod level and would start with initial research/mapping into what was already happening and consultation with the senior leadership of the whole church for strategic development and prayer. In this stage there would also be conversations with Synods focused on road shows and the setting up of Synod evangelism funds.
- Stage two would see part of stage one replicated at Synod level, with the aim to build vision and plan training. Training of trainers would take place, as would Synod road shows focused on evangelism. Materials would be developed for stage 3.
- In the third stage every church would be provided with material, such as a toolkit and leaflets, guides, booklets to give out etc. They would be encouraged to get involved in first base evangelism events, changing perceptions and making connections. This might lead to offering longer 'courses' such as Alpha, Christianity Explored, or something URC specific. Churches would feed back what they have done via the annual church returns.
- At the end there would be an evaluation and the start of MSP4 on deepening discipleship, the development of which would run alongside stage 2 and 3 of MSP3.

The Mission Committee discussed this initial proposal in February and agreed that it should be offered for wider consultation to potential stakeholders in a new programme. These included the Mission Council, Synod Moderators and Clerks, the Assembly Committees

and staff, the Resource Centres for Learning, the networks of Mission Enablers, Training and Development Officers and Children and Youth Development Officers, the Church Related Community Workers, FURY, various URC associated groups, ecumenical partners and selected world church partners. It was envisaged that after consultation the proposal would be revised and finalised for discussion and approval by the Mission Council in November 2013 and submission to CWM in December 2013.

The consultation process

The consultation was conducted from March to September 2013. An interim report was brought to the Mission Committee in June 2013 and highlighted a number of common themes and questions that had arisen from the responses received by then. The Committee considered the paper and affirmed the points raised. It concluded that there was much to wrestle with for the church, acknowledging the need for spiritual renewal and confidence in faith sharing. The MSP3 group was asked to consider the comments made and to report back, once the consultation process was finished.

The group met again in September and by then responses had been received from nearly all the groups and committees identified, and in addition to that from a number of individuals and local congregations. They confirmed and reinforced the five themes that had already been identified in the interim report in June. They were:

1. **Evangelism as a focus:** faith sharing with confidence was affirmed as important, but there was a mixed response as to whether evangelism should become the focus of our work in the next few years.
2. **Defining evangelism:** responses were divided over the need and the feasibility of reaching a shared understanding of evangelism.
3. **Methodology:** the proposal was seen by many as top down and the wisdom of a centrally introduced strategy was queried. There were also questions over the methodology of the proposed research.
4. **Initiative overload:** many expressed wariness about more programmes and training, and made a plea for recognising what we already have and starting there.
5. **Mapping:** there were questions over mapping as opposed to story telling/sharing and various suggestions to use instead the mapping we already do (e.g. through LMMR).

Several other common themes were also noted. They related to equipping and resourcing people, piloting whatever is developed, and doing in-depth research as groundwork.

However, a much bigger issue emerged. Many of the comments pointed to the need to start several steps back, at the stage of pre-evangelism. Though some of our churches are actively engaged in evangelism, many are not ready. This may be for a variety of reasons, but a recurring theme from the consultation responses related to people lacking confidence in their ability to give expression to/articulate their faith. And that translates into a lack of confidence in God. Enabling this confidence therefore is key and that would involve addressing the underlying questions as to why people are not more confident in God and discovering and practising ways of expressing one's faith with confidence – from actual lived experience. Ultimately, it is about discipleship, “making a lifelong commitment to working out what being a Christian means in the whole of life, in order to make a world-transforming difference”, as the Methodist Church describes it. Discipleship is at its most basic a response to the call to



follow Jesus, it embraces all our lives (personal and public), it is a life-long process and it is always a journey with others. It is about cultivating grateful and generous faith communities and ministries rooted in vibrant worship, knowledge of scripture, tradition, identity as URC Christians and as generous stewards of God's gifts. It is the living out of our baptismal life with the help of the Holy Spirit.

As a result the group suggested the following way forward to the Mission Committee:

1. To reshape the MSP3 and to focus it on pre-evangelism and deepening discipleship.
2. To expand the group to develop the proposal further, including someone from Westminster College, the Mission Enablers and/or Training and Development Officers network, a Synod Moderator, a colleague from the CTE Churches Group for Evangelisation and possibly others.
3. To task the current (small) group with developing a brief for the new and expanded group.
4. To draw on the mapping of the new Synod Evangelist in West Midlands, which will provide useful information for the new group.
5. To bring the new group together in February 2014 to start working on a revised proposal for consideration by the Mission Committee in May 2014.

This was accepted by the Mission Committee when it met in early October. Mission Committee also noted the importance of linking the development of the proposal with the Learning Church consultation and with the General Assembly theme.



Paper J1

Nominations

Nominations Committee





Paper J1

Nominations Committee

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Carol Rogers, secretary carannrog@aol.com
Action required	For information
Draft resolution(s)	
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Update
Main points	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notification of the appointment of the Revd Neil Thorogood as Principal of Westminster College. 2. Notification of names to be brought to Assembly for appointment to service on committees. 3. Request for Mission Council guidance on the matter of extensions of appointments of committee conveners and members.
Previous relevant documents	
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of Impact

Financial	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Nominations

1. Westminster College Principal

The appointment group convened by the Revd Pauline Barnes appointed the Revd Neil Thorogood as Principal of Westminster College, Cambridge. Neil is currently the director of pastoral studies at Westminster, a post he has held since 2005. Before training for ministry he studied the geography of Africa and the Middle East at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, and taught English in Taiwan for two years. Ordained in 1992, he has served churches in Halifax and Welwyn Garden City. While working as a local minister in Halifax, he studied for an MA in Contextual Missiology.

2.. The following conveners have agreed to extend their terms of service:

- i) **International Exchange Reference Group:** Mr Chris Wright until 2016.
- ii) **Retired Ministers Housing Trust:** The Revd David Bedford until 2016

These names will be taken to General Assembly for appointment.

Replies are awaited to invitations to serve as Convener-Elect of the following committees:

Listed Buildings Advisory Group
 Education and Learning
 Disciplinary Process Commission Panel Deputy Convener
 URC Pensions Trust Ltd
 Westminster College Board of Governors

Replies are awaited to invitations to fill immediate vacancies on:

Church House Management Group
 Communication and Editorial Committee: (2 vacancies)
 Education and Learning

3. Extensions to Service

In recent months we have received a number of requests asking for extensions to individuals' periods of service as members or conveners of committees. Apart from the question of whether or not our committee has the authority to agree to any such diversions from the norm laid down by General Assembly, we have recognised that these invariably reasonable requests themselves raise questions about how well as a Church we operate our committee system. At this point we would simply like to put down a marker, so that Mission Council members may be aware that a conversation has been sparked within our own committee that probably needs to be taken up more widely.

We recognise that task-orientated committees often want members to stay on to see a piece of work to its conclusion; but we can see the dangers of preventing new blood from joining, which might well increase diversity and contribute something new to the tasks in hand. As we look for new committee members, and particularly conveners, we are aware of how little is done to prepare individuals to serve on our committees. We are grateful for names that are passed on to us by synods, but realise that many of the people we approach will not really know (even when we can provide a job spec) what is really going to be required of them. We have wondered about the possibility of something like taster sessions for some committees, but then are wary of making the nominating process too burdensome for nominees as well as for ourselves.

Where committees undertake particularly specialised work, we recognise the pressure for individuals (particularly conveners) to go on and on as they are persuaded that there really is no one else with their body of knowledge and expertise. We want to protect such people and to urge such committees to play some part in preparing successors; but at the same time it is clear that in some cases four or five years may be seem less than a reasonable term of service. We would be very pleased to hear the views of members of Mission Council on these and related matters. Comments may be directed to us via the General Secretary.

Paper J2

Westminster College, Cambridge

Nominations Committee

Church 2013
United
Church **Reformed**
Church Church 2013



Paper J2

Nominations Committee

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	John Proctor Jp225@cam.ac.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council appoints the Revd Dr John Bradbury as Director of Studies in Theology and Church History at Westminster College for a further seven years from 1st September 2014.
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Reappointment of Westminster College's Director of Studies in Theology and Church History
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	
Consultation has taken place with...	A review process took place at the request of the Westminster Governors.

Summary of Impact

Financial	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Westminster College, Cambridge

Revd Dr John Bradbury

Review of Tenure, 8th October 2013

John Bradbury was appointed by the United Reformed Church at the 2007 General Assembly, to serve as Director of Studies in Theology and Church History at Westminster College, Cambridge. The initial term of appointment was for seven years, to 31st August 2014.

As the seven-year term approaches, the Governors of the college set up a review group. Its remit was to meet John Bradbury, to review with him the work he had been doing, and – if this was indicated by the process – to forward to Mission Council an appropriate recommendation.

The review group was made up as follows:

- Prof Sir Anthony Bottoms (Convener of Governors; chair of group)
- Revd John Proctor (Acting Principal; clerk of group)
- Revd Dr Cindy Wesley (Cambridge Theological Federation)
- Prof Janet Soskice (University of Cambridge)
- Revd David Grosch-Miller (nominated by URC Secretary for Education and Learning)

The group met John Bradbury on 8th October 2013. It first sought papers from John, describing his service and reflecting on it, and received letters from two referees he had nominated. The group then spoke with John for about an hour, and was able to discuss with him all the issues that they and he wished to address.

The unanimous conviction of the group was that John had served with diligence and indeed with excellence in these six years, and that his tenure should be renewed. In the college, in the Cambridge Theological Federation and its partner universities, in the wider life of the URC, and in international ecumenical work, he had contributed with energy, imagination, care and insight to a broad range of church and educational duty. As teacher, tutor, colleague and theologian he is greatly valued and highly regarded. He continues to research actively in ways that not only earn him academic respect, but which also inform and support the life of the church.

The group therefore resolved to recommend that Dr Bradbury be reappointed for a further seven years, and their recommendation comes in the name of the Governors of Westminster College.

Further recommendations were addressed to John himself, and to those who work regularly with him.

Resolution

Mission Council appoints the Revd Dr John Bradbury as Director of Studies in Theology and Church History at Westminster College for a further seven years from 1st September 2014.

Paper J3

Supplementary Report

Nominations



Paper J3



NOMINATIONS: Supplementary Report

Resolution

Mission Council appoints

The Revd Nigel Uden as Convener Elect of the Board of Governors of Westminster College;
Mr Richard Nunn as Chair of the URC Pensions Trust;
Ms Ellen Quaye as a member of the Education and Learning Committee;
Mr Doug Maxell as a member of the Church House Management Group;
Mr Cliff Patten as a member of the Joint Property Strategy Group;
Revd Dick Gray as Deputy Treasurer.

All of these appointments to take place with immediate effect.

Paper L

Location of Church Offices

United Reformed Church Trust





Paper L

United Reformed Church Trust: Location of Church Offices

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Revd Prof David Thompson dmt3@cam.ac.uk
Action required	Discussion and feedback
Draft resolution(s)	
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	The paper gives a brief update on the possibility of sharing office premises with the Baptist Union in Didcot. It acknowledges that there is still work to do in exploring what other options may be available and commits to reporting further in due course.
Main points	The Trust will not be taking the Didcot option forward at this stage. Church House staff have been asked to identify ways in which the work might be delivered more effectively and efficiently. A number of possible options have been identified to be explored.
Previous relevant documents	Minutes of May 2013 Mission Council – statement by Prof Thompson, session 5 (p. 7).
Consultation has taken place with...	Church House staff, ecumenical partners.

Summary of Impact

Financial	The purpose of these explorations is to use Church resources more efficiently.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	It is possible that the eventual decision will be to share office premises with at least one ecumenical partner.

Location of Church Offices

At its last meeting Mission Council authorised the URC Trust to investigate the possibility of the Church sharing premises with the Baptist Union and Baptist Missionary Society at Didcot. This was the result of a suggestion made to the General Secretary from the Baptist side. There were two reasons for taking up this invitation: first, as a matter of ecumenical courtesy to a close partner Church; and secondly, the increasing pressure from the Church at large for some reduction in the overall Central Administration budget, comparable to that being asked of the Church's Committees. The Trust accepted a Baptist invitation to hold its October meeting at Baptist House, so that members could see the building themselves.

At the beginning of September the Secretary of the Trust, Sandi Hallam-Jones, the Treasurer and I visited Baptist House to explore the possibility in more detail. This was a very useful visit, which enabled us to prepare a background paper for the Trust meeting referred to above. In particular, we were impressed by the way in which a more modern building (1989) has enabled the Baptists to make good use of an open-plan office space. We were given evidence of the closer liaison between staff in different departments that it made possible. The Baptists have also achieved further economies of space during their recent reorganisation, by scanning a large quantity of paper files, which they were then able to shred.

When it became clear that the URC was taking the Baptist offer seriously, the two Baptist Trust Boards concerned reflected on how they wanted to move forward in the next period of time. As a result they indicated to us that, at this stage, they did not feel able to commit themselves to stay in their present building in Didcot beyond five years. Effectively, this made it impossible for the Trust to recommend that this option be considered further at this stage.

However, the Trustees did feel that it would be appropriate to consider some of the wider issues which impact on the making of a decision such as this. These touched upon future staffing needs, whether programmes and administration needed to be co-located, the possible sharing of some back-office functions with other partners and the possible refurbishing and updating of Church House.

The Trust agreed that progress so far should be shared with Mission Council.

The Trust is continuing to explore other options and will report further in due course.



Paper M1

Membership of Mission Council

Clerk





Paper M1

Clerk: Membership of Mission Council

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Margaret Carrick Smith clerk@urc.org.uk
Action required	Resolution
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council agrees to present the following resolution to the General Assembly: General Assembly resolves that the Convener of the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee shall be a member of Mission Council.
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To add the Convener of the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee (PRWC) to the membership of Mission Council in addition to the conveners of all other standing committees.
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	
Consultation has taken place with...	General Secretary, Convener PRWC

Summary of Impact

Financial	Cost of an additional person at Mission Council plus travel expenses.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Membership of Mission Council

When the membership of Mission Council was determined it was decided that the conveners of all the standing committees should be included apart from the Convener of the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee (PRWC). This was because that committee is not a programme committee, and most of its work is by its nature confidential and not open to questioning at Mission Council or the Assembly. It has been understood, however, that the Convener of the PRWC would receive Mission Council papers and would be welcome to attend if the business warranted it.

The PRWC Convener is a member of the General Assembly and it has recently become clear that it would often be appropriate for the her/him to be present at Mission Council also. It is therefore proposed that the Assembly be invited to add the Convener of the PRWC to the membership of Mission Council.

Resolution

Mission Council agrees to present the following resolution to the General Assembly: General Assembly resolves that the Convener of the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee shall be a member of Mission Council.

M1

United Reformed Church • Mission Council, November 2013

Paper M2

The Officers of General Assembly
General Secretary



Paper M2



General Secretary: The Officers of General Assembly

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Roberta Rominger roberta.rominger@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision on recommendation to General Assembly 2014
Draft resolution(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Mission Council recommends that General Assembly agrees that the following office-holders should be recognised as the Officers of the United Reformed Church and its Assembly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the serving Moderators of General Assembly General Secretary Clerk Treasurer Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee. Mission Council agrees that the three Deputy General Secretaries and the Deputy Treasurer should be members of Mission Council, but not of the Mission Council Advisory Group. Mission Council recommends that General Assembly agrees to the addition of the three Deputy General Secretaries and the Deputy Treasurer as members of Assembly and Mission Council.
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To clarify the list of Assembly officers in light of the new deputy general secretary posts
Main points	The paper recommends that the three DGSs should be members of Mission Council and Assembly but not officers of Assembly.
Previous relevant documents	
Consultation has taken place with...	The Officers of the Assembly

Summary of Impact

Financial	Cost of attendance at Mission Council and Assembly
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

The Officers of General Assembly

Since 1993, the following office holders have been recognised as the officers of the United Reformed Church and its General Assembly:

- the serving Moderator(s) of General Assembly
- General Secretary
- Deputy General Secretary
- Clerk
- Treasurer
- Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee.

In May 2013 Mission Council authorised three new posts; Deputy General Secretary Administration and Resources, Deputy General Secretary Ministries of the Church, and Deputy General Secretary Mission. With three new Deputy General Secretaries replacing the previous single post, the question arises as to whether the new DGSs should be officers of the Assembly.

In October 2012 Mission Council agreed to seek a Deputy Treasurer. It is also important to be clear whether this postholder would be an officer of Assembly.

These resolutions are proposed by the current officers.

Resolutions

1. **Mission Council recommends that General Assembly agrees that the following office-holders should be recognised as the Officers of the United Reformed Church and its Assembly**
 - **the serving Moderators of General Assembly**
 - **General Secretary**
 - **Clerk**
 - **Treasurer**
 - **Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee.**
2. **Mission Council agrees that the three Deputy General Secretaries and the Deputy Treasurer should be members of Mission Council, but not of the Mission Council Advisory Group.**
3. **Mission Council recommends that General Assembly agrees to the addition of the three Deputy General Secretaries and the Deputy Treasurer as members of Assembly and Mission Council.**

Paper M3

Minor change to the
URC structure

Clerk





Paper M3

Clerk: Minor change to the URC Structure

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Margaret Carrick Smith clerk@urc.org.uk
Action required	Resolution
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council agrees that in Paragraph 2.(3)(d) of the Structure the words “(currently four)” be deleted.
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Remove an anomalous comment in the Structure
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	
Consultation has taken place with...	General Secretary and officers of the LPAG

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None

Minor change to the URC Structure

When changes were made to the Structure in order to put into effect the removal of one level of council between the General Assembly and the local church, it was necessary to retain district councils for legal reasons. The membership of district councils was significantly amended and now includes the following: *“(d) Such number of representatives of local churches within the district (currently four) as the synod shall direct;”*

Since there are thirteen synods there could be thirteen different numbers in this category, and it is therefore proposed that the words in brackets be deleted.

These words do not form part of the Structure, but are simply included for information. It is therefore open to Mission Council to make this decision by a single resolution. There is no need to follow the constitutional change process.

Resolution

Mission Council agrees that in Paragraph 2.(3)(d) of the Structure the words “(currently four)” be deleted.

M3

United Reformed Church • Mission Council, November 2013

Paper M4

Consensus Adviser

Mission Council Advisory Group



Paper M4



Mission Council Advisory Group: Consensus Adviser

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Roberta Rominger roberta.rominger@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Mission Council re-affirms its commitment to the use of consensus decision making for the strategic decisions facing the Church. Mission Council asks the Education & Learning Committee and the General Secretary to ensure that ongoing reflection and training on consensus methods takes place, not only for incoming Assembly Moderators but for others in leadership roles across the Church. Mission Council agrees that the role of consensus adviser should come to an end at the conclusion of General Assembly 2014.
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	The current consensus adviser's post finishes in 2014 and a decision is required about the future of the post.
Main points	The Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG) recommends discontinuing the post and fostering consensus decision making through other means.
Previous relevant documents	May 2009 Mission Council paper
Consultation has taken place with...	Assembly officers and present and previous consensus advisers

Summary of Impact

Financial	The recommended reflection and training will incur costs; some money will be saved by not having a dedicated consensus adviser at Mission Council and Assembly.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Consensus Adviser: future of the post

The Revd Pauline Barnes completes her term as consensus adviser in July 2014. It would be good for Mission Council to decide whether a successor should be appointed. This paper comes to Mission Council with Pauline's support.

The Clerk has researched the origins of the post. Here are her findings:

- Neither the documents in support of the adoption of Consensus Decision Making nor the Standing Orders which implemented it make any mention of a Consensus Adviser.
- In December 2008 Mission Council passed a resolution from MCAG which appointed Elizabeth Nash as Consensus Adviser "until General Assembly 2010 in the first instance".
- In May 2009 proposals were brought to Mission Council (see the first item of Session 2) which included at 1.10 «A Consensus Adviser be nominated by Nominations to both General Assembly and Mission Council, and four consensus facilitators be nominated by Nominations to General Assembly". The minutes record the decisions reached for many of these proposals, but do not record what was decided concerning this one. I can find no reference to it in subsequent minutes. No resolution in these terms was presented to Assembly.
- In 2010 Assembly appointed Pauline Barnes as Consensus Adviser until Assembly 2014.
- The Standing Orders include in the remit of the facilitation group "help and support the Moderator". (See SO 2c.(b))

The Clerk concludes from this that Assembly, although it has appointed a Consensus Adviser, has not resolved that there should always be one. The previous Clerk, James Breslin, treated the post as transitional in anticipation of the day when all procedural advice would once again lie with the Clerk.

The Assembly officers exchanged emails on this subject over the summer. There seems to be clarity that it is no longer felt to be helpful to have a consensus adviser at the Moderator's elbow giving procedural advice, especially when there is a Clerk at the other elbow speaking into the other ear. The Clerk is confident that she can give appropriate procedural advice as required.

However, there was also an observation from the officers that the URC is at an early stage in its practice of consensus decision making and that we must continue to develop our skill in this area. This view was strongly endorsed in conversations with Pauline Barnes and Elizabeth Nash, her predecessor as consensus adviser. The question is whether that development need is best served by a dedicated consensus adviser or whether it can be entrusted to the other processes of our Church (review, agenda planning, induction sessions for new Assembly Moderators). Obviously there is nothing to prevent us from calling on the consensus "experts" among us for occasional training and review events.

Resolution

1. **Mission Council re-affirms its commitment to the use of consensus decision making for the strategic decisions facing the Church.**
2. **Mission Council asks the Education & Learning Committee and the General Secretary to ensure that ongoing reflection and training on consensus methods takes place, not only for incoming Assembly Moderators but for others in leadership roles across the Church.**
3. **Mission Council agrees that the role of consensus adviser should come to an end at the conclusion of General Assembly 2014.**

Paper M5

New name for the Ministries of the Church Department

General Secretary





Paper M5

General Secretary: New name for the Ministries of the Church Department

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Roberta Rominger roberta.rominger@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council agrees that, with immediate effect, the Ministries of the Church Department should be known as the Discipleship Department, and the Deputy General Secretary responsible for that department should be called the Deputy General Secretary Discipleship.
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	The proposal is for a change of name of the Ministries of the Church department.
Main points	The new name more accurately describes the work of the department. It would foster the self-understanding of church members that they are disciples of Jesus. It would enable certain work lost with the termination of the Life & Witness office to be recovered. It has helpful ecumenical resonance.
Previous relevant documents	
Consultation has taken place with...	Church House staff, relevant committee conveners, HRAG

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Would open new possibilities for ecumenical collaboration

Ministries of the Church Department: new name

Mission Council agrees that, with immediate effect, the Ministries of the Church Department should be known as the Discipleship Department, and the Deputy General Secretary responsible for that department should be called the Deputy General Secretary Discipleship.

The Ministries of the Church Department comprises these areas of work:

- Children's & Youth Work
- Church Related Community Work
- Education & Learning
- Ministries
- Safeguarding

What is the unifying theme that holds these disparate areas of work together? "Ministries of the Church" isn't a very good name. It is intended to encompass the various ministries of the whole people of God and all their different forms of service, but in practice it is easily misunderstood as referring to one kind of minister.

Discipleship is an excellent word to encompass these areas of work. The department is concerned with cradle to grave discipleship – the formation of the people of God into their full potential for faithfulness and service. It is about equipping and supporting people of all ages in their Christian development and fulfilment of their vocation.

However, there is a more fundamental reason for the change. Until church members think of themselves as disciples, there isn't much hope for the renewal of the Church. This has not been typical language in the URC... why not? Renaming the department is a step towards putting the call to discipleship firmly at the heart of our self-understanding as a Church.

The new name will also enable Church House to address work which currently falls between the cracks. When the Life & Witness Department was dissolved under the Catch the Vision restructuring, a new Secretary for Mission was appointed to take up its work on evangelism and church growth. But who updates the leaflet on "They've asked me to be a church secretary"? Where does the Retreats Group sit? Or the Healing Advisers Group? Who coordinates the synods' work on local church vitality? Who monitors the superb documents emerging from the World Council of Churches, the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe and other world church partners and ensures that Mission Council and Assembly are enabled to benefit from the dynamic thinking that is happening around us? At the moment, spirituality and prayer are an uneasy add-on to the busy Mission Committee agenda. While the Faith & Order Committee engages in a certain amount of theological reflection on behalf of the Church, they would no doubt welcome partnership with a department which fostered deeper spiritual and theological awareness across the Church, day in and day out. All of this work happens but it would benefit from the coherence of a unifying theme and perspective.

The current staff in the department do not have capacity for much additional work. The Deputy General Secretary would have some time for hands-on involvement. But the proposal is not for new initiatives as much as a coherent overview from which recommendations can flow.

It is also significant that some of our ecumenical partners, the Methodist Church and the Congregational Federation in particular, have done significant work on the theme of discipleship. Local churches already make extensive use of ecumenical resources but there is everything to be gained in combining our energy and creativity with that of our partners in exploring what it means to be a disciple of Jesus in the 21st century.

Paper M6

Engagement with 20-40 year olds

General Secretary





Paper M6

General Secretary: Engagement with 20-40 year olds

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Roberta Rominger roberta.rominger@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mission Council agrees to form a task group of six people with the insight and expertise to give leadership on the issue of the integration of 20 to 40 year olds into the life of the United Reformed Church. 2. Mission Council asks the Nominations Committee to identify the appropriate people to serve. 3. Mission Council asks the Mission Council Advisory Group to approve the terms of reference for this task group, including a date for completion of the work, and to report to the next meeting of Mission Council.
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To address Assembly Res 33 on the integration of 20 to 40 year olds into the life of the URC
Main points	A task group is required
Previous relevant documents	Assembly 2012 Reports pp. 224-6; Assembly 2012 Record p. 43
Consultation has taken place with...	Church House staff

Summary of Impact

Financial	Expenses for task group meetings and investigations
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Draws upon work by partner churches; collaboration likely

The Church's engagement with 20 to 40 year olds

General Assembly 2012 agreed a resolution brought by the Youth Assembly as follows:

General Assembly celebrates the contributions of young adults in the life of the United Reformed Church and recognises:

- **the reducing number of adults aged 20-40 in the United Reformed Church and**
- **the concerns of the United Reformed Church Youth Assembly 2012 that many people on reaching the age of 26 and leaving FURY drift away from any engagement in the United Reformed Church.**

General Assembly asks Mission Council to address these issues and consider how to improve the integration of this age group at every level of the United Reformed Church.

This resolution reinforces the case for a Department of Discipleship at Church House which could have responded immediately to a challenge such as this. The Connective meeting of senior Church House staff discussed how the resolution should be implemented and they offer these observations and suggestions to Mission Council.

1. This concern is not unique to the URC – there is extensive research on the subject and good practice to be drawn upon. In particular, the Methodist “Missing Generation” report should be a primary source for statistical information and analysis.
2. The real issue is the transition a young adult makes from youth participation (often high energy and exciting) to adult belonging (dull by comparison). This can only be enabled in the local church. But churches would probably welcome guidance and suggestions.
3. The post-FURY age tends to be a period of transition, personally, socially and professionally. The experience of transition on multiple levels militates against participation in a single local congregation. Some people find Christian nurture through higher education (or further education) chaplaincies. Others find it through social media. The recent Faith & Order Committee discussion on the relevance of religious orders for the future of the United Reformed Church offered intriguing models for alternative forms of belonging and discipleship.
4. Fresh Expressions has a lot to contribute to the discussion, as does university chaplaincy. There is to be a round table group thinking about how Fresh Expressions can best serve young adults. Catherine Lewis-Smith (EM1 student at Westminster) is a member.
5. Vigilance was needed as to whether the URC's structures discouraged this age group from getting involved.
6. The best way to engage with these issues would be through a Mission Council task group of people with the relevant insight and expertise.

Resolutions

- 1. Mission Council agrees to form a task group of six people with the insight and expertise to give leadership on the issue of the integration of 20 to 40 year olds into the life of the United Reformed Church.**
- 2. Mission Council asks the Nominations Committee to identify the appropriate people to serve.**
- 3. Mission Council asks the Mission Council Advisory Group to approve the terms of reference for this task group, including a date for completion of the work, and to report to the next meeting of Mission Council.**

Paper N

Human Sexuality Task Group





Paper N

Human Sexuality Task Group

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Elizabeth Caswell ecaswell@btinternet.com
Action required	Resolution
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council affirms the work of its Human Sexuality Task Group and encourages it to follow the direction of travel set out in Paper N.
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Description of work thus far and direction of travel for the future
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	General Assembly Commitment 2007
Consultation has taken place with...	Law & Polity Advisory Group

Summary of Impact

Financial	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Human Sexuality Task Group

Remit

1. To promote awareness of the General Assembly Commitment of 2007 and to continue dialogue around the issues it raises.
2. In the area of human sexuality, to aid the United Reformed Church to respond to changes in the law proposed by Her Majesty's Government (e.g. proposals relating to same-sex marriage).
3. To advise on the complexities resulting from the present stance of the United Reformed Church.

Membership

Jacob Addo, Karen Campbell, Elizabeth Caswell (Convenor), John Hardaker, Val Morrison, Neil Riches and Justine Wyatt.

Meetings

The Group has met four times, in January, residentially in April, July and September.

What we have done so far

We have spent time, as any new group or committee will do, in getting to know each other; we believe that we have achieved a level of trust which enables us to speak openly about sensitive matters despite the wide divergence of views in the group.

The Government had announced its intention to bring forward a same-sex marriage Bill for England and Wales before we had first met, and similar legislation was already proposed in Scotland. We therefore agreed that same-sex marriage had to occupy the major part of our time for the foreseeable future. The Law and Polity Advisory Group has taken the lead in understanding the legislation and in representing a United Reformed Church perspective to relevant committees at Westminster; Augur Pearce, LPAG Secretary, has attended our Group twice and briefed us fully between meetings. The Synod of Scotland, led by its Church and Society Committee, has responded to consultations concerning the Scottish legislation and has furnished our group with copies of this; in turn their Secretary, Alan Patterson, receives all our Task Group papers and may attend the Group when he thinks this is advisable. We regret that we failed to establish this link more quickly.

Group members have prepared and discussed papers on the quest for theological consistency in understanding different aspects of human sexuality, on how we understand and use the Bible, on a biblical understanding of marriage, on situation ethics, on a scientific view of sex and gender and on gay, lesbian and 'queer' theologies of relationships including marriage. We have also collated the views of churches and faith groups which have expressed support for same-sex marriage.

We had planned to consult Synods about the level of registration of local churches since General Assembly 2012 for Civil Partnerships. Anecdotal information is that only eight churches have done so thus far; but it was agreed that this should form part of the Annual Returns, together with information about the number of marriages conducted.

Through Reform and the URC web-site we have invited comments about same-sex marriage and how the United Reformed Church should respond. The number of responses has been small. Most recently we have been focused on concerns about how robust the legal protection for ministers and local churches who decline to conduct same-sex marriages will prove to be. At the time of writing this is ongoing work and we are indebted to Augur Pearce for his time and advice and to the GEAR Reference Group for sharing with us their work on this.

The direction of travel

We are not yet in a position to draft any possible resolutions for General Assembly 2014 but we are only too aware that the March Mission Council will need to see and approve such resolutions. What we can share is our direction of travel.

1. The Task Group is unanimous in its desire to uphold the 2007 Commitment. Differences of view across the church are profound on this subject, as of course on many others. This is largely, although not exclusively, because of the different ways we understand and handle scripture. The Commitment gives a way to recognise these differences whilst acknowledging something greater which binds us together.
2. The Group will wish to enable Assembly to have a discussion about same-sex marriage and our Church's response which reflects all relevant points of view and enables the kind of 'hearing' of others which lies at the heart of our Commitment to live with difference.
3. It is possible that we will propose that the Church follows the same route that it did with Civil Partnerships. This would leave us with no single denominational view but give freedom to ministers and churches to follow their consciences. However we are concerned that the Westminster Act does not offer real parity with opposite-sex marriage. We are grateful to the Revd Dick Wolff for alerting us to the lack of inclusion of unfaithfulness/adultery as unreasonable behaviour and therefore, as with opposite-sex marriage, a ground for divorce. This is a major inconsistency. Lady Elizabeth Butler-Schloss proposed an amendment to deal with this in the House of Lords' debate but it was defeated. As this legislation stands same-sex marriages are exempt from the expectation of sexual faithfulness; this is a major re-definition of marriage.
4. The understanding that there is proper legal protection for ministers and churches not participating in the solemnising of same-sex marriages will have to be demonstrable; there is ongoing work on this, as indicated above, at the time of writing.
5. We will wish to honour the large number of local churches who are in Local Ecumenical Partnerships or who host churches/faith groups of other traditions and for whom decisions will be more complex. We are attempting to assess the impact on our ecumenical partners of Assembly's 2012 decision regarding Civil Partnerships and of any potential decision on same-sex marriage. Nevertheless we should not be distracted from our own conscientious search as a Church for the will of God for us.

We would value the opinion of Mission Council about the route we are taking and therefore ask you to discuss this Resolution.

Resolution

Mission Council affirms the work of its Human Sexuality Task Group and encourages it to follow the direction of travel set out in Paper N.

Paper O1

Human Resources Advisory
Group (HRAG)

Church 2013
United
Church **Reformed**
Church Church 2013



Paper 01

HUMAN RESOURCES ADVISORY GROUP (HRAG): General Report

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Keith G. Webster kwebsterwms@btinternet.com
Action required	For information
Draft resolution(s)	
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Report providing an update on the recent work of HRAG
Main points	Recent Appointments Interim HR Arrangements in Church House
Previous relevant documents	
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of Impact

Financial	The posts described are within existing budget provision.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG)

General Report

There are three elements to the HRAG report:-

- 1) Routine work
- 2) Interim HR arrangements
- 3) The review of the General Secretariat has continued following the resolutions agreed at Mission Council in May 2013 and the report on this work is contained in a separate paper.

Current membership of HRAG for information:

Keith Webster (convener from May 2013)
Alastair Forsyth
Mike Gould
Peter Pay
Revd Wendy White

In attendance:

Revd Roberta Rominger – General Secretary
Sandi Hallam-Jones – Interim Human Resources Manager

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

HRAG expresses its gratitude to Rowena Francis, as Convener, who steered in the first instance the Staffing Advisory Group and subsequently HRAG through the General Secretariat review, at the same time ensuring that the routine work was undertaken.

HRAG was established in October 2012 until July 2015 with a remit to provide a unified reference point on HR matters for Mission Council (General Assembly) / Trust and Church House personnel.

Routine work report – May to September 2013

The following job description and / or posts have been considered:

General Assembly posts:

Secretary for Church and Society who is a member of Joint Public Issues Team
A successful appointment was made and Andrew Bradstock, who held the same post between 2000 and 2005, starts in post on 16 September 2013.

Principal of Westminster College – recruitment in progress.

Staff posts:

Safeguarding Officer – a joint post shared with the Baptist Union. An appointment was made on the second round of recruitment when this was advertised as a URC post and the new Safeguarding Officer, Amy Slennett started in post on 8 July 2013. Services will be provided to the Baptists via a Service Level Agreement.

Children's & Youth Work Programme Officer – a successful appointment was made and Natalie Husk started in post on 1 July 2013.

Children's & Youth Work Support Staff – PA to the Head of C&YW – recruitment is in process following the departure of the previous incumbent at the end of July.

Property Maintenance Assistant – Retired Minister's Housing Society – action had been taken to review the operation. Having put in place a robust system for acquiring properties the next stage was to put in place a similarly robust maintenance system. This post will build a short, medium and long term maintenance programme for all properties, both new and old, in order to maintain a level of service that enables the Society to meet its legislative and moral duties as Landlord.

Interim Human Resources arrangements

As was noted in the report to May 2013 Mission Council, no appointment of an HR Manager was made on the first round of recruitment in February 2013 and consequently HRAG was pursuing interim options in this regard.

HRAG is pleased to report that Sandi Hallam-Jones, URC Trust Secretary, who had been providing high level HR advice, has taken on the role of Interim HR Manager with effect from 19 May 2013. The appointment is part time (2 days per week).

The priorities for the role are:

- ongoing HR support
- an audit of current processes and procedures (the report to May Mission Council noted that anomalies in central URC employment practices had been identified during the General Secretariat review)
- identification of the longer term HR requirements.

Paper O2

Review of General Secretariat

Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG)





Paper 02

HUMAN RESOURCES ADVISORY GROUP (HRAG): Review of General Secretariat

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Keith G. Webster kwebsterwms@btinternet.com
Action required	For information
Draft resolution(s)	
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Update on the review of the General Secretariat
Main points	Preparation of job descriptions: Revised job description for the General Secretary New job descriptions for the three Deputy General Secretary posts
Previous relevant documents	May Mission Council Paper B1
Consultation has taken place with...	General Assembly Moderators – past, present, elect Clerk to Assembly Staff Secretaries and Departmental staff

Summary of Impact

Financial	The re-structuring is cost neutral. There will be some recruitment costs.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	The new structure creates an alignment with the structures of ecumenical partners.

Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG)

Review of General Secretariat

HRAG replaced the Staffing Advisory Group with an agreed remit that brought together most staffing matters under this one group to give consistency and a unified approach.

This group also carries as a separate remit the review of the General Secretariat agreed by Mission Council in November 2011. The aim of this review is limited to making more effective and flexible the management of Church House. It is not about managing the Church nor its undergirding theology. As the medium term strategy group engages the councils of the Church more fully in those debates it is anticipated that nothing in this review will be a block or hindrance to it.

This paper details work done in regard to the resolutions of Mission Council agreed in May 2013 and should be read in conjunction with Paper B1 of that meeting. It is advised that members of Mission Council have read paper B1 recently.

At the May 2013 meeting Mission Council resolved, in summary, to:

1. Establish a General Secretariat Team, convened by the General Secretary, consisting of the General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary Ministries of the Church, Deputy General Secretary Mission and Deputy General Secretary Administration and Resources.
2. Establish three strands of work – Ministries, Mission and Administration and Resources.
3. Instruct HRAG
 - a. to enable and facilitate the implementation of parts 1 and 2.
 - b. to include a revision of the job description of the General Secretary and the development of job descriptions and person specifications for the three 'Head of...' posts.
 - c. to work with the Mission Team to identify the way forward in the further development of the Mission Team with a leader and appropriate internal management processes. This to be within current Mission Team staffing levels and for report at the November 2013 meeting of Mission Council.

This report deals with the work undertaken in order to meet the requirements of the instruction to HRAG set out in 3 above.

1. Job Descriptions and Person Specifications

The first priority has been the development of the job descriptions for the four members of the General Secretariat.

It was noted that one of the concerns regarding the new structure and associated job descriptions was that the management issues highlighted in the report of the Resolution 38 Commission (Paper C) would be addressed. The re-structuring and associated General Secretariat job descriptions have been reviewed in the light of the issues raised and it is believed that these have been satisfactorily taken into account.

1.1 General Secretary

In the light of the requirements of the new structure the job description and person specification for the General Secretary have been revised and a copy for information of the final draft is contained in Appendix 1 of this report.

The first draft was sent to the General Assembly Moderators (past, present and elect) for comment and sense checking. In the light of the comments received the draft was refined further.

1.2 Deputy General Secretaries.....

Following on from Mission Council in May HRAG met with Staff and Conveners from each strand. The aim was in the first instance to encourage discussion around the three strands and their internal workings, in accordance with the outline requirements as set out in May Mission Council Paper B1, and then to focus on the job description and person specifications for each of the three Deputy General Secretary (DGS) posts as agreed by Mission Council. These consultations proved to be very helpful in enabling the preparation of a robust and clear job description for each of the three DGS posts.

The agenda for the consultation meetings was two-fold:-

- Addressing the scope of management and accountability in each department.
- Gathering information to enable the preparation of the job description and person specification for each of the Deputy General Secretary posts.

A first draft of each job description was prepared and then sent to the senior staff in each department as appropriate for comment and sense checking. In the light of the comments received the drafts were refined further.

Underpinning the re-structuring and the development of the associated DGS job descriptions were the objectives of ensuring that:

- a. no one manager has more than 4-6 staff members reporting directly to them, and
- b. lines of accountability are clear ensuring effective line management that develops staff, co-ordinates the work and provides effective performance management.

Although there are some generic aspects of the three DGS posts, it was very clear from the consultations held earlier in the year that the three departments/teams did not need to be the same in structure or ways of operation.

In addition to the core responsibilities it was necessary to allocate as appropriate the responsibilities of the former Deputy General Secretary role. It should be noted that each new DGS role was seen as “heading up a department” to which has been assigned those Deputy General Secretary responsibilities which are appropriate to be associated with the job. It is not a “Deputy General Secretary” job which coincidentally happens to be “heading up a department”.

Copies for information of the final draft job descriptions for each of the three DGS posts are contained in Appendix 2.

1.3 Mission Team

There was a particular requirement to identify the way forward for the Mission Team with regard to a leader and the appropriate internal management processes. The consultation with the all the Team proved most helpful in this regard and account was taken of the issues raised in the preparation of the job description. Some further work will be necessary to finalise the detailed approaches to be adopted once the DGS Mission is in place.

The consultation appears to have settled the matter of the departmental structure. We also appear to have got to the point where the team recognise that a member of the team can be the candidate for the DGS job, at the same time as carrying out their functional role. Having said that, because of the requirement for the DGS management responsibilities it will be necessary for the “internal candidate” to reallocate and delegate some functional responsibilities to create a new set of internal management processes. Since we do not have final confirmation as to who that person will be the final set of internal management processes cannot as yet be identified. This will need to be worked out with that person in post. The job description in effect sets out the high level internal management processes without spelling out the fine detail.

1.4 Ministries of the Church

During the preparation of the job description, arising out of the consultations, it became apparent that there was a strongly held view amongst the staff that a more appropriate title for this department would be “Discipleship”.

This matter is being dealt with in a separate paper. HRAG appreciates the rationale for and would be supportive of such a change.

1.5 Church Affiliation

1.5.1 Current Practice

The reports to General Assembly 1996 identified four categories of affiliation for Assembly appointed posts, as follows:

1. posts restricted to ministers of the URC;
2. posts restricted to members of the URC;
3. posts restricted to members of the URC and to members of those churches which belong to one or more of the three world bodies, WARC, Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council and CWM;
4. all other central staff appointments are open to persons of any church affiliation.

These standards have been used consistently since then when establishing the affiliation requirement associated with an Assembly appointed post.

1.5.2 Employment Legislation Background

In reviewing the three new DGS jobs HRAG became aware of the requirements in relation to those circumstances where it is lawful for an employer to treat individuals differently on the basis of belief, if possessing a particular religion or belief is a Genuine Occupational

Requirement (GOR) for the post. In addition the GOR has to relate to the job not the organisation or context. This requirement has to be proved by the employer and must reflect the nature of the work and the context within which the specific role sits.

HRAG understand that a religious organisation advertising for a minister of religion is allowed to specify that applicants for the post must be a member of that religion but, for example, it would be unlikely that a more general “administrative/managerial” post in the same organisation could have a genuine occupational requirement.

In summary, the requirement must be:

- crucial to the post, and not just one of several important factors;
- relating to the nature of the job in question, rather than the nature of the employing organisation;
- proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

The consideration by HRAG of affiliation also brought to the fore two separate issues:

- the particular case concerning the Deputy General Secretary Administration and Resources;
- the general case concerning Assembly Appointed Posts.

1.5.3 Deputy General Secretary Administration and Resources

Dealing with the DGS Administration and Resources first, HRAG recognised the distinction between the functional requirements of this job – HR, finance, etc. – which do not in themselves require any particular beliefs – and the other aspects, specifically being a member of the General Secretariat and hence the leadership role and the possibility of deputising for the General Secretary.

Having given the matter considerable thought, because of the complexity we decided that some legal advice was necessary and so approached Towns Needham, submitting the job description and person specification. The advice received is as follows:

- *As background, under the Equality Act 2010 (EqA'10) it is possible to directly discriminate by specifying that a job applicant has a certain 'Protected Characteristic' if, having regard to the context of the work, it is an occupational requirement and application of the requirement is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. The 'Protected Characteristic' of religion or belief includes holding and not holding a particular religion or belief. Under EqA'10 the occupational requirement must be crucial to the post and not merely one of several duties and tasks.*
- *Having reviewed the Job Description for the DGS Administration and Resources role it is my view that there is nothing crucial to the post that would justify imposing a requirement that the applicant must hold a particular religion or belief.*
- *I certainly see the view that as part of the General Secretariat the post holder will be involved in the leadership of the Church generally and therefore there is the requirement of Christianity. However, I do not believe that this is sufficient to justify the occupational requirement and if it was challenged, an Employment Judge is likely to find it to be discriminatory. I believe that the aim that you are trying to achieve can be met with the requirement that the applicant is willing to work within the Christian ethos.*

- *In summary I would advise against imposing any requirement that applicants for the post of DGS Admin & Resources must be a Christian. If this was challenged it is likely to be found to be discriminatory. If this was the case, the Church would be required to pay damages in addition to the legal fees to defend the claim and it is also likely to lead to negative publicity.*

The advice appears to be quite clear that for the DGS Administration and Resources, whereas we can specify a **willingness to work within a Christian ethos**, to require the job holder “to have any church affiliation” would contravene the Equality Act 2010, with all that such action would entail. The job description attached in appendix 2a reflects this advice. However, there is ongoing discussion with the Assembly Officers on this point and further legal advice will be taken if necessary; Mission Council will be given an update at the November meeting.

1.5.4 Affiliation Recommendations

Accordingly HRAG makes the following recommendations for the new DGS posts:

- a) the postholder of DGS Mission **will need** to be either an ordained Minister, or a member of the URC, or a member of one of the three world bodies (World Communion of Reformed Churches, Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council, Council for World Mission) – the GOR is that leading the Mission within the Church requires a committed Christian;
- b) the postholder of DGS Ministries of the Church **will need** to be either an ordained Minister, or a member of the URC, or a member of one of the three world bodies (World Communion of Reformed Churches, Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council, Council for World Mission) – the GOR is that leading Discipleship within the URC requires a committed Christian;
- c) the postholder of DGS Administration & Resources – to be confirmed after further consultation.

HRAG also recommends that the Secretary for Ministries must be an ordained URC minister.

1.5.5 Assembly Appointed Posts in general

Although we have not carried out any detailed work we believe that certainly one and possibly two other Assembly appointed posts, currently classified in accordance with Affiliation category 4, would also be subject to the above advice regarding GOR. Accordingly we are looking into this matter further.

2. Implementation

2.1 Recruitment and Appointment Process

The three DGS posts are Assembly Appointments and so the normal procedure of constituting an appointments panel will be followed.

HRAG has recommended to the Nominations Committee the names of potential panel members.

2.2 Line Management Training

The requirement for line management training was identified in the review as an issue. HRAG is currently investigating possible appropriate training options and will make recommendations in due course.

Appendix 1

JOB DESCRIPTION



JOB TITLE:	General Secretary
RESPONSIBLE TO:	The General Assembly (via an agreed, specified, Moderator of General Assembly)
RESPONSIBLE FOR:	The management of three Deputy General Secretaries and direct Administrative support and oversight of the Synod Moderators
SALARY:	Minister's stipend will apply
<p>JOB SUMMARY: To provide theological and pastoral leadership and operational oversight to the URC by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	

Principal Responsibilities and Duties

1. Provide theological and pastoral leadership for the denomination and maintain its well-being and unity by:
 - a. ensuring that the life and mission of the URC are undergirded by its theological understanding, as expressed in the Basis of Union; and
 - b. responding to opportunities to engage with local churches, Synods and others.
 - c. fostering the unity and wellbeing of the Church
2. Provide operational oversight and leadership to the URC by:
 - a. ensuring that appointment and review groups for Synod Moderators are established and acting as consultant to them;
 - b. providing oversight to the Synod Moderators;
 - c. responding to Synod issues and opportunities as appropriate;
 - d. being an ex-officio member of all Assembly standing committees and the URC Trust;
 - e. ensuring the effective work and reporting of Faith & Order and Equal Opportunities Committees and Mission Council Advisory Groups.
3. Service both General Assembly and Mission Council by:
 - a. assuring the work of the agenda setting body(ies);
 - b. ensuring that all business is properly prepared for the Assembly and Council;
 - c. ensuring that members are given information they need;
 - d. ensuring that meeting facilities are adequate;
 - e. ensuring that the records are properly kept;
 - f. ensuring that the decisions of the Assembly are reported to the Church;
 - g. ensuring the implementation of the decisions and policies agreed by General Assembly and by Mission Council;
 - h. acting as required in relation to the Disciplinary Process and Incapacity Procedures.

4. Provide leadership to, and management of, the three Deputy General Secretaries who form the General Secretariat by:
 - a. agreeing the objectives and priorities for each of the Deputy General Secretaries in the light of Assembly and Mission Council decisions
 - c. ensuring the Church House work plans are coordinated and delivered
 - c. fostering an organisational climate that releases and focuses the energy that comes from competent, motivated specialists
 - d. monitoring and managing individual performance within the Secretariat agreeing appropriate personal development.

5. Oversee the coordination of the work of Church House by:
 - a. ensuring the effective functioning of the General Secretariat team;
 - b. ensuring effective two-way communications with Church House staff through team and Connective meetings and other mechanisms as required;
 - c. enabling cross-department project and task groups to meet agreed objectives;
 - d. preparing, and being the budget holder for, the General Secretariat budget;
 - e. ensuring personal and staff compliance with all relevant legal requirements (e.g. Health and Safety, Safeguarding, Data Protection).

6. Foster, and maintain, links with the wider Church by:
 - a. developing relationships with senior officers of other Churches and being alert to opportunities for closer ecumenical links or collaborative work;
 - b. representing the United Reformed Church on a number of national and international ecumenical bodies; and
 - c. working closely with the Secretary for World Church Relations and the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith & Order on matters relating to sister Churches and the UK ecumenical instruments.

7. Ensure positive external relations by:
 - a. speaking publicly on behalf of the Church, in consultation with the Moderators of General Assembly and with the Press & Media Manager, and with others as necessary; and
 - b. being prepared to act, as and when necessary, to maintain and protect the reputation and image of the URC, in conjunction with Communications.

Health and Safety at Work:

You are required to take reasonable care of the health and safety of yourself and other persons who may be affected by your acts or omissions at work and to co-operate with the United Reformed Church in adhering to statutory safety regulations.

Equal Opportunities:

The Church will behave as an equal opportunity organisation and not discriminate on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation or age.

This list is an indication of the main tasks to be performed. It is not an exhaustive list of duties and responsibilities and may be subject to amendments to take account of changing circumstances.

PERSON SPECIFICATION



JOB TITLE:

GENERAL SECRETARY

REQUIREMENTS	MEASUREMENT		
	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE	
Education and qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ordained to the Ministry of the United Reformed Church with a proven work history in ministry. • Educated to degree level or equivalent and possesses a theological qualification. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of keeping abreast with theological literature. 	Application form, references and interview
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of change. • Conflict resolution. • Crisis Management. • Collaborative and ecumenical working within and beyond the Church. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relations with and work with the media. 	Application form and Interview
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wide awareness of contemporary political and social issues with an ability to reflect on them theologically. • An appreciation of, and sensitivity to, the complex nature of the URC, recognising the theological diversity within the denomination. • Awareness of how organisations function and develop. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the wider Reformed and of other Christian traditions 	Application form and interview
Skills and Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to inspire confidence and demonstrate effective public speaking skills. • Ability to think strategically and encourage others to do the same. • Skilful manager of people. • Sound leadership skills • Able to build, develop and play an active part in the staff community at Church House. • Able to prioritise a demanding workload through effective time management and delegation. • An understanding of and commitment to a multicultural church (i.e. ability to relate across different cultures). • Able to demonstrate effective pastoral and listening skills. • Able to demonstrate strong written and analytical skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to interact comfortably in a wide variety of contexts. • Ability to make time for personal study and to relax. 	Application form, references and interview
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a deep Christian faith • Hospitable • Patient • Resilient • Possesses a good sense of humour 		Interview and references



Appendix 2a

JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE:	Deputy General Secretary Administration & Resources
RESPONSIBLE TO:	General Secretary
RESPONSIBLE FOR:	Chief Finance Officer, HR Officer, Communications, Facilities Manager, IT Support Manager and Archivist/records Manager
SALARY:	
<p>JOB SUMMARY: Manage and lead the Administration & Resources Department and integrate its work into the overall work of Church House, thereby ensuring delivery of agreed General Assembly requirements and projects.</p> <p>As a member of the General Secretariat ensure the implementation of decisions of General Assembly or Mission Council and the effective running of Church House.</p>	

Preamble

The three posts of Deputy General Secretary have been created as part of a review of Church House Management and, together with the General Secretary to whom they report, form the General Secretariat which will work together to oversee and develop the effective work of Church House. The Job descriptions are likely to develop and evolve with experience.

Principal responsibilities and duties

A. Department Management

1. Develop and co-ordinate the work of the Department, seeking ways to ensure high standards and cost effective delivery within agreed budgets.
2. Foster effective working relationships with the standing and other Committees, as appropriate, that relate to the Department's work and seek ways to optimise the impact of and staff relationships with the committees.
3. Integrate staff and team outputs, priorities and vision with agreed General Assembly/ Mission Council priorities and objectives.
4. Manage the senior staff members in the Department, encourage appropriate teamwork and ensure they are effective in their role and in their line management responsibilities.
5. As line manager:
 - Provide overall departmental representation within the Secretariat.
 - Offer accessibility and presence for staff when needed.
 - Share the 'big picture'/strategic issues and make connections between groups, providing staff with regular updates.
 - Manage staff performance by:
 - i. Ensuring that staff are equipped to carry out the roles which they currently occupy, and where necessary identify suitable training to ensure that their skills are up-to-date and relevant
 - ii. Delegating work in an appropriate and supportive manner;

- iii. Providing decision-making support and, where appropriate, ensure decisions are taken in a timely manner;
 - iv. Providing regular performance feedback to staff and conducting annual appraisal of direct reports with input from Committee Conveners.
 - Ensure appropriate departmental attention to Health & Safety and Data Protection issues.
6. An ex-officio member of all standing committees that give direction to the work of the Department, attending when appropriate.
 7. Overall budget holder for the Department.

B. Specialist role

1. Develop an HR strategy for Church House
2. Ensure the provision of a comprehensive HR service to central staff and as agreed to the wider URC which will include:
 - a. developing, monitoring and recommending to HRAG employment policies and procedures for central staff in order to meet the staffing needs of the central URC and legislative requirements.
 - b. advising HRAG and Church House management on relevant employment law requirements, providing guidance on staffing issues and providing people-related data as requested
 - c. reviewing regularly and advising on remuneration issues to the Remuneration Committee
3. Handle reputation management in conjunction with Communications.
4. Maintain oversight of the provision of administrative support to Church House, managing any changes required by new legislation, evolving good practice or changing circumstance.
5. Ensure that up-to-date information is available for local churches and synods on matters of legal compliance (with the exception of safeguarding).

C. General Secretariat

1. Ensure the effective accomplishment of the three Church House roles of:
 - a. providing a Secretariat for the General Assembly and Mission Council and those who need representatively to embody the Church;
 - b. providing support service functions where a demonstrable demand or specific requirement is discerned;
 - c. maintaining good communication networks within the Church and between the Church and wider society.
2. Work with the Connective meeting of senior staff to develop thinking and encourage collaboration.
3. Develop, maintain and evaluate good management of Church House.
4. Ensure the implementation of decisions of General Assembly and Mission Council within their departmental remits
5. Maintain a broad overview of the Church House organisation and the interface with the wider URC

6. Support the General Secretary in developing the General Secretariat team to manage and lead Church House to most effectively fulfil its roles as identified previously
7. An ex-officio member of General Assembly and Mission Council.

Other responsibilities

1. Commitment to continuous Personal Development.

Health and Safety at Work:

You are required to take reasonable care of the health and safety of yourself and other persons who may be affected by your acts or omissions at work and to co-operate with the United Reformed Church in adhering to statutory safety regulations.

Equal Opportunities:

The Church will behave as an equal opportunity organisation and not discriminate on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation or age.

This list is an indication of the main tasks to be performed. It is not an exhaustive list of duties and responsibilities and may be subject to amendments to take account of changing circumstances.

FINAL DRAFT: 10 October 2013

PERSON SPECIFICATION



JOB TITLE: DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY – ADMINISTRATION AND RESOURCES

REQUIREMENTS		MEASUREMENT	
	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE	
Education and qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chartered Member Institute of Personnel & Development 		Application form
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> general/senior management experience significant generalist HR experience strong Employee Relations background ideally within a voluntary or religious environment experience of developing and operating HR Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> experience of managing an HR department leadership and management awareness and experience 	Application form
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> knowledge of current HR legislation and practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HR data systems knowledge Awareness of finance (and other areas) knowledge of the URC 	Application form/ Interview
Skills and Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> proven organisational ability ability to work as a member of a senior management team excellent interpersonal and communication skills ability to develop a broad overview of the organisation ability to manage a complex workload and work to deadlines ability to train and motivate a team ability to think strategically and formulate short and long term plans ability to manage budgets ability to make effective presentations to a variety of audiences able to represent the work of a department to others IT literacy in respect of Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> experience of change management good negotiating and facilitation skills 	Application form/ Interview
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> willingness to work within the Christian ethos of the URC 		



Appendix 2b

JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE:	Deputy General Secretary Ministries of the Church
RESPONSIBLE TO:	General Secretary
RESPONSIBLE FOR:	Secretary for Ministries, Secretary for Education & Learning, Head of Children’s & Youth Work, Safeguarding Officer, CRCW Development Worker(s)
SALARY:	
JOB SUMMARY:	
<p>Manage and lead the Ministries of the Church Department and integrate its work into the overall work of Church House, thereby ensuring delivery of agreed General Assembly requirements and projects.</p> <p>As a member of the General Secretariat ensure the implementation of decisions of General Assembly or Mission Council and the effective running of Church House.</p>	

Preamble

The three posts of Deputy General Secretary have been created as part of a review of Church House Management and, together with the General Secretary to whom they report, form the General Secretariat which will work together to oversee and develop the effective work of Church House. The Job descriptions are likely to develop and evolve with experience.

Principal responsibilities and duties

A. Department Management

1. Develop and co-ordinate the work of the Department, seeking ways to ensure high standards and cost effective delivery within agreed budgets.
2. Foster effective working relationships with the standing and other Committees, as appropriate, that relate to the Department’s work and seek ways to optimise the impact of and staff relationships with the committees.
3. Integrate staff and team outputs, priorities and vision with agreed General Assembly/ Mission Council priorities and objectives.
4. Manage the senior staff members in the Department, encourage appropriate teamwork and ensure they are effective in their role and in their line management responsibilities.
5. As line manager:
 - Provide overall departmental representation within the Secretariat.
 - Offer accessibility and presence for staff when needed.
 - Share the ‘big picture’/strategic issues and make connections between groups, providing staff with regular updates.

- Manage staff performance by:
 - i. Ensuring that staff are equipped to carry out the roles which they currently occupy, and where necessary identify suitable training to ensure that their skills are up-to-date and relevant
 - ii. Delegating work in an appropriate and supportive manner;
 - iii. Providing decision-making support and, where appropriate, ensure decisions are taken in a timely manner;
 - iv. Providing regular performance feedback to staff and conducting annual appraisal of direct reports with input from Committee Conveners.
 - Ensure appropriate departmental attention to Health & Safety and Data Protection issues.
6. An ex-officio member of all standing committees that give direction to the work of the Department, attending when appropriate.
 7. Overall budget holder for the Department.

B. Specialist role

Resource and encourage those concerned with helping the growth in faith and service (discipleship) among people of all ages.

1. maintain an overview of the whole ministries of the Church and oversee the way in which they are developed and supported.
2. Keep up to date with developments in the understanding of discipleship in light of trends in contemporary society so that our discipleship initiatives remain contextual and relational
3. encourage the spiritual and organisational vitality of local churches through the management of the support materials available to synods, ministers and elders
4. advocate worship and theological reflection across the Church
5. service the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee
6. serve as the General Assembly Representative in respect of the Ministerial Disciplinary Process
7. deputise for the General Secretary in matters requiring an ordained Minister of Word & Sacrament

C. General Secretariat

1. Ensure the effective accomplishment of the three Church House roles of:
 - d. providing a Secretariat for the General Assembly and Mission Council and those who need representatively to embody the Church;
 - e. providing support service functions where a demonstrable demand or specific requirement is discerned;
 - f. maintaining good communication networks within the Church and between the Church and wider society.
2. Work with the Connective meeting of senior staff to develop thinking and encourage collaboration.
3. Develop, maintain and evaluate good management of Church House.

4. Ensure the implementation of decisions of General Assembly and Mission Council within their departmental remits
5. Maintain a broad overview of the Church House organisation and the interface with the wider URC
6. Support the General Secretary in developing the General Secretariat team to manage and lead Church House to most effectively fulfil its roles as identified previously
7. An ex-officio member of General Assembly and Mission Council.

Other responsibilities

1. Commitment to continuous Personal Development.

Health and Safety at Work:

You are required to take reasonable care of the health and safety of yourself and other persons who may be affected by your acts or omissions at work and to co-operate with the United Reformed Church in adhering to statutory safety regulations.

Equal Opportunities:

The Church will behave as an equal opportunity organisation and not discriminate on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation or age.

This list is an indication of the main tasks to be performed. It is not an exhaustive list of duties and responsibilities and may be subject to amendments to take account of changing circumstances.

FINAL DRAFT: 10 October 2013

PERSON SPECIFICATION



JOB TITLE: DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY – MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH

REQUIREMENTS		MEASURE	
	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE	
Education and qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> member of the United Reformed Church or of a church that is part of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council or Council for World Mission educated to degree standard or equivalent 		Application form/ Interview
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> experience of a wide spectrum of ministries experience of communicating ideas and concepts to a wide range of people Leadership and management awareness and experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecumenical working Leading a small organisation 	Application form/ Interview
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sound knowledge of the United Reformed Church 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> awareness of the significance of Safeguarding issues 	Application form/ Interview
Skills and Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> proven organisational ability ability to work as a member of a senior management team creativity and imagination able to inspire others able to reflect on theology and context able to think strategically and formulate short and long term plans able to develop a broad overview of the organisation able to train and motivate a team ability to make effective presentations to a variety of audiences able to represent the work of a department to others IT literacy in respect of Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> good negotiating and facilitation skills good budgeting skills 	Application form/ Interview



Appendix 2c

JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE:	Deputy General Secretary – Mission
RESPONSIBLE TO:	General Secretary
RESPONSIBLE FOR:	Secretaries for Church & Society, Ecumenical Relations, Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministries and World Church Relations. Oversight of Rural Officer and Commitment for Life Programme Coordinator.
SALARY:	
<p>JOB SUMMARY: Manage and lead the Mission Department and integrate its work into the overall work of Church House, thereby ensuring delivery of agreed General Assembly requirements and projects.</p> <p>As a member of the General Secretariat ensure the implementation of decisions of General Assembly or Mission Council and the effective running of Church House.</p>	

Preamble

The three posts of Deputy General Secretary have been created as part of a review of Church House Management and, together with the General Secretary to whom they report, form the General Secretariat which will work together to oversee and develop the effective work of Church House. The Job descriptions are likely to develop and evolve with experience.

Principal responsibilities and duties

A. Department Management

1. Develop and co-ordinate the work of the Department, seeking ways to ensure high standards and cost effective delivery within agreed budgets.
2. Foster effective working relationships with the standing and other Committees, as appropriate that relate to the Department’s work and seek ways to optimise the impact of and staff relationships with the committees.
3. Integrate staff and team outputs, priorities, vision and best practice with agreed General Assembly/Mission Council priorities and objectives.
4. Manage the senior staff members in the Department, encourage appropriate teamwork and ensure they are effective in their role and in their line management responsibilities.
5. As line manager:
 - Provide overall departmental representation within the Secretariat.
 - Offer accessibility and presence for staff when needed.
 - Share the ‘big picture’/strategic issues and make connections between groups, providing staff with regular updates.

- Manage staff performance by:
 - i. Ensuring that staff are equipped to carry out the roles which they currently occupy, and where necessary identify suitable training to ensure that their skills are up-to-date and relevant
 - ii. Delegating work in an appropriate and supportive manner;
 - iii. Providing decision-making support and, where appropriate, ensure decisions are taken in a timely manner;
 - iv. Providing regular performance feedback to staff and conducting annual appraisal of direct reports with input from Committee Conveners.
 - Ensure appropriate departmental attention to Health & Safety and Data Protection issues.
6. An ex-officio member of all standing committees that give direction to the work of the Department, attending when appropriate.
 7. Overall budget holder for the Department.

B. Specialist role

To provide inspiration for, focus on and raise the profile of mission across the United Reformed Church:

1. undertake continuous evaluation of the place of mission and evangelism within the work of General Assembly.
2. analyse requirements and develop resources to support a sustained focus on mission by the whole Church, engaging with contemporary culture and working alongside ecumenical partners.
3. identify and develop good practice in mission initiatives enabling local churches and Synods in the development of their own mission work.
4. develop strategies for and support the implementation of 'vision2020'.
5. be a resource for synods and local churches in their understanding of and engagement with mission.
6. identify and service appropriate networks which raise the profile of mission and enable synods and local churches in mission and evangelism.
7. shape thinking by producing occasional papers for the United Reformed Church based on research and mission insights.
8. develop existing ecumenical co-operation, and explore new partnerships with both para-church and secular organisations where appropriate.
9. ensure the Mission Committee is fully serviced and in conjunction with the Convener shape the agenda, ensure the practical aspects are dealt with and assure the work of the Committee.

C. General Secretariat

1. Ensure the effective accomplishment of the three Church House roles of:
 - a. providing a Secretariat for the General Assembly and Mission Council and those who need representatively to embody the Church;
 - b. providing support service functions where a demonstrable demand or specific requirement is discerned;
 - c. maintaining good communication networks within the Church and between the Church and wider society.

2. Work with the Connective meeting of senior staff to develop thinking and encourage collaboration.
3. Develop, maintain and evaluate good management of Church House.
4. Ensure the implementation of decisions of General Assembly and Mission Council within their departmental remits
5. Maintain a broad overview of the Church House organisation and the interface with the wider URC
6. Support the General Secretary in developing the General Secretariat team to manage and lead Church House to most effectively fulfil its roles as identified previously
7. An ex-officio member of General Assembly and Mission Council.

Other responsibilities

1. Commitment to continuous Personal Development.

Health and Safety at Work:

You are required to take reasonable care of the health and safety of yourself and other persons who may be affected by your acts or omissions at work and to co-operate with the United Reformed Church in adhering to statutory safety regulations.

Equal Opportunities:

The Church will behave as an equal opportunity organisation and not discriminate on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation or age.

This list is an indication of the main tasks to be performed. It is not an exhaustive list of duties and responsibilities and may be subject to amendments to take account of changing circumstances.

FINAL DRAFT: 10 October 2013

PERSON SPECIFICATION



JOB TITLE:

DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY – MISSION

REQUIREMENTS		MEASUREMENT	
	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE	
Education and qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> membership of the United Reformed Church or of a church that is part of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council or Council for World Mission educated to degree standard or equivalent proven theological competence 		Application form/ Interview
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> leadership and management awareness and experience worked on complex mission programmes and projects undertaking research, analysing and interpreting the results communicating ideas and concepts to a wide range of people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ecumenical working leadership in a small organisation 	Application form/ Interview
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sound knowledge of the United Reformed Church knowledge of aspects of the church in Europe knowledge of aspects of the world church 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> knowledge of a range of methods of communication knowledge of relevant para-church and similar agencies knowledge of training resources 	Application form/ Interview
Skills and Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a passion for mission proven organisational ability the ability to work as a member of a senior management team creativity and imagination the ability to inspire others the ability to 'read' the contemporary culture the ability to reflect on theology and context the ability to train and motivate a team the ability to think strategically and formulate short and long term plans able to develop a broad overview of the organisation ability to make effective presentations to a variety of audiences able to represent the work of a department to others IT literacy in respect of Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the ability to identify and advocate best practice in mission initiatives good negotiating and facilitation skills good budgeting skills 	Application form/ Interview

Paper P

Law and Polity Advisory Group

Church 2013
United
Church **Reformed**
Church Church 2013



Paper P

Law and Polity Advisory Group

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Professor David Thompson dmt3@cam.ac.uk
Action required	For note
Draft resolution(s)	
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Advice of forthcoming proposals
Main points	Trust Deeds; Charity Registration of Churches; Marriage legislation
Previous relevant documents	Advice on Civil Partnerships
Consultation has taken place with...	Human Sexuality Task Group

Summary of Impact

Financial	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Report of Law and Polity Advisory Group November 2013

Membership:

Margaret Carrick Smith (Clerk of Assembly), David Eldridge, Kath Fowler, Morag McLintock, Andrew Middleton (Legal Adviser), Augur Pearce (Secretary), Roberta Rominger (General Secretary), Duncan Smith, David Thompson (Convener).

The Group has met in July since the last Mission Council. We wish to report on three matters:

1 The position of Trust Companies as Trustees within the United Reformed Church. Because of the variety of practice between different Synods, based on differing interpretations of the United Reformed Church Acts, the Group decided to seek Counsel's Opinion in order to assist in resolving certain problems that have arisen concerning entitlement to assets. A Conference was held on 22 October 2013, which was extremely valuable, and we expect the written Opinion by the time of our next meeting on 29 November. Counsel did not surprise any of those who attended by her exposition, but we expect that it may come as news to certain members of Synods and local churches. It is our intention to prepare a Declaratory Statement in the light of the written Opinion, which we shall discuss with members of PLATO (Provincial Legal and Trust Officers) and with Synod Clerks and Moderators, before producing a version for Mission Council to recommend to Assembly at its next meeting.

2 Entry of further local church funds on the Register of Charities. Mission Council will recall that the Charities Act 2006 set a limit of £100,000 on the annual income of charities that could be excepted by Regulations from the requirement to register. As a result the general funds of several large local churches had to be registered, which also entailed initial steps to define formally the trusts and trusteeship of these funds. The current excepting Regulations are due to expire or be renewed in March 2014, and it is at least possible that a further 'tranche' of local churches may be affected by the need to register. The Group will be preparing guidance for such churches, which it hopes to have ready by the end of February.

3 Same-Sex Marriage Legislation

At the time of writing the Scottish Bill still has not passed into law, nor has the Commencement Date for the Act for England and Wales been announced. It may be the Government's intention for the Commencement Dates for both pieces of legislation to be the same. The Group has provided some assistance on legal points to the Human Sexuality Task Group, which has provided a resolution for Mission Council, to affirm its work and encourage it to continue along its present direction of travel.

From a legal and procedural point of view LPAG wishes to remind Mission Council of three points:

- a) that Paragraph 4 of The Structure reads: 'Decisions on the part of any council shall be reached only after the fullest attempt has been made to discover the mind of other councils or of local churches likely to be affected by the decision'. LPAG accordingly believes that this should be borne in mind during consideration of any proposal that the Church take advantage of the change in the law of marriage.

- b) that Paragraph 1(a) of the Trusts for Local Churches requires that premises be used for ‘the public worship of God according to the principles and usages for the time being of the United Reformed Church’. If option 3 of the HSTG’s report is followed (by analogy with Civil Partnerships), this will be seen by many as containing an implicit decision that same-sex marriage is – at least – not inconsistent with ‘the principles and usages’ of the URC. (There are similar implications in England and Wales for the completion of the marriage certificate by an Authorised Person that two persons were married ‘according to the rites and ceremonies of the United Reformed Church’.) For the avoidance of doubt, it may be felt preferable for Assembly to make such a decision explicit. It has become clear since Assembly 2012 that there are differences of view as to what the decision based on ‘local option’ implied about the principles and usages of the URC. Whereas Civil Partnerships are registered by a Registrar, the registration of same-sex marriages in England and Wales will usually fall to Authorised Persons (ministers or members of the URC), who will reasonably expect the Church to have assured itself about the legal appropriateness of its procedures.
- c) that, in view of the differences in marriage law between Scotland and England & Wales, it is desirable to establish at which level any decision on the acceptability of same-sex marriage should be taken. LPAG’s view is that, since we are all part of one Church, the appropriate level for the decision is General Assembly. Those with long memories will recall that, for the same reason, the decision to support the proposals for an Ecumenical Bishop in Wales was taken by General Assembly, and not by the Synod of Wales alone.

LPAG further recommends that when all the necessary decisions have been taken, comprehensive advice on marriage procedure should become part of The Manual (which curiously it never has been since 1972, even though it was included in the comparable volumes for both Churches before that date). It has already requested that information be gathered in this year’s annual returns about the number of marriages conducted in our churches in the last year (and last five years). At present this basic information is lacking from any of our discussions.

Paper R

Safeguarding Advisory Group



Paper R

Safeguarding Advisory Group



Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Roberta Rominger roberta.rominger@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Mission Council confirms the appointment of a Safeguarding Advisory Group, to meet at least three times per year. Its membership would include the Safeguarding Officer, the Secretary for Children's and Youth Work, the Secretary for Ministries, the appropriate Deputy General Secretary, and up to three co-opted members with relevant experience.</p> <p>The Group's responsibilities will be as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to oversee the development of policy and the implementation of Good Practice across the Church in the safeguarding of children, young people, and adults in need of protection, making recommendations to Mission Council as appropriate; 2. to ensure that Good Practice documents are published, circulated and updated as appropriate; 3. to develop systems for monitoring local church and synod compliance with Good Practice, and to devise strategies for addressing identified weaknesses; 4. to foster collaboration with ecumenical partners across the full range of safeguarding issues, including engagement in the development of public policy; 5. specifically to work closely with the Baptist Union in the development of policy, the delivery of safeguarding education, and the support of synod/regional safeguarding officers; 6. to oversee the service which the United Reformed Church receives from the Churches Agency for Safeguarding and other relevant agencies.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	With the appointment of the United Reformed Church's first dedicated Safeguarding Officer, the possibilities offered by ecumenical collaboration, and the change of context represented by the new vetting and barring legislation, Mission Council is invited to approve new terms of reference for a newly constituted Safeguarding Advisory Group.
Main points	Membership and terms of reference of the Group
Previous relevant documents	Terms of reference 2004
Consultation has taken place with...	The documents of similar groups in partner churches have been considered.

Summary of Impact

Financial	None – the Group has already been functioning for some time.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Ecumenical interaction happens mainly through the Safeguarding Officer but the Group will encourage and support ecumenical collaboration on safeguarding issues.

Safeguarding Advisory Group

Terms of Reference

In January 2004 Mission Council established a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Reference Group with the following terms of reference:

- a) to maintain an overview of the policy offered to local churches with regard to Criminal Records Bureau disclosures and to make recommendations regarding the development of policy and practice, including the use of the Churches Agency for Safeguarding.
- b) to outline principles and monitor current practice in synods when responding to child protection concerns in support of local churches in their implementation of Good Practice.
- c) to establish and monitor a process which supports churches in response to the receipt of a blemished Disclosure for a local worker/volunteer.
- d) to ensure support for local churches during times of sensitive action regarding child protection.
- e) to monitor and advise on the training provision offered to relevant synod and Assembly-appointed staff regarding sensitive child protection issues.
- f) to advise the General Secretary and Secretary for Ministries in circumstances where blemished Disclosures are received concerning ministers, CRCWs and nationally-accredited lay preachers.
- g) to act as a reflecting group for Assembly-appointed staff with child protection responsibility.

The people appointed to serve on that first Group were a synod moderator, a church member with professional expertise as a child protection officer, a magistrate, the Children's Advocate, the Secretary for Youth Work, and the Deputy General Secretary.

With the appointment of the United Reformed Church's first dedicated Safeguarding Officer, the possibilities offered by ecumenical collaboration, and the change of context represented by the new vetting and barring legislation, Mission Council is invited to approve new terms of reference for a newly constituted Safeguarding Advisory Group.

Resolution

Mission Council confirms the appointment of a Safeguarding Advisory Group, to meet at least three times per year. Its membership would include the Safeguarding Officer, the Secretary for Children's and Youth Work, the Secretary for Ministries, the appropriate Deputy General Secretary, and up to three co-opted members with relevant experience.

The Group's responsibilities will be as follows:

- 1. to oversee the development of policy and the implementation of Good Practice across the Church in the safeguarding of children, young people, and adults in need of protection, making recommendations to Mission Council as appropriate;**
- 2. to ensure that Good Practice documents are published, circulated and updated as appropriate;**

3. to develop systems for monitoring local church and synod compliance with Good Practice, and to devise strategies for addressing identified weaknesses;
4. to foster collaboration with ecumenical partners across the full range of safeguarding issues, including engagement in the development of public policy;
5. specifically to work closely with the Baptist Union in the development of policy, the delivery of safeguarding education, and the support of synod/regional safeguarding officers;
6. to oversee the service which the United Reformed Church receives from the Churches Agency for Safeguarding and other relevant agencies.

Paper S

Even Better Synod Resources

Medium Term Strategy Group





Paper S

Medium Term Strategy Group: Even Better Synod Resources

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Roberta Rominger roberta.rominger@urc.org.uk
Action required	Discussion and decision
Draft resolution(s)	To be drafted in light of Mission Council discussion
Alternative options to consider, if any	See paper

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To secure feedback on various ways of improving the resources available to synods in the light of discussions at the May 2013 Mission Council.
Main points	Paras 5-9 Reflection on May Mission Council discussion Paras 10-16 Considering funded Synod Manager posts Paras 17-41 Options for developing the Inter Synod Resource Sharing Process
Previous relevant documents	Paper D1 “Even Better Synods” May 2013 Mission Council
Consultation has taken place with...	Representatives of the Inter Synod Resource Sharing Task Group and Synod representatives

Summary of Impact

Financial	Possible employment of 13 Synod Managers: around £600k Redistribution of income between the synods; this would be financially neutral to central budget
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Even Better Synod Resources

Purpose

- 1) This paper is designed to secure feedback on various ways of improving the resources available to synods in the light of discussions at the May 2013 Mission Council.

Background

- 2) In order to progress one aspect of its remit, the Medium Term Strategy Group (MTSG) brought to the May 2013 meeting of Mission Council a discussion paper *Even Better Synods...* This was discussed in eight small groups, written feedback was received from all the groups and some reflections brought back by MTSG to the full Mission Council. As a result, Mission Council asked MTSG to do further work on the basis of the discussions at the Council. This paper is part of the response.
- 3) A full collation of the feedback from the groups is available in the Mission Council section of the URC website (under May 2013, alongside Paper D1).

The Current Reality

- 4) In the light of responses to a previous draft, it seems to MTSG that the following outline of our current reality in the United Reformed Church on the topic of synods would command widespread recognition.
 - (i) The synods are very different in size: the largest has over three times as many members as the smallest; the smaller synods have fewer members and stipendiary ministers than the larger districts had in the 1970s. The synods have always covered geographical areas of very different sizes.
 - (ii) There are distinctive issues in the two national Synods of Wales and Scotland.
 - (iii) Since the ending of districts, the synods have evolved very different patterns: in some synods there are structured groupings that have regular meetings, their own Pastoral Committees and deployment responsibilities; in other synods the work has mainly been centralised.
 - (iv) In most churches the synod moderator and other synod staff are respected and readily used, especially as an emergency service.
 - (v) Many of the most innovative ministry posts in the Church, not least church-related community workers and Special Category Ministries, are devised and supported by synods.
 - (vi) Synods, and particularly their officers, are often the means by which we give expression to our ecumenical commitments, especially in relation to other Church leaders and regional bodies.
 - (vii) Synods are a key focus of two-way communication between local churches and the General Assembly, Mission Council and Church House; and communications need to be improved.
 - (viii) The location of tasks, e.g. in Church House or in Synods, needs to be kept under constant review without any assumption of a centralising drift.
 - (ix) Financial resources are very uneven; almost all synods now need proceeds from selling redundant buildings to cover their running costs but selling a property in one part of the country can produce several times the sum that selling the

same property would produce in another area. The Inter-Synod Resource Sharing scheme is very dependent on the giving of just two synods.

- (x) Personnel resources are stretched; finding volunteers for synod posts is hard.
- (xi) The costs of running the network of 13 synods are significant at around £4m per annum. There is a small but growing number of paid staff posts shared between adjoining synods.
- (xii) At our best, we see sharing resources between synods as an expression of grace, cheerful generosity and New Testament principles, rather than as a frustrating necessity.

Mission Council discernment

- 5) The discussion at Mission Council, most of whose members are sent by their synods, did not indicate unanimity on every point. Given the wide diversity of situations in which synods find themselves, this was not a surprise. Some themes did however emerge fairly clearly.
- 6) The first and critical theme was that there is very little appetite for wholesale formal restructuring. While not everyone would have the current pattern as their first choice, a large majority accept that the work involved in removing District Councils should not now be replicated in initiatives to change again the formal structures between the local church and the Assembly. The majority message to MTSG was to produce proposals that enhance the support the existing structure of 13 synods can give to local churches, not develop proposals for more or fewer synods.
- 7) This feedback therefore rules out any plans to regionalise into a small number of larger synods. More sensitively, it also rules out proposals to opt for some smaller, standardised unit than existing synods, despite the various calls at Mission Council and elsewhere for bodies that feel closer to local churches than synods have done. MTSG has reflected on this and has noted that since the abolition of District Councils some patterns of living together more local than the synod structures have been attempted in every synod. In some places these are relatively formal, in some places less so; some arrangements feel fairly stable, others less so. This has happened in response to Assembly's invitation to the synods to devise whatever support structure seemed right in their context. MTSG does not see there is need for a new central initiative but draws to the attention of synods the continuing pleas for effective intermediate relationships.
- 8) MTSG has focused further work on the areas where Mission Council was interested to explore how an existing pattern of 13 synods could be better equipped to fulfil their functions. Mission Council appeared to discern that we should retain a full-time moderator in each synod and that their role should have a pastoral emphasis. The roles of the Synod Trusts should also remain as they are, although noting that there may be benefit in some synods of considering appointing the same Trustees for Trusts of adjoining synods to minimise duplication and maximise co-ordination of activities. Mission Council also appeared to accept that where mission and technical staff are employed by a particular synod to complement the services provided centrally, these additional staff would have to be at that synod's discretion and expense.
- 9) That left two main areas that were raised at Mission Council on which MTSG needed to do more work. First, the proposal that alongside the synod moderator there should be a full-time manager post in each synod funded from the Ministry and Mission (M&M) Fund. Secondly, the idea of some more structured sharing of financial resources between the synods. In reflecting on this latter area, MTSG gratefully acknowledges the help given to us by some colleagues with a close involvement in the practicalities of the existing resource sharing process.

A Funded Manager Post

- 10) The report on the role of the synod moderator that was brought to the 2012 Assembly recommended dividing up the moderator's role between two people and separating pastoral support for ministers from involvement in disciplinary and management issues. The feedback from current moderators and from Mission Council generally was not necessarily to favour that division. There were many who questioned whether separating the pastoral care of ministers from a role in the discipline of ministers was right. However there did seem to be much stronger support for the concept of separating off from the care of ministers some of the internal synod management tasks which often fall to moderators, whether or not they have suitable training and experience, such as line managing staff and being responsible for policies on Health and Safety, Safeguarding and other similar issues.
- 11) MTSG asked a group with direct day to day experience of a synod office to consider a possible Job Description for a full-time Manager post to see whether this can help identify the best boundaries between such a role and that of the moderator. Attached as Appendix 1 is such a Job Description which draws on their work; it is presented alongside the proposed Job Description of the Synod Moderator prepared by the group reviewing the role of the Synod Moderator. A key issue that emerges is the relationship between such a Manager and the post of Synod Clerk. As some Synod Clerks are employees and some are volunteers, this diversity represents just one area where different Synods would work out the role of Manager differently. However we hope that having a broad brush Job Description will help Mission Council focus on whether this proposed post is what the Church now needs.
- 12) Whatever the precise nature of the Manager role, there will still be the question of funding; this may also help focus the mind on the level of priority Mission Council would attach to having synod managers. Mission Council responses suggested members warmed to the suggestion that, like the moderator, the Manager should be funded from the central M&M Fund and not therefore be a charge on the synod. The total annual cost of 13 managers in synods would be of the order of £700k.
- 13) Given the support of the 2012 Assembly for ringfencing the costs of supporting ministers in the context of any necessary budget reductions, MTSG assumes we do not need to consider the option of reducing the funding for ministers in order to find funding for the Manager posts. If this is right, then MTSG suggests there are broadly three possible ways in which funding could be achieved.
- 14) **Funding Option A: an immediate rise in M&M giving.** To create additional income to cover the costs of the 13 managers would need around an extra £10 a year per church member or around £500 extra a year from the average church of just over 40 members. Most anecdotal feedback suggests sharp increases in M&M are difficult to achieve but if synod representatives to Mission Council feel strongly enough about the advantages of having synod managers and the benefits they would bring for local churches, they could be powerful advocates. However, on the basis of what we have heard to date, and noting that some Mission Council members said they could only support the concept of synod managers if there was no net additional cost, MTSG doubts whether there would be adequate enthusiasm for this approach in local churches.
- 15) **Funding Option B: a reduction of £700k in other central expenditure** to offset the extra cost of funding synod managers. In 2012 Assembly agreed reductions of around £600k in the central budget but not without dissenting voices and a good deal of pain and complexity in the preceding process. It is much easier to ask for cuts in general than to vote for cuts in specific areas of work. However if the creation of synod manager posts is a deliberate shift of resources from the centre to the synods, there is a logic in reducing central posts and services at the same time.

- 16) **Funding Option C: growing a network in line with income.** If current stewardship and TRIO initiatives bear fruit, giving to the Church at large, and to the M&M Fund in particular, might start to grow more rapidly. If this were the case, the first call on any regular additional income could be deemed to be funding for synod managers. It would be unlikely that a full set of 13 could be afforded in the near term but managers could be added as income grew, starting with synods with the least wealth of their own. This funding option depends on income growing but would provide an extra incentive for synods to grow their M&M giving as they would know that synods would benefit directly.

****In the light of this further reflection, should the principle of paid synod managers, funded centrally, be pursued?**

****If so, which funding option for synod managers would you think best?**

Sharing Synod Wealth

- 17) Currently the entirely voluntary Inter-Synod Resource Sharing process invites each synod each year to consider whether they would be willing to make a donation into the pot and also invites each synod to put forward specific bids for grants from the pot. A small Task Group, appointed by the synods and chaired by a synod moderator, seeks to allocate available money as fairly as possible. In recent years between £250k and £500k a year has been given and redistributed through this process.
- 18) Although the majority of synods contribute something, currently the Resource Sharing process is heavily dependent on the gifts of just two synods (75% of 2013 income) and gives the bulk of its funds to just two synods (85% of 2013 grants).
- 19) In addition to the Resource Sharing process, Assembly has in the past urged synods to give a share of the proceeds of the sale of property (eg 10%) to the Ministers' Pension Fund and to the Retired Ministers Housing Society. Most synods made some response to these requests, although not always in the form suggested. In addition to these processes relating to synod funds, the gifts from local churches to the M&M Fund makes possible a substantial redistribution of money from richer areas to poorer ones.
- 20) In responding to the Mission Council request to explore a more significant Inter-Synod Resource Sharing process, there are several questions to be addressed. The first is what should be included in any calculation of synod "wealth" as a basis for deciding how much should be shared. There are three main elements to be considered.

(a) What wealth should we include?

- 21) **Wealth Element 1: financial investments.** History from long before the United Reformed Church was founded has resulted in different synods having very different levels of investments. The wealthiest synod has around twenty times as much as the poorest. Thus if they followed identical investment strategies, the richest would expect an investment income twenty times larger each year than the poorest. This increases inequality rather than reducing it. MTSG recommends that investment income should be included in any new sharing process.
- 22) **Wealth Element 2: income from church buildings sales.** All synods make use of income from property sales to help balance their regular budget and some are heavily dependent on this source. Nonetheless it is a further cause of inequality in that, for

example, in north London a building can often fetch four or more times the amount the same building would produce if sold in a South Wales valley. There is therefore an argument for including this income in any new sharing process and MTSG recommends that it should be included.

- 23) In recommending this, MTSG is aware of a complication that has caused both confusion and tension in the existing Inter Synod Resource Sharing process. Whilst every synod operates under the same United Reformed Church Acts and therefore the same legislative framework regarding the ownership of assets, different synods have evolved different practices about the division of responsibility between the local congregation and the relevant synod trust. This means that in practice in some synods a larger share of the total proceeds of buildings sales flows into the synod's own accounts than in other synods. The wealth a synod holds as a result of sales is therefore only partly the result of factors outside the synod's control. The moral argument for transferring resources to poorer synods to compensate for factors outside their control is clearly not the same as an argument for transferring resources to address differences created by a synod's chosen policies.
- 24) It is highly unlikely that complete parity of treatment of the proceeds of building sales is about to materialise. MTSG believe that while synods might be encouraged towards greater comparability in the way they treat asset sales, the differences in the scale of resources available to different synods are so large, and not principally generated by differences of accounting treatments, that the Church should be challenged to address these inequalities now and not use the different treatments of asset sales as an excuse to avoid the underlying issue. Therefore MTSG recommends that income from church buildings sales should be included in the resources shared.
- 25) **Wealth Element 3: income from sale of manses.** The position regarding manses is very substantially different in different synods. In several the churches have agreed to centralise manse costs and proceeds of manse sales, and so fund new manses and major improvements of manses from a ringfenced synod fund. This provides some assurance that money will be available when needed and fits well with the Assembly's concern that our ministers do not suffer as a result of financial stresses in the Church. In other synods the sale of a manse is essentially a local matter and funds realised stay local. In these circumstances, bringing synod receipts from the sale of manses into any resource sharing scheme would penalise synods who have devised a central manse scheme. MTSG recommends manse sales proceeds are not part of a new inter-synod scheme.

****Which synod wealth elements do you think should be included in a sharing scheme?**

(b) Church House as Synod 14?

- 26) Several members of Mission Council suggested that in any enhanced inter-synod resource sharing process Church House should be included as, in effect, a 14th synod. In practice of course money spent through the central Church budget on Church House activities and staff is already used for the benefit of all synods regardless of their own wealth. To take some of this money away to provide larger grants to certain synods would obviously reduce the services available to all synods. It is a moot point whether this enhances or detracts from a sense of the United Reformed Church being one community.
- 27) In terms of wealth held centrally, the general budget does not have any regular income from the sales of property. (The sale proceeds of surplus houses previously occupied by retired ministers are handled separately by the Retired Ministers Housing Society and devoted to the purchase of other houses for retired ministers.) Investment income to the general budget is on a comparable scale to that of the wealthier synods. If partly diverted into a synod sharing process it would not have a dramatic effect on the overall total available. The Assembly work it currently supports would need to end.

- 28) The bulk of the resources available to the central budget comes from M&M giving. A radical version of making Church House Synod 14 would be to amalgamate the funds of the synods with the M&M fund. All central and synod costs would then come from a single pot. The legal and technical difficulties of achieving this would be legion but even if it were feasible, the blurring of accountability for different funds between Assembly and the synods would be a distinct disadvantage.
- 29) On balance, MTSG recommends that we do not attempt to include Church House funds as a Synod 14 in any enhanced resource sharing.

****Should we continue work on how to incorporate Church House funds into inter-synod resource sharing?**

(c) Options for Enhanced Resource Sharing

- 30) Assuming consensus can be reached on what types of wealth to include in further synod resource sharing, there is the question of how an enhanced process could work. It needs to be remembered that the Assembly cannot instruct synods what to do with their own resources and so any process has to proceed by persuasion.
- 31) The existing Inter-Synod Resource Sharing process has also revealed how complicated it is to bring the different accounting conventions of different synods into sufficient alignment that comparable, agreed figures about resources can be achieved. For the purpose of this paper, MTSG simply notes that area of work and considers the principles on the assumption that some tolerable base figures for each synod could be agreed. MTSG does not think that a failure to achieve complete comparability of accounting treatments in different synods should be used as a reason to delay making any movement towards greater fairness in resource sharing.

Option 1: voluntary offer

- 32) A first option would be for the Assembly to adopt more formally as its own the synods' existing voluntary sharing scheme. The Assembly might urge every synod to make some contribution to the pot as a matter of principle even if for some synods it was a small donation. Assembly might suggest that each synod, by a specified date, makes an explicit decision about a percentage of all its annual income from investments and church building sales to donate each year.
- 33) This approach might give the process a higher profile and a fresh impetus and increase the donations from synods. However if this were the process, the resulting available funds would still be unpredictable. It would only be possible to distribute money after it had been donated and would need a group similar to the existing Task Group to assess requests from synods for support.

Option 2: guided donations

- 34) A greater shift from the status quo would be for Assembly to set a suggested level of donation from synods, perhaps as a percentage of their income from church buildings sales and investments. A possible approach would be to set a low initial percentage and gradually increase this in order to minimise the disruption but still to reach over a period of years a substantially larger flow of funds than under the current system. For example, synods could all be asked for 5% for a central pot initially and then have the percentage increased by two percentage points a year until it reached 25% ten years later.

- 35) A broad estimate of the income to synods from investment and property sales is of the order of £4m a year, so a 5% levy would produce a similar amount to the present sharing system but a 25% levy, for example, would yield the significantly larger £1m. This assumes that all synods were willing to agree to join in the scheme and income did not decline.
- 36) With such a scheme the proceeds in a given year would be possible to estimate in advance. It would need to be decided on what basis they were shared. Options include the following; more complex and less transparent formulae are obviously also possible.
- (i) Option A: through a bidding system as now
 - (ii) Option B: distributed to 13 synods in equal shares
 - (iii) Option C: distributed to synods on the basis of their church membership figures
 - (iv) Option D: distributed to synods on the basis of their wealth, eg 0% to each of the three wealthiest synods; 5% to each of the next three most wealthy synods; 10% to each of the next four most wealthy synods; 15% to each of the three poorest synods
 - (v) Option E: a guaranteed minimum income for all synods; if there was any money left over after distributing grants to ensure this, distribute it as in Option A.
- 37) Using the best data currently available, MTSG has calculated how these various options would work out in practice in terms of net flows of resource between synods. The actual sums would change year by year because of the uneven flow of income, especially from property sales. However in most years Options B, C and D would result in a good deal of administration for a rather modest movement of funds. Most synods would be net contributors or net recipients of sums less than £50k. Perhaps more importantly, the spreading of the money would mean the resources moving to Wales and Scotland would be very much less than under the present system.
- 38) Given Mission Council's reluctance to contemplate any change in the numbers and basic structure of the 13 synods, MTSG assumes a key objective for Mission Council is to achieve a resource sharing pattern that continues to provide significant net inflows to the poorest synods. If this is a principal objective, MTSG recommends Option E. By aiming to provide a minimum level of income to every Synod, in a typical year most of the benefit of the resource sharing would continue to flow to the poorest Synods. Only in a year of unusually high income would the sharing process provide significant funding to any of the other synods.
- 39) Setting a minimum level of income for a synod would inevitably be a somewhat arbitrary calculation. The current Inter-Synod Resource Sharing Task Group has worked on what resources a synod needs to cover all the tasks the Church requires. Taking account of this and noting the accounts of the various synods, MTSG suggests we might set £400k as the minimum amount a synod needs to run itself. The majority of synods currently spend more than that, some several times that amount, but several work on expenditure rather below that level so it seems a reasonable threshold.
- 40) If £400k were taken as the minimum income level, then the resource sharing process could make known to all synods the amount needed in the pot each year to ensure the poorer synods could have their internally generated income topped up to £400k. This would give a clearer steer than at present to synods about the amounts they might contribute to the process in a particular year. It would remain the decision of each synod how much they chose to give; and so ensuring that the minimum threshold was reached for every synod would be dependent upon synods working together to increase the total in the pot, if initial offers in any given year left a shortfall.
- 41) This approach could provide a more predictable flow of resources to synods than the present entirely voluntary system but would still not provide any guarantees to

help with medium term planning. A possible way to make the flow of resources more predictable would be to build up a reserve to even out the fluctuations in income. Creating a reserve would require a proportion of the income in the initial years to be held back, rather than 100% being distributed to synods immediately.

****Would you favour the “voluntary offer” or the “guided donation” approach?**

****If the guided donation approach were adopted, do you agree Option E would best serve the Church’s mission?**

****Would you favour holding back a proportion of the income coming into the system in order to build up a reserve?**

Next Steps

- 42) If Mission Council finds a consensus of how it wishes to proceed, MTSG suggests the Finance Committee be asked to develop how decisions should be implemented. If Mission Council wishes to amend the Inter-Synod Resource Sharing process, MTSG would propose the existing Task Group should undertake the consultation and co-ordination necessary for the chosen outcome. If at any point the Task Group felt that there were policy questions that needed attention they would be encouraged to raise this initially with the Finance Committee.

Job Description for role of Synod Manager

The following paragraphs outline a generic job description for a Synod Manager. The role could combine that of the Trust/Finance Officer, Office Manager and Synod Clerk.

Key Purpose

To be responsible for the Management of the Synod Office and its staff and to have oversight of the undertaking of the administration carried out within the Synod Office to contribute to its development and mission.

Reporting

The Moderator and the Executive Committee of the Synod.

The Synod Manager to have regular meetings with the Moderator and other Synod Officers to share and discuss the leadership of the Synod.

Duties and Responsibilities

Human Resources

1. To be responsible for recruitment, training and development of Synod Office staff and to be Line Manager to all office based staff.
2. Definition of line management: The Synod Manager does not have direct 'operational' responsibilities for staff. These fall to the individuals/committees/Moderator who direct the staff members in their day to day activity. There needs to be close co-operation between the Synod Manager and the 'operational managers'. Line management activities are as defined in the following paragraphs.
3. Job description. Maintain and update as required in consultation with 'operational managers'.
4. Remuneration. Agree with 'operational managers' and Treasurer and recommend reviews of pay to the Trustees.
5. Recruitment. Work with operational manager (and others) in:
 - i. advertising post (as appropriate)
 - ii. interview and selection processes
 - iii. issue of job contract
6. Job contract / conditions of service. Issue (for new employee), and maintain and update as required.
7. Regular meetings with staff members to:
 - o ensure that each member of staff understands his/her responsibilities
 - o provide a safe environment for the employee to raise and discuss any issue pertaining to the synod and its activities
 - o agree training needs
 - o provide a route for escalation of any issues that the employee may have
 - o carry out an annual development review

8. Expenses and holidays. Agree and implement sign off process and inform the moderator/operational managers accordingly.
9. Overtime payments (if applicable). Agree with 'operational manager', sign off and submit to xxx.
10. Annual performance / development review – With 'operational managers' as appropriate
11. Grievances. First port of call for any differences that cannot be settled directly with 'operations manager'.
12. Be responsible for the provision of employment periphery, e.g. laptop / mobile phone / contracts / travel.
13. Undertake any disciplinary procedures.

Procurement

14. To ensure value for money in purchase of Synod supplies, contracts, services and equipment, including the establishing and managing tendering procedures.
15. To be responsible for the co-ordination and organisation of Synod Committee meetings and to collaborate with working groups and individuals undertaking specific pieces of work.

Communication and Networking

16. Work with others to update and maintain the Synod website.
17. To develop working relationships with other Synod Managers to share good practice.

Governance and Compliance

18. To ensure that the annual return and accounts are filed on time with Companies House and the Charities Commission.
19. Health and Safety Officer for the Synod, ensuring Health and Safety policies are in place in addition to liaising with churches on health and safety issues.
20. Safeguarding Officer for the Synod ensuring correct policies and procedures are in place in addition to liaising with churches on safeguarding issues.
21. Ensuring that there is adequate insurance of Synod properties and equipment to include regular review of policies.
22. In conjunction with the Trustees, ensuring regular review of the Risk Register.

Paper T1

Updates

Ministerial Incapacity & Discipline

Advisory Group





Paper T1

Ministerial Incapacity & Discipline Advisory Group: Updates

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Revd Hugh C.F. Graham Hughf.graham@gmail.com
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	As attached
Alternative options to consider, if any	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To update relevant documentation.
Main points	The Group suggests changes to the Ministerial Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure.
Previous relevant documents	The Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure as laid out in the current edition of The Manual.
Consultation has taken place with...	Members of the MIND Advisory Group, the United Reformed Church's Legal Advisor and the Assembly Clerk

Summary of Impact

Financial	Unknown but limited
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Unknown but limited

MIND Advisory Group

Suggested changes to the Disciplinary Process

Mission Council agrees to make the following changes to the Disciplinary Process:

A.3

Replace the whole of this paragraph with the following:

“Accordingly, where under the provisions of this Disciplinary Process, any notice specifies a time limit for a certain action to be taken by the recipient and that action is not carried out within the time specified in the notice to the satisfaction of the person or body sending the notice, that person or body shall have a discretion to allow a reasonable further period for such compliance, except as regards the strict time limit imposed on the right of appeal under Paragraphs AA.8.1, E.5.3.1 and G.1 and upon the steps to be taken by the Synod Moderator under Paragraphs AA.10.2.4 and AA.10.2.5. In other cases, if the person or body sending the notice considers that sufficient time has been allowed and the action required has still not been carried out or there has been an unreasonable delay in the carrying out of the action (whether or not the Disciplinary Process imposes a time limit for the carrying out of the action), that person or body may proceed, bearing in mind the need for the Process to be conducted as expeditiously as possible.”

AA.1.5.3

Replace the existing paragraph in its entirety with the following:

“If any member of a Synod Panel or the Joint Panel is a member of a local church connected with the case or has any pastoral or personal involvement in the case or is the subject of a disciplinary complaint, that person shall not be one of the Synod Appointees for that case.”

B.3.2

Delete the word **“other”**.

B.3.3

Delete the word **“other”**.

B.4

In each of the expressions **“connected with a case”** and **“involvement in a case”** insert the word **“particular”** between **“a”** and **“case”**.

E.9.1

In the last sentence, after the words **“...appropriate so to do...”** insert the words **“...and having supplied the Mandated Group with a copy of the minister’s statement...”**.

E.9.2 Insert a new second sentence as follows:

“The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall supply the minister with a copy of the Mandated Group’s Notice.”

G.8.

Add the following to the list at G.8.5 and move the existing G.8.5 and renumber the following accordingly:

G.8.5 “Any Cautions (other than those successfully appealed against).”

Suggested Changes to the Incapacity Procedure

Mission Council agrees to make the following changes to the Incapacity Procedure:

Renumber current paragraph B.1.1 to become B.1.1.1. and add a new paragraph B.1.1.2 as follows:

“Should the General Assembly Representative make the enquiry specified in Paragraph B.1.1.1, the officers of the General Assembly shall appoint a Synod Moderator or other member of Mission Council to be the third member of the Consultation Group along with the General Assembly Representative and the Convener of the PRWC.”

K.5.2

After the word **“include”** insert the words **“in the Decision Record”**.

Delete the words **“the General Assembly Representative”**.

L.11.2

After the word **“include”** insert the words **“in the Decision Record”**.

Delete the words **“the General Assembly Representative”**.

Paper T2

Updates

Ministerial Incapacity & Discipline

Advisory Group





Paper T2

Ministerial Incapacity & Discipline Advisory Group: Updates

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Revd Hugh C.F. Graham Hughf.graham@gmail.com
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	As attached
Alternative options to consider, if any	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To update the Structure of the United Reformed Church.
Main points	The resolution (a) assigns a new function to the General Assembly; (b) removes a reference to the Deputy General Secretary; (c) offers corrections for other minor errors.
Previous relevant documents	The Structure of the United Reformed Church The Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure as laid out in the current edition of The Manual.
Consultation has taken place with...	Members of the MIND Advisory Group, the United Reformed Church's Legal Advisor and the Assembly Clerk

Summary of Impact

Financial	Unknown but limited
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Unknown but limited

MIND Advisory Group

Suggested Changes to the Structure

Mission Council agrees to make the following changes to the Structure:

Insert the following immediately after **2.(6)(A)(xxiii)** so as to become **(xxiv)** and renumber the later functions accordingly.

“(xxiv) to ensure that, where an Assembly Commission or an Appeals Commission following a Hearing under the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual or a Review Commission or an Appeals Review Commission following a Hearing under the Incapacity Procedure contained in Section P of the Manual appends guidance to its decision to delete the name of the minister or Church Related Community Worker from the respective Roll, any such guidance is brought fully to the attention of those responsible for exercising oversight of the minister or Church Related Community Worker and any others who might in the future be identified as being proper and appropriate persons to receive such information;”

Remove references to the Deputy General Secretary as follows:

2.(6)(A)(xxiii) delete the words “, **the Deputy General Secretary**” replace the words “**(acting through the Deputy General Secretary or his/her duly appointed deputy)**” with “**(acting through the General Assembly Representative or his/her duly appointed deputy)**”

6.5

Replace the words “**Deputy General Secretary**” with the words “**General Assembly Representative**”.

Remove an inappropriate reference to Section O:

2.(4) In the sixth bullet point following the words “**The moderator shall**” replace the words “**Section O**” with “**Disciplinary**”

Remove inaccurate references to **Paragraph (B)**:

2.(4)(A), 2.(5)(A) and 2.(6)(A)

In each case replace the words “**(subject to the restriction referred to in Paragraph (B) below)**” with the words “**(subject to the restriction referred to in Paragraph 7.4 below)**”

Paper U

Report

Mission Council Advisory Group





Paper U

Mission Council Advisory Group

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Roberta Rominger roberta.rominger@urc.org.uk
Action required	Information to note; one item for decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council notes the concern expressed by Plymstock United Reformed Church regarding the appointment of the Revd Ruth Whitehead as Moderator of the South Western Synod and agrees that their dissent from this decision should be recorded.
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	
Main points	Procedural changes at Mission Council Request for a registration of dissent Resolution 38 Assembly Commission final report Comment on a blue plaque at URC Church House Correspondence with Children's & Youth Work Committee
Previous relevant documents	
Consultation has taken place with...	Human Sexuality Task Group convener (item 4)

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Mission Council Advisory Group Report

1. Mission Council will notice two significant procedural differences in this meeting.
 - a. One is the use of a cover sheet for each paper summarising the main points and giving other general information. These are intended to give a clear introduction to each paper and MCAG would welcome comments as to their effectiveness.
 - b. The second is the implementation of the standing order agreed at the last meeting:

For the good ordering of [Mission Council's] time, the Moderators, in consultation with the General Secretary and the Clerk, shall group the draft motions into three Groups which shall determine the manner in which [Mission Council] shall consider them: A – en bloc, B—majority voting, and C – consensus... Notice in writing to the effect that one or more of the motions included in Group A should be considered separately may be given to the General Secretary by the close of business on the first day of the meeting... If such notice, which must be signed by at least six members of [Mission Council] is duly received, then the motion(s) in question shall be removed from Group A.

It was MCAG's view that the option of grouping items together for en bloc approval should be used to the full at this meeting as a demonstration of the time that could be released for other matters. Members are reminded that if they wish any item to be removed from the en bloc category, they must submit a written note to the general secretary by the first evening of Mission Council. [N.B. The Moderators have ruled that three signatures will be sufficient rather than the six signatures which will be required at General Assembly.]

2. The general secretary received a letter from Plymstock United Reformed Church wishing to register dissent from Mission Council's decision of October 2012 to appoint the Revd Ruth Whitehead as moderator of the South Western Synod. Although this is not technically allowable under the rules of procedure, MCAG felt that the pastorally responsible action would be to notify Mission Council of this request and suggest it be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Resolution

Mission Council notes the concern expressed by Plymstock United Reformed Church regarding the appointment of the Revd Ruth Whitehead as Moderator of the South Western Synod and agrees that their dissent from this decision should be recorded.

3. Resolution 38 Assembly Commission – final report
The Commission investigated the one outstanding matter which was called to Mission Council's attention in May. The Commission submitted a final report to say that the allegation made had been proved and made recommendations about follow-up

actions. These actions have now been taken and the Commission's findings have been shared with the individuals concerned. With the completion of their work, the Commission has now stood down. Work continues in the Law & Polity Advisory Group and the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee (PRWC) on the full range of issues in the Commission's reports, including the one presented to Mission Council in May. Because of the pastoral sensitivity of PRWC's reconciliation work, MCAG felt it unhelpful to circulate the Commission's final report to Mission Council. However, it is available from the general secretary upon request.

4. Blue plaque at Church House

Early in 2013 a request was received from the Marchmont Community Association to affix a blue plaque under their local scheme to the Wakefield Street wall of URC Church House to commemorate Ernest Boulton and Frederick Park, two comic actors of the Victorian era. Using the stage names Fanny and Stella, Boulton and Park were well-known female impersonators. They kept a flat at Wakefield Street and this was the site of their arrest in 1870 on charges of sodomy and conspiracy to draw other men into inappropriate behaviour. When brought to court the pair were acquitted but their treatment prior to their trial would be widely condemned as inappropriate today.

The request was forwarded to the Church House Management Group who gave approval, and on 10th July a dedication ceremony was held which included the mayor of Camden, other council staff, Marchmont Association officers, the author of the book *Fanny and Stella* and a crowd of neighbours. The general secretary welcomed them and took part in the dedication, citing other historical occurrences which had taken place on the site and highlighting the horror of the Boulton and Park story. She made it clear that the URC did not have a common mind on homosexuality.

The Assembly Moderators subsequently received complaints from the leadership of the URC's Group for Evangelism and Renewal (GEAR) who felt that the agreement to the plaque was in contravention of the 2007 Commitment on Human Sexuality and objected to what it had been reported the general secretary had said at the dedication ceremony. The GEAR leadership also sought clarity about who had authorised the plaque. This latter point was clarified and GEAR given an assurance that MCAG would consider whether this matter should be raised at Mission Council as some individual GEAR members had requested.

MCAG discussed this carefully but given that a proper process had been used to authorise the plaque did not see that there was any justification for a retrospective debate. However, given the concerns that had been raised, and some evidence of confusion about what actually happened, MCAG felt that a statement should be given to Mission Council. MCAG wishes to acknowledge the hurt caused and hopes that these paragraphs supply the necessary clarity.

This and other recent issues which relate to the use of the 2007 Commitment also prompted MCAG to reflect on how the Commitment is being remembered, heard and interpreted in various parts of the United Reformed Church. MCAG has therefore suggested that the Human Sexuality Task Group might consider how the Commitment can be more fully instilled into the Church's consciousness and whether there is scope for producing useful guidelines to ensure that all groups in the Church, not least committees that have a representative function, are alert to its implications as they undertake their responsibilities.

5. A resolution from the Children’s & Youth Work Committee

The Children’s & Youth Work Committee agreed at their June meeting that a resolution should go to Mission Council: **The Children’s and Youth Work Committee asks that the choice of venue for General Assembly should be made so that all of the groups involved have appropriate space to participate and that children and youth work and FURY are represented on Assembly Arrangements Committee both in advance of and during General Assembly.** The general secretary sent the resolution directly to the Assembly Arrangements Committee and Karen Morrison, Head of Children’s and Youth Work Development, took part in the discussion at their September meeting. Ideas were shared as to how the youth event “What do you think?” could be delivered effectively within the current budget and how input from children might be enabled in the absence of a Children’s Assembly. Although regular attendance at Assembly Arrangements Committee meetings is restricted to those designated by Assembly as members of the Committee, there is a firm commitment to ongoing consultation with all the key stakeholders in the planning of the Assembly. MCAG offers assurance both to the Children’s and Youth Work Committee and Mission Council that the inclusion of children and young people in the deliberations and decision making of the Church is receiving serious attention from those responsible for planning General Assembly. In the light of these discussions, the Convener and Secretary of the Children’s and Youth Work Committee agreed that the Committee resolution did not need to be tabled at Mission Council.



Paper W1

Faith & Order Conversations

Methodist/URC Strategic Oversight Group





Methodist/URC Strategic Oversight Group: Faith & Order Conversations

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Roberta Rominger roberta.rominger@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	<p>1) Mission Council agrees that bilateral conversations should take place with the Methodist Church to undertake theological exploration of the beliefs and practices of the two denominations. These conversations should be commissioned on the following terms:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. There should be three people from each of the two Churches, with the URC participants appointed by Mission Council in consultation with the Faith & Order Committee; b. The group should meet over a period of two years, with any extension approved by the Methodist Council and the Mission Council as appropriate; c. Conversation should focus in the first instance on the particular questions of theologies of ministry, including appointment/call, and the ecclesiological foundations for connexionalism, congregationalism and Conciliarity; d. Other topics may be explored as time permits. <p>2) Mission Council agrees that the group should report regularly to the two Faith & Order Committees and the Methodist/URC Liaison Group.</p> <p>3) Mission Council agrees that it will be for the Strategic Oversight Group on the advice of the Methodist/URC Liaison Group to determine whether it is appropriate to take discussions to Methodist Council and/or Mission Council.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To commission faith and order conversations with the Methodist Church.
Main points	This proposal responds to requests for joint, accessible theological work.
Previous relevant documents	Minutes of joint meeting of the Mission Council with the Methodist Council October 2012.
Consultation has taken place with...	Faith & Order Committee

Summary of Impact

Financial	Small cost of meetings for bilateral conversations
External (e.g. ecumenical)	New clarity will have favourable impact on LEPs

A proposal for Faith and Order conversations

Methodist Church and United Reformed Church

Background

In his address to the joint meeting of the Methodist Council and the United Reformed Church Mission Council in October 2012, the Revd Dr David Cornick, General Secretary of Churches Together in England, noted that although the two denominations have been close partners for many years, particularly through the life of their united congregations and united areas, and although they have held faith and order conversations with other Churches, they have never held bilateral talks with one another.

The joint meeting also noted two issues that plague the lives of the LEPs. The first is differing views of ministry, with Methodist ministers appointed by Conference to fixed terms of service and URC ministers called by their pastorates for open-ended terms. There is often awkwardness in the change of ministry from one denomination to the other. The second is the connexional view of Church in Methodism as contrasted with the centrality of the local church in the URC. Methodists expect a certain commonality of practice across the Church while their URC partners expect flexibility. When there is a project afoot, permissions happen in different ways. There was a clear message from the October 2012 joint meeting that deeper understanding in these particular areas should be sought as part of a larger goal of removing the barriers that impede local ecumenical collaboration.

There is no intention in this proposal that these conversations should be a precursor to the uniting of the two denominations. The purpose is mutual understanding and theological engagement with the hope of relieving some of the tension points in local ecumenism.

Resolutions

- 1) **Mission Council agrees that bilateral conversations should take place with the Methodist Church to undertake theological exploration of the beliefs and practices of the two denominations. These conversations should be commissioned on the following terms:**
 - a. **There should be three people from each of the two Churches, with the URC participants appointed by Mission Council in consultation with the Faith & Order Committee;**
 - b. **The group should meet over a period of two years, with any extension approved by the Methodist Council and the Mission Council as appropriate;**
 - c. **Conversation should focus in the first instance on the particular questions of theologies of ministry, including appointment/call, and the ecclesiological foundations for connexionalism, congregationalism and Conciliarity;**
 - d. **Other topics may be explored as time permits.**
- 2) **Mission Council agrees that the group should report regularly to the two Faith & Order Committees and the Methodist/URC Liaison Group.**
- 3) **Mission Council agrees that it will be for the Strategic Oversight Group on the advice of the Methodist/URC Liaison Group to determine whether it is appropriate to take discussions to Methodist Council and/or Mission Council.**

Paper W2

Terms of Reference for the Methodist-United Reformed Church Liaison Group

Methodist/URC Strategic Oversight Group





Paper W2

Methodist/URC Strategic Oversight Group: Terms of Reference for the Methodist- United Reformed Church Liaison Group

Basic Information

Contact Name and Details	David Tatem david.tatem@urc.org.uk
Action Required	Decision
Draft Resolutions	Mission Council approves the Terms of Reference for the Methodist-United Reformed Church Liaison Group contained in paper W2.
Alternative Options to Consider, if Any	

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	To agree revised Terms of Reference for this Group.
Main Points	Give the Group a greater clarity of purpose. Establish a procedure for the renewal of its membership. Revise the Group's working method and reduce the normal number of its meetings from three to two per year. Clarify the Group's lines of responsibility and accountability.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	The adoption of Resolution 16 of the 2008 Assembly. The subsequent establishment of the Strategic Oversight Group (SOG) meant that the long-standing Liaison Group needed to review its terms of reference, in particular to establish the nature of its relationship with the SOG.
Consultations	Strategic Oversight Group

Summary of Impact

Financial	Probable reduction of costs due to fewer meetings
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Methodist-United Reformed Church Liaison Group

Revised Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The first official Methodist/Congregational partnership scheme was inaugurated at Bridgnorth in Shropshire in 1962.¹ Over the last 50 years, there has been a significant growth in the number of partnerships between churches in our two traditions. These partnerships vary in size and balance and many also involve churches of other traditions. As well as partnerships between local churches there are also ecumenical or united areas which originally brought together the functions of Methodist circuits and URC districts.
- 1.2. The Methodist-United Reformed Church Liaison Group began its life as ‘a small informal group’ in 1975 or 1976,² became the United Reformed/Methodist Committee in 1977,³ and subsequently took on its current name.
- 1.3. In the on-going relationship of our two Churches and particularly following the establishment of the Strategic Oversight Group, the time has come to renew the terms of reference of the Liaison Group.
- 1.4. It is notable that the Liaison Group’s agendas have had a cyclical pattern. In part, this may be due to a lack of corporate memory, inadequate communication, or inaccessibility of resources. It is also due to the developments both our Churches have made in certain key areas as they seek to respond to the changing context for the life and mission of the Church. It is hoped that these renewed terms of reference will help to respond to these challenges.

1 *Patterns of sharing and commitment between Methodist and United Reformed churches (Formerly Local co-operation between United Reformed and Methodist churches)*, 6th edition (1990), p.7. This ‘Letter of Advice’ had previously been published in 1974, 1977, 1980, 1983, and 1986.

2 See the report of the Methodist Church’s Ecumenical Committee to the Conference in 1976 (Agenda, p.273): ‘Relations with the United Reformed Church have developed rapidly at local levels and it has been found necessary to have a small informal group, representing on the Methodist side the interests of the Ecumenical, Building Schemes, and Faith and Order Committees, in order to deal with particular issues. These have included the deployment of the ministry, payment of stipends and the increasing number of what are virtually Methodist/URC circuits rather than single shared churches. A joint meeting of Methodist Chairmen of Districts and URC Provincial Moderators immediately after the Conference is one of the results of this group’s work.’

3 See the report of the Methodist Church’s Ecumenical Committee to the Conference in 1978 (Agenda, p.191): ‘As requested by last year’s Conference, the Ecumenical Committee has set up a United Reformed/Methodist Committee; it has so far met three times and, among other things, has produced a printed version of the letter of advice to URC/Methodist schemes, discussed the development of URC/Methodist Circuits, considered the recognition of lay preachers within the two churches, and provided a form for ministers serving in joint churches.’

2. Task

- 2.1. The task of the Liaison Group is to focus on the local and intermediate dimensions of the relationship between the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church and, in relation to those contexts, to:
- explore the two Churches' understandings of their life and mission;
 - share perspectives and insights from each tradition;
 - address the issues affecting their practical co-operation, including theological and non-theological factors and those arising from policy and strategic decisions made by both Churches;
 - provide advice and information; and
 - develop appropriate web-based resources that can be printed on request.
- 2.2. The Liaison Group shall pay particular attention to the following:
- matters relating to local ecumenical partnerships involving both Churches;
 - matters relating to ecumenical/united areas;
 - the current accuracy of the information, advice, and other resources relevant to the responsibilities of the Liaison Group available on both Churches' websites;⁴ and
 - links to other websites providing information about both traditions, including the national ecumenical instruments (Action of Churches Together in Scotland, Churches Together in England, and Cytûn: Churches Together in Wales), Uniting and United Churches, and international dialogues.

3. Membership

- 3.1. The membership of the Liaison Group shall comprise:
- an equal number of persons from each Church who, together, have a broad range of relevant expertise and experience:
 - two co-chairs, one from each Church;
 - two co-secretaries, namely the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations of the URC and the Connexional Ecumenical Officer of the Methodist Church;
 - up to three other members from each Church;
 - and one representative of each of the following:
 - the Baptist Union of Great Britain;
 - the Council for Christian Unity of the Church of England; and
 - Churches Together in England.

⁴ This includes information about the faith, worship, life, ministry, and mission of our two churches, training opportunities, the expectations, orientation, and welcome/induction of ministers, and the sharing and use of manses and other church buildings.

- 3.2. The United Reformed Church members shall be appointed by the General Assembly or Mission Council on the recommendation of the URC's Nominations Committee.
- 3.3. The Methodist Church members shall be appointed by the Methodist Council.
- 3.4. Both Churches shall review the membership every five years.
- 3.5. The Liaison Group may draw upon outside expertise as and when needed to comment on papers, contribute to discussions at meetings, and to offer guidance and advice.
- 4. Method of working and relationship with other bodies**
- 4.1. The Liaison Group shall support the Methodist Church's Connexional Ecumenical Officer and the URC's Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and National Ecumenical Officers for Scotland and Wales, and through them their respective networks of district, synod, and denominational ecumenical officers.
- 4.2. The Liaison Group shall normally meet for two day-meetings each year and, between meetings, continue to fulfil its task through active networking and consultation.
- 4.3. The Liaison Group's agenda shall relate to its Task and items may be contributed by:
- its co-chairs, co-secretaries, and other members;
 - the Strategic Oversight Group;
 - the Joint Property Strategy Group;
 - Methodist district, and URC synod and denominational ecumenical officers;
 - the Methodist Church's Ecumenical Stakeholders' Forum; and
 - the URC's Synod Moderators' Meeting, Mission Committee, and Mission Council.
- 4.4. Agendas for and Minutes of each meeting shall be produced by the co-secretaries and, after approval by the co-chairs, distributed to the members and be available to the Strategic Oversight Group.
- 4.5. The Liaison Group shall relate with the Methodist-URC Liaison Committee in Wales.
- 4.6. The Liaison Group shall maintain an appropriate working relationship with the faith and order and law and polity bodies of the two Churches.
- 4.7. The Liaison Group shall identify those items that need to be reported or referred to the Strategic Oversight Group and the co-secretaries shall ensure good communication between the two groups.
- 4.8. The Liaison Group shall identify those items that need to be reported or referred to the Methodist-Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission⁵ and/or the Methodist Church's Ecumenical Stakeholders' Forum and the Methodist co-secretary shall ensure good communication with these bodies.
- 4.9. The Liaison Group shall identify those items that need to be reported or referred to the URC's Synod Moderators' Meeting, Mission Committee, and Mission Council, and the United Reformed co-secretary shall ensure good communication with these bodies.

⁵ The URC's Secretary for Ecumenical Relations is a member of MAPUM.

Resolution

Mission Council approves the Terms of Reference for the Methodist-United Reformed Church Liaison Group contained in paper W2.

Paper W3

The future of the Joint Property
Strategy Group

Strategic Oversight Group





Paper W3

Strategic Oversight Group (Methodist/URC): Future of the Joint Property Strategy Group

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Revd Roberta Rominger roberta.rominger@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council asks the Nominations Committee to identify two people to join the Revd Lucy Brierley as the United Reformed Church members of the Joint Property Strategy Group, and grants authority to the Assembly officers to confirm their appointment.
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To update Mission Council on developments in the Joint Property Strategy Group
Main points	Previous work allocated to the JPSG (on the closure of church buildings, resolving a difficulty around the disposal of buildings occupied by LEPs, and a properties advice service for local churches) has been redirected to other groups. The JPSG will focus on the mission potential of buildings, engaging and inspiring congregations towards imaginative and faithful decisions regarding their premises.
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council (May 2011) Paper Q for terms of reference; Mission Council and Methodist Council (October 2012) JPSG first year report
Consultation has taken place with...	Methodist colleagues through the Strategic Oversight Group; Methodist/URC Liaison Group; URC Law & Polity Advisory Group

Summary of Impact

Financial	Resources for the employment of an executive officer were committed for the period 2012 – 2014. The money will be used in whatever way best supports the aims of the JPSG.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	This is a significant partnership with the Methodist Church.

Strategic Oversight Group

The future of the Joint Property Strategy Group

Background

- 1 The October 2010 joint meeting of the Methodist Council and the URC Mission Council agreed that a new group should be established to undertake work identified by the earlier Methodist/URC Buildings Think Tank. Terms of reference were agreed by both councils in spring 2011 and the Joint Property Strategy Group began meeting later that year. Money was budgeted to enable the employment of an executive officer and the Revd Carla Maurer held this post from September 2012 until May 2013. Currently the post is vacant pending further discussion in the Strategic Oversight Group.

Fundamentals

- 2 URC participation in this joint work is guided by the following:
 - We believe we are called by God to work with other Christians wherever possible.
 - The General Assembly has asked for more co-ordination of central structures with the Methodist Church (the resolutions being paralleled by resolutions passed by the Methodist Conference).
 - The Assembly has specifically asked for the possibility of a property advice service to be explored creatively.
 - The wealth of the URC is overwhelmingly embedded in property and therefore the effective use or liquidation of property assets is a key stewardship issue.
 - In formal and informal ways, local congregations who work with, or wish to work with, local Methodists plead for perceived administrative and legal blockages to be removed.

Areas of JPSG Activity

- 3 The JPSG has had some engagement with a variety of topics. The JPSG would like to move some of its work to other groups as follows and this has been agreed by the Strategic Oversight Group.
 - Good Endings: This is a project to produce a definitive paper on the issues surrounding the closure of church buildings, legal, procedural, financial and pastoral. This work has been passed to the Methodist Connexional Team so that they can prepare a paper for Methodist Conference dealing with specifically Methodist issues. The URC will in parallel work on pastoral and liturgical resources and would want confirmation that the JPSG/Team work would still be available for incorporation into a wider URC resource; equally the latter would be freely available to the Connexion.
 - Reciprocal Capital Investment Arrangements: This work has been passed to the Methodist-URC Liaison Group (MURCLG). The URC Law & Polity Advisory Group will provide input, especially via a sub-group that is currently working on the topic.
 - Advice on Property Aspects of Sharing Agreements, Declarations of Intent, etc; this work to rest with the MURCLG.
 - Property Advice Service: to be pursued by each denomination independently. As joint work with Methodism is not currently possible, the URC will be exploring an ecumenical service for a variety of smaller denominations eg the Friends, Congregational Federation.

A Reshaped JPSG

- 4 The JPSG will focus on the People, Possibilities and Partnerships aspects of its former work. It will open eyes, inspire vision and make the sharing of good practice easier.
- 5 For the URC a key question that has not been resolved satisfactorily by the JPSG ways of working to date is how it is sufficiently linked into other URC structures for its work to inform, and be informed by, work elsewhere in the URC. The Methodist Connexional Team has post holders with overall responsibility for building matters; there are no such posts in the URC staff team. This has been a somewhat debilitating problem. The URC needs to examine this further.
- 6 The revised JPSG scope will mean a reshuffle of membership. Some previous JPSG members will continue to serve the URC in exploring possibilities for a properties advice service for local churches in partnership with other denominations.
- 7 It is recommended that the URC look for two new members who would between them have experience and expertise in the creative use of buildings, current knowledge of URC structures, and the ability to be effective advocates. In the interim the General Secretary will attend the December JPSG meeting.
- 8 The URC remains open for further discussion in the Strategic Oversight Group about the best use of the resource originally set aside for the Executive Officer post.

Resolution

Mission Council asks the Nominations Committee to identify two people to join the Revd Lucy Brierley as the United Reformed Church members of the Joint Property Strategy Group, and grants authority to the Assembly officers to confirm their appointment.

Paper X1

Responses to the
recommendations of
The Gathering

National Synod of Wales



Paper X1

National Synod of Wales: Responses to the recommendations of The Gathering



Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Sally Thomas ecumenical@urcwales.org.uk
Action required	Discussion and transmission to General Assembly
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council recommends to General Assembly that the paper entitled 'United Reformed Church response to the Commission of Covenanted Churches' (Paper X1) be submitted as the United Reformed Church's response to the Commission.
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Recommendations for a Uniting Church in Wales with a number of recommendations for the churches and leadership of all five denominations to consider.
Main points	These are set out in points 5.1 to 5.6 of the paper.
Previous relevant documents	In October 2012 the Commission for the Covenanting Churches in Wales organised an event called The Gathering. This was in response to a request from the churches at a 2009 meeting that the Commission come up with proposals for unity. In preparation, three working parties with representatives from each denomination plus Cytûn met to address and prepare material on Pastoral Oversight, Church Governance, and a new Liturgy for Holy Communion. The full reports and details of the day itself are on the Cytûn website link: http://www.cydgynulliad.org.uk
Consultation has taken place with...	Churches in the Synod of Wales have been asked to discuss the recommendations. To date 42 have responded and there has also been a Synod discussion. Ecumenically, there has been one meeting of church leaders. The whole process came from a Commission consultation, has been discussed at subsequent Commission meetings and will be discussed at a special meeting in November.

Summary of Impact

Financial	No detailed information as yet. The ongoing funding of the Commission and cost of the next Gathering scheduled for October 2015 is a consideration. If the recommendations are accepted, either as they are or amended, then a task group will be set up to consider future financing (Section 5.3.c).
External (e.g. ecumenical)	As above, 5.3.c states that "leaders, lawyers and administrators" of all five denominations work together on the new ecumenical structures. The impact on our existing L.E.P.s will be something we shall then need to work through with them. It should be noted that should these or subsequently amended recommendations not be accepted by all five denominations there will be press coverage around churches failing to agree. This will also impact on our wider ecumenical partnerships whichever way the final decision goes.

United Reformed Church response to the Commission of Covenanted Churches

1. Process

We see The Gathering process as a step in the continuing ecumenical journey in Wales. We are thankful for the Covenant going back to 1975 and want to continue conversations that make that real for people in Wales, so that the unity we believe we have in God can be seen more clearly.

We recognise that the recommendations from The Gathering are not a full scheme of union, but represent sufficient work to test whether the covenant partners are ready for interchangeability of ministry. We offer this response as part of the consultation to help refine the recommendations into proposals that might gain wider acceptance.

The summary recommendations have been shared with local church meetings and 42 have responded. There have been discussions at some local ecumenical meetings, but it is unfortunate that local reporting back suggests that many local Anglican churches had not heard about The Gathering. The process of each covenant partner making an individual response has also meant that we have reacted from our own tradition and prejudices. More joint conversations may have helped us to imagine the future together.

We continue to see ourselves as part of a uniting church movement and affirm positive ways of working together. As the Statement of Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church says: “We affirm our intention to go on praying and working, with all our fellow Christians, for the visible unity of the Church in the way Christ chooses, so that people and nations may be led to love and serve God and praise him more and more for ever.”

2. Principles

We believe that the desire for unity is rooted in the Bible, in Jesus’ prayer ‘that they may all be one ... so that the world may believe’ (John 17:21). It would also be natural for us to begin thinking about unity in diversity by reflecting on the nature of God as Trinity calling people to be the Church, continuing the ministry of Christ as partners in God’s mission.

When the United Reformed Church Task Group on Personal and Conciliar Leadership and Authority reported back to Mission Council in October 2002 it noted ‘The way forward in ecumenical dialogue is not to try to fit into one another’s categories, making compromises here and there, but for all our churches to walk together to somewhere beyond our current position... Unity is not a matter of ecclesiastical joinery - it is about the place of the Church within the purposes of God’ paragraphs 1.3.3 and 1.3.5.

Our traditions would not see any particular church order as being essential. At the same time members hold deep convictions about how the Spirit shapes the life of churches. We affirm the ministry of the whole people of God, with some set aside for particular ministries. We affirm the local congregation as an important agent in God’s mission, and note that many of our local churches in Wales are suspicious of external interference.

Eldership has been important in our tradition as a locally elected and ordained leadership team within a congregation. We offer this as a model that has the potential to include collaborative working and spiritual depth.

We affirm that there should be equality of opportunity for people in the discernment of God's call to all ministries in a Uniting Church in Wales. It was through the call of local church meetings that the call to ministry of women and gay people was first recognised. In the same way, we have affirmed the freedom of local congregations to respond to their context by offering the registration or blessing of civil partnerships. Whilst not all in the United Reformed Church agree with this, we would expect such freedom to be respected in a Church Uniting in Wales.

3. Possibilities

It will be some time before the responses of other denominations are known. Full reporting back and future steps will be the focus of the next Gathering scheduled for October 2015. The Gathering in 2012 was widely reported and we do not want the reports of the next to be about failure. We are committed to greater ecumenism but do not get the impression from local churches or ecumenical partners that this is the way to do it. The congregational responses to the recommendations as they stand are only part of the story. We are working with other denominations all the time on the deployment of ministers in shared situations and the current recommendations do nothing to make that easier.

We would like to see a mission emphasis as the core element of what happens next. We believe there is more to say about the United Reformed Church position than that reflected in the Gathering reports.

We are mindful of current successful examples of ecumenical collaboration and hope for similar effective developments -

- Local ecumenical partnerships bringing Christians in a community together.
- Chaplaincy models where labels are not as important as responding to need and showing God's love, where different ministries are recognised in team contexts as an important example of mutual respect.
- Franchise models of ecumenical working such as food banks, street pastors, messy church which are of our time and are a visible way that Christians are working together to respond to people and meet their needs .

In their responses, and whatever their concerns about the current recommendations, local churches expressed strong commitment to local ecumenism.

4. Response to the Commission

The Synod wrote to all local churches in January 2013 asking for their response to the recommendations. By the deadline date of June 13, forty two churches out of a hundred had responded with others reporting that they will be discussing it later in the year.

The 'Summary of Recommendations' document from the Gathering papers says, "It is the Commission's hope that, at the end of the consultation period, these recommendations - perhaps refined by our combined wisdom - may become proposals for the future."

PLEASE NOTE THAT THOSE SENTENCES IN BOLD BELOW ARE QUOTES FROM THE GATHERING PUBLICATION 'SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS'. THE NUMBERING ALSO FOLLOWS THAT OF THE GATHERING.

5.1 The first recommendation invites the five Covenanted Churches to think of themselves as the Church Uniting in Wales.

We consider ourselves to be a church that has already brought together different traditions and is committed to working for unity. We note that the Covenanting Baptist churches signed the covenant as individual congregations, or as part of LEPs who were part of other covenant partners. The 1975 Covenant and 2005 Trefeca Declaration which the recommendations intend to bring to fruition are at Appendices 1 and 2.

The second recommendation includes several bullet points concerning oversight and interchange of ministers. Each bullet point is followed by our response, which include key questions which we believe require further discussion before the recommendation can be accepted:

The Commission recommends

5.2 a. That the Uniting Church will have nine jurisdictions – the six existing Anglican dioceses plus a Methodist jurisdiction, a Presbyterian jurisdiction and a United Reformed Church/Covenanting Baptist jurisdiction, each of which will be invited to elect its own bishop;

The United Reformed Church concern here is one of parity. The recommendation of a 6/3 balance between current diocese and new jurisdictions is therefore a concern depending on what decisions are to be taken by the bench of Bishops of the Church Uniting in Wales. This is not clear from the documentation nor, therefore, what the difference in representation means.

Many of the Local Ecumenical Partnerships that currently exist in Wales will be under more than one jurisdiction with no clear indication of the implications of this, nor of how it will facilitate the decision about how to deploy ministers in LEPs.

We recognise that other reformed churches around the world have accepted bishops for the sake of unity. For example, the Porvoo Communion, consisting mostly of churches in Northern Europe, states in its declaration:

“We acknowledge that the episcopal office is valued and maintained in all our churches as a visible sign expressing and serving the Church’s unity and continuity in apostolic life, mission and ministry. And the churches commit themselves to welcome persons episcopally ordained in any of our churches to the office of bishop, priest or deacon to serve,[..] in that ministry in the receiving church without re-ordination; - by invitation and in accordance with any regulations which may from time to time be in force”.

However, unlike other churches, in particular the Methodist and Anglican churches in the USA, Porvoo does not yet accept the office of bishop as equally open for women and men.

Another example is The Lund Statement by the Lutheran World Federation which includes: “58. Absence of this episcopal succession does not necessarily mean that there has been a loss of continuity in apostolic faith. The possibility of recognising that churches may be apostolic even if they have not preserved the sign of episcopal succession is of great ecumenical significance, since the mutual recognition of ministers exercising episcopé at the supra-congregational level is vital in ecumenical rapprochement among churches. At the same time, a church which has not preserved the sign of historic succession is free to enter a relationship of mutual participation in episcopal installations (consecrations) with a church which has retained it, and thereby to adopt it for itself, without thereby denying its past apostolic continuity. The readiness of Lutheran churches to recognise the value of the sign of apostolicity in the historic succession of episcopal ministers and to adopt this sign, without requiring its necessity, is a contribution to the ecumenical movement.”

Within the United Reformed Church in the UK context, for some the image of a bishop is alien and emotive. Sensitive conversations would be needed to address any misconceptions and gain acceptance. Some respondents urged that a different title be considered. The recommendations do not suggest a mechanism for the United Reformed Church and Covenanting Baptist congregations to elect a bishop and this would require conversation before the recommendation could be affirmed.

The Commission recommends

5.2 b. That a description of the bishop's role be drawn up and agreed by all five Covenanted Churches;

Within current United Reformed Church polity, some of the functions of a bishop are fulfilled by a Synod Moderator, but it is clear from the title that these are performed as a representative of the Synod Meeting, and any personal authority is held within the authority of a council of the church. This is particularly true in the deployment of ministers, where a committee of synod decides where ministers are to serve, and the local pastorates decide who to call. We believe that more exploration of assumptions about the power of bishops would be helpful before a role description can be drawn up.

The Commission recommends

5.2 c. That the bishop be consecrated into the historic episcopate, i.e. ordained by the laying on of hands by at least three bishops who are themselves part of the historic episcopate;

We have heard many concerns about the historic episcopate and the idea of apostolic succession. We would identify continuity as coming from the work of the Holy Spirit, the teaching of the Gospel, and the councils of the church. We wonder whether this could be represented by Elders being involved in the laying on of hands during the consecration of bishops. With our understanding of the Priesthood of all believers we would want the breadth of our traditions represented in the way bishops are recognised.

The Commission recommends

5.2 d. That the bishop will ordain all those who are to become ministers within the bishop's jurisdiction;

The Structure of the United Reformed Church currently says that the Synod Moderator shall - "preside, or appoint a deputy to preside, at all ordinations and/or inductions of ministers and all commissionings and/or inductions of CRCWs within the province or nation"
(*Basis of Union, Section B paragraph 2.4*)

It is not necessary for the synod moderator to preside or be present at the ordination of elders who share in ministry but are not 'ministers'. The Commission recommendation doesn't take account of the ministry of CRCWs (Church Related Community Workers) who are diaconal ministers but not ordained, nor Elders who are ordained but not presbyters or priests.

The Commission recommends

5.2 e. That the bishop will be a bishop in the Church Uniting in Wales and will share collegiality and full interchangeability with all the other bishops of that Church;

Our concern at the beginning of the process was that The Church in Wales did not allow for women bishops. However, the decision of the Governing Body of the Church in Wales in September 2013 that women are now eligible to be appointed bishops removes this concern about inequality expressed by many in the United Reformed Church and opens the way for interchangeability.

The Commission recommends

5.2 f. That the bishops of all nine jurisdictions in the Church Uniting in Wales consult with each other at least twice a year;

We believe that to adequately and thoroughly address co-operation in mission or deployment of ministers across Wales, more meetings would be needed. We think that the Commission needs to express more clearly what the bench of bishops would do.

The Commission recommends

5.2 h. That all existing ministers agree to the laying on of hands by at least one Anglican bishop and at least one other bishop representing the other traditions within the Church Uniting in Wales. This would be regarded not as an ordination but as a step forward to full covenanted ministry.

Ministers who feel that their existing ministry should be recognised have found it hard to accept that they should go through another ceremony that would include the laying on of hands. We ask The Commission to look again at how other uniting churches have addressed this, such as the Churches of South and North India and Pakistan.

In the United Reformed Church, we are familiar with the idea that one might be locally ordained as an Elder and then go on to ordination for wider service as a minister of Word and Sacrament without this being seen as re-ordination, because the kind of service is very different. However, we believe that ministers from other parts of the United Reformed Church would see having hands laid on them by a bishop as an additional barrier to serving in the National Synod of Wales. Ministerial formation and in-service training are significant here, yet are not mentioned in the report or recommendations.

In 1987 the Commission published a service for “The Inauguration of a Uniting Church in Wales’. While the hopes of uniting then did not reach fruition, the carefully chosen words of the service still have much to offer. They include each church leader saying to one another and then to every minister as part of the act of laying on of hands -

“May God continue his blessing already given in your ordination; may God use our action here for the reconciliation of all our ministries within the Uniting Church in Wales.”

We ask the Commission to consider this form of recognition and acceptance of ministers from Covenant partners.

The responses from some ministers indicate that they would not be willing to undergo anything that would look like a re-ordination. Likewise some local churches have indicated that they would not want to submit to the authority of a bishop. Whilst we need to consider how to care for those who feel they could not be part of a Uniting Church in Wales, we would like the Commission to consider whether an attempt at visible unity that creates more fragmentation has achieved its aim. We are also mindful of our churches working creatively with congregations including those from denominations that are not Covenant partners.

The third recommendation says that

5.3 Following acceptance of the invitation outlined in 1. above, the Commission recommends:

5.3 a. That all member jurisdictions will, for the present, continue to operate their existing ecclesiastical polity;

It is difficult in cross border churches like the United Reformed Church to change the relationship with the wider denomination without having a clearer structure for a Uniting

Church in Wales. We know from our current ecumenical partnerships where differences in polity cause friction, and would hope for ecumenical co-operation to help smooth these problems rather than continue them.

5.3 b. That the Gathering of the Church Uniting in Wales be held annually; and

We have concerns about the cost both for this and wider aspects of the recommendations.

5.3 c. That leaders, lawyers and administrators representing all five member Churches be asked to draw up, within a period of five years a Scheme and Constitution for the Uniting Church based on the recommendations in Section 5 of the Report of the Working Group on Church Governance.

Section 5 addresses the long term recommendations for structure and governance.

We have concerns that they create additional levels of governance for which none of the denominations has capacity and that they misunderstand the current dynamics of the partnership. For example, it recommends authorisation of forms of service which could be counter productive for those who value the autonomy to create contextual worship and whose service books exist as a resource not as something anyone should feel obliged to adhere to. The proposed structure and language used has caused a significant number of churches to express concern that it is too Anglican. While we accept this is not the intention, it is, we would suggest, a section that needs further conversation.

An additional and significant concern is the financing and deployment of ministry. Denominations are already feeling themselves vulnerable in this regard. A new infrastructure to sit alongside and work with existing ones is likely to be unsustainable.

We also recognise that affirming the Welsh language in church life is an important element in ecumenical dialogue in Wales, and as significant as the issues about church order.

The fourth recommendation says that

5.4 The Commission recommends as good practice the appointment in the Church of England of cathedral canons from other denominations.

The United Reformed Church would welcome this happening now. Current practice is for ecumenical guests to be full voting members of the United Reformed Church National Synod of Wales.

The fifth recommendation says that

5.5 The Commission recommends that its member churches explore together the role of the diaconate to see whether they can reach a common mind on this issue.

The United Reformed Church's diaconal ministry is CRCWs (Church Related Community Workers) who are commissioned but not ordained. Discussions as recommended would be welcome.

The sixth recommendation relates to Local Ecumenical Partnerships

5.6 a. Within Local Ecumenical Partnerships, the Commission recommends: that ministers be encouraged but not required to attend a denominational court other than that of the denomination to which they belong; and

For some denominations this is already happening. For example, the Presbyterian Church of Wales /United Reformed Church Guidelines state (Page 51)

When a minister is serving in a joint church or joint pastorate it is reasonable to expect them to continue to fulfil the obligation of their parent denomination.

It is also reasonable to expect them to attend some of the wider councils of the other denomination, in the case of a United Reformed Church Minister, principally Presbytery and in the case of a Presbyterian Church of Wales minister, principally one of the two meetings of Synod each year. These expectations should be made explicit to the minister, the local joint church or pastorate, the Synod Elders and Presbytery before the minister's induction.

And 'How to Make it Work' the guidelines for Methodist / United Reformed Church LEPs (pages 3/4) has -

The status of the minister in the other church.

The authorised procedures of both denominations permit a minister in a Local Ecumenical Partnership to enjoy full status in both churches.

The United Reformed Church paragraph 2(3)(a) enables a Methodist Minister who is directly working in the service of the United Reformed Church within a particular Synod to be a member of that Synod.

United Reformed Church ministers are expected to seek the status of Authorised Minister from the Methodist Conference. There is a requirement to make a declaration that he or she will not during the period of authorisation so preach or act as to deny or repudiate Methodist doctrinal standards.

Having full status in both churches and obligations within two denominations means that it is advisable for the Circuit and the United Reformed Church Synod, in discussion with the local church/pastorate, to agree on what are reasonable expectations and obligations before the minister is called/appointed. Adjustments can then be made once the minister has settled into his or her style of ministry.

While the benefits of such mutual recognition of ministry far outweigh the disadvantages, the latter must be acknowledged. Being qualified for membership of a double quantity of official meetings is a mixed blessing. Sensitivity and flexibility on the part of the Circuit and Synod as well as the local church(es) and the minister, are needed to decide which must be attended. Ideally, the expectations of the minister in a Methodist/United Reformed Church Local Ecumenical Partnership should be agreed beforehand as part of the terms and conditions of service. The Liaison Committee recommends attendance at Circuit Meeting and the Synods of both Churches as a high priority. The United Reformed Church minister ought to share in the Methodist Circuit Staff meeting. The informal ministers' meetings common in the United Reformed Church, although very valuable, are not equivalent.

5.6 b. The Commission recommends that churches entrust the administration of the Partnership to a Sponsoring Body selected from members of the Commission of Covenanted Churches or Cytûn.

We would welcome and support this happening effectively. Currently, the United Reformed Church National Synod of Wales has joint liaison groups with both the Methodists and the Presbyterian Church of Wales which consider strategy and give oversight to existing LEPs.

6. Summary Comments - If not this, then what?

We would expect further possibilities to emerge from discussion under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We are committed to the conversations without a set idea of the conclusions that will be reached. Like the disciples on the Emmaus road, we hope that talking and travelling together will provide the opportunity for the living Word to re-shape our future. We will always be open to God surprising us with fresh recognition, vision, wisdom and hope.

Appendix 1

The 1975 Covenant

Confessing our faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour,
and renewing our will to serve his mission in the world,
our several churches have been brought into a new relationship with one another.

- * **Together we give thanks for all we have in common.**
- * **Together we repent the sin of perpetuating our division.**
- * **Together we make known our understanding
of the obedience to which we are called.**

We do not yet know the form union will take.

We approach our task with openness to the Spirit.

**We believe that God will guide his Church into ways of truth and peace,
correcting, strengthening and renewing it in accordance with the mind of Christ.**

Appendix 2

The Trefeca Declaration 2005

We reaffirm our commitment to journeying together in covenant relationship.
In the consultation process of 2003-4

We have heard and understood each other better.

We remain committed to the goal of the journey being
the visible unity of the Church in the way that Christ wills.

As covenanted partners, within the family of Cytûn, we commit ourselves
during the six-year period 2005-2011 to:

- * a fuller sharing in one another's ministries
- * making the best possible use of the provisions of each church;
- * always undertaking new work jointly,
except where in conscience we must do so separately;
- * pooling resources in order to provide a united witness to Wales;
- * and listening to what the nation is saying to the Church.

Paper X2

Synod reports on
vision2020 implementation



United Church 2013
Church 2013
Reformed Church 2013
Church 2013

Paper X2



Synod reports on vision2020 implementation

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Roberta Rominger roberta.rominger@urc.org.uk
Action required	For information and reflection
Draft resolution(s)	
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	General Assembly 2010 adopted vision2020 as the framework for mission across the United Reformed Church. Mission Council asked the synods to report to the November 2011 meeting on their progress with use of the framework (paper B2).
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of Impact

Financial	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	



Synod reports on vision2020 Implementation

A. *Dying to Live: vision2020 in Northern Synod*

Northern Synod recognised the reality of church decline, and sought to help churches to consider what needs to be let go of, to enable new life to come – using the parable of the sower. Here are highlights of their implementation of vision2020.

1. Spirituality and Prayer

This is the main focus for St Cuthbert's Centre, Holy Island, which is increasingly recognised by visitors as a place of prayer. The Warden can also resource a wide variety of churches, individuals and groups in this area, on and off of the Island. Aware of the current financial climate they are looking at more effective advertising and marketing to increase the use of the Bothy for private retreats.

Other achievements in the Synod

- Worship resources for Vision 2020 are on the Synod website
- Training events for worship leaders being run by Coast churches
- TLS is regularly promoted in Synod meetings – 10 students took the Foundation Course in 2012/13, with 1 on an extension course
- 13 individuals attended the Synod's spring retreat 2013
- 9 people participated in the Synod's 2013 pilgrimage.

2. Identity

- 44 churches have a website. All the otherS have a page on the Synod website.

3. Christian Ecumenical Partnerships

The three denominations on Holy Island are working closely together, not least on the Lindisfarne Gospels Pilgrimage in July 2013. Some ecumenical co-operation is developing with the Retreat Houses using our facilities and vice versa.

Other achievements in the Synod

- South East Northumberland is operating as an ecumenical area
- There are 15 single congregation Local Ecumenical Partnerships in the Synod, as well as 23 sharing agreements and various informal sharing arrangements
- Receptive ecumenism findings are to be a major discussion point at Synod meeting in October 2013
- Synod plays a full part in North East Christian Churches Together, the Churches' Regional Commission in the North East and Northumbria Industrial Mission
- The Newcastle City Centre Chaplaincy is currently a partner in mission

4. Community Partnerships

Other achievements in the Synod

- 2 Church-Related Community Worker posts and 2 community worker posts in the Synod
- Continuing as a partner with the Faith in the Community project in the Diocese of Durham.

5. Hospitality and Diversity

- Returns for 2013 show 25% of church members in the Synod are male and 1% black or minority ethnic members; males make up 36% of adherents, with 4% BME
- Nominations Group seeks balance where possible
- Synod advocates and supports the revised radical welcome campaign.

6. Evangelism

St Cuthbert's Centre, Holy Island, was a full participant in a mission weekend run by students from Cranmer Hall in March. It is hoped that this might become an annual event. An interesting ecumenical conversation has begun about the opportunities on Holy Island for faith-sharing, with the hope that some resources and activities might be developed for the hundreds of thousands of visitors who come each year.

Mission & Evangelism Group seeks to encourage churches to recognise and use opportunities; to help to equip churches; offer information and some training; to enable the movement of ideas through contact with the Link Persons; and to take the fear out of the word "evangelism".

7. Church Growth

Mission & Evangelism Group are considering offering to do some work on prayer in relation to both evangelism and church growth. This occurs in the context that total church membership in the Synod has declined by 10% since 2010 with average church membership declining by 5% in the same period.

Other achievements in the Synod

7 churches had a growing membership in the 2013 returns.

8. Justice and Peace

- Commitment for Life was promoted in Synod meeting in 2012 and one church has since joined the scheme
- Crookham peace garden was opened
- Many churches across the Synod are actively working with Food Banks and similar community initiatives.

9. The Integrity of Creation

Other achievements in the Synod

- Northallerton and Ponteland have gained the Eco-Congregation award.

B. Implementation within the North Western Synod

In March 2010, meeting at Trinity Church Cheadle, the North Western Synod agreed to prioritise three of the Vision 2020 statements for its life and mission. These were Spirituality & Prayer, Community Partnerships and Evangelism.

Spirituality and Prayer

- Since 2010 there will have been two retreats on Lindisfarne: one in May 2010 attended by 15 ministers and the other in September 2013 attended by 24 ministers and lay people.
- The Silence & Retreats group have taken advantage of the two Synod Days to publicise their work and offer resources to people.
- The Emmaus Road Prayer Community has come into existence as a means by which our life in Christ might be deepened and our local congregations might be nourished by prayer. So far there is only one local meeting but it is hoped that this will grow in the coming months.
- Our Synod meetings have incorporated the Sacrament of Holy Communion and this was most recently celebrated at the Big Day Out at Blackpool.
- Mr Lawrence Moore and the Rev Dr Rosalind Selby have led us in Bible Study in our Synod Meetings.

Further Work

Arrange training Events for lay, ordained and young people to help deepen our understanding of spirituality and prayer.

Develop ministers' meeting in each area which offer colleague support and forums for prayer and reflection.

Create prayer links with our World Church partners and share ideas stories with the wider Synod.

Community Partnerships

- The Synod has set up a Redevelopment Group to harness the skills and experience of churches in the Synod that have recent experience of redevelopment together with those with relevant professional qualifications. This may include sourcing finance, negotiating with local authorities/ other agencies. The Legal & Trust Officer has recently prepared a paper which will be circulated to all churches in the Synod on how to tackle a redevelopment project.
- In addition to the Tonge Moor CRCW placement, a CRCW post has been declared at Levenshulme/ Trinity Community Church, Moss Side and a further such post is being prepared in Blackburn.
- Some good news stories have been shared through Area Meetings of churches impacting their communities.
- Monies released to support local churches through the Synod Grants scheme have tried to establish how the grant will facilitate Christ's mission in local communities.
- The Synod Property Consultant has addressed the EM 2 ministers on how to set about leading their congregations into redevelopment projects to better able meet the needs of the surrounding communities.

Further Work

LMMR needs to be fully implemented. Currently without a Ministerial Self Appraisal Accompaniment Co-Ordinator the Synod has been delayed in assisting local churches to think about their ministry and mission in localities.

Evangelism

- Thinking ahead about... initiative launched within the Synod and then nationally by the Rev Dr John Campbell, Ms Linda Rayner and the Rev Wendy White. Linda wrote of this: I am also aware of many events that were a direct result of the conversations, but were not 'fed back' including one church which held a Taize service on Palm Sunday evening, handed out Holy Week colouring books, held a Saturday workshop creating banners and gardens for Easter Sunday - bringing in the Brownies, and many parents who don't come to church - delivered invitations around the estate opposite, and generally improved their outward-facing communications.
- Synod Mission Interns a scheme to encourage young people to spend a year's placement in a local church (or churches) to enable local churches in their mission. The first such volunteer is at Chorley URC. We are hoping that the scheme will develop in the coming years.
- Following the closure of the ZI campaign, a small Radical Welcome Campaign group has started work and circulated materials to every church in the Synod and explained the development of the process within our Synod and set up a website.
- Three Special Category Ministry posts have been agreed. Two are for Pioneer ministries in Salford and Chorlton. The other is for Town Centre Chaplaincy in Oldham.
- A 24hr residential conference has been planned for Elders in March 2014 with John Ellis to inspire and help them think about their missionary purpose.
- Fresh Expressions featured at both the Synod Days Out. We are blessed in having the National Co-ordinator for the URC as our TDO. Several Area days have been organised as 'taster' Events.

Further Work

Explore evangelism with World Church Partners and share stories and ideas with wider Synod.

Careful evaluation of the SCM ministries (beginning January 2014) Enable through LMMR the adoption of local mission pledges by local Churches.

C. Mersey Synod

D. A story from Yorkshire Synod

During 2012 the congregation engaged with Vision2020 and after consideration of all the 10 statements we decided to work with Statements 2 (*Identity: The URC will be a church where every local congregation will be able to say who they are, what they do and why they do it.*)

And 7 (*Church Growth: We will be a growing church with an increasing membership*)

We also took into consideration Statements 1 (Spirituality and Prayer: We will grow in our practice of prayer and spirituality, nurturing strength for our witness to Jesus Christ, and developing our discernment of where God is and what God is calling us to do by reading and studying the Bible and through the power of the Holy Spirit.)

And 5 (*Hospitality and diversity: We will be a church committed to becoming even more welcoming and hospitable, and embracing all people equally*)

Groups were set up to look at our Prayer life, our Welcome to all and an Explorers Group working with enquirers about Church Membership.

So far we have:

- Written our Mission Statement.
- Produced an Advice Sheet for newcomers to Communion.
- Produced a draft Welcome Pack. The Welcome Group are in the process of producing the final version.
- We have implemented the Prayer Group's suggested changes in the use of the prayer book, box and tree; and they are working well.
- Produced a Welcome Sheet for Baptismal Families.
- Engaged with our sister Churches in SPACE to produce a 'What's on in SPACE' booklet to encourage our congregations to interact with one another.

All this is a 'Work in Progress' which we hope will help to build the spiritual life of this Church.

E. East Midlands Synod

Vision2020 has been at the heart of much of the Synod's work in the last six years. Here are the headlines.

1. Development of Pastorate Profiles of Churches who find themselves in vacancy.
2. LMMR and MASA processes
3. Mission Fund Panel which gives grants to churches
4. Mission Enabling Group which reports to Synod
5. Several presentations at Synod meetings
6. County meetings in the recent past
7. Back To Church Sunday.

F. West Midlands Synod

The West Midlands Synod has not integrated Vision2020 into its strategies. Rather it is using the Vision2020 framework and inhabiting it with its own aspirations and indicators under the Vision2020 statements. A copy of the synod's strategy is available on request.

As an example Local Mission & Ministry Review sits under the Identity statement and we have indicators for the number of pastorates we seek to cover by a given date.

Our Mission Fund sits under the Community Partnerships statement and we have indicators to say we aim to make sure that the Fund becomes a regular part of the synod's life.

The indicators and targets are kept under regular review by Synod Mission Council. Some indicators have already been achieved and so amended or removed. Many more of course have to be amended because we have missed our target or anticipate we will do so.

The establishment of a strategy group to oversee the work of the evangelist and mission enabler is now working on sharpening the synod strategy to better support their work.

In any event our pattern is to review all the indicators under all the statements at our annual residential Synod Mission Council. We then look at smaller sections at each of the intervening SMC's to ensure we revise them and keep them up to date and that actions laid on Synod Mission Council specifically are followed through.

Much of the work indicated was in train when Vision2020 came along. So for example our moves to seek an Evangelist and Mission Enabler. A good amount of the work indicated below would have unfolded without Vision2020. But Vision2020's comprehensive range of statements has enabled us to map our work better. And it has obliged us to pay attention to areas of our life which previous initiatives were not covering. We are now for example surveying churches with regard to their engagement in issues of peace and justice and with regard to the integrity of creation to establish where cross fertilisation of ideas can help and to see where churches need more encouragement.

This Vision2020 framework also allows us to note where Mission pledges and other information coming from Local Mission & Ministry Reviews requires us to amend or adjust our synod's strategy. This is happening slowly so far as Local Mission & Ministry Review picks up speed and people get used to it. Much of what has been drawn from pledges so far encourages us to maintain a strength of commitment to children's and youth work and to continue providing a mission fund which has been used to support local youth workers.

G. Eastern Synod

In the Eastern Synod, the main way in which we have been exploring how to engage with the Vision2020 statements, is through the LMMR process. We have rewritten the pastorate profile document to make it fit for purpose, in terms of being the key guidelines for undertaking the LMMR process and in doing that we have written the Vision2020 statements into that document. By doing that, we are hoping that over a fairly short period of years, every church within the Synod will be encouraged, whilst doing that process, to consider their engagement with the Vision2020 guidelines.

The process leads to the production, from the congregation in our case, of what we are calling a Mission Manifesto and that is proving to be a very helpful process and the Mission Manifestos that have been received so far from the churches are, on the whole, of very good quality and a number of them are very helpfully addressing the Vision2020 statements and their engagement with those.

The other thing that we have done is that we have chosen to focus on Vision2020 at the two Synod meetings during 2013. In order to facilitate that, we were very pleased to welcome the Convenor of the Mission Committee, the Revd. Tracey Lewis, as our keynote speaker at the March Synod and Tracey gave us a very helpful address in which she encouraged and challenged us to engage with the Vision2020 statements. At the October Synod, we had a series of workshops, which sought to address a number of the Vision2020 elements. As these were presented in a range of ways, we didn't call them workshops, but referred to them as Topics and the leaders of the Topic sessions engaged in a range of ways in encouraging people to look at the particular theme. Each participant in Synod was able to attend two of these Topic sessions, examples of what we included are: Prayer and Spirituality, Church Growth, Mission and Evangelism, Messy Church and Communication.

H. South Western Synod

A brief report from a very new synod moderator:

In the South West we are in the process of piloting an LMMR process which will include work on the Vision2020 statements.

Our Education & Learning Enabler is also happy to help churches to get to grips with what Vision2020 might mean for them, if they request this.

I. Wessex Synod

J. Thames North Synod

Thames North Synod has been involved in a number of different initiatives and programmes that have reflected the mission priorities at the time. With the introduction of Vision 2020 by the wider church, it was recognised within the Synod that this was not a separate initiative, but offered a framework for understanding the activities of church life in terms of mission and outreach. This has enabled the use of Vision 2020 to be integrated into the thinking of the Synod in a way that has not required major changes. The language and structure offered by Vision 2020 will become more familiar to the congregations and the Synod as it is being used increasingly within the programmes being established by the Synod

This Synod has a long history of funding small projects being undertaken by local churches as part of their mission and outreach. These schemes are managed by the Mission Initiatives Group (MIG). Two schemes were previously available, the first The Small Grants Scheme, usually for one off payments of under £1,000. The second scheme was the Developmental Grant Scheme and was generally for a period of up to three years and the sums might be up to £3,000 per annum. However, schemes requiring larger sums have been and continue to be supported under the scheme. For both grant funding schemes the criteria operated was the Seven Marks of Mission.

In November 2011, at the Synod meeting MIG presented a new scheme of grant funding using the Vision2020 criteria as the basis for assessing the mission potential of a project. This new scheme was launched, with a new series of forms to encourage churches to consider the proposed projects under the criteria set out in Vision2020. In addition the sums awarded under the scheme were in line with the sums being awarded under the national scheme that is up to £2,000 per annum for a maximum of 3 years. It should be noted that although the scheme operates according to the criteria set out by the national church, it is being funded locally as part of our recognition that Thames North Synod is in a position to be able to do this.

In adopting Vision2020 within the Synod, it was recognised that the scheme being used to assess the project was less important than the project being undertaken, but it is recognised that some tool is necessary in order that some comparison and analysis is possible. It was also recognised that a number of churches were familiar with other schemes for describing their mission and outreach activities. It was agreed that these would not be discouraged, but that for the purposes of evaluation would be read within the context and framework of Vision2020.

The Vision2020 headings are offered as one of the resources for Churches and their Pastorate Partners to use in assessing the life and witness of the Church, but these are not the only one as, within the Synod, we haven't been prescriptive. So far from, the few Church Life Reviews (CLRs) that have been received the Vision2020 criteria have not been used. However, this is the start of the process and only a very small number of CLRs have been received. As a Synod there was some delay in getting LMMR up and running, and it is only now it is truly getting going.

K. Southern Synod

Southern Synod endorsed three major documents; two are for guidance and are encouraged to be to be used for the local church to use as they see fit in their life and witness. The other is the Synod's policy document which underpins the life of all churches within the Synod. It is used extensively in all areas of church life. The documents I refer to are as follows:-

- 1) **'The 5 Marks of Mission'** which has assisted churches for many years but we recognise has its limitations. We recognised some have benefited and therefore it recommended to churches, but its the responsibility of the Church meeting to decide if they thought it appropriate for their setting.
- 2) **'Vision2020'** in its developmental stage came during the finalising of the Southern Synod Mission Criteria. After careful consideration and a small working party representing the then Mission Committee representative, Revd Pauline Sparks and the Synod Mission Officer, Martin Hayward, and others that the two documents had the same intention and ethos but they were sufficiently different in their statements/ enquiry. Vision2020 met with a degree of hostility from the floor of the Synod and was accepted as a tool to be used on the same lines as 'The five Marks of Mission.' Southern Synod therefore has enabled churches at the local level to engage with Vision2020 if they deem it suitable for their situation.
- 3) **The Mission Criteria** is the Southern Synods policy document. Similar to vision2020, however, it is a covenant agreement as it is in two parts, the Synod and all its committees and Council work use the mission criteria and local churches use it as the basis o their life and witness. It is the primary document that guides all our work e.g. deployment, scoping, LMMR, finance, property, allocation of small grants (New Growth Fund) allocation in grants for youth and children workers in local churches (Turn the Tide) and the recently set up Synod Mission Fund.
- 4) LMMR is working well in Southern Synod. We have fully integrated the old MASA with the old District visitation to produce a much better scheme which allows a local church to produce its own living document which reflects its current mission with hopes for the future. The Synod Mission Criteria is used for this rather than Vision2020. I have attached a copy for you. You will see the similarities with Vision 2020 but I am sure you will appreciate the wording of the Synod Mission Criteria was carefully chosen with discipleship being the first of those criteria. The Synod Mission Criteria reflects the Local Church Mission Criteria and we have just spent an interesting Synod Council meeting reflecting on Synod priorities so that it might facilitate local churches better in its mission to building up God's Kingdom.

It is regrettable that Southern Synod does not, at this present time, have monies to make large building grants (too many choices in the past which have gone belly-up and depleted reserves). However, we give small grants for:

- a) Children's and Youth Work = Turn the Tide
- b) New church projects = New Growth Fund
- c) Mission/Evangelism projects = Mission Fund

We are working to restore the finances to a position where we shall be able to make larger grants. We have also stopped giving loans simply because we need to explore the implications for this under the Consumer Credit Act.

- 5) We have many examples of churches in Southern Synod exploring Messy Church, Food banks being set up, and, of course, we continue to help fund a Ukrainian student at our Project Fair Isle on the Kent coast which helps to promote mission to disadvantaged immigrants particularly in the Margate area.

L. National Synod of Wales

M. National Synod of Scotland

- a) We offer vision2020 to churches as one of many tools for their mission and outreach, which they use as they so wish. We are not "implementing" vision2020 as such.
- i) Vision2020 is one of a "basket" of ways that are used by congregations when considering their ways of being church now and into the future.
- ii) This "basket" is primarily advocated through the Synod's Mission & Development Officer, and others, and in particular when facilitating LMMR in local churches, and when churches are looking at ways of growing and/or identifying issues to work on.
- iii) Other items in this "basket" include;
 - The eight Synod Aspirations (please ask if more detail required) of which we are just about to produce a booklet of 'Faith Talk Starters' for each Aspiration and this is being promoted through our Church Life Committee and Synod Development Team (*It is worth noting that the Synod of Scotland developed its Aspirations a couple of years ahead of V2020 and hence why there is a stronger emphasis on Aspirations*).
 - The Vision for Life materials
 - HOPE Heartbeat which is to be promoted to all churches at our Autumn Synod
 - Possibly the work being undertaken by the Mission Committee on evangelism and church growth (plans to have workshops over next two residential Synod meetings)
 - Various ways of exploring the Bible
 - Various ways of being involved in the community
 - The "See me....." campaign and pledge against the stigma of mental ill-health made by congregations singly or ecumenically, as in Lanarkshire and Dumfries & Galloway
 - The dynamic worship workshops developing in our West Link congregations
 - Explorations into faith such as "Living the Questions", Alpha courses, and the like
 - Ecumenical engagement; local churches have been invited to get to know their ecumenical neighbours, this has focussed on two strands i) to try to implement our EMU national (Episcopal, Methodist, URC) partnership at local level, and ii) to support the Church of Scotland on local partnership, eg.

exploration by Giffnock URC & 3 parishes, foermal agreement at Stonehouse. Synod Ecumenical & World Church Committee charged with exploring deeper relationships with parishes. (The National Sponsoring Body is the strategic vehicle for local initiatives, eg. at the Barrhead Church). Exploratory interim ministry at 4 URCs in Fife/Tayside (Dundee/Dunning/Dunfermline/Coaltown–o–B) is also looking at ecumenical options.

- The opportunities offered to all congregations and ministers by the Scottish United Reformed & Congregational College, which offers an annually newly-written programme of short and longer courses, which in 2013/4 include leadership development, jazz as an organisational & developmental model, pilgrimage as a model of congregational life, continuing work on radical welcome, multi-congregation pastorates, ministry with older people, TLS valuing community experiences, developing skills for facilitating adult learning, Ministers' conference focus on towns and urban theology/ministry/mission, engaging with the sacred and the sensual.... .Much of the educational programme is rooted in a commitment to engaging with the gifts of wider society for theological thinking as well as with that society critically.
- Children's and Youth Ministry initiatives; Child Friendly Church Award, CORE Skills for Children's Ministry & Youth Work Training
- The use of 'Everybody Welcome' which has been very well-received and promoted engaging conversations and actions

b) **Good stories about Churches that are delivering something significant under one of the vision2020 Headings.**

Priesthill – Community ministry/activities/ garden = Community Partnerships

Avonbridge Lunch Club = Community Partnerships, Hospitality and Diversity and Ecumenical relationships

Augustine & Metropolitan Community Church = Hospitality and Diversity

Mosspark = Spirituality and Prayer (through their Lunch Club)

Port Glasgow Food Bank = Hospitality and Diversity as this foodbank (unlike others) does not discriminate nor expect enquirers to substantiate their need

Dunfermline, Nairn, Peedie Kirk - Kirkwall, (examples, as there are many) = global partners

Helensburgh one example of Integrity of Creation

Murrayfield Churches Together (Saughtonhall) and Morningside = Hospitality and Diversity, Community Partnerships, Ecumenical Partnerships through their ministry for elderly and dementia etc





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