

9 November 2022

Dear friends and colleagues,

**Welcome to the Assembly Executive
Monday to Wednesday 28 to 30 November 2022**

1. Assembly Executive papers

Many of the papers for Assembly Executive are now available here:
<http://www.urc.org.uk/assembly-executive>.

Other papers may follow over the coming days, so please regularly check this page on our website.

2. En Bloc

At General Assembly and Assembly Executive meetings, we take certain business *En Bloc*. These are items where the Moderator thinks that decisions might be reached responsibly without further discussion. You will see that the agenda includes a slot when these items will be voted on.

I suggest you read the *En Bloc* papers first. This will give you time to contact the author of a paper if you have questions. Authors' names and email addresses are noted on the cover sheets. If you think any of these papers need discussion at Assembly Executive, particularly if you disagree with a proposed resolution, you may ask that a piece of business be removed from *En Bloc*. You must put that request to the Clerk michael.hopkins@urc.org.uk by **12:00 on Friday 25 November**. If six people ask to remove an item, it will be withdrawn from *En Bloc* and added to our agenda.

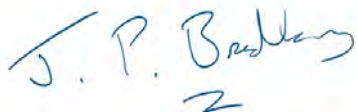
If a serious difficulty, error, or changed circumstance is noticed in a paper currently scheduled for *En Bloc*, the proposer may ask for it to be withdrawn from *En Bloc*, or the Moderator may rule that the difficulty, error, or changed circumstance requires the paper to be withdrawn from *En Bloc*. Such requests should be made to the Clerk as soon as possible.

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

Here are the papers the Moderator presently expects to take in *En Bloc*:

A1 – Former Moderators
D1 – Education and Learning – Cost of living
D1 – Education and Learning – Continuing studies
F1 – Faith and Order
G1 – Finance – Accounts
G4 – Finance – Car expenses
H2 – Lay Pioneers
I1 – Mission report
J1 – Nominations
J2 – Nominations
M1 – Loyal Address
M2 – Risk register
P1 – Local constitution amendment
P2 – Section Q Complaints Procedure
R2 – Size of Investigation Team
S1 – Safeguarding annual report and appendix

Yours in Christ,

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

John Bradbury
General Secretary

Assembly Executive

Monday 28 to Wednesday 30 November 2022

Agenda

Monday 28 November

12:00 to 13:00 Registration in reception

13:00 to 14:00 Lunch

Session one

14:00 to 15:30 Worship
Welcome and introduction
Minutes and matters arising

15:30 to 16:30 Check-in / access rooms
Tea / coffee break

Session two

16:30 to 18:00 R1 – MIND – lessons learned
Greenbelt feedback report
Roll of Ministers H1
Marks of Ministry of an Elder and Marks of H3
Ministry of an Elders Meeting

18:30 to 19:30 Dinner

Session three

19:45 to 20:30 Legacies of slavery report
Finance – Pensions update G5

20:30 Evening prayer

Tuesday 29 November

8:00 to 9:00 Breakfast

Session four

9:15 to 11:00 Worship
Finance – M&M Budget G3
Finance – Benevolent Fund and Energy Crisis Fund G2
CYW E&L Ministries – Call and Vocation – part 1 BDH1

11:00 to 11:30 Tea / coffee break

Session five

11:30 to 13:00 CYW E&L Ministries – Call and Vocation – part 2 BDH1

13:00 to 14:00 Lunch

Session six

14:00 to 14:30 Closed session business, then free time

16:00 Tea / coffee break

Session seven

16:30 to 18:00 Address by the Revd Dr Susan Durber, President of the European Region of the World Council of Churches

18:30 to 19:30 Dinner

Session eight

19:45 to 20:30 En Bloc
Items taken out of En Bloc
Remaindered business

20:30 Evening prayer

Wednesday 30 November

8:00 to 9:00 Breakfast

VACATE ROOMS AND RETURN KEY CARDS NO LATER THAN 9:30

Session nine

9:30 to 11:00	Morning Prayer Church Life Review	N1
11:00 to 11:30	Tea / coffee break	
11:30 to 12:30	Worship with Holy Communion	
12:30 to 13:30	Lunch and departures	
13:30 to 15:00	Meeting of Committee Convenors and Staff Secretaries in Mulberry Hall	

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

<p>A</p> <p>Beech 1 (Ground floor)</p> <p>Ian Hardie <i>Convenor</i> Tim Crossley <i>Note taker</i></p> <p>Sharon Barr Karen Bell Andy Braunston David Greatorex Martha McInnes Simeon Mitchell Kim Plumpton Robert Pope Rachel Wakeman George Watt</p>	<p>B</p> <p>Beech 2 (Ground floor)</p> <p>Sally Thomas <i>Convenor</i> Jenny Mills <i>Note taker</i></p> <p>Jane Baird Martin Ferris Ken Forbes Sarah Gower David Herbert Tim Hopley Steve Powell Adella Pritchard Daniel Raddings</p>
<p>C</p> <p>Willow 4 (First floor)</p> <p>Geoff Felton <i>Convenor</i> Jan Adamson <i>Note taker</i></p> <p>Nicola Furley-Smith Vaughan Griffiths Elaine Hutchinson Sarah Lane Cawte Reynaldo F Leão-Neto Philippa Osei Lindsey Sanderson Mary Thomas Simon Walkling</p>	<p>D</p> <p>Mulberry Room (Ground floor)</p> <p>Bridget Banks <i>Convenor</i> Sam Richards <i>Note taker</i></p> <p>David Coaker Paul Franklin Ewen Harley Roger Jones Jamie Kissack Richard Lewney Margaret Marshall Mark Robinson Martin Spain Camilla Veitch</p>
<p>E</p> <p>Sycamore Suite 3 (First floor)</p> <p>Geoffrey Clarke <i>Convenor</i> Helen Lidgett <i>Note taker</i></p> <p>Susan Durber Jonnie Hill Rachel Leach Paul Robinson Anne Sardeson Maureen Shepherd Hazel Starrit Pamela Tolhurst Paul Whittle</p>	<p>F</p> <p>Sycamore Suite 4 (First floor)</p> <p>Steve Faber <i>Convenor</i> Rita Griffiths <i>Note taker</i></p> <p>Chuka Agbasiere Clare Downing Melanie Campbell Timothy Clarke Tessa Henry-Robinson Myra Rose John Samson Peter Stevenson Alison Termie</p>

			Ann-Marie Trubic Catriona Wheeler
G	Willow Room 1 (Ground floor)	H	Willow Room 3 (First floor)
	Lythan Nevard <i>Convenor</i> Graham Hoslett <i>Note taker</i> Adrian Bulley Nneoma Chima Martin Coe Nicholas Jones Joanna Harris Fran Kissack Ola Laval Andy Middleton Alan Yates		Laura Everard <i>Convenor</i> Joan Grindrod-Helmn <i>Note taker</i> Philip Brooks Russell Furley-Smith Naison Hove Clive Snashall Steve Summers Ruth Whitehead

Paper A1

Changes consequent upon moving to one Moderator of General Assembly

Business Committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Michael Hopkins michael.hopkins@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Assembly Executive resolves that the Immediate Past Moderator of the General Assembly shall be an Assembly Officer, with immediate effect.2. Assembly Executive resolves to initiate a change to paragraph 2(6)(i) of the Structure, removing text struck through, and new text in italics: The current text reads: (i) Two in total <i>Such number as the General Assembly shall from time to time determine</i> from the following: former Moderators of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, past chairmen of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, past presidents of the Congregational Church in England and Wales, former Moderators of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, former chairmen or presidents of the Annual Conference of the Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland, former presidents of the Annual Conference of the Re-formed Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland, provided that such former officers are members of the United Reformed Church and that they shall have been elected by a college consisting of all such past and former Moderators, presidents and chairmen as are members of the United Reformed Church;3. Under paragraph 3.1 of the Structure, the matter is referred to Synods, with responses to be with the General Secretary not later than 31 March 2023.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Consequential changes to one Moderator.
Main points	<p>A change in the induction of the Moderator reduces expertise among the Assembly Officers, and a change is proposed to remedy this.</p> <p>The reduction to one Moderator for one year reduces the number of former Moderators available for chairing both parallel sessions and those sessions that the Moderator is unable or unwilling to chair.</p>
Previous relevant documents	N/A
Consultation has taken place with...	N/A

Summary of impact

Financial	N/A
External (eg ecumenical)	N/A

Assembly Officers

1. With a reduction to one Moderator serving for one year, who is now inducted at the end of the Assembly that begins their year of service, the pool of availability and expertise among the Assembly Officers is reduced. The Business Committee has noted this concern, and proposes that the immediate past Moderator should henceforth be an Assembly Officer.

Former Moderators at the General Assembly

2. For various reasons, it was appropriate that all former Moderators were no longer members of General Assembly in that capacity.
3. The General Assembly has previously determined that the two immediate past Moderators (who at that time would have both served simultaneously) be members of General Assembly, and two other former Moderators elected from the total pool of former Moderators by said pool. This meant that there were generally two serving and four former Moderators present, making a total of six inducted Moderators.
4. Former Moderators are needed to chair sessions that the serving Moderator is either unable or unwilling to chair. This may include parallel sessions, as well as business sessions that the Moderator cannot chair.
5. The Assembly needs a suitably sized pool of people to undertake this work. While recent Moderators have tended to chair most business, this is not always the

case and in some years the serving Moderator has chaired relatively little business for various good reasons.

6. Although the two immediate past Moderators category was agreed at the time this was two people, there is no proposal to change this because it is still helpful to have the most recent two Moderators present as members of General Assembly.
7. The Business Committee is not proposing a radical change in the number of former Moderators, but it is proposing to remove an absolute setting of the number in the Structure. This is because changing the Structure can take up to two years to come into effect, which seems unnecessarily cumbersome to make a minor adjustment such as this. Therefore, the Business Committee is proposing to use the form of words used elsewhere, which allows the Assembly to determine a number upon one decision that can be effected immediately.
8. As a change to the Structure, this requires agreement at the Executive, then to be referred to Synods, and if not more than one third of the Synods reject it, it is presented for agreement at the 2023 General Assembly. Were that to happen, it would then be effective for the 2024 General Assembly, but in future the number could then be changed upon a single vote on one occasion.
9. The Business Committee gives notice that if the resolution is passed, it is planning to propose at the 2024 General Assembly that the number of former Moderators elected from the pool be four.
10. The Business Committee notes that former Moderators may be present in other capacities, welcomes the input of former Moderators as Conveners and Synod representatives, and encourages Synods to consider former Moderators as representatives on the same basis as other possible representatives. However, the Business Committee is aware that some Conveners may be limited in what they can chair, because of potential conflicts of interests or their Convener duties, and the Business Committee is not comfortable relying on happenstance presence of former Moderators.
11. By way of information, the Business Committee is aware that there are no 'former Moderators' still living from some predecessor denominations, but there are from others. The Business Committee believes that the gracious thing to do is to leave the list as it is until there are only former URC Moderators still living before tidying up that part of the list.

Paper BDH1

Call and vocation

Children and Youth Work, Education and Learning and Ministries Committees

Basic information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Paul Robinson paul@pjr-robinson.co.uk Dr Sam Richards sam.richards@urc.org.uk The Revd Mary Thomas dso-s@urcwessex.org.uk The Revd Nicola Furley-Smith nicola.furley-smith@urc.org.uk Mr Alan Yates alan.yates@urc.org.uk The Revd Jenny Mills jenny.mills@urc.org.uk
Action required	Discussion and group work.
Draft resolution(s)	None.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Call and vocation in the lives of the people of God.
Main points	This paper comes as a response to the GA resolution to continue the focus on lifelong discipleship encouraged by the <i>Walking the Way</i> emphasis. This is not a paper about the theology of call and of vocation but seeks to begin discussions around why, how and what call and vocation means in practice.
Previous relevant documents	Documents relating to the URC emphasis on <i>Walking the Way, living the life of Jesus today</i> . Walking the Way Daily Devotions Vocations booklet (available free from the URC Bookshop).
Consultation has taken place with...	Children and Youth Work, Education and Learning and Ministries Committees. Shared with Faith and Order. The General Secretariat.

Summary of impact

Financial	No current costings, possible costs in the future, depending on subsequent decisions.
External (eg ecumenical)	If offerings are developed for local churches around vocation and call, this would also include any Local Ecumenical Partnerships.

1. Introduction

1.1 Jesus said: 'Follow me'.

We are all called by God and, as followers of Jesus, *Walking the Way*, we have responded to that call. Our vocation is how we respond to that call on our lives, where we are. It can change over time and be different things, in different settings, alongside different people.

1.2 Over the past few years there has been a lot of talk about vocation and call, in various committees in the United Reformed Church (URC). These are well-known and widely used phrases in a faith-based context.

2. Background to this paper

2.1 At this year's General Assembly of the URC, the parallel session of Education and Learning was guided, by participants, in the direction of discussions that focused on call and vocation. One area of discussion was in relation to our Resource Centres for Learning and a desire for more people to know what was available through them, appreciating that the aims of the 2006 training review have not been fully realized. Over the past five years, *Walking the Way* has encouraged a greater emphasis on discipleship development and on lifelong learning. Whilst formally the work of the group focusing on this has ended, the work continues encouraging people in our local churches and worshipping communities.

2.2 Ministries Committee has been working on acknowledging the many and varied forms of ministry that exist (both lay and ordained), in the URC, and how to recognize these more formally.

2.3 Children's and Youth Work Committee's six year strategy focusses on enabling children and young people to play their part in the mission of God, resourcing them as missional disciples to be the scattered church in the world.

2.4 The Church Life Review is ongoing and focusing on vocations and how to support those seeking a call on their lives.

In all areas of the life of the URC there is a desire for people to find faith, have opportunities to learn more and grow in faith, to live that faith, to bring and be God's kingdom 'on earth as it is in heaven'- and to encourage this as widely as possible.

3. Purpose of this paper

3.1 This paper comes as a response to the GA resolution to continue the focus on lifelong discipleship encouraged by the *Walking the Way* emphasis. This is not a paper about the theology of call and of vocation.

- 3.2 This paper seeks to begin discussions around WHY we feel call and vocation are important, HOW we identify call and vocation currently and WHAT do we mean by these words. These conversations can help us all reflect on our own call and vocation and who encouraged (or discouraged!) us and how we responded, what experiences we have gained, what opportunities have been open to us and how it has blessed us (or not!). Then move on to conversations around what the URC can do to support people in our local churches encouraging dialogue and action. We would wish to see an intentional emphasis on discernment and releasing people to be the people of God in their individual or collective contexts.

*“Vocation is where our deepest gladness meets the world's greatest need.”
Frederick Buechner.*

- 3.3 **WHY?** Vocation and call are intrinsic to our faith. God calls us and we respond, seeking ways to use our God-given gifts, talents, abilities and opportunities, to be faithful followers and God’s presence in the world. It can be argued that every moment of every day for every follower is a response to the call on our lives; and that all people are called by God – believers or not.
- 3.4 **HOW?** We can identify gifts for ourselves or recognize them in others and then we use them to make the world a better place, seek justice, or carry out a specific role. Or there may be a task needing doing that we respond to and apply ourselves to. It can be a spiritual or practical response. It can be paid or voluntary. We can equip everyone to see God at work in the world and their contribution to this as part of the people of God.
- 3.5 **WHAT?** Over the years there have been varying responses to vocation and call. There were ‘levels’ of vocation (with the more spiritual being elevated). We continue, in church settings, to use the word vocation and it is still used in more secular roles, often for more people-facing jobs (eg teachers, nurses, carers).

4. Research

- 4.1 Dr Sam Richards (URC Head of Children and Youth Work) in her thesis (2005) proposed a five-fold model as a description of a biblically-based theology of the calling of humanity: We are firstly *called by God* (there is no calling without the Caller), called into **RELATION**; secondly we are *called to be* (God calls everything into existence), God’s act of **CREATION**; thirdly we are *called to belong* (God calls us into renewed covenant through the cross of Christ), called to **SALVATION**; fourthly we are *called to become* (God calls us to become Christ-like and to become Christ’s body through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit), called to **SANCTIFICATION**; and fifthly we are *called to serve* (God calls us to spend ourselves in service, as witnesses and co-creators of God’s Kingdom), called to **VOCATION**. God’s call is an invitational summons that requires a response to be embraced and fulfilled.

This paper considers call in its widest sense NOT just to ordained ministry (although that is one such vocation).

5. Paper considered at committees

- 5.1 Dr Sam Richards’ model gives us a framework to begin considering call and vocation within our committees and to help us engage in some theological reflection.

Now, this is all very well, but why and why now? We are suggesting that the United Reformed Church, as it moves on from the 50th anniversary celebrations and looks forwards, and as it seeks ways to continue encouraging people in our churches to *Walk the Way of Jesus Today*, creates some form of initiative to encourage people in our local congregations to think about call and vocation – in their widest senses. But particularly:

- 5.1 a) Asking those alongside whom we worship and serve ‘have you thought that God might be calling you to....?’ Encouraging people to name what they see in others and where they see God might be calling them or equipping them, whatever age or stage of life they might be. Offering support with discerning and validating a call.
- 5.2 b) Posing the question: ‘How do you live out your faith every day? How might the Holy Spirit be prompting you to grow? Have you thought about what God might be calling you to (or away from)?’ Getting people to reflect on what they are doing in service to God and response to their faith, whatever age or stage of life they might be. And seeing if anything is changing or developing.

In both cases, allowing space for people to consider the wide variety of vocations that exist within the URC and beyond (especially some of the more ‘on the edge’ roles related to pioneering, technology or green issues in the church gathered and the church scattered amongst the wider world). And that all are called.

- 5.3 c) Resourcing these conversations with information (about what roles there are in the URC, information about what training or learning is available, information about different ministries (from Church Secretary to youth leader to pulpit supply to minister of the Word and Sacraments, to Synod URC Youth Rep), Bible study, linking people up with those in roles already... and more!). Also equipping people with transferable skills and theological insight to develop their vocation beyond the Church as missional disciples wherever they are. Basically saying – how can the URC help you, whatever age or stage of life you might be?
- 5.4 This paper is a first step in promoting conversations.
Whatever we do from here on in needs to be relevant, accessible, hopeful, championing the work already going on, encouraging of those already serving and welcoming as people listen for God, reflect on what they are hearing/seeing and, we hope, are blessed by the things that come next.

6. Discussion ideas

What do you think about this paper and its suggestions?
What do you think we should or could do?
What should we avoid?
How can we make this a truly ‘joined up’ piece of work?

7. Responses from committees

- 7.1 Children’s and Youth Work, Education and Learning and Ministries discussed the paper at their committee meetings in September.

- 7.2 All three committees endorsed the direction of travel of the paper. They saw this as building on the emphasis encouraged through *Walking the Way*, supporting whole of life discipleship and valuing vocations both within, and beyond, the Church contexts. Questions arose around intentional communities, something that is being considered in various places in the URC and ties in with this focus. It was thought the encouragement to talk about vocation, discussing how it looks for differing ages, is a good thing and something to be promoted, including challenging others and asking questions about personal faith journeys and responses. There were concerns around not using the language of 'recruitment' but of 'discern and release'; and the need to be clear not to pigeonhole people and to be aware of, and avoid, the spiritual/secular hierarchy and the Church/world divide. It was raised that we need to ensure any conversations avoid jargon and 'Church speak' so that call and vocation are not terms that exclude and are accessible to all. A focus on recognising gifts and talents in others, talking about them and being able to find resources or support to discover more about possibilities, would be a good emphasis within the URC, encouraging this through all councils of the Church.
- 7.3 The three committees see their roles in supporting call and vocation within their remits: identifying and supporting a variety of ministries, encouraging and supporting children and young people to respond, and by offering resources, learning opportunities and information.

8. Reflection – in two parts

- 8.1: We would all recognize the concept of call and response (vocation) on our lives. We would like to encourage people to have a conversation around their own lives, their call from God to faith and then their response(s). We want to offer a time of reflection on vocation at different times and to different roles or responsibilities and sharing this with others. There will be a series of questions to promote discussion. Sharing stories is so valuable and helps us to think about why we are in the roles we are, what people encouraged and supported us along the way and how we discerned the call to respond. This will be followed by a time of facilitated feedback.
- 8.2. Assembly Executive would break into groups to discuss the paper itself and comment on its contents. We would encourage discussion on how we can intentionally enable everyone to discern their vocation, as a response to God's call on their lives. This will be followed by feedback.

The feedback will be collated by the staff from Children's and Youth Work, Ministries and Education and Learning and a response will be decided.

What first drew you to your vocation?

- when did you decide to become or do your calling?
- when did you know that this was your calling?

How do you hear God and know God's calling?

- ...in big things, in small things, about work, about relationships, alone, with others

"Vocation is the place where our deep gladness meets the world's deep need."

Frederick Buechner

What do you like and enjoy about your calling?

- when does it feel worthwhile?
- what are your strengths, gifts, talents, preferred ways of working or being?

What puts you off your calling?

- have you ever felt like giving up

Look forward
- what is your sense of direction, sense of purpose

What are or do you feel called to?

- a role, a ministry, a gifting, a way of being, or something else?

How do you think that your calling is seen by others?

- by family & friends, your church, your colleagues by yourself, by God

Who (or what) do you see yourself

- as working for
- as serving
- as accountable to

Look back

- your story so far... can you see your calling unfolding?

What keeps you going in your calling?

- what sustains you personally

How much is your calling for you

- a job
- a ministry
- a vocation
- something else

Paper D1

Cost of living award for EM1 students

Education and Learning Committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Alan Yates, Convenor alan.yates@urc.org.uk The Revd Jenny Mills, Secretary jenny.mills@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Assembly Executive agrees to funding a one-off cost of living payment of £500 to URC students who are Education for Ministry 1 students, studying for Stipendiary Ministry at a Resource Centre for Learning, in the academic year starting September 2022.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To enable Assembly Executive to provide additional support for Education for Ministry 1 students, studying for Stipendiary Ministry at a Resource Centre for Learning, as a partial response to the cost-of-living crisis.
Main points	<p>General Assembly 2022 awarded ministers of Word and Sacraments and CRCWs, who receive a stipend, a one-off grant of £800 as a partial response to the cost-of-living crisis. At the same time Church House employees were awarded a one-off grant of £500, and Synods and churches were encouraged to do likewise.</p> <p>The Education and Learning Committee (E&LC) are recommending that a similar award is made to existing Education for Ministry 1 students studying at a Resource Centre for Learning, studying for Stipendiary Ministry.</p> <p>The estimated cost for this initiative is £12,000. Even with that unbudgeted cost, E&LC is not expected to exceed its budget for 2022.</p> <p>If approved by Assembly Executive, these awards will be paid before the end of 2022.</p>

Previous relevant documents	General Assembly 2022 Paper G2 – ‘Possible one-off payments to ministers and lay staff’ from the Finance Committee.
Consultation has taken place with...	The URC Finance Committee.

Summary of impact

Financial	This unbudgeted award is unlikely to cause E&LC to exceed their budget for 2022.
External (eg ecumenical)	None.

Cost of living award for EM1 students

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Inflation in the UK, at the time of writing, is 9.9%. This has eroded the real value of stipends and grants and is likely to cause difficulties for those without financial reserves to fall back on. Our students are not immune from these pressures.
- 1.2 In July, General Assembly voted that, as a gesture of good will towards those who serve the Church centrally, a gross payment should be made together with October 2022 stipend and salary payments amounting to:
 - £800 in the case of each office holder in receipt of a stipend under the URC Plan for Partnership; and
 - £500 in the case of each ‘Church House’ employee.
- 1.3 In September, the Education and Learning Committee voted to invite Assembly Executive to support our EM1 students studying in an RCL, in a similar manner.

2. EM1 student award

- 1.4 EM1 students are neither ministers of Word and Sacraments/CRCWs nor are they employees of Church House, and therefore the Finance Committee resolution at General Assembly does not apply to them. However, they are affected by the cost-of-living crisis. In the spirit of the Finance Committee resolution, the Education and Learning Committee wish to invite Assembly Executive to make a similar one-off award of £500 to URC students who are Education for Ministry 1 students, studying for Stipendiary Ministry at a Resource Centre for Learning, in the academic year beginning September 2022.
- 1.5 This award, if agreed by Assembly Executive, would be given to 24 students, amounting to an unbudgeted cost of £12000. Although unbudgeted, these payments will not cause Education and Learning to exceed their budget for 2022.
- 1.6 If approved, we would aim, with the support of URC Finance, to process these payments before the end of 2022.

3. Resolution

- 3.1 Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Assembly Executive agrees to funding a one-off cost of living payment of £500 to URC students who are Education for Ministry 1 students, studying for Stipendiary Ministry at a Resource Centre for Learning, in the academic year starting September 2022.

Paper D1

Continuing studies funding for lay members

Education and Learning Committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Alan Yates, Convenor alan.yates@urc.org.uk The Revd Jenny Mills, Secretary jenny.mills@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Assembly Executive agrees to funding grants for relevant continuing studies for lay members of the URC, in line with the Continuing Studies Fund grants for Ministers and CRCWs, from the Discipleship Development Fund.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To provide support for lay members of the URC for further studies that will benefit the individual and the URC.
Main points	<p>At present, ministers of Word and Sacrament and CRCWs who are eligible to apply for EM3 funding can apply for funding to support continuing studies.</p> <p>The Continuing Studies Fund (CSF) provides up to £500 pa for doctoral courses and £350 for other courses. Funding is provided by the Carmichael Trust and administered by the Education and Learning (E&L) finance sub-committee.</p> <p>It is suggested that similar grants are made available to lay members of the URC, assuming certain conditions are met. Funding is to be provided by the Discipleship Development Fund (DDF) and administered by the E&L finance sub-committee.</p> <p>These additional grants from the DDF are unlikely to affect its ability to fund the existing DDF grants.</p>
Previous relevant documents	

Consultation has taken place with...	The DDF Large Grants Awarding Body.
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Summary of impact

Financial	This does not affect the E&L budget.
External (eg ecumenical)	None.

Continuing studies funding for lay members

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Ministers of Word and Sacraments and CRCWs, who are eligible to apply for EM3 funding, can apply for funding to support continuing studies. This funding can be called upon after all EM3 sources, including sabbatical funding and EM3 allowances, have been exhausted.
- 1.2 The fund offers a maximum annual amount of up to £350 for a Bachelors' degree, Graduate Diploma, or professional development programme and up to £500 towards a Postgraduate Diploma, Masters or PhD. Repeat requests are allowed, throughout the duration of study, and approval in principle for the entire duration of study is given before the study is started. Typically, these grants are a relatively small proportion of the total funding required. The funding is provided by the Carmichael Trust, and so is not part of the E&L budget agreed by Assembly Executive on behalf of General Assembly.

2. Supporting lay members

- 2.1 Note that the term 'lay' is shorthand for any member or elder who is not a minister of Word and Sacraments or a CRCW, recognising that this term does not reflect ordination of elders.
- 2.2 As a denomination we are becoming more dependent upon lay members, particularly Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers and Locally Recognised Worship Leaders, as the numbers of serving ministers of Word and Sacrament reduce more quickly than the number of congregations. It is therefore right that we continue to improve our support for lay members as they uphold our congregations.
- 2.3 Support for lay members has improved in recent times through DDF grants, increased allowances for Lay Preachers and improved development opportunities. This move to support relevant further education for lay members is part of our continuing focus to encourage lifelong learning for the whole people of God.
- 2.4 Applications can be made for a broad range of subjects, not just theological. For example, bookkeeping courses for treasurers and MS Word courses for secretaries will be considered.

3. Funding

- 3.1 The proposal is to provide the same funding levels to lay members that ministers of Word and Sacrament and CRCWs receive, subject to certain conditions explained below. As the Carmichael Trust cannot be used for such grants, the proposal is to fund these grants from the DDF. To date, the applications for grants from the DDF have been below expectation, so taking lay CSF grants from the DDF will not, at least in the medium term, diminish its already agreed role.
- 3.2 There are five conditions to be met before a grant will be considered:
- The applicant will be someone who serves the URC in a voluntary capacity, needs to have been a member of a URC for at least two years and remain a member throughout the duration of the course
 - The application needs to be for a course from a recognised establishment
 - The applicant will need to explain how this learning will enhance or support their role/ministry in a local church context
 - All the remaining funding needs to be in place before a grant is given
 - The form needs to be endorsed by both the local church and the Synod.

4. Process

- 4.1 An application form can be obtained from the person responsible for education and training in the Synod.
- 4.2 Once completed, the form needs to be endorsed by both the Minister of their church (or the secretary if in vacancy) and the person responsible for education and training in the Synod.
- 4.3 The signed form should be sent to the Secretary for Education and Learning at **secretaryeandl@urc.org.uk**
- 4.4 The decision will be made by the Education and Learning finance sub-committee.
- 4.5 Although forms can be submitted at any time, decisions are normally made in early July ready for the start of the academic year.

5. Resolution

- 5.1 Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Assembly Executive agrees to funding grants for relevant continuing studies for lay members of the URC, in line with the Continuing Studies Fund grants for Ministers and CRCWs, from the Discipleship Development Fund.

Paper F1

Update on current work and reflections on the Church Life Review

Faith and Order Committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Robert Pope rpp20@cam.ac.uk Philip Brooks philip.brooks@urc.org.uk
Action required	For information.
Draft resolution(s)	None.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Update on the work of the Faith and Order Committee.
Main points	This paper outlines the current areas of work for the Committee.
Previous relevant documents	None.
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of impact

Financial	None.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	The future of the Faith and Order Committee has an impact on ecumenical relationships, as this is the body which is often called on by our ecumenical partners to discuss how to improve areas of co-operation.

The Remit of the Faith and Order Committee:

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

The Faith and Order Committee will meet on 21 October (a date after the date to submit papers to Assembly Executive but prior to the meeting itself). The committee has not met since General Assembly, but its work has continued and this paper gives an update about ongoing work.

- The sub-group delegated from Faith and Order to consider questions raised by the Fresh Expressions Enabling Group regarding what makes a group of people a *church* have continued to refine a response on behalf of Faith and Order. A revised draft will be discussed at the meeting in October.
- Time will also be given during the meeting in October to discuss hybrid church. Faith and Order Committee members feel that a greater understanding of how hybrid church 'works' will enable further theological reflection to take place. Digital church and isolated membership will also be discussed.
- At our previous meeting, it was considered that time was ripe to look again at 'What is the Spirit saying to the Churches', produced by Faith and Order in 2015. Experience of global pandemic and lockdown, as well as the continuing climate emergency, lead us back to the recommendations of the report with a view to seeking answers to the same question in 2022.
- Faith and Order has received a copy of a paper from Ministries Committee on the Marks of Ministry of an Elder, as well as a copy of a paper produced by Children and Youth, Education and Learning and Ministries Committees regarding 'call' and 'vocation'. These are on the agenda for the next meeting.
- A suggestion was made at General Assembly that Faith and Order look to provide ordination and induction promises in gender neutral language, while a passing comment at Education and Learning Committee raised the issue of providing material on the priesthood of all believers. This may form future work for the Committee.

Committee members have been canvassed regarding the proposal from the Church Life Review Group that Faith and Order cease to be a standing committee of the General Assembly and become an Advisory Group. Feedback has been given, but the following summarises issues that need to be addressed:

1. How do we ensure that faith and order matters remain important in the URC if Faith and Order ceases to be a standing Committee of the General Assembly?
2. Could we be clearer about how the new Faith and Order arrangements will work? I am struck, for example, that in my time on Faith and Order the 'denomination' has never sent anything to us for discussion and resolution.
3. The point was made at General Assembly that Faith and Order should not be a group that only responds to questions asked of it; it should be a group that is able to bring matters to the denomination for consideration (even if we have not had much of that in recent years either). How would faith and order issues be raised in the denomination? The initial document sees the group as reactionary: who then, would refer matters to the new body? It has been the case in the past that Faith and Order has initiated its own work, but this seems not to be part of the remit going forward.

4. In re-categorising Faith and Order into an advisory group rather than a standing Committee, how is it envisaged that faith and order matters remain important and retain their proper significance in Church life?
5. What are the practical arrangements envisaged for the advisory group? Who would be members, how would they be selected and how long would they serve for? To whom would they report?
6. What, if any, budget would be available for Faith and Order?

Members of the Committee would be pleased to receive comments and feedback from members of Assembly Executive. We would be pleased also to receive questions of faith and order for deliberation during, or between, our meetings.

Paper G1

URC Trust 2021 accounts

Finance Committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Ian Hardie, Treasurer ianzhardie@gmail.com
Action required	None – for information.
Draft resolution(s)	Assembly Executive notes the Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31 December 2021.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To draw to Assembly Executive's attention the availability of the audited accounts for 2021 and accompanying Trustees' Report.
Main points	<p>With Finance Committee advice, the United Reformed Church Trust Directors have received and approved the audited accounts for 2021.</p> <p>Although normally available by the time General Assembly meets, there was a delay this year because Trust directors wanted to improve the description of the relationships between various bodies as set out in the Trustees' Report.</p> <p>The trustees' report and financial statements have been available online since early October 2022: www.urchurch.org.uk/trustees-report-and-financial-statements/</p>
Previous relevant documents	2020 audited accounts are available on the URC website.
Consultation has taken place with...	The URC Trust.

Summary of impact

Financial	Simply noting the availability of the accounts has no financial impact.
External (eg ecumenical)	The report provides a publicly available summary of the Church's activities and financial state.

Paper G2

Update on Benevolent and Churches' Energy Crisis Funds

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Ian Hardie, Treasurer ianzhardie@googlemail.com
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Assembly Executive approves the recommendation of the Finance Committee and the decision of the United Reformed Church Trust to make £2m from the Trust's reserves available as seed money for a new Churches' Energy Crisis Fund.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To inform Assembly Executive of the progress of consideration of a possible Retired Ministers Benevolent Fund and the establishment of a Churches' Energy Crisis Fund.
Main points	<p>General Assembly asked the Finance Committee to explore the need for a benevolent fund for retired ministers in financial distress.</p> <p>Subsequent discussions within Finance Committee, with Synod Moderators and with the URC Trust Directors has led to consideration of the need for a fund to support mission-oriented churches whose finances are under threat because of the energy crisis.</p> <p>A single meeting has been arranged to discuss both possible funds.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Assembly Executive approval is sought for £2m to be made available to seed fund the Energy Crisis Fund, should it be created.</p>
Previous relevant documents	Paper G3 for July 2022 General Assembly.
Consultation has taken place with...	The URC Trust; Synod Moderators; Synod Treasurers.

Summary of impact

Financial	If the Churches' Energy Crisis Fund is established, £2m will be taken from the URC Trust's reserves to pump prime the Fund.
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External (eg ecumenical)	
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1. In July 2022, General Assembly passed resolution 9, inviting the Finance Committee to bring various people together to consider whether the URC needed a benevolent fund for retired ministers in particular financial difficulties and, if so, what might be its scope and how might it be resourced.
2. At that same meeting, General Assembly agreed to one-off payments to all stipendiary ministers and to lay staff as a gesture of good will at a time of increasing energy costs. That money was paid together with October stipends and salaries.
3. Since then, the government has acted to put a so-called cap on individual's energy cost rises for the next two years. What has been labelled 'equivalent support' has been announced for a period of a few months for businesses and charities, including churches; but the precise extent and duration of this support is difficult to gauge at the time of writing this paper. What is clear is that, before any government support is taken into account, many churches are facing a dramatic increase in the costs of the energy they use, in many cases of the order of 200% or more increases.
4. When the Finance Committee considered this challenge facing churches at our September meeting, we recognised that such cost increases had the potential to push some otherwise viable congregations towards closure. The committee decided to initiate a round-table discussion involving the Synod Moderators and Synod finance people to explore the scope for establishing a fund to help with energy costs and/or energy saving projects of otherwise viable and mission-oriented churches. Although some Synods may be in a position to react to this crisis on their own, unfortunately that is not the case for all Synods. The committee felt that, in this jubilee year for the Church, this proposal might bring people together in a worthwhile venture which would promote God's kingdom.
5. The committee believes that an approach to Synods would be received best if there were a clear signal that the Church centrally is fully behind the idea of the fund. Accordingly, the committee recommended to the URC Trust that the sum of £2m be made available from the Trust reserves as seed money for the new fund. URC Trust Directors have agreed to this and the resolution above seeks Assembly Executives approval for the money to be made available should the fund be established.
6. Synod Moderators have expressed their enthusiastic support for this fund.
7. Finance Committee believed that, although the two prospective funds are very different, it does not make sense to speak to Synods about the energy crisis fund for churches and the benevolent fund for retired ministers separately. The URC Trust directors agreed with this view.

8. Accordingly, attempts were made to find a date at which it is possible to bring together most Synod Moderators and someone with financial or trust responsibilities within each Synod to discuss the possible need for either or both of these two funds, and the arrangements which would be required to put them in place.
9. The best date for this meeting has been identified as 14 December 2022.
10. Finance Committee proposes the resolution above to approve taking £2m from the URC Trust reserves.

Paper G3

The 2023 M&M budget

Finance Committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Ian Hardie, Treasurer ianzhardie@gmail.com
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Assembly Executive adopts the M&M Fund budget for 2023, as set out in the Appendix to paper G3 for November 2022 Assembly Executive.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	The paper presents a budget for 2023 to be considered for adoption by Assembly Executive.
Main points	Our expected income for 2023 is slightly up on 2022's budget. Our expenditure is budgeted to be considerably less. Nonetheless, we are facing a deficit for 2023.
Previous relevant documents	Paper G3 for November 2021 Assembly Executive.
Consultation has taken place with...	Budget holders, the URC Trust and our investment managers.

Summary of impact

Financial	Failure to adopt a budget would create uncertainty around the denomination's financial arrangements for next year.
External (eg ecumenical)	N/A

1. For the past two years, when presenting a budget for consideration, we have stressed the uncertainties caused by the pandemic and its aftermath. Such uncertainties are still with us, but we are beginning to have increased clarity regarding the financial implications for local churches and for the denomination as a whole. Nonetheless, our figure for the Ministry and Mission (M&M) income from local churches and Synods remains speculative. With that proviso, we present our draft budget for Assembly Executive consideration, as set out in the Appendix to this paper. It has been seen by the URC Trust Directors and has their support.

2. The budget has been prepared on the basis that a new pension scheme will begin both for ministers and lay staff, with effect from 1 January 2023. As a separate brief paper prepared for this meeting indicates, the consultation about closing the existing schemes and starting the new one does not conclude until 22 November. If there is a need to make significant changes to the proposed scheme or to delay its implementation following the consultation, this will have an impact on the figures as presented here.

Income

3. As usual in arriving at a figure for M&M contributions by Synods and local churches for the following year, we have sought estimates from Synods. Encouragingly, the total of those estimates is slightly higher than last year's corresponding figure.
4. Despite recent turmoil in the financial markets, we are led to believe that our income from investments is also likely to be close to last year's forecast.
5. As a result, 2023 budgeted income is more than £100k above the 2022 budget figure – but still almost £871k less than we achieved in 2021.

Expenditure

6. Stipends and the related costs of ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers continues to be our largest single expenditure heading. Salaries and associated costs are the second largest expenditure category.
7. The task of setting the stipend level is delegated to the Finance Committee in conjunction with the URC Trust Directors. Both bodies found this a particularly difficult decision to make this year. Applying the usual formula based on the consumer price index and average weekly earnings at around the mid-year point came out with a figure of 6.6%. But clearly, inflation has since gone above that level and is still rising. Both bodies have agreed that an increase of 9% is appropriate for this year – though there were two different bases for arriving at this figure within each body. A number clearly saw the additional uplift as responding to more current inflation pressures. Others, however, arrived at the figure on the basis that primarily the additional uplift was restoring the amount not awarded in 2020 (increased for subsequent inflation). Either way, 9% is the figure which has been built into the budget. This will increase the stipend from 1 January 2023 by £2,558 to £30,986.
8. It was the unanimous view of both Finance Committee and the URC Trust Directors (or at least those who did not have to abstain from the discussion on grounds of conflict of interests) that salaries should be increased by the same 9% with effect from 1 January 2023.
9. Despite these large increases, total budgeted expenditure for next year is projected to be significantly less than the outcome in 2021 and especially the budgeted 2022 costs. The main reason for the latter being the extremely large increase in the future benefit pension contributions to the Ministers' Pension Fund, which was the reason for General Assembly's in principle decision in July 2021 to close the existing pension schemes.

Projected deficit

10. The result of all of this is that the budget brings out a deficit of £664,324 for 2023. That is larger than my committee would like, but can be coped with from our reserves. We continue to look to the URC Church Life Review to make a significant difference to financial aspects of the life of the denomination in due course. But, for now, the committee proposes the resolution as set out above.

Appendix

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
2023 BUDGET & COMPARATIVES

URC TOTAL	2021 Actual	Full Yr Budget 2022	Full Yr Budget 2023
	£	£	£
Income			
Income from Churches & Synods	17,203,003	16,148,127	16,259,240
Donations, Legacies & Grants	210,077	109,950	152,000
Income from training & academic activities	1,426	1,000	1,000
Other income	2,489	12,000	12,000
Income from Investments	1,040,294	1,199,000	1,189,000
Income from Trading Activities	225,940	219,500	216,900
Property income	173,979	163,770	162,550
Total Income	18,857,208	17,853,347	17,992,690
Expenditure			
Stipends & associated costs	13,109,819	13,837,800	12,467,786
Other Minister costs	75,174	116,800	143,600
Salaries & associated costs	2,298,426	2,792,737	2,612,190
RCL Support	660,327	683,665	694,580
Student Fees & Support	584,660	566,910	506,000
Discipleship development	10,049	0	0
Mission Costs	18,551	58,500	48,500
Programme expenditure	143,155	258,950	277,350
Committee & other meeting costs	93,771	227,150	144,850
Grants	366,651	521,520	390,760
Travel, accomodation & subsistence	72,243	170,400	137,700
Office & other staff costs	239,186	267,850	268,150
Professional & Consultancy fees	460,968	254,200	213,850
Telecoms	37,611	33,430	33,000
Facilities & buildings costs	131,389	183,700	140,500
IT Costs	210,764	216,840	205,100
Cost of sales	195,263	134,500	150,000
Sundries	11,408	15,250	11,500
Depreciation	61,389	74,200	91,598
Irrecoverable VAT	161,545	120,000	120,000
(Profit)/Loss on sale of assets	(5,200)	0	0
Total expenditure	18,937,149	20,534,402	18,657,014
Net expenditure/(Income) excl Pension Deficit items	79,941	2,681,055	664,324

Paper G4

General Assembly car expenses payment level

Finance Committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Ian Hardie, Treasurer ianzhardie@googlemail.com
Action required	None – for information.
Draft resolution(s)	

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To indicate the outcome of reconsideration of car expense payment levels at the September meeting of Finance Committee.
Main points	<p>The committee believes that, since all public transport travel costs are paid in full, no-one ought to feel excluded from any Assembly event.</p> <p>Any uplift in mileage rates is in tension with the URC's Environment Policy.</p> <p>The environmental impact of encouraging car travel may be mitigated slightly if the car is used to transport more than one person.</p> <p>On that basis, the committee agreed to pay an additional five pence per mile for each passenger in the car.</p>
Previous relevant documents	Paper I2 for July 2022 General Assembly.
Consultation has taken place with...	The Secretary for Church and Society.

Summary of impact

Financial	There will be (at present unquantifiable) additional costs to cover the payment of the higher mileage rate when there are car passengers.
External (eg ecumenical)	N/A

1. At its meeting in July 2022, General Assembly passed a private members' resolution (resolution 53) which read: *'In the light of increasing fuel costs, General Assembly requests the Finance Committee to reconsider the current policy of paying only the lower HMRC rate for travel expenses at General Assembly level, and encourages Synods and other bodies also to reconsider this.'*
2. The rationale for the request was that the lower rate of 25p per mile was said to no longer reasonably cover the cost of travel. This rate was said to be at best discouraging and at worst preventing attendance and participation and was becoming an issue of exclusion as some are less able to afford to participate.
3. Finance Committee took the view that the committee was not being asked to reconsider the mileage rates applicable to ministers (with all the tax implications inherent in any move away from HMRC approved rates) but to focus only on the mileage rate payable to people travelling to General Assembly, Assembly Executive or Assembly committee meetings.
4. The Finance Committee discussion recognised that contributors to the debate on the floor of General Assembly had disagreed about whether the current rate was adequate to meet travel costs or not. It was concluded that drivers of some cars would be able to meet their costs in full, but that drivers of other cars would not.
5. The committee noted the concern that the current rate discouraged or prevented participation: but disagreed that this was a necessary result. Anyone travelling by public transport to an event would have all their costs reimbursed and so would not be excluded.
6. The committee recognised a tension between the sentiment underlying the passing of resolution 53 and what the new environment policy, which General Assembly also approved at the July meeting, says about travel and transport. (The latter sets out that the necessity and benefits of all travel have to be considered in light of its environmental impact; that preference has to be given to low-carbon modes of transport; and that for travel undertaken within Europe the default option ought to be by train unless there is compelling reason not to do so.)
7. As a result of such factors, the committee was reluctant to raise the current mileage rate across the board. They noted, however, that in some HMRC-approved rate structures provision is made for paying a slightly higher mileage rate when a passenger is being transported in the vehicle. Since that might mitigate the adverse effects of car travel's impact on the environment the committee decided that, in future, travel expenses forms would be amended to allow drivers to claim an additional five pence per mile for each passenger carried to or from the same Assembly event.

Paper G5

Pensions update

Finance Committee and Pensions Review Group

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Ian Hardie, Treasurer ianzhardie@googlemail.com
Action required	Unclear at present – awaits outcome of consultation.
Draft resolution(s)	

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To report on the pensions consultation process and to indicate that an oral update will be given to Assembly Executive.
Main points	The pensions consultation got underway on 22 September and will run to 22 November. Assembly Executive will be given an oral report on the outcome of the consultation to the extent that is possible in the timeframe.
Previous relevant documents	Paper G5 for General Assembly 2022.
Consultation has taken place with...	All active and prospective members of the two existing defined URC benefit pension schemes.

Summary of impact

Financial	Each year of delay in switching to a defined contribution scheme would cost considerably in excess of an additional £1m.
External (eg ecumenical)	N/A

1. In July 2022, General Assembly authorised consultation with the active members of the two URC defined benefit pension schemes on the basis of the proposals outlined in paper G5 for that meeting, subject to some provision being made for lay staff ill health retirement benefits.
2. It took the Pensions Review Group a little while to work out the form of this additional benefit, but they were able to produce first drafts of all the consultation material by the start of August.

3. However, the material had to be considered by both lawyers to the URC and to the Ministers' Pension Trust and by our Mastertrust provider. It took well into September to complete this process and get final versions of the documents agreed by everyone concerned. They were eventually sent on 22 September and the consultation will run until 22 November.
4. It will involve not just written material sent out by the church, but also a series of meetings to ask questions and the provision of some material on the Aon website for our members to consider.
5. The consultation period is somewhat later than we intended but there is (just) still time to consider the responses to the consultation and, if no or only minor changes to the previous proposals are required, to get the new scheme operational from 1 January 2023, as hoped.
6. Obviously, with the consultation still under way at the time of writing this paper, it is not possible to indicate what its outcome will be. The Treasurer will provide an oral update to Assembly Executive, to the extent that is possible after only a few days of consideration of the responses.
7. Given the timing of the Assembly Executive meeting, it is possible that members may be asked to do more than simply receive his report.

Paper H1

URC Roll of Ministers Policy

Ministries Committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Mary Thomas dso-s@urcwessex.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Assembly Executive adopts the URC Roll of Ministers Policy.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	This policy sets out what it means to be on the Roll of Ministers.
Main points	<p>The policy tidies up, and puts in one document, what is already in place by giving clarity/defining</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) the two new categories of active ministers2) the Synods' role in the process3) the relationship between the categories of active and non-active ministers and the Roll of Ministers4) the status of URC ministers overseas5) ministers on more than one roll. <p>The policy combines the Roll of Ministers and the Roll of CRCWs.</p>
Previous relevant documents	General Assembly 2006 Resolution 25 Active Ministers Policy (Paper H5 Assembly Executive 2021) Ministers on more than one Roll (Paper H2 Mission Council 2019).
Consultation has taken place with...	Law and Polity Synod Moderators.

Summary of impact

Financial	None.
External (eg ecumenical)	None as defines/clarifies current process.

1. The United Reformed Church values the contribution of its ministers.
2. However, the status of ministers of the United Reformed Church who are no longer exercising a ministry recognised by the URC has been raised with the Ministries

Office a number of times over the past few years. In some cases, the URC has no contact details for those ministers and is unaware of any ministry which may be exercised in its name.

3. Recognised ministry is not only an expression of personal discipleship, but a continuation of the work of Christ rooted in his body which is the Church. Due diligence requires that those presenting themselves as ministers of the United Reformed Church need to be anchored within the denomination for reasons both of support and of discipline.
4. Further, it may reasonably be argued that questions 7 and 8 in Schedule C of the Basis of Union¹ (affirmations made at ordination/commissioning and induction) point to an expected active participation in the life of the church if one is to be a minister of the United Reformed Church.
5. In 2015 Ministries brought the policy for ministers on the Roll to Mission Council making the above points to provide clarity regarding the status of ministers on the Roll of United Reformed Church ministers and improve accountability and support. The matter was referred back under Standing Order 2.5.9.1 for further consultation, before coming back to a future meeting of Mission Council.
6. As a result, in 2018 General Assembly agreed the Active Ministers Policy, which defined 6 categories of active ministers which provided the clarity needed as to who has the privileges and responsibilities of being an active minister.
7. Assembly Executive (November 2021) updated the Active Ministers Policy, which introduced two new categories: ministers
 - in a lay post for which they are receiving a salary not under the Plan for Partnership, but where the Synod has requested the designation of active
 - in categories 1-7, but authorised to perform the functions of ministry on a limited basis as specified in an agreement of the Accreditations Sub-Committee of the Ministries Committee.
8. Appendix 1 tidies up much of what is already in place by giving clarity/defining:
 - 1) the two new categories of active ministers
 - 2) the Synods' role in the process
 - 3) the relationship between the categories of active and non-active ministers and the Roll of Ministers
 - 4) the status of URC ministers overseas
 - 5) ministers on more than one roll.

¹ Schedule C

7. Do you promise to fulfil the duties of your charge faithfully, to lead the church in worship, to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight, to take your part in the councils of the Church, and to give leadership to the Church in its mission to the world?
By the grace of God, I do.
8. Do you promise as a minister of the United Reformed Church to seek its well-being, purity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church? **By the grace of God, I do.**

9. The policy combines the Roll of Ministers and the Roll of CRCWs.

Appendix 1

The Roll of Ministers

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Basis of Union states that: The Lord Jesus Christ continues his ministry in and through the Church, the whole people of God called and committed to his service and equipped by him for it. To equip his people for this total ministry the Lord Jesus Christ gives particular gifts for particular ministries and calls people to exercise them in offices duly recognised within his Church namely, ministers of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Workers and Elders. Those who enter on such ministries commit themselves to them for so long as God wills.
- 1.2 The scope of this policy refers to ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers of the United Reformed Church (hereafter known as ministers).
- 1.3 The Roll of Ministers lists all individuals who hold status as ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers of the United Reformed Church.

2. The policy

- 2.1 For each individual, the Roll shall specify in accordance with the URC Data Privacy Policy for Ministers:
- The name, address and contact details of the individual
 - The Synod having oversight over the individual
 - The ministry to which that individual has been ordained/commissioned
 - The category of active minister for that individual
 - The date from which that category of ministry applies, normally at movement of one ministry to another.
- 2.2 A minister is considered active if they are on the URC Roll of Ministers and at least one of the eight categories of the Active Minister Policy applies. They are:
- i) in a pastorate or post for which they are receiving a stipend (either full or part) from the United Reformed Church (eg deployed post, SCM post, Assembly appointment) under the Plan for Partnership
 - ii) in non-stipendiary service in a recognised ministry post (eg model 1, 2, 3 or 4 or Local NS CRCW)
 - iii) exercising a ministry with another organisation within the gift of the church to the wider church to which they have been inducted by the URC where possible (eg chaplaincy, educational establishment, ecumenical body) and for which they receive a stipend, salary or serve in a voluntary capacity
 - iv) in a lay post for which they are receiving a salary not under the Plan for Partnership but where the Synod has requested the status of active;

- v) providing recognised voluntary service on behalf of the Church (eg Interim Moderator, serving on a Synod or area committee, representing the URC on an external body)
 - vi) not in a formal position but whose expertise and experience means that, enjoying the confidence of Synod Officers, they are asked to undertake pieces of work from time to time
 - vii) frequently leading worship in a church other than where they are a member (this criterion does not apply in the case of Church Related Community Workers)
 - viii) categories 1-7 but authorised to perform the functions of ministry on a limited basis as specified in an agreement between the General Assembly and the minister and with the approval of the Accreditations Sub-Committee on behalf of Ministries
 - ix) Applications that do not fit the criteria i-vii which are approved by Accreditations Sub-Committee.
- 2.3 Upon ordination/commissioning, a minister shall normally be entered into category 1 or 2 of the Active Ministers Policy as above.
- 2.4 The initial decision as to the category in which each individual minister should be entered shall lie with the relevant Synod. Any individual dissatisfied with that initial decision shall be entitled to query the Synod decision, with a view to having his or her categorisation amended to his or her satisfaction through discussion. In the event of any such individual remaining dissatisfied with a category in which they have been entered, they shall have the right to appeal to the Accreditations Sub-Committee.
- 2.5 Once the roll has been compiled, the Ministries Office shall maintain the roll with the assistance of the Synods.
- 3. Moving within categories of Active Ministers**
The category of Active Minister can change within the course of a ministry with the agreement of the Accreditations Sub-Committee at the request of a Synod. In most cases this will be because a minister moves from one kind of ministry to another.
- 4. Active Ministers on more than one roll**
- 4.1 The 2019 Mission Council ministers of Word and Sacraments on More than One Roll policy states that a minister cannot be on more than one roll.
- 4.2 The exception to this is when a minister of another denomination who is received onto the roll of ministers of the United Reformed Church, but who remains on the roll of another church may only do so if there are proven cultural, historical or financial reasons for maintaining their status as a minister of an overseas denomination.

4.3 A second exception arises for ministers who had been ordained into the United Reformed Church and the Union of Welsh Independents and are counted on both rolls.

5. Active Ministers on a limited basis

5.1 Ministers who are authorised to perform the functions of ministry on a limited basis as specified in an agreement with the approval of the Accreditations Sub-Committee shall be those ministers who are unable to perform the whole scope of ministerial duties. For example, a minister who:

- is unable to serve as a Trustee of a local church. In this case the minister is required to refer the matter to the Synod Moderator who will inform the Secretary for Ministries
- has a DBS with content. This will be dealt with by the Secretary for Ministries in consultation with the URC Designated Safeguarding Lead using the normal process
- exhibits exceptional signs of ill-health outside the scope of the URC's Sickness Policy for ministers. In such cases, a minister may not be able to perform the full functions of ministerial duties but can nevertheless have a fruitful ministry. An independent occupational health assessment will be required and will normally be managed by the Synod Moderator in consultation with the MOM Office and the Secretary for Ministries
- is going through a Capability, Incapacity or Disciplinary process where the Synod Moderator or Assembly Standing Panel for Discipline, in consultation with the Synod Safeguarding Officer where appropriate, determines ministry can continue on a limited basis whilst the process is being carried out
- as an outcome of the Disciplinary Process has limitations put on their ministry by the Assembly Commission in consultation with the Synod Moderator and the Synod Safeguarding Officer where appropriate.

The above list is not exhaustive.

5.2 A minister who is an Active Minister category 8 may undertake only those functions of ministry which are defined in his or her agreement between the General Assembly/Synod and the minister.

5.3 The minister shall be entitled to a review (or reviews) of the terms and conditions of the Agreement after expiry of a period (or periods) specified within the Agreement. Such a review (or reviews) shall be conducted by the Accreditations Sub-Committee at the point(s) indicated in the Agreement.

5.4 The Accreditations Sub-Committee shall inform the minister concerned and the Synod Moderator and, where appropriate the Synod Safeguarding Officer, of the outcome of all such reviews. Subject to satisfactory fulfilment of all of the terms and conditions specified in the agreement, the Accreditations Sub-Committee may resolve that the minister shall be removed from Active Minister category 8 into another category.

5.5 Any individual dissatisfied with that decision shall be entitled to appeal to the Accreditations Sub-Committee with a view to having his or her categorisation amended to his or her satisfaction through discussion. In the event of any such individual remaining dissatisfied with a category in which they have been entered shall have the right to appeal to General Assembly using the Appeals process.

6. Moving from Active to Non-Active

The status of Active Minister can change within the course of a ministry to Non-Active Minister with the agreement of the Accreditations Sub-Committee at the request of a Synod. In most cases this will be because the minister will declare to the Synod that they no longer intend to perform the functions of ministry. This may or may not include retired ministers.

7. Non-Active Ministers residing overseas

Ministers residing overseas who wish to stay on the Roll of Ministers will have the designation of non-active and remain under the pastoral care of the last Synod in which they served which is in line with current practice.

8. The Roll and moving away from ministerial service in the URC

8.1 General Assembly 2006 Resolution 25 sets out the process for those ministers who move away from ministerial service in the United Reformed Church without resignation from the Roll. Their move should be with the concurrence of the church.

8.2 If concurrence is granted, the minister would remain on the Roll. They would remain under the oversight and care of the Synod in which they reside. The minister would be eligible to seek a future pastorate/post within the United Reformed Church upon request to the Synod Moderators.

8.3 If concurrence is not granted and the minister/CRCW proceeds with the move, the Synod should send a report of the Synod Pastoral Committee (or equivalent) decision to the Accreditations Sub-Committee setting out details of the post the minister has accepted and the reasons why the Synod did not consider it appropriate to give concurrence. If the Accreditations Sub-committee gives approval for the move, the minister's/CRCW's status would remain as in 8.2 above.

8.4 If the Accreditations Sub-Committee upholds the decision of the Synod, the minister would be deemed to have resigned from the Roll. If a minister does not receive concurrence and is removed from the Roll, they would have the right to appeal to General Assembly through the Appeals process.

9. Review of Non-Active Ministers

For ministers who move away from ministerial service in the United Reformed Church without resignation from the Roll of Ministers, the Synod should ask the minister at three yearly intervals whether this is still the position or whether they should resign.

Paper H2

Safer recruitment and accreditation of Assembly Accredited Lay Pioneers

Ministries Committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Mary Thomas dso-s@urcwessex.org.uk
Action required	For information.
Draft resolution(s)	

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	General Assembly (2022) asked for further work to be done on a Safer Recruitment and Accreditation Process for the new ministry of Assembly Accredited Lay Pioneers. The paper outlines both processes together as they are linked.
Main points	The process states clearly which council of the church is responsible for which part of the process.
Previous relevant documents	Marks of Ministry of Assembly Accredited Lay Pioneers (2022) Assembly Accredited Lay Pioneers and the Newbigin Pioneering Hub Paper B/D/M1 (2022).
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of impact

Financial	None.
External (eg ecumenical)	None.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The United Reformed Church is committed to the safeguarding and protection of all within our church communities. The United Reformed Church recognises the importance of carefully selecting, training and supporting all those with any responsibility within the Church.
- 1.2 Not all those who train on the URC CMS course will go on to seek accreditation. Those who do will need to follow the process as outlined in point.
- 1.3 The process for accreditation is based on a similar process used for the accreditation of Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers. It is therefore an established process.

2. What are Assembly Accredited Lay Pioneers?

Assembly Accredited Lay Pioneers will focus either on:

- a) cultivating new Christian communities such as Fresh Expressions or new missional communities through contextual mission in a local setting. They will normally be based within a local pastorate, working under the supervision of the minister or Interim Moderator
- b) engaging in mission in a specific context to develop new Christian communities. While they may work in a pastorate setting, they may also work across multiple contexts or develop a new community outside the existing pastorate structure. They may be supervised by their minister or Interim Moderator or by the person assigned by the Synod to give support and oversight
- c) engaging in wider new forms of mission. While they may work from a pastorate setting, they may also work across multiple contexts or outside the existing pastorate structure. They may be supervised by their minister or interim Moderator or by the person assigned by the Synod to give support and oversight.

3. The process

3.1 Those thinking of becoming an Assembly Accredited Lay Pioneer should, where possible:

- a) have completed CMS Certificate Course in Lay Pioneering through the Newbigin Hub or an equivalent training programme
- b) be a URC church member for at least one year
- c) contact the Ministries Office for a registration form plus copies of The Marks of Ministry of an Assembly Accredited Lay Pioneer and URC Guidelines for the Conduct and Behaviour of Lay Pioneers
- d) have had a conversation with their minister/interim moderator, Training Officer or equivalent and the Synod Moderator about their proposed sphere of ministry
- e) agree for their names to go forward to Church Meeting (or equivalent) for agreement
- f) agree for their names to go forward to the Synod Pastoral Committee (or equivalent) for agreement.

3.2 The Synod Pastoral Committee should send in the Application Form with a copy of both the Church Meeting and Synod Pastoral Committee minute and complete their part of the Accreditation Form (known as the Green Form).

3.3 Once received, the Ministries Office will:

- a) take up references
- b) should these no give cause for concern then the Ministries Office would organise the DBS/PVG; if there is a blemish this will be followed up the Ministries Office as per the usual process.

- 3.4 Applicants will:
- a) attend the in person You're Welcome: An Ethos and History of the URC course held at Westminster College, Cambridge
 - b) will undergo safeguarding training and other mandatory training appropriate to their role, as well as further training which the denomination shall determine from time to time.
- 3.5 Once 2.3 is completed, the Ministries Office will inform the Synod that a commissioning service may take place.

Paper H3

Marks of Ministry of an Elder and Marks of Ministry of an Elders Meeting*

Ministries Committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Mary Thomas dso-s@urcwessex.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Assembly Executive adopt the Marks of Ministry of an Elder and Marks of Ministry of an Elders Meeting*¹.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	The ministry of elder and the elders meeting form a significant role in the life of the church. Having established a Roll of Elders, the marks of ministry are intended to be a concise and comprehensive description of what the United Reformed Church can reasonably expect of people who are called to be an elder and how those skills are to be exercised in the Elders Meeting.
Main points	The Marks are divided into two sections. It is not expected that every Elder will exhibit all of these marks. However, it is expected that anyone called to the office of eldership will exhibit the first four marks and that the elders meeting should collectively embody the other marks of ministry.
Previous relevant documents	Safer Election of Elders 2021 Guidelines on the conduct and behaviour of Elders 2020 Disciplinary Policy for Office Holders 2021.
Consultation has taken place with...	Education and Learning Committee Synod Moderators Faith and Order Committee.

Summary of impact

Financial	None.
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¹ *Or the Council fulfilling the functions of an Elders Meeting in an LEP or other expression or church

External (eg ecumenical)	It is recognised that this applies to the Council of the church fulfilling the functions of an Elders Meeting within an ecumenical context or other expression of church.
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Elders are called to share responsibility, with the minister of the Word and Sacraments, for the spiritual oversight of the congregation. They are ordained into the whole United Reformed Church and inducted to exercise their ministry through their local church. The Elders' Meeting is intended to be a distinctive and vital part of every URC congregation with the elders collectively possessing the abilities, skills and spiritual gifts of leadership.

The following is a concise and comprehensive description of what the United Reformed Church can reasonably expect of people who are called to be an elder. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list and it is not expected that every elder will exhibit all of these marks. It is acknowledged that what this will look like in each elder will vary depending on the context, the individual, and the specific ministry to which they are called.

An elder in the United Reformed Church (URC) should be:

- **A faithful disciple of Jesus Christ:** caught up in the joy and wonder of God's will and work; seeking always to live a holy life in public and in private; to be committed to growing in faith and discipleship and developing the gifts each has been given and open to journeying as a disciple with others.
- **A person of integrity and prayer:** self-aware and committed to their own lifelong learning (especially through the URC's provision for elders); aware of their own limitations and thus willing to seek support; sustained by their own rhythm of prayer, Bible reading and worship; upholding values of faithfulness, trust and respect.
- **A person who cares for others:** sharing with others including the minister in offering and sustaining pastoral care; regarding all persons with equal love and concern; rejoicing and grieving with others through listening deeply and offering prayerful support; wise in knowing their limits and boundaries when more specialised help is needed; reliably dealing with issues of safeguarding and confidentiality.
- **A person of accountability:** committed to serving as an elder within the conciliar oversight of the church; willing to engage in systems of support for elders; observing proper boundaries in relationships; willing to engage in mandatory training including safeguarding; understands their role as a Trustee (where appropriate) in administering the assets of the church; committed to the United Reformed Church and ready to collaborate with others for its mission in God's world.

The Elders' Meeting collectively should include the following Marks of Ministry:

- **Pastorally caring for others:** sharing with others in offering and sustaining pastoral care; regarding all persons with equal love and concern; rejoicing and grieving with others through listening deeply and offering prayerful support; wise in knowing their limits and boundaries when more specialised help is needed; reliably dealing with issues of safeguarding and confidentiality.

- **A ministry of oversight for the Church:** working collaboratively with ministers/CRCWs in a team ministry and safeguarding the contribution of the whole church in decision-making processes; sharing in spiritual leadership by praying through and discussing key issues in the life of the church and empowering church members to own and develop the ministry and mission of the fellowship; ensuring that the key functions of the local and wider church are fulfilled.
- **A focus upon mission and evangelism:** fostering in the congregation concern for witness and service to the community and evangelism at home and abroad; alive to the significance of contexts and cultures in shaping mission to live God's Kingdom of justice and peace to the full.
- **A participation in the councils of the Church:** responsive to God's call as gift and blessing to be lived out within the discipline and accountability of the denomination which ordains them and the pastorates into which they are inducted to serve.
- **A commitment to the Church always being renewed** able to help congregations to discern and respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit as new chapters open in the life of the Church and others close.

Paper 11

Update on current work

Mission Committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Sarah Lane Cawte, Convenor of Mission Committee slanecawte@gmail.com Philip Brooks, Deputy General Secretary (Mission) philip.brooks@urc.org.uk
Action required	For information.
Draft resolution(s)	None.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Update on the work of Mission Committee.
Main points	Updates on refugee advocacy, cost of living crisis, Environmental Policy, Israel Palestine work, Global Intercultural Ministries, ecumenical relations, Fresh Expressions and pioneering, Greenbelt and the Mission Enabling Fund.
Previous relevant documents	General Assembly 2022 Resolutions: 17, 19, 20, 21 and 52 General Assembly 2021 Resolutions: 26, 31 and 33.
Consultation has taken place with...	Ongoing consultation with relevant partners.

Summary of impact

Financial	Costs to Assembly of the various items in the paper are covered by the Mission Committee budget.
External (eg ecumenical)	Continuing ecumenical work.

1. Advocacy for refugees

1.1 General Assembly Resolution 52, from North Western Synod, asked the Mission Committee to make representations to Government and resource church members to write to their MPs about the cruel and unjust nature of the UK's current asylum policies. It has done this through:

- Using the anniversary of the fall of Kabul in August, to call on the government to support Afghan refugees still languishing in hotels and provide safe routes for those still at risk in Afghanistan, with the General Secretary joining the signatories of a letter to The Times.

- In September, the Moderator of General Assembly wrote to the newly appointed Home Secretary on behalf of the Church outlining a number of concerns about the government's asylum policies. We await a reply.
- A template letter and guidance for contacting MPs about the policy to send asylum seekers to Rwanda has been made available on the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) website and publicised. Please do share this widely.
- We continue our advocacy in this area with colleagues in JPIT; for instance, it will be the focus of a briefing for MPs as part of an event with church leaders in parliament on 1 November.

2. Cost of living crisis

2.1 The impact of rising living costs has continued to be a major focus for JPIT, especially the grave concern that millions on low incomes will not have enough to live this winter. In August, it co-ordinated the launch of a research report highlighting the huge financial shortfall people would be experiencing and some of the personal impact of that and calling for urgent government action. This was endorsed by over 50 faith and charity leaders, alongside former Prime Minister Gordon Brown, generating significant media and political interest. The report, and a recording of the launch event, can be found at www.jpit.uk/enoughtolive

2.2 Following the government's announcement of an energy price freeze, which will nonetheless result in bills being double what they were a year ago, JPIT coordinated publication of a letter with 52 signatories including the Moderator of General Assembly, calling for additional direct support for the poorest households. The URC also endorsed a call to extend Free School Meals to all children in primary schools in England.

2.3 Many churches and community groups have been considering practical responses to help people who are struggling financially as a result of the rising cost of living, such as 'Warm Spaces' and debt advice centres. Mission Committee heard about the North Western Synod's Warm Hubs initiative and endorsed the Warm Welcome UK campaign. An advice page for churches has been created on the URC website.

3. Implementation of Environmental Policy

3.1 Following General Assembly's adoption of a new Environmental Policy, work has begun to implement the resolutions and embed the commitment to achieve net zero emissions across all of church life by 2030. A key step in this is the formation of the Net Zero Task Group, with representation drawn from across the Church, to oversee and report on progress, facilitate sharing and learning, and identify common support needs. A role description for a task group convener has been drawn up and some administrative support identified, but it is recognised that significant additional resources and expert guidance are likely to be necessary as the implications of our environmental commitments are worked through. All committees have also been asked to begin consideration of the Environmental Policy's implications for their activities.

4. Israel Palestine work

4.1 Educational – we partnered with an organisation called Solution not Sides for a participative Zoom meeting, aimed specifically at people who have little or no knowledge about issues around Israel and Palestine. The online seminar listened

to Israeli and Palestinian parents who had both lost children in the conflict. The event was well attended and well received.

- 4.2 Advocacy – in August, Fiona Bennett was one of the ecumenical signatories to an open letter organised by the Balfour Project, opposing the illegal encroachment into an area designated ‘E1’ in East Jerusalem. Fiona was interviewed on UCB Radio on this topic. In October, a similar ecumenical coalition sent a letter to the new Prime Minister, Liz Truss expressing deep concern about the possible re-location of the UK Embassy to Jerusalem, in direct contravention of international agreements.
- 4.3 A draft resource has been drawn up in consultation with ecumenical partners about pilgrimage to the Holy Land. This will be made available in early 2023.
- 4.4 The 2021 General Assembly urged synods not to invest in companies benefitting from the occupation of Palestine. Many of our Synods hold substantial investments managed by CCLA and therefore are dependent on the ability of CCLA to screen these investments. The URC Treasurer, Ian Hardie has been in negotiation with CCLA about how they might create a fund as a subset of their present ethical fund which would be closer to the principles arising from the URC Assembly Resolutions. The structural changes will take some time to implement, and we will not see any firm proposals until 2023. It would be a fund designed to be accessible to others beyond the URC.

5. Global Intercultural Ministries

- 5.1 Legacies of Slavery next steps. General Assembly adopted the Statement of Confession and Apology and committed to ‘repairing justice’. A task group will consider ‘what next?’ in terms of confession/apology, with the aim of bringing concrete proposals for repairing justice to next year’s Assembly.
- 5.2 Following Karen Campbell’s advocacy with the Council for World Mission (CWM) as it journeys towards confession/apology on Legacies of Slavery, she was invited to attend the launch of CWM’s Onesimus Project in South Africa in August. Further information about CWM’s journey is available on the CWM website: www.cwmission.org/the-bethelsdorp-statement/
- 5.3 The Black and Ethnic Minority Ministers/Cascades of Grace residential gathering took place in September in Sheffield. This was followed by the justice co-ordinators’ residential, bringing together Synod racial justice/intercultural co-ordinators, Commitment for Life, and global partnerships’ advocates. These two gatherings had some overlap of participants and topics, but two distinct groups and programmes. Both included updates and conversations about Legacies of Slavery, positive action towards becoming an anti-racist church, URC Jubilee, and the launch of the ‘Telling it like it is’ docufilm, which will be shown at Assembly Executive.
- 5.4 The URC hosted Nicolás Rosenthal, who heads up the Fundación Protestante Hora de Obrar, the diaconal wing of our partner church the Iglesia Evangélica del Rio de la Plata in Argentina. Nicolás was visiting London for the international Faith and Belief Conference. He is now on the planning committee for our upcoming global, ecumenical, theological consultation on environmental action

by churches. This will be held online and in-person at Westminster College on 3 to 5 June 2023.

6. Ecumenical relations

- 6.1 The World Council of Churches (WCC) eleventh Assembly took place in Karlsruhe, Germany, from 30 August to 8 September. Sarah Moore and Karen Campbell were URC delegates and Philip Brooks ecumenical advisor. Sarah Moore was re-elected to the WCC Central Committee. It is a milestone for the URC that Susan Durber was elected WCC European President.
- 6.2 The annual conference bringing together ecumenical officers from both local and county level took place in September. 13 URC ecumenical officers attended this three day residential. The keynote speakers were the new General Secretaries from Churches Together in England (CTE), Mike Royal and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI), Nicola Brady, as well as the new Moderator of the Free Churches Group, Helen Cameron.

7. Fresh Expressions and Pioneering

- 7.1 Newbigin Pioneering Hub:
(www.urch.org.uk/your-faith/more-about-ministry/newbigin-pioneering-hub)
22 participants attended the first learning weekend from 16 to 19 September 2022. This is an encouraging start to this new initiative. A number of URC ministers in pioneering roles are involved with the Newbigin Pioneering Hub, including being prepared to serve as coaches for future cohorts of lay pioneers.

8. Greenbelt

- 8.1 The URC played a significant part at Greenbelt this year: running the café; providing craft activities; scheduling talks and music. The URC was responsible for the youth provision at the festival. On the Sunday evening a special 50th Anniversary service was held, which was broadcast live via Zoom. There will be a presentation at Assembly Executive giving a taste of the many aspects of the URC presence at Greenbelt.

9. Mission Committee

- 9.1 Mission Committee met in September and included discussions on the above programmes. We began a series, initiated by Mersey Synod, looking at the relationship between evangelism and mission.

10. Mission Enabling Fund

- 10.1 Full details are now on the website with the details of the Mission Enabling Fund agreed at the 2022 General Assembly: www.urch.org.uk/grants-funding-opportunities/ Small grants are available to fund activities within Synods, local churches and community groups, with the commitment to provide a decision on applications within 30 days.

Paper J1

List of nominations

Nominations committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Helen Lidgett hnlidgett@gmail.com Margaret Marshall nominations.secretary@urc.org.uk
Action required	
Draft resolution(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Assembly Executive notes the changes set out in Section 1 of the report to the list of Nominations agreed at the July 2022 meeting of General Assembly.2) Assembly Executive notes and approves the changes set out in Section 2 of the report to the list of Nominations agreed at the July 2022 meeting of General Assembly.3) Assembly Executive appoints according to the nominations in Section 3 of the report.4) Assembly Executive appoints according to the nominations in Section 4 and 5 of the report.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) To alert Assembly Executive to the implications of the Church Life Review for the Nominations Committee.2) To clarify various details of the nominations list.3) To appoint and reappoint members of various committees and representatives of the Church.
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	Nominations list as at July 2022: www.bit.ly/URCNom .
Consultation has taken place with...	All Synods are represented on the Committee.

Summary of impact

Financial	None.
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External (eg ecumenical)	Some roles involve ecumenical contact and collaboration.
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Introduction

In presenting this report, the Nominations Committee wishes to inform Assembly Executive of the particular difficulties it is facing.

The Church Life Review

The Church Life Review's report to General Assembly proposed that the revised committee structure be agreed by Assembly Executive in November 2023 and come into being in January 2024 (Assembly Paper N2, paragraph 2.5). However, that timetable has slipped as a result of the Assembly debate and the amended resolution and it is not yet clear when the new structure will be adopted and its precise form.

Several Committee Convenors are due to complete their term of office at Assembly 2024. Following past practice, Nominations would seek new Convenors in the autumn of 2022 to serve as Convenors-elect for 2023-4 who would take over as Convenors in 2024. Among the 21 Committees, the Church Life Review proposes would have their work taken up in new ways, several have Convenors retiring in 2024. The Nominations Committee decided in consultation with the General Secretary to ask the Convenors of these Committees whether they would be willing if necessary to serve a little longer to cover the transition should that be delayed beyond Assembly 2024 rather than seeking new Convenors. This is a break from existing practice where Convenors are normally not asked to serve a second term. These appointments are listed at 3.1.1, 3.1.2 and 4.4 below with an end date of GA28 but in fact these appointments are until or shortly after the new structure is in place.

The same issue will face Nominations at its meeting on 8 November, when it will be considering whether to seek new committee members to serve from Assembly 2023, for what would in the past have been a four year term. Do we ask existing members to extend their term of service until the committee's demise, rather than look for new people to serve what could be a period of only one year?

The Nominations Committee hopes that the Assembly Executive meeting in November 2022 will be able to provide some clarity on the timetable and some guidance for Nominations.

The Covid-19 pandemic

Some staff secretaries responsible for some continuing committees have expressed concern that the work of these committees was so seriously disrupted over a two year period by the pandemic that they have asked whether Convenors due to stand down at Assembly 2024 can be invited to serve a further four year term, rather than recruiting new convenors. Although this is a break from existing practice, in consultation with the General Secretary, Nominations has agreed to this.

1. Amendments to published list of nominations to be noted
Assembly Executive is asked to note the following amendments to the Nominations list that was agreed at the July 2022 meeting of General Assembly.

4.2.2 Stepwise Development Group

The post of Project Manager for *Walking the Way* no longer exists.

4.3 Children’s and Youth Work Committee

The post of Convenor of the Pilots Sub-committee no longer exists.

The role of Pilots Representative: Mr Derek Goodyear will hold this role until the Church Life Review has been agreed.

5.6 The United Reformed Church Ministers’ Pension Trust Ltd.

Action by the Officers of Assembly

Mr Lyndon Thomas’s first term as a Church Nominated Director of **The United Reformed Church Ministers’ Pension Trust Ltd** ended at the July 2022 meeting of General Assembly. Assembly appointed Mr Chris Atherton to succeed him. However, Mr Thomas should have been invited to serve a second term.

The Officers of Assembly, acting on behalf of General Assembly, rescinded the appointment of Mr Chris Atherton and appointed Mr Lyndon Thomas to serve a second term until General Assembly 2026.

2. Amendments to published list of nominations for approval
Assembly Executive is asked to note and approve the following amendments to the Nominations list that was agreed at the July 2021 meeting of General Assembly.

1.2 Law and Polity Advisory Group

Mr Tim Hockley replaces Mrs Melanie Campbell as the Synod Clerk Representative.

2.2 Nominations Committee

The Eastern Synod representative is now the Revd David Coaker.

The Synod of Wales representative is now Ms Megan Price.

7.1 World Council of Churches 2022 Assembly

Ms Karen Campbell will be a representative to the 2022 Assembly in addition to the Revd Sarah Moore.

3. New appointments and Re-appointments

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Assembly Executive makes the following appointments:

1.2	Law and Polity Advisory Group	Ms Morag McLintock	Convenor †	GA24	GA28
1.2	Law and Polity Advisory Group	Mr Dean Taylor	Member**	NOV 22	GA26
3.1	Mission Committee	Ms Sarah Lane Cawte	Convenor †	GA24	GA28
3.1.1	International Exchange Reference Group	The Revd Dr Ana Gobledale	Convenor †	GA24	GA28
3.1.2	Commitment for Life Reference Group	Mr Richard Lewney	Convenor †	GA24	GA28
3.1.3	Interfaith Enabling Group	The Revd Tracey Lewis	Convenor †	GA24	GA28

4.4	Worship Reference Group	The Revd Sam Silungwe	Convenor †	GA24	GA28
5.3	Equalities Committee	The Revd Jayne Taylor	Member †	GA23	GA27

Key: ** = new appointment, † = extension of term of service, †† = further term of service after a break

4. Disciplinary Process Appointments

Members of the Assembly Commission for Discipline Panel and the Disciplinary Investigation Panel are appointed for unlimited terms.

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Assembly Executive makes the following appointments:

<i>Ref</i>	<i>Committee/Group</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Role</i>
2.5	Assembly Commission for Discipline Panel	The Revd John Grundy	Member**
2.5	Assembly Commission for Discipline Panel	The Revd Alistair Smeaton	Member**
2.5	Assembly Commission for Discipline Panel	Professor Graham Handscomb	Member**
2.5	Assembly Commission for Discipline Panel	Dr James Mawdesley	Member**
2.5	Assembly Commission for Discipline Panel	Ms Mary Coole	Member**
2.5	Assembly Commission for Discipline Panel	Ms Janine Cowie	Member**
2.5	Assembly Commission for Discipline Panel	Ms Barbara Groom	Member**
2.5	Assembly Commission for Discipline Panel	Ms Darnette Whitby-Reid	Member**
2.5	Assembly Commission for Discipline Panel	Mr Remi Ferguson	Member**
2.5	Assembly Commission for Discipline Panel	Mr Dean Taylor	Member**

Assembly Executive notes the following appointments made on behalf of the General Assembly by the Officers of Assembly, following nomination by the Nominations Committee.

2.6	Disciplinary Investigation Panel	Professor Jean McClellan	Member**
2.6	Disciplinary Investigation Panel	Mrs Chris Harris	Member**
2.6	Disciplinary Investigation Panel	Ms Alison Jiggins	Member**
2.6	Disciplinary Investigation Panel	Mrs Margaret Smith	Member**
2.6	Disciplinary Investigation Panel	Mrs Liz Swanwick	Member**
2.6	Disciplinary Investigation Panel	Mr Stuart Dew	Member**
2.6	Disciplinary Investigation Panel	Mr Keir Hounsome	Member**

5. Appointment Groups

There is a requirement for three Appointment Groups:

Northern Synod Moderator Nominating Group

The following four people have accepted invitations to be members of the Group:

The Revd George Mwaura (Convenor)
The Revd Jan Adamson
Mrs Sheila Davies
Mr Trevor Orr.

Chief Operating Officer Appointment Group

The following three people have accepted invitations to be members of the Group together with the General Secretary:

Ms Muna Levan-Harris
Ms Darnette Whitby-Reid
Mr Ian Hardie.

Appointment of new Clerk to the General Assembly

The following three people have accepted invitations to be members of the Group along with the General Secretary:

Ms Pippa Hodgson
The Revd Nigel Uden
Mr Tim Crossley.

Paper M1

Loyal Address

Clerk

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Michael Hopkins michael.hopkins@urc.org.uk
Action required	Note.
Draft resolution(s)	N/A

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Loyal Address upon the death of the sovereign.
Main points	The Assembly Officers determined to send a Loyal Address to the Throne upon the death of her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and the accession of King Charles III. The text is attached for the information of Assembly Executive.
Previous relevant documents	N/A
Consultation has taken place with...	N/A

Summary of impact

Financial	N/A
External (eg ecumenical)	N/A

Address to the Throne

12 September 2022

To the King's Most Excellent Majesty,

The Assembly Officers of the United Reformed Church, acting on behalf of its General Assembly, send our sincere condolences for the loss of your mother Her Majesty Elizabeth II and share with you in grief for the loss of our Queen.

Through seventy years including times of crisis, conflict, innovation and development, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's reign was marked as one of dignity, stability and servanthood.

Both as a denomination and as local United Reformed Churches across Wales, Scotland and England, we have been sharing in our nations' grief for her passing and giving thanks for her most remarkable life of dedicated Christian service. As a devout Anglican and Presbyterian, her faith shone from her words and deeds. Her contribution to the life of our nations, the commonwealth, and beyond will be remembered with gratitude for generations to come. She inspired respect from across political and ideological spectrums.

We are grateful for the care with which you and your family are responding to the global grief at Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's passing, whilst cradling your own more personal losses. Be assured of our prayers for you and your family in this fragile time.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's passing also shifts the heavy responsibility of the crown onto your brow. Throughout your public service you have already shown many years of concern and support for the health of our planet and the flourishing of all humanity. We pray that in the days and years ahead the passion, hope and faith which has shaped you will continue to strengthen you and shine through your reign.

In this time and throughout your reign, may the peace of Christ which passes all human understanding keep your heart and mind in the knowledge and the love of God.

May God strengthen, sustain and guide you always.

Yours in Christ,

The Revd Fiona Bennett
Moderator

The Revd Dr Michael Hopkins
Clerk

Paper M2

Risk Register review

General Secretariat

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Mary Fallah mary.fallah@urc.org.uk Jane Baird jane.baird@urc.org.uk
Action required	Accept the report and take note.
Draft resolution(s)	Assembly Executive receives the report regarding the review of United Reformed Church's Risk Register and takes note of its content.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To highlight major risks that may seriously affect the United Reformed Church's (URC's) financial wellbeing, its structures and consequently, its ability to proclaim the gospel.
Main points	The 2021 Risk Register review has been completed. Major risks and the measures to mitigate those risks have been identified and the most significant ones highlighted below.
Previous relevant documents	Paper L2 Mission Council March 2018 Paper L2 Mission Council May 2019 Paper M2 Mission Council March 2020 Paper K1 Mission Council November 2020.
Consultation has taken place with...	Convenors and Secretaries of Assembly Committees, Advisory and Other Groups, United Reformed Church Trust.

Summary of impact

Financial	None.
External (eg ecumenical)	None.

Risk Register review 2021

A biennial report of the risk process review is provided to Assembly Executive, to highlight major risks that may seriously affect the United Reformed Church's (URC's) financial wellbeing, its structures and consequently, its ability to proclaim the gospel.

United Reformed Church Trust has reviewed its own register and Assembly Executive is now asked to review and note the risk register which pertains to the life of the United Reformed Church. There is inevitably some overlap of risks as the financial affairs of the United Reformed Church impact directly the work of United Reformed Church Trust.

The risks reported here are those that were identified in the review which commenced in August 2021.

Consolidated spreadsheet¹

The Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register Spreadsheet was divided into two worksheets, based on the inherent risk scoring.

The risk scores have been categorised as:

- a) 1-3: Acceptable
- b) 5-8: Undesirable
- c) 9-12: Unacceptable
- d) Over 12: Catastrophic

Although all risks are a topic of discussion, Assembly Executive are asked to be more concerned about the inherent risks rated nine or more worksheet, which is included at the end of the report.

Main risks identified

1. Lack of clear RCL strategy in the light of low EM1 ministerial student numbers

Education and Learning stated that the College is largely dependent upon the Church for the supply of candidates for the ministry and for funding. However alternative courses have been created to appeal to independent students to grow student numbers and a range of other RCL activities are possible.

2. Children and/or young people suffer abuse during or as a result of activities connected with the URC at any level of the church in person or online

Children's and Youth Work Committee plan on ensuring the Good Practice guide is current and disseminated, and through CYDO+ team; and that Synod Safeguarding Officers will promote and implement policies and practices. They also believe ensuring appropriate pastoral support for survivors is available is a good mitigating factor.

3. Insufficient funds due to local church closures or income reduction following the pandemic to meet the financial needs of the Church with consequent reserve reduction impacting our investment return

The Finance Committee continue having robust budget processes with clear justification to Assembly Executive for any deficit budgeting. A Church Life Review Group is expected to slim Church structures and costs, perhaps also increasing central income going forward.

4. Diminishing accommodation and conference business (Westminster College)

The Management Committee indicated the bursar will monitor sales activity daily and will work with staff, to optimise appropriate business. The bursar has strengthened networking and professional connections to that end. In addition, performance is kept under constant review, by monthly formal reporting via Management Letter to the Management Committee and at every meeting.

¹ Consolidated GA AE Risk Register Spreadsheet 2022.xlsx

5. Unable to attract/retain appropriately qualified applicants for vacancies due to pay rates and or/terms and conditions

The Remuneration Committee believes subscribing to charity sector salary surveys will help understand market rates for jobs. It has been agreed to advertise roles with a salary range rather than fixed point salary. There is also access to established temporary work agencies for short-term cover in place.

6. Disruption to IT services through loss or damage to external supplier infrastructure

Church House Management Group Committee have a robust DR facility with systems being backed up to the cloud.

7. Insufficient number of Ministers signing up for the Ministers Conference due to Covid-19 risk

The General Secretariat Committee highlighted that there is clear communication with synods and Ministers about Covid-19 safety measures in place. In addition, clear agreements have been made, with conference centres.

8. Disruption to IT services following compromise by security breach, malware, or hacking

Due to an increase in cybercrime, Church House Management Group Committee have deployed comprehensive anti-virus, anti-malware, malicious traffic detection, anti-ransomware software. They confirm that staff are trained and reminded about good practice dealing with emails. Alerts have also been set up, which are received from Ramsac and auditors about the latest scams.

Change from previous report

The previous report (Mission Council November 2020) identified a major concern regarding the URC's ability to find sufficient people to fill the many voluntary roles on its committees and as representatives to other bodies. In November 2020, it had a residual risk score of 20. In the latest review the residual risk has been reduced to 6 in anticipation of a slimmed down committee structure as an outcome of the Church Life Review.

Covid-19

At the time the risk exercise was taken on, some sense of normality had returned to the United Kingdom; however, there is ongoing review carried out by the Government, based on Covid-19 infection rates. The United Reformed Church, like many other organisations has had to adapt to imminent change and have contingencies in place, should there be another nationwide lockdown. Were this to happen, an impact on risks identified within the United Reformed Church and Trust are inevitable. It's therefore advisable there exists an ongoing review of risks identified by all committees.

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022		Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register				Residual Risk					
Risk Number	Committee/Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
6	Education and Learning Committee	Financial	Lack of clear RCL strategy in the light of low EM1 ministerial student numbers	3	5	15	URC Education and Learning Committee	The College is largely dependent upon the Church for the supply of candidates for the ministry and for funding. However alternative courses have been created to appeal to independent students to grow students numbers and a range of other RCL activities are possible		3	5	15	
1a	Children's and Youth Work Committee	People	Children and/or young people suffer abuse during or as a result of activities connected with the URC at any level of the church in person or online	4	5	20	Secretary	Ensuring Good Practice guide is current and disseminated, and through CYDO+ team and Synod Safeguarding Officers promoting and implementing safeguarding policies and practices. Ensure appropriate pastoral support for survivors	01/10/2021	3	4	12	Ultimate responsibility lies with SAG which we have representation on.
1a	Finance Committee	Financial	Insufficient funds due to local church closures or income reduction following the pandemic to	4	4	16	Treasurer	Continued robust budget processes with clear justification to Assembly Executive for any deficit budgeting. A Church Life	31/12/2023	4	3	12	CFO works closely with the Treasurer to oversee the budget process

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022	Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register				Residual Risk					
Risk Number	Committee/Group	Risk Category	Risk	Inherent Risk		Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
				Probability	Impact							
			meet the financial needs of the Church with consequent reserve reduction impacting our investment return				Review Group is expected to slim Church structures and costs, perhaps also increasing central income going forward					
1	Remuneration Committee	Capability/Service Delivery	Unable to attract/retain appropriately qualified applicants for vacancies due to pay rates and or/terms and conditions	5	3	DGS (A&R)	Subscription to charity sector salary surveys to understand market rates for jobs. Process to follow should there be a need to amend salary rates. Agreement to advertise roles with a salary range rather than fixed point salary. Access to established temp agencies for short-term cover	26/08/2021	4	3	12	
7	Management Committee	Financial	Diminishing accommodation and conference business	4	4	Other named individual	Bursar to monitor sales activity on daily basis and works with staff to optimise appropriate business. Bursar has strengthened networking and professional		3	4	12	Board of Governors in conjunction with Management Committee Principal in conjunction with Senatus

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022		Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register				Residual Risk					
Risk Number	Committee/ Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
7	CHMG	Capability/ Service Delivery	Disruption to IT services through loss or damage to external supplier infrastructure	5	3	15	Other named individual	Robust DR facility with systems being backed up to the cloud	31/03/2020	5	2	10	IT Manager
1b	Children's and Youth Work Committee	Reputation	Children and/or young people suffer abuse during or as a result of activities connected with the URC at any level of the church in person or online	4	4	16	DGS (Disciples-hip)	External - work with Head of Communications. Internal - work with Survivors' Group	01/10/2021	3	3	9	
7	Children's and Youth Work Committee	Financial	URC suffers financial loss through cancellation or poor attendance at children's and youth work events.	4	3	12	Secretary	Promotion of events through networks, monitoring of bookings against penalty clause dates, evaluate need for insurance (NB not able to insure against Covid-19)	01/10/2021	3	3	9	

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022		Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register				Residual Risk					
Risk Number	Committee/ Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
8	CHMG	Capability/ Service Delivery	Disruption to IT services following compromise by security breach, malware or hacking	5	3	15	Other named individual	Comprehensive anti-virus, anti-malware, malicious traffic detection, anti-ransomware software deployed. Staff are trained and reminded about good practice dealing with emails. Alerts received from Ramsac and auditors about latest scams	30/09/2019	3	3	9	IT Manager
11a	CHMG	Data	Theft or release of data by external body or person	5	3	15	Other named individual	Comprehensive anti-virus, anti-malware, malicious traffic detection, anti-ransomware software deployed	30/09/2019	3	3	9	IT Manager
11b	CHMG	Legal/ Regulatory	Theft or release of data by external body or person	5	3	15	Other named individual	Comprehensive anti-virus, anti-malware, malicious traffic detection, anti-ransomware software deployed	01/10/2019	3	3	9	IT Manager
8	Finance Committee	Capability/ Service Delivery	Inability to manage the Church's finances effectively due to absence of key members of staff	4	3	12	Treasurer	CFO procedures yet to be documented. Documentation for others and cross-training already exists	01/06/2022	3	3	9	

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022	Inherent Risk			Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register			Residual Risk				
Risk Number	Committee/ Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
1a	Mission Committee	People	Person/people are injured or taken ill while travelling overseas	3	4	12	Other named individual	Travel insurance in place. Crisis Management team and procedure in place	01/09/2019	3	3	9	Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries
6	General Secretariat	Financial	Insufficient number of Ministers signing up for the Ministers Conference due to Covid-19 risk	4	4	16	DGS (Discipleship)	Clear communication with synods and Ministers about Covid-19 safety measures in place. Clear agreements with conference centre made	01/09/2021	3	3	9	
12	Business Committee	Financial	Overspend against Assembly budget	4	4	16	General Secretary	Tracking spending against budget. If overspend is likely then arrangements are adjusted accordingly		4	2	8	
9	Children's and Youth Work Committee	Reputation	URC Children's and Youth Work team contributes to unacceptable levels of climate change and environmental damage through its working practices	3	4	12	Convenor	CYWC regularly review all practices in line with the URC's Environmental Policy and GA2021 resolution on meetings and take all action possible to reduce impact on environment	31/10/2021	2	4	8	

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022		Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register				Residual Risk					
Risk Number	Committee/ Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
1	CHMG	Capability/ Service Delivery	Church House is unavailable for use. (Examples of possible causes: damage to building or services, transport problems, bad weather, area cordoned off)	4	4	16	DGS (A&R)	Business Continuity Plan provides plan for action in the event that Church House is unavailable	01/09/2019	4	2	8	
9	CHMG	Capability/ Service Delivery	Disruption to IT services due to failure of broadband service	4	3	12	Other named individual	Remote servers allow staff to work from any location with internet access. 'Dongles' retained for internet connection in such situations	30/09/2019	4	2	8	IT Manager
5a	Finance Committee	Financial	Unsustainable pressure on central funds due to increasing funding requirements of the two final salary pension schemes	4	5	20	Treasurer	Agreement reached in principle for synods to provide most of the funding to meet the current deficit over the next five years and anticipated future deficits down to 2030. General Assembly has agreed in principle to close the two final salary schemes	01/01/2023	2	4	8	Deputy Treasurer and others are working with the Treasurer to finalise the agreement with Synods by end 2021 and to produce an acceptable DC scheme

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022		Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register					Residual Risk				
Risk Number	Committee/Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
9	Finance Committee	Financial	Unsustainable pressure on central funds due to penalties imposed as a result of Safeguarding failings	3	5	15	DGS (Discipleship)	provided good DC alternatives are made available Policies, practices and training updated in 2020 and 2021. Finance Committee monitors the level of available reserves to ensure money would be available to meet any penalties	10/07/2021	2	4	8	before the end of 2022
10	Finance Committee	Financial	Changes in law give rise to significant unanticipated additional costs	3	4	12	Treasurer	Church Legislation Advisory Service circulars to be monitored. FC members encouraged to draw attention to anything relevant they learn about from news outlets or other sources	01/01/2022	2	4	8	
3	Pastoral Reference Welfare Committee	People	Minister suffers harm due to inadequate support	4	4	16	Convenor	Careful consideration of minister's circumstances in conjunction with the available resources		4	2	8	
3a	Remuneration Committee	People	Inequity in treatment of staff due to line managers having an inconsistent approach to	5	2	10	DGS (A&R)	Bonus application form is clear about requirements to be eligible for a bonus. HR provides managers with the same information	01/09/2019	4	2	8	

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022		Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register				Residual Risk					
Risk Number	Committee/ Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
3b	Remuneration Committee	Legal/Regulatory	bonus applications Inequity in treatment of staff due to line managers having an inconsistent approach to bonus applications	5	2	10	DGS (A&R)	Bonus application form is clear about requirements to be eligible for a bonus. HR provides managers with the same information	01/09/2019	4	2	8	
11	Management Committee	Financial	Operating losses due to external circumstances (eg, pandemic)	5	4	20	Bursar	College Officers meet regularly to review cash flow against financial demands (inc. building projects) to make recommendations to the Board of Governors to protect the College financial interests. Additional funding may be sought internally (denomination) and/or externally (eg, furlough scheme)		2	4	8	Convener of the Management Committee Principal Vice-Principal Bursar
25	Health and Safety Committee	Legal/Regulatory	Breach or breakdown of Catering regulations and practices (ie,	3	4	12	Other named individual	Staff are adequately trained in Hygiene, Food Safety, HACCPs, Food Allergens and COSHH on regular		2	4	8	College Competent Person Health and Safety Officers Hospitality

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022	Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register				Residual Risk						
Risk Number	Committee/ Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
26	Westminster College	People	Abuse of staff or students	3	4	12	Other named individual	Policies are clearly stated in the College's disciplinary procedure and Handbooks. Zero tolerance policy on any type of verbal and/or physical abuse		2	4	8	Principal Bursar
7a	Business Committee	Capability/ Service Delivery	General Assembly / Assembly Executive cannot take place as planned due to unavailability, inaccessibility of venue or contagious virus	3	4	12	General Secretary	Business Committee convenes to take steps for alternative arrangements to be made and executed for General Assembly to take place in a different format or for urgent business to be dealt with		3	2	6	
			food poisoning or allergic reaction)					basis. Regular visual checks by Hospitality Management during service. Supervisor on each service available. Recruitment of experienced staff in key roles is essential. Food Allergens flagged up on menus for consumers' information					Manager Head Chef Catering Team

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022		Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register				Residual Risk					
Risk Number	Committee/ Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
7b	Business Committee	Financial	General Assembly / Assembly Executive cannot take place as planned due to unavailability, inaccessibility of venue or contagious virus	3	5	15	General Secretary	Ensure that the contract clauses cover such eventualities		3	2	6	
8	Business Committee	Capability/ Service Delivery	Someone tries to disrupt General Assembly	3	3	9	Convenor	Security is arranged with the venue and a clear process for cutting off the AV and streaming systems is in place		3	2	6	
2a	CHMG	People	Staff member or visitor suffers harm due to poor health and safety practice at Church House	3	3	9	Other named individual	Health and safety Policy is reviewed regularly. All staff are required to familiarise themselves with the Health and Safety Policy. Building regularly risk assessed for hazards	01/09/2019	2	3	6	Facilities Manager
2b	CHMG	Legal/ Regulatory	Staff member or visitor suffers harm due to poor health and safety practice at	3	3	9	Other named individual	Health and safety Policy is reviewed regularly. All staff are required to familiarise themselves with the Health and Safety Policy. Building regularly risk	01/09/2019	2	3	6	Facilities Manager

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022		Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register				Residual Risk					
Risk Number	Committee/Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
3	CHMG	People	Church House Staff/visitor threatened or harmed by an unwelcome visitor who gains access to Church House	3	3	9	Other named individual	assessed for hazards Building protected by access control system. Visitors have no access to office areas. External doors set to shortest possible closure time. Panic alarm which calls police. Internal alarm which alerts Facilities Manager to a problem	31/12/2019	2	3	6	Facilities Manager
4a	CHMG	People	Staff member driving on business is involved in a serious road accident	3	3	9	Other named individual	Training on safe driving is provided for Church House staff who drive regularly as part of their work	31/03/2020	2	3	6	HR Officer
4b	CHMG	Legal/Regulatory	Staff member driving on business is involved in a serious road accident	3	3	9	Other named individual	Training on safe driving is provided for Church House staff who drive regularly as part of their work	01/04/2020	2	3	6	HR Officer
6a	CHMG	People	Lone worker suffers harm in an uncertain environment	3	3	9	Other named individual	Training on safe practice is provided for lone workers whose reporting base is Church House	31/03/2020	2	3	6	HR Officer

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022		Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register				Residual Risk					
Risk Number	Committee/Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
6b	CHMG	Legal/Regulatory	Lone worker suffers harm in an uncertain environment	3	3	9	Other named individual	Training on safe practice is provided for lone workers whose reporting base is Church House	01/04/2020	2	3	6	HR Officer
10a	CHMG	Capability/Service Delivery	Loss of core data or loss of confidence in accuracy resulting from corruption of central databases	4	4	16	DGS (A&R)	Documented database management processes. System audit to identify individual making changes. Records of staff authority/access permissions. Database back up implemented	30/06/2020	3	2	6	IT Manager
10b	CHMG	Data	Loss of core data or loss of confidence in accuracy resulting from corruption of central databases	4	4	16	DGS (A&R)	Documented database management processes. System audit to identify individual making changes. Records of staff authority/access permissions. Database back up implemented	30/06/2020	3	2	6	IT Manager
10c	CHMG	Legal/Regulatory	Loss of core data or loss of confidence in accuracy resulting from corruption of	4	4	16	DGS (A&R)	Documented database management processes. System audit to identify individual making changes. Records of staff	30/06/2020	3	2	6	IT Manager

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022	Inherent Risk			Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register			Residual Risk				
Risk Number	Committee/ Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
			central databases					authority/access permissions. Database back up implemented					
12a	CHMG	Data	Theft or disclosure of data by person with authorised access	3	3	9	DGS (A&R)	Policies in place. Staff trained in Data Protection. Contracts of employment imply a duty of trust	29/09/2019	2	3	6	IT Manager
12b	CHMG	Legal/ Regulatory	Theft or disclosure of data by person with authorised access	3	3	9	DGS (A&R)	Policies in place. Staff trained in Data Protection. Contracts of employment imply a duty of trust	30/09/2019	2	3	6	IT Manager
22a	CHMG	Capability/ Service Delivery	Tenants of flat are disruptive	3	3	9	Other named individual	References taken up prior to completion of tenancy agreement. Six months break clause in agreement. Facilities Manager maintains regular contact with tenants	01/10/2019	2	3	6	Facilities Manager
22b	CHMG	People	Tenants of flat are disruptive	3	3	9	Other named individual	References taken up prior to completion of tenancy agreement. Six months break clause in agreement. Facilities Manager maintains regular contact with tenants	02/10/2019	2	3	6	Facilities Manager

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022		Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register				Residual Risk					
Risk Number	Committee/Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
7	Finance Committee	Capability/Service Delivery	Inability to manage the Church's finances effectively due to inadequate or obsolete financial systems	4	3	12	CFO	Payroll system upgraded in 2020 and financial software replaced during 2021	01/04/2021	2	3	6	
9a	HRAG	People	Employee driving 'on business' suffers a serious accident	3	3	9	DGS (A&R)	Driving and vehicle credentials are checked annually. Drivers undertake Safe Driving training	01/12/2019	2	3	6	
9b	HRAG	Legal/Regulatory	Employee driving 'on business' suffers a serious accident	3	3	9	DGS (A&R)	Driving and vehicle credentials are checked annually. Drivers undertake Safe Driving training	02/12/2019	2	3	6	
9c	HRAG	Reputation	Employee driving 'on business' suffers a serious accident	3	3	9	DGS (A&R)	Driving and vehicle credentials are checked annually. Drivers undertake Safe Driving training	03/12/2019	2	3	6	
19a	HRAG	Capability/Service Delivery	Staff are not well managed	3	3	9	DGS (A&R)	Line management training provided for all CH managers	01/09/2019	2	3	6	
19b	HRAG	People	Staff are not well managed	3	3	9	DGS (A&R)	Line management training provided for all CH managers	02/09/2019	2	3	6	
7	Safeguarding Committee	Legal/Regulatory	Section O disciplinary process	5	3	15	DGS (Discipleship)	Disciplinary process review to include safeguarding	30/06/2022	2	3	6	

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022	Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register				Residual Risk						
Risk Number	Committee/ Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
31	Operations Team	Property	Damage to Westminster college premises, property of those staff and residents within it	3	3	9	Other named individual	Electronic access in operations for external, corridor and bedrooms doors. Visitors are identified by uniforms or badge, and by signing in/out each visit. Regular Night patrols (7pm to 7am) by security company all through year. Closing down protocol		2	3	6	Managers Reception Team
52	Board of Governors	People	Crisis - outbreak of a virus (including Covid-19)	5	5	25	Convenor of Board of Governors	The College forms a scenario-specific Crisis Management Team. Welfare and safety measures are put in place		2	3	6	Board of Governors in conjunction with Management Committee
			does not robustly take into account safeguarding implications leaving the Church in breach of our legal safeguarding responsibilities including Charity Commission notifications and DBS referrals					professionals' involvement. New volunteers for panels to be recruited with safeguarding speciality					

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022		Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register				Residual Risk				
Risk Number	Committee/ Group	Risk Category	Risk	Inherent Risk		Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
				Probability	Impact							
1a	Nominations Committee	Capability/ Service Delivery	Assembly Committees and other groups unable to function effectively due to lack of suitably skilled and diverse volunteers	4	4	Convenor	The on-going review of the church's committee structure to reduce the number of places to be filled	01/07/2023	3	2	6	General Secretary and Review Group
1b	Nominations Committee	Capability/ Service Delivery	Assembly Committees and other groups unable to function effectively due to lack of suitably skilled and diverse volunteers	4	3	Convenor	Commitment from all Synods to identify suitable people to serve on committees and groups or as representatives to other bodies	01/09/2022	3	2	6	Synod Officers and Nominations Committee members
1c	Nominations Committee	Reputation	Assembly Committees and other	4	3	Convenor	Production of role descriptions for committee	01/12/2022	3	2	6	Committee convenors and secretaries

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022		Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register				Residual Risk					
Risk Number	Committee/Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
2	Nominations Committee	People	Nomination of unsuitable people causing Breaches of Safeguarding Policy/ Procedure	4	4	16	Convenor	Following 'safer recruitment' procedure, including interviews and references and obtaining DBS/PVG checks as advised by relevant committee	01/09/2022	2	3	6	Committee convenors/sec retaries to advise
3a	Communications Committee	Legal/Regulatory	URC publishes something in contempt of court	3	3	9	Secretary	Staff to be trained	30/06/2019	2	3	6	
3	Safeguarding Committee	People	Safeguarding Committee not able to lead the agenda due to not being able to 'recruit' members with the necessary competencies/experience	2	5	10	Convenor	Early consultation with SSOs, Nominations Committee, etc	30/06/2022	1	5	5	
6	Safeguarding Committee	Legal/Regulatory	Risk of failing to learn from and	3	3	9	Convenor	IICSA reports to be discussed at SSPG and SAG and working group to	31/03/2022	1	5	5	

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022	Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register				Residual Risk						
Risk Number	Committee/Group	Risk Category	Risk	Inherent Risk Probability	Inherent Risk Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
			implement changes from the IICSA report into faith organisations leading to a failure to robustly safeguard people and the Church					look at implementation of any recommendations that could impact on the URC if not actioned					
9a	Business Committee	Reputation	Members of General Assembly uses social media inappropriately	4	3	12	Convenor	Clear policies and procedures are in place and communicated well		2	2	4	
8	Children's and Youth Work Committee	Data	Children's and Youth Work team fails to prevent misuse of personal data	3	4	12	Secretary	GDPR policies in place, all staff trained, regular review of practice with URC Compliance Officer	01/10/2021	2	2	4	
2	Equalities Committee	People	Individual suffers detriment or harm due to unfair treatment	3	3	9	Convenor	Ensure Equalities training materials are available to all		2	2	4	
5a	MIND Advisory Group	Data	Unintentional disclosure of personal data through incorrect use	4	3	12	Convenor	Very careful training regarding data protection issues	01/09/2019	2	2	4	

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at			08/04/2022			Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register			Residual Risk				
Risk Number	Committee/Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
8	Safeguarding Committee	Legal/Regulatory	Inadequate case management recording systems in place with variations across synods and CH Teams leading to poor recording, tracking and management of cases	5	3	15	DGS (Discipleship)	New case management system to be launched and used by all SSO's and others when relevant to safeguarding	31/12/2021	2	2	4	
9	Safeguarding Committee	Capability/Service Delivery	Safeguarding not seen as an important part of all areas of work within Church House teams and committees leading to the risk of failings in our responsibility to ensure safeguarding is the golden thread in all we do	3	3	9	Convenor	Positive and productive working relationship to continue to be built and supported by the new DSL. Internal training to be arranged	31/03/2022	2	2	4	
2	Ministries Committee	People	Ministers under severe stress.	4	5	20	Secretary	Emphasis on Vocations. Liaise with URC Treasurer	01/07/2023	2	2	4	

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022	Inherent Risk			Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register			Residual Risk				
Risk Number	Committee/ Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
			because of serving in many churches, due to a shortage of ministers					about new formula to bring to GA in 2023					
1b	RMHS	Legal/ Regulatory	Residents are exposed to carbon-monoxide poisoning	3	4	12	General Manager - RMHS	Asbestos register is up to date and a programme of annual inspections established and monitored	21/12/2021	2	2	4	
2b	RMHS	Legal/ Regulatory	Poor governance due to inadequate Board representation and skills	4	4	16	General Manager - RMHS	Annual gas safety checks are closely monitored and reported to Board	21/12/2021	1	4	4	
3a	RMHS	Legal/ Regulatory	The Society suffers financial loss and poor value for money because properties are bought above their	3	3	9	General Manager - RMHS	Board has approved the variety of skills required. Skills audit of existing members has been undertaken. This will aid effective recruitment as vacancies arise	01/06/2022	2	2	4	
7b	RMHS	Financial		4	4	16	Other named individual	In-house surveyors now visit every property before sale, for their appraisal. If necessary, independent RICS valuations are carried out. The Property Management	21/12/2021	2	2	4	The Surveyors

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022		Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register				Residual Risk					
Risk Number	Committee/Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
7c	RMHS	Financial	Inappropriate properties are purchased because housing policy and ceiling are not adhered to	4	4	16	Other named individual	The Housing Policy is now in place and Board revised the ceiling upwards to enable ministers obtain better quality houses that are more environmentally efficient	21/12/2021	2	2	4	Housing Services Officer
7f	RMHS	Financial	Delays in letting residential properties leading to financial loss	3	4	12	Other named individual	New and experienced staff members have been recruited to improve efficiency in this service. The new housing management system will improve monitoring	01/06/2022	2	2	4	Housing Services Officer
7g	RMHS	Financial	Loss of potential income because donors no longer see the relevance of the work of the Society	3	3	9	General Manager - RMHS	Articles about the work of the RMHS in Reform and RMHS Board members promote the work of the Society	21/12/2021	2	2	4	
8b	RMHS	People	Service quality diminishes and staff anxiety	5	4	20	General Manager - RMHS	The RMHS team has been restructured to ensure knowledge	21/12/2021	2	2	4	

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022		Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register				Residual Risk					
Risk Number	Committee/ Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
9	RMHS	Legal/ Regulatory	increases when the most Knowledge-able staff leaves The Society is investigated by the Regulator because it failed to follow due process and requirements of a registered landlord	4	3	12	General Manager - RMHS	The Society has established clear processes in Scotland and Wales to respond to their respective regulatory demands. All operations through policies and procedure adhere to good practice	21/12/2021	2	2	4	
37	Operations Team	People	Inadequate staffing levels	3	3	9	Bursar	Staff contracts enable flexibility required for peak seasons. Regular review of rotas against event bookings. Good working relationship with local agency to arrange temporary cover last-minute or for permanent replacements. Prior to accepting event bookings assess potential risks.		2	2	4	
51	Operations Team	People	Staff, student, guest or	5	2	10	Managers	Engagement of external contractor to respond to the		4	1	4	

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022	Inherent Risk			Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register			Residual Risk				
Risk Number	Committee/Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
			another visitor to Westminster College is taken ill					emergency cords within Westminster College. Appropriate numbers of Appointed First Aiders on duty within the college during the college core hours. Protocols in place to support access to the premises 'out of hours' for emergency medical staff. All guests and staff to be informed of how to contact emergency services or out of hours contact through information packs					
1a	Communications Committee	Financial	URC publishes something libellous	3	4	12	Secretary	Staff are trained about libel	01/09/2019	1	4	4	
10	Business Committee	Legal/Regulatory	Breach of copyright law on presentations, use of music, publications and posting	4	3	12	Other named individual	Communications staff will be trained in copyright laws		1	3	3	
19a	CHMG	People	Harm to residents or visitors due to inadequate	3	3	9	General Manager - RMHS	RMHS has established a programme of regular building inspections.	30/09/2019	1	3	3	Visits were suspended through Covid-19 although a condition

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022		Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register				Residual Risk					
Risk Number	Committee/ Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
19b	CHMG	Legal/ Regulatory	Harm to residents or visitors due to inadequate maintenance of central properties	3	3	9	General Manager - RMHS	Residents of central properties have been given more flexibility about the way repairs can be organised/ authorised RMHS has established a programme of regular building inspections. Residents of central properties have been given more flexibility about the way repairs can be organised/ authorised	30/09/2019	1	3	3	survey has happened for all properties
20	CHMG	Financial	Tenants of second floor default	3	3	9	DGS (A&R)	Financial solvency checked prior to completion of tenancy agreement	30/09/2019	1	3	3	
5a	HRAG	Legal/ Regulatory	Employment of an individual who does not have the right to work in the UK	3	3	9	DGS (A&R)	Right to work checked at interview stage	01/09/2019	1	3	3	
5b	HRAG	Financial	Employment of an individual who does not have the right to work in the UK	3	3	9	DGS (A&R)	Right to work checked at interview stage	02/09/2019	1	3	3	

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022		Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register				Residual Risk					
Risk Number	Committee/Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
6	HRAG	People	individual suffers harm due to employment of an individual who has a criminal record which would disqualify them for the post	3	3	9	DGS (A&R)	Where DBS checks are required, these are undertaken at recruitment	01/09/2019	1	3	3	
6a	RMHS	Property	Properties are not repaired and maintained regularly thereby losing value and putting residents' safety at risk	3	3	9	Other named individual	Biennial inspections are carried out on every property and clear processes and controls are in place to repair every identified issue promptly dealt with	21/12/2021	1	3	3	The Surveyors
7a	RMHS	Financial	Properties are sold below market price because adequate due diligence was not done	3	3	9	Other named individual	In-house surveyors now visit every property before sale, for their appraisal. If necessary, independent RICS valuations are carried out. The Property Management Co-ordinator monitors market movement closely	21/12/2021	1	3	3	The Surveyors

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Risk Number	Committee/ Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
7d	RMHS	Financial	Rent arrears accrue because of inaccurate rent debit charges and poor collection activities	3	3	9	Other named individual	A new Housing Management system is being implemented, which will enable more efficiency and accurate accounting	30/04/2022	1	3	3	Housing Services Officer
8a	RMHS	People	Mistakes are made and residents exposed to danger because the RMHS staff are inexperienced and unqualified	4	4	16	General Manager - RMHS	All new staff recruitment adhere to the requirements of the relevant job description and secure qualified people accordingly	21/12/2021	1	3	3	
5a	Business Committee	Capability/ Service Delivery	General Assembly / Assembly Executive not well managed due to insufficient volunteers. The likelihood of this occurring is very low because the volunteers are coming from within. However if it	5	2	10	Convenor	The local Synod Clerk arranges for volunteers to help at General Assembly		1	2	2	

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Risk Number	Committee/ Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
4	Safeguarding Committee	People	Failure to recruit Designated Safeguarding Lead ever occurs, the probability that our service delivery and capability will be adversely affected will be high	2	5	10	Convenor	Review post if second recruitment campaign unsuccessful, consider alternative options	30/11/2021	1	2	2	
1a	RMHS	Legal/ Regulatory	A contractor or resident is exposed to asbestos	3	4	12	General Manager - RMHS	All applicable properties surveyed, asbestos register established and updated	21/12/2021	1	2	2	
5a	RMHS	Legal/ Regulatory	Residents are exposed to safeguarding concerns because Volunteer Overseers role is not regulated	3	3	9	General Manager - RMHS	Role Profile, Volunteer Agreement and online training have been set up, are in place and mandatory	21/12/2021	1	2	2	
1	Ministries Committee	People	Disciplinary process - dealing unjustly with ministers or the church, due to failure	3	3	9	Secretary	Procedure needs to be reviewed regularly to ensure process moves more quickly than in past, reducing cost in terms of people's	12/07/2022	1	1	1	

United Reformed Church Risk Register as at		08/04/2022	Inherent Risk			Consolidated General Assembly/Assembly Executive Risk Register				Residual Risk			
Risk Number	Committee/ Group	Risk Category	Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Person response for mitigat'n	Mitigation	Target Date	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Notes
			of keeping a robust yet timely Section O process					time and financial cost. Careful selection and training is available with regular updates with monitoring from Ministries					
2a	RMHS	Reputation		3	3	9	General Manager - RMHS	Residents have been made aware of locations and reminded in every Newsletter. Contractors notified before undertaking work. Asbestos Management Plan in place to monitor	21/12/2021	1	1	1	

Paper N1

Church Life Review update

Church Life Review Group

Basic information

Contact name and email address	The General Secretary john.bradbury@urc.org.uk
Action required	For information and discussion.
Draft resolution(s)	N/A

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To update Assembly Executive of work in progress and response to the consultation on structures.
Main points	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. An overview of work in hand2. An overview of responses to the structures consultation3. Initial reflections on the structures consultation.
Previous relevant documents	General Assembly N1 2022 Assembly Executive N2 2021.
Consultation has taken place with...	GA Committees, Synod Moderators and Clerks.

Summary of impact

Financial	N/A
External (eg ecumenical)	N/A

Part one

Updates from task groups

1. Theos research

This work is being undertaken by Dr Nathan Lladin, Senior Researcher with Theos. His visits to the selected congregations are on track and interviews have been set up. It is anticipated that data from this piece of work will be available in

February 2023. Theos have also expressed interest and requested sight of the responses to the Jubilee questions which have been circulated (see point 4 below). A related issue of what additional data it may be possible to obtain through the church annual return is being explored.

2. Forensic accounting with MKS

Most of the financial material has now been received from Synods. Melanie Campbell is continuing to work with Synods where there are gaps in information to try to address any outstanding issues. There will be a meeting with MKS in mid October to review progress and it is hoped that a clearer timetable for completion of this work will be available following this.

3. Theology of money

Initial conversations have taken place concerning resources which will enable reflection on a theology of money, and how we are called to use money within the denomination. We are seeking to invite a number of people to contribute to this resource from biblical, financial, and justice perspectives. The aim is that this work shall be available for General Assembly 2023 and provide a theological grounding for a number of pieces of work currently being undertaken as part of the Church Life Review, including the forensic accounting and some of the governance questions.

4. Tending the Vineyard Service for Reformation Sunday, 30 October 2022

The material for this service was made available through Worship Notes, the Daily Devotions Sunday service, and publicised on social media, in Reform and through the Tending the Vineyard postcards. Responses are requested by 28 November and will be collated as soon as practical thereafter.

5. Minimum requirements for being a congregation

A redraft of this work is underway.

Future work

6. Consultation with the Synod Moderators

The Church Life Review Group will be holding a 48 hour consultation with the Synod Moderators from 5 to 7 December. This will be facilitated by the Moderator of General Assembly, the Revd Fiona Bennett. Fiona has spent time with both the CLRG and Moderators, reflecting on aims of the consultation and has designed a process for the consultation accordingly.

7. Communication strategy

Following discussion with Andy Jackson, it is intended to use Facebook as a way of sharing the work of the Church Life Review Group more widely. In addition to posting information, the Facebook Live function would also allow for real-time interaction and events with those who would like to engage further with the Review. Andy has offered support from the Communications Team, wherever possible.

- Detailed planning is still to take place for the consultation event with representatives of Synods, LPAG and others on governance and financial questions. The timing of this event is determined in part by when the results of the forensic accounting exercise are known.

Part two

Consultation process on Paper N2/Resolution 27 from General Assembly 2022 on General Assembly Structures

Introduction

This is an interim report which provides Assembly Executive with feedback from the consultation process on Paper N2/Resolution 27 passed at General Assembly, concerning the proposed committee structure for the denomination. It goes on to offer some initial reflections about the proposed structure in light of the feedback received. The Church Life Review Group (CLRG) next meets after the deadline for the production of reports for Assembly Executive and so will consider the responses from the consultation process fully at its next meeting. It is anticipated that a further document for consultation will come to Committees, Moderators, Clerks and others following the CLRG consultation with Synod Moderators in early December, before a final paper is prepared for General Assembly 2023.

Consultation on Resolution 27

Section one: Review of responses received

The Church Life Review Group (CLRG) is grateful to all committees, their Conveners and Secretaries for their willingness to discuss Paper N2 and offer their responses to it within a very tight timescale. The CLRG is aware of the deficiencies of the consultation process, apologises and seeks to learn from this experience as the work of the CLRG progresses. In particular, it acknowledges that asking committees to comment on a paper already passed at General Assembly may have given the impression that decisions had already been taken and seeks to assure Committees and Assembly Executive that this is not the case and that there will be opportunity for further consultation, as indicated above.

Responses were received from eleven committees or their Conveners. The Synod Moderators held a discussion and decided to respond individually and four responded, two Synod Clerks responded and one Synod sent a response from their Synod Leadership team. Some committees confined their discussion to their own particular remit, other responses considered the paper as a whole.

There was a high level of agreement that change was necessary within the present Committee structure and that a smaller structure is desirable with a variety of views on process, the overarching structure proposed and questions about detail and practicalities.

Some respondents felt that insufficient attention had been given to vision, aspiration and strategy of both the denomination as a whole, and individual committee work, and that strategy should shape structure. It was felt that to adopt a new structure without clarity of vision and strategy was a mistake and lost opportunity. Other respondents asked whether the proposed restructuring is largely about numbers of volunteers and cost and would like to know whether any work been done on the reduction in terms of people and cost on the new committees?

The proposal to create three main areas of work was welcomed by some and felt to be logical with Mission having an outwards focus, Church Life an inward focus and Administration and Resources supporting both to work well. However, there were many concerns raised about the size of the proposed committees, wider remits, the challenges of grappling with the level of detail required and the potential necessity of working with more sub-groups or reassurance that sub-groups would continue. Concerns were also expressed about staff capacity and workload and the range and depth of experience required of committee members. There was feeling expressed that in recent years there had been much more 'joined up' work between committees and staff and this was developing rather than diminishing within the denomination. A desire was expressed that the voices of children and young people in particular be clearly heard in any new structure.

Paper N2 proposes that a number of committees cease to exist and a number of respondents commented on these in particular. Comments concerning Faith and Order indicated a strong desire for a continuing and respected place for Faith and Order, given our commitment to ecumenism. Any new body should be able to bring matters to the denomination for consideration as well as respond to issues from within the denomination and ecumenical partners.

The proposal to disband the Business Committee was felt to see the Business Committee as only an Assembly Arrangements Committee and to lose the element of helping to support Officers, and to shape and manage meetings, and to enable difficult items of business. To take that away from an appointed committee and give it to a less accountable group of individuals was felt to be unwise and unhelpful. This is an area where further thinking has been carried out and a revision to the proposal is in section two of this report.

Much of the debate at General Assembly centred around the proposal to disband the Equalities Committee, with many contributors feeling that if Equalities became everyone's responsibility it would in fact become no-one's responsibility. It was also felt that in a smaller structure with a reduced number of committees and groups, some marginalised voices would be lost all together. There was a broad consensus that some form of identifiable group with the sole remit of resourcing and upholding the principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion within the church was required, increasingly in local congregational settings as well as at a denominational level. The CLRG is grateful to Philip Brooks for his work in progressing this conversation, and further thinking is outlined in section two of this report.

A number of omissions were noted by respondents, notably the lack of mention of the Assessment Board, and the Resource Sharing Task Group as parts of the structure and a lack of mention of discipleship as part of the broader questions concerning vision and strategy.

Reflections from a number of individuals and committees raised very practical questions such as remits and recruitment for committee members, transition from one system to another and the nominations process. The CLRG is grateful for these types of question and acknowledges that further work will require to be done to ensure the transition to any new structure is as smooth and informed as possible.

Paper N2 considered the committee structure of the General Assembly, amongst the respondents there were also calls for the review of structures to move through other councils and structures of the denomination to include subcommittees and advisory groups of General Assembly committees and Synods and Synod Trustees. There was a call for the denomination to have confidence in employed staff to make decisions and get on with work given to them and for staff to have clearly delegated authority.

Section two: Reflections on the initial feedback

It is worth drawing the attention of the Assembly Executive to a key paragraph within our report in November 2021 (paper N2). That stated that:

“We don’t believe that the United Reformed Church as a whole can or should develop some kind of ‘mission strategy’. The forms of worship, witness, evangelism and service that are called for in any one context can only be successfully determined in that context. We believe we are better to concentrate on how the wider church best resources those front-lines of mission, rather than attempt to pre-determine what local churches should be doing.”

We believe this is very significant for our work in total, and that this is in line with the fundamental polity of the United Reformed Church. The vision and mission of the church is discerned primarily within the local church. The primary task of the wider church, including the work of the General Assembly, is to resource local churches and to assist Synods to resource local churches. There are elements of the mission of the Church that rightly belong themselves at General Assembly level (one thinks, for example, of the work of the Joint Public Issues Team which could not effectively be carried out by local churches or Synods alone), but the primary locus of mission is always the local. The General Assembly structure is therefore not designed to deliver a set of pre-determined strategic goals for the denomination, but to service local churches and Synods. Put simply, the structures of the General Assembly are about the purpose of us being the Church, the body of Christ, the people of God. We are unconvinced that the United Reformed Church is seeking an Assembly level mission strategy or programme that is then rolled out to local churches. It would not be helpful, therefore, to determine its committee structures around such an idea.

To attempt to outline the underlying principles of our thinking in bullet points, we might say that the aims of the revision of structures are:

- To enable the United Reformed Church to provide the infrastructure and resources that are necessary to support the work of local churches and Synods.
- To carry out at General Assembly level only those functions of the life of the church that are not more appropriately carried out at local or Synod level.

- To provide integrated decision making and delivery as much as is possible to avoid duplication or lack of coherence.
- To significantly reduce the number of people required to populate the committee structure to make it proportionate to the current size of the United Reformed Church.
- To ensure coherence between the Committee Structure and the Church House Staffing Structure to facilitate joined-up strategic thinking and operations.
- To ensure that committees work at the level of strategy, policy and governance, not engaging with operational decision making.

We hear the nervousness around bringing together a range of areas of church life within a Church Life committee. However, we continue to think that coherent oversight of all the various ministries of the life of the church, along with the education and training provided to enable and equip those ministries, will be most effectively delivered by one committee with oversight of this area of the Church's life. This also allows the committee to function in an intergenerational fashion. The experience of the Mission Committee is helpful in this regard, as they went on a similar journey of bringing together a range of work previously held by different committees. There is a sample agenda and reflection from Philip Brooks as Deputy General Secretary for Mission appended to this report. We hope that the next iteration of our proposals will include model agendas for the Church Life committee to help put flesh on the bones of the idea.

We also remain convinced that an Administration and Resources Committee (though there have been some suggestions as to other names, such as Finance and General Purposes) will help integrate key aspects of our work (and this seems broadly supported by committees in this area). It is, for example, 'odd', that we separate out key decisions about Human Resources matters (which constitute the greatest proportion of the Church House part of the budget) from overall responsibility for that budget. The proposals would enable these oddities to be resolved.

There is a clear question about how new committees might be composed. Currently, the Mission Committee has representatives of each Synod. This is good for enabling good two-way communication. It leads to quite a large committee, which can struggle to be strategic because of its size. It can be difficult to ensure diversity within the committee, because often Synods find it impossible to provide a choice of potential candidates to serve which might enable a more balanced committee. There are, for example, no youth representatives on the committee. There are a number of key questions about the composition of committees that need addressing, and we would welcome feedback from Assembly Executive about:

1. Should the three key committees (Administration and Resources, Mission and Church Life) all be made up in the same way or would them having different means of being appointed matter?
2. Do we have a preference for smaller, potentially more diverse committees, or committees with each Synod having a representative which may be less diverse and less focussed strategically?

An issue has been raised about whether there is capacity within existing staff roles to take on additional line management responsibilities in terms of the proposed 'Team Leaders'. This is a genuine concern and needs addressing. There is, though, a reality

that there is a need to ensure the number of staff at Church House does not expand disproportionately (recognising, however, that as in all areas of Church Life, many responsibilities are falling to staff that previously were held by volunteers, which creates a certain pressure to increase staffing levels at times). We will consider this further.

We would note that the Faith and Order Committee becoming a Reference Group would not change the reality that it is accountable to General Assembly and would bring business to Assembly. It is more about recognition that it is a specialist group, and one where business might normally reach it for its response, rather than it to generate new business.

The responses around the Business Committee are compelling. There was a sense in our deliberations that the 'Assembly Arrangements' function of the Business Committee had been uppermost in our minds (throughout the last few years of Covid-19, Assembly Arrangements has been its focus for obvious reasons). The aspect of its work which is about ensuring the coherence of business, that important strands of work are not lost, and that 'gaps' in the work of the Church are noticed is important. There may be a case for it to continue in a revised form that recognises this is its primarily function. For example, it could perhaps be formed of the Officers of the General Assembly and the Convenors of the Administration and Resources, Mission, and Church Life Committees (representing the committees that will generate most of the work of the Assembly).

We will continue to reflect carefully on the Equalities Committee and the question of how matters of equality, diversity and inclusion remain central to the life of the United Reformed Church. Philip Brooks, on behalf of the General Secretariat, has explored the issue carefully with a number of interested parties, and the committee itself has commented. Various matters for consideration have arisen:

- That the committee has struggled with a wide and increasingly technical brief from within the resources of the committee itself.
- That matters of diversity and inclusion are rapidly becoming a compliance issue that will need handling in appropriate ways in that context.
- That to engage meaningfully with the issues, dedicated staff time will be necessary.
- That where major pieces of work have emerged (becoming an anti-racist church, and on affirmative action), these have been the result of leadership from particular staff members.
- That equalities issues may be better handled by dedicated staff accountable to some kind of watchdog group within the life of the Church.

Appendix – A note on the functioning of the Mission Committee, and an example agenda

Mission Committee

A glance at the most recent agenda of Mission Committee and the headline panel reminds the reader of the wide-ranging nature of the remit. This is a forum which brings together so many different strands in the life of the denomination: Church and Society

and its work with the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT); Global Intercultural Ministries with its emphasis on world church relationships and racial justice; ecumenical and interfaith relations; Commitment for Life; fresh expressions and pioneering; environmental work; oversight of the URC presence at Greenbelt; evangelism and mission; rural networks. All of this is underpinned by the principle that each Synod sends a representative. The Synod involvement is vital as representatives play their part in shaping the URC's mission agenda and then disseminate information back to local churches. This is the work of the whole Church.

We take for granted now that all of the above comes to one committee, but that was not always the case. Mission Committee is an amalgam of what were once several separate committees, each overseeing their individual areas. It took time and a fair degree of angst in combining all of this work into one body. It has resulted in wide ranging agendas, but there is a strength in sharing everything which is being undertaken in mission as a team. So much so, that this approach has now been widened by inviting discipleship colleagues to attend as observers, to identify the areas where there is overlap. The alternative to this holistic approach would be a return to working in silos and potentially duplicating work.

Yes, there are some challenges. It is not always easy for Synods to recruit Mission Committee representatives, even though those who are appointed find the roles fulfilling and energising. It is also somewhat less onerous now we meet online for two of our three 'residential' meetings. The role of the convenor is central in focusing the work and Mission Committee has been well served in this respect.

That it works can be evidenced in the contribution of Mission Committee to the 2022 General Assembly. Resolutions were brought which challenged the denomination in its commitment to the environment; racial justice – including the legacies of slavery apology and becoming an anti-racist church; social justice; global and ecumenical relationships. The efforts of our forebears in working through the difficulties of bringing together several smaller and more disparate committees are bearing fruit.

Philip Brooks – October 2022

Mission Committee, 22 – 23 September 2022 Focolare Centre, Welwyn Garden City

Agenda

Remit of the Mission Committee:

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

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

Thursday 22 September 2022

11.30: **Induction session** for new members and those who wish to attend

2.00pm: **Session 1**

- Opening worship – Sarah Lane Cawte, Convenor of Mission Committee
- Introductions and apologies
- Notification of Synod items
- Presentation 'Open Table' – Alex Clare-Young
- Follow-up on Resolution 7 General Assembly – 'Towards an anti-racist church'.

3.30pm: **Coffee break**

4.00pm: **Session 2 (Global and Intercultural Ministries/Commitment for Life)**

- Staff reports
- Follow-up on GA Resolutions 18, 20 & 21
- Environmental policy and BWC grants
- Revolting Christians 2.0 – planned environmental conference at Westminster College with the Reformed and Lutheran Church of Argentina
- CWM Conference – South Africa.

5.30pm: **Session 3**

- Fresh Expressions/Newbigin Hub launch update
- Greenbelt report
- World Council of Churches Assembly attended by Philip Brooks and Karen Campbell
- 50th Celebrations update

6.30pm: **Dinner**

8.00pm: **Session 4 (Ecumenical and Interfaith)**

- Follow-up to GA Resolution 16 – Reinvigorating the URC's ecumenical vision
- Report from ecumenical officers' conference
- Interfaith update – new URC resource on Holy Land pilgrimage

9.00pm: **Evening prayers** – Aftab Mughal (N W Synod rep)

Friday 23 September 2022

7.45 – 8.45: **Breakfast**

9.00: **Session 5 (Evangelism and Mission)**

- Morning worship – Lindsey Brown (Eastern Synod rep)
- Evangelism and Mission Discussion (contributions from Stuart Nixon on behalf of Mersey Synod and Philip Brooks – Steve Summers and Sam Richards invited observers from the Discipleship Team)
- Mission Enabling Fund launch and awareness

10.30: **Coffee Break**

11.00: **Session 6 (general business)**

- Warm Hubs initiative – NW Synod, Aftab Mughal
- Church and Society/JPIT Report and Update
- Application from Elim Church to join Free Churches Group
- Mission Committee Convenor second term from 2024
- Commitment for Life Convenor second term
- Mission Committee representative to the Ecumenical Reference Group
- Minutes of last meeting and matters arising (MINUTES)
- Items from Synods
- Dates and venues for future meetings in 2023 – for notification
2/3 Feb (online), 8/9 June (online), 28/29 September (Luther King House)

12.45: **Closing prayers** – Sarah Lane Cawte

1.00pm: **Lunch and departures**

Paper P1

Amendment to local Church constitution

Committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Neil Mackenzie ravelston20@hotmail.co.uk Secretary, Law and Polity Advisory Group (LPAG)
Action required	To agree the following draft resolution.
Draft resolution(s)	Assembly Executive resolves that clause 9(1) of the model local church constitution adopted by Mission Council at its meeting in March 2010 be amended as follows: In clause 9(1) the word ‘must’ is replaced by the word ‘may’.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Following the amendment, the local church constitution will fully accord with section 2(4)A(iii) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church.
Main points	Section 2(4)A(iii) of the said Structure provides that the Synod will decide on all matters regarding (among other things) dissolution of local churches. The word ‘must’ in the said clause 9(1) implies that it provides the only way of dissolving a local church whereas the ‘may’ does not contradict the Structure.
Previous relevant documents	None.
Consultation has taken place with...	Consultation has taken place with the General Secretary, Clerk of Assembly and our Legal Adviser. The use of the model constitution for local churches by the local churches in Scotland (adapted to conform with Scots Law) has been discussed in the Law and Polity Advisory Group and the National Synod of Scotland. The members of the Group having knowledge and experience of Scots Law have led the discussion in the said National Synod.

Summary of impact

Financial	There is no financial impact.
External (eg ecumenical)	None.

As part of an internal exercise by the National Synod of Scotland, local church constitutions and the model constitution passed by Mission Council in March 2010 were reviewed. As a result, LPAG were asked to consider whether the model dissolution clause complied with the Structure and the view was formed that this proposed amendment would allow it so to do.

1. A copy of the model local church constitution adopted by Mission Council marked with the proposed amendment can be found at: **www.urch.org.uk/your-church/guidance-support-for-churches-synods/model-constitution-for-local-churches/**
2. A copy of the Structure of the URC – please see Section 2(4)A(iii) on page 7 can be found at: **www.urch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/The-Structure-of-the-URC.pdf**

Paper P2

Revision of Section Q (Complaints Procedure)

Law and Polity Advisory Group

Basic information

Contact name and email address	John Bradbury john.bradbury@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Assembly Executive adopts with immediate effect the revised Complaints Procedure for the United Reformed Church, as set out in paper P2 of Assembly Executive November 2022.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Revisions to the Section Q, Complaints Procedure, in the light of experience.
Main points	To adopt a more stream-lined procedure which takes account of issues raised over the years since the adoption of the original procedure.
Previous relevant documents	Paper P1, Mission Council in March 2018.
Consultation has taken place with...	Assembly Clerks Synod Moderators Synod Clerks Legal Advisor.

Summary of impact

Financial	Nil.
External (eg ecumenical)	None.

The United Reformed Church's Complaints Procedure (Section Q in the Manual) was adopted by Mission Council in March 2018. The Law and Polity Advisory Group has long recognised the need for a review of the procedure in the light of experience but has lacked the capacity to undertake it.

A review has now taken place and has included consultation with key stakeholders. As a result, a revised version of Section Q is now proposed consisting of three clear stages: Triage, Mediation and Formal Investigation.

Alongside the policy is a short user-friendly summary of the process (reproduced herewith as an appendix).

Q: The Complaints Procedure

Part one: Preamble

Why a Complaints Procedure?

The United Reformed Church needs a complaints process because humans are imperfect. The Church is made up of people, and so is a fallible community, and its members on occasion behave in ways which are damaging to themselves and others, and which undermine the credibility of the Church's witness. A complaints process is one of the means by which the Church recognises that all humans are made in the image of God and are entitled to be treated as such and by which it maintains its witness to the new life in which we are called through Christ.

In the absence of a policy directing otherwise, people or councils of the Church may find themselves expected to investigate and decide upon complaints about themselves, which is unfair to all concerned. Further, Church history is littered with cases where a complaint was made, but not properly investigated. No doubt in many cases it was thought better not to 'stir things up', or we could assume that because the complainant had not repeated the complaint, it had been dropped. This seems to go against all best practice in all kinds of ways. This is why a Complaints Procedure is essential.

Through the Complaints Procedure members of the United Reformed Church are accountable to the Church in matters of faith and behaviour. The Church seeks to enable healing and reconciliation to take place through that accountability whenever possible. The Church also responds to the call through Christ for justice, openness, and honesty, and to the need for each of us to accept responsibility for our own acts.

The Complaints Procedure therefore seeks to embody the following principles:

- the initiation of complaints should not be limited to members of the Church
- there should be no difference in principle between ordained and lay people in the way in which complaints against them are dealt with
- help and support should be offered both to the person making the complaint and to the person complained against at every stage during the process
- the process should be fair, and seen to be fair
- the person or body making the decision at each stage should be competent to do so
- there should be a means of correcting any errors which may be made
- there should be a means of ensuring compliance with any decision

- there should be appropriate requirements relating to confidentiality and record keeping
- the possibility of reconciliation should be explored carefully in every case in which that is appropriate.

As the Body of Christ, the Church seeks to embody justice, and to challenge injustice. The Complaints Procedure is one means of searching for truth. Justice involves loving, honouring, and respecting others, and ensuring that processes and procedures are accessible, consistent, fair, and transparent. Justice is also dynamic, implying an active concern for those who are vulnerable, marginalised, or oppressed.

Information about making complaints

The United Reformed Church seeks to ensure that the Church is a safe, responsible, and caring environment for all. To achieve that, rules and procedures have been put in place to enable the Church to deal with any acts of inappropriate or unethical behaviour by any church minister, elder, or office bearer.

These rules differentiate between serious issues of conduct, and other acts of inappropriate behaviour. For serious issues, the Church has internal disciplinary procedures for ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers and also for Office Holders who are not ministers of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community workers or paid employees. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to refer the matter to the police, if the complainant has not already done so.

For less serious matters, the Church has a Complaints Procedure. The aim of this procedure is neither to trivialise serious matters, nor on the other hand to treat minor matters with undue weight. In this procedure, the Church wishes to prioritise the use of mediation and conciliation, as experience suggests that this is the best way to ensure an outcome where everyone involved feels that their concerns have been appropriately heard and dealt with.

In framing its Complaints Procedure, the Church is strongly of the belief that a person with a legitimate grievance must be listened to, and that their complaint should be properly and fairly addressed.

This Complaints Procedure has three stages:

- a) Stage One seeks to ensure that the complaint is handled by the appropriate body, is appropriate under the terms of this Complaints Procedure, and that all appropriate informal ways of trying to resolve the complaint have been tried before the complaint moves onwards.
- b) Stage Two is a mediation stage, seeking a resolution through the offices of a mediator.
- c) Stage Three sets down the process by which complaints are investigated when it has been deemed they are about a matter the body investigating has responsibility for, appropriate under the terms of this Complaints Procedure, and that has not been resolved by the more informal processes made available in parts one and two.

What is and what is not a complaint to be handled using this procedure?

Examples of complaints that might be handled using this procedure:

- An allegation about the minor wrongdoing of a minister of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Worker, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the United Reformed Church or about the way in which they have performed their duties
- An expression of dissatisfaction about the way in which a complainant has been treated by a minister of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Worker, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the United Reformed Church or about their attitude to the complainant
- An allegation that a minister of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Worker, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the United Reformed Church failed to do something in the way that should reasonably be expected
- An allegation that there has been unreasonable delay by a minister of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Worker, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the United Reformed Church in responding to an enquiry or request
- A breach of confidentiality by a minister of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Worker, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the United Reformed Church

Examples of complaints that would not be handled using this procedure:

- An allegation of serious misconduct against a minister of Word and Sacraments, a Church Related Community Worker or an Office Holder. This will immediately be referred to the appropriate procedure. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate also to refer the matter to the police, if the complainant has not already done so. This will be where criminal behaviour is alleged, in particular where there are allegations of a serious sexual nature, where vulnerable groups are involved, or where allegedly there has been financial impropriety. Anyone who becomes aware of offending of this nature is urged to contact the police immediately, as well as also informing the church
- A safeguarding concern, which will be referred into the church's safeguarding guidelines through a Synod Safeguarding Officer or the Designated Safeguarding Lead
- A complaint against an employee, which would be handled by their line manager under the appropriate Human Resources policy of the body which employs them
- A routine request for information, or for an explanation of the way in which something is done
- An allegation that a Council of the Church has acted beyond its powers (that is a Constitutional Review), or made a decision or acted in a way that is unacceptable (that is an Appeal)
- An objection to an individual, or a group of people, implementing decisions that have been correctly reached
- A whistle blowing event, for which the Church is developing a whistle blowing policy
- An issue about selection or training of a minister of Word and Sacraments or a Church Related Community Worker: this goes to the ministries committee
- An issue about Synod decisions on scoping or deployment: this would be an Appeal or a Constitutional Review
- An issue about insurance, sale, or purchase of property: this would be dealt with by the trustees of the building or the relevant officers of the Synod

- An issue about buildings maintenance: this would be dealt with by the trustees of the building or the relevant officers of the Synod
- Insurance claims: these go to the insurance company
- An attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint, or to have a complaint reconsidered where a final outcome has already been reached
- An issue which involves vulnerable people: this will go straight to safeguarding guidelines
- Also, while a person can complain about a matter which is already being dealt with in the civil or criminal courts, such a matter will not normally be dealt with by the Church until the civil or criminal process has been concluded
- Decisions of Trustee bodies, which are not subject to the councils of the Church

Where the complaint should be dealt with under a different process, eg, those mentioned above, the appropriate Synod Clerk or their deputy, or the General Secretary or their deputy will be able to supply you with the appropriate information about who to contact.

Part two: Policy

Making a complaint – Stage One

Informal Assessment (triage)

The purpose of this part of the process is to ascertain three things before a complaint progresses further.

- a) That the complaint is about something that is the responsibility of the body to whom a person is complaining.
- b) That the complaint is an appropriate complaint to be handled under this procedure, rather than any other process indicated above.
- c) That all appropriate forms of informal attempts to resolve the complaint (Stage Two) have been tried before the complaint moves to Stage Three.

Complaints may arise in different ways. Some issues may have been a problem for some time, and there may have been various informal attempts to resolve them before someone reaches for a formal Complaints Procedure. In which case, the appropriate person to whom the complaint is made may determine that, presuming the complaint is something the body they represent is responsible for, and the complaint is about something appropriately handled under this policy, it is appropriate for the complaint to pass quickly to Stage Three.

Sometimes a formal written complaint may be received as the very first indication that a problem has arisen. In which case the person receiving the complaint, having ascertained that it concerns a matter that the body they represent has authority over, and that the complaint is one which falls under this procedure, may wish to ascertain whether using informal processes to resolve the complaint (Stage Two) are appropriate, before progressing the complaint to Stage Three of the procedure.

Step one: Who to contact about a complaint

For complaints relating to a local church, you should contact the Church Secretary. If the complaint is about the Church Secretary, you should contact the minister of Word and Sacraments or Interim Moderator. Normally, complaints about ministers of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Workers should be referred to the Synod, as ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers serve

under the oversight of the Synod not the local church. The Church Secretary, minister or Interim Moderator of the local Church is empowered to consult with any other officer of the local church (the officers are normally the minister, the Church Secretary and the Treasurer), or the Synod Moderator or their deputy or Synod Clerk or their deputy when they deem it appropriate for appropriate help and support in dealing with the complaint.

For complaints relating to a Synod, you should contact the Synod Clerk or their deputy. If the complaint is about the Synod Clerk, you should contact the Synod Moderator or their deputy. The Synod Clerk or their deputy or Synod Moderator or their deputy are empowered to consult with any other officer of the Synod or with the General Secretary or their deputy or the Clerk to Assembly or their deputy when they deem it appropriate.

The Synod Clerk or their deputy may deem it appropriate to appoint a small panel of trained individuals to one of whom they can pass a complaint for being dealt with in the manner described below.

For complaints relating to a Synod Moderator, you should contact the General Secretary or their deputy.

For complaints relating to the work of the General Assembly, you should contact the General Secretary or their deputy. If the complaint is about the General Secretary, you should contact the Clerk of the General Assembly or their deputy. The General Secretary or their deputy and Clerks are empowered to consult with any other officer of the Assembly, or staff member, that they deem appropriate.

The General Secretary or their deputy may deem it appropriate to appoint a small panel of trained individuals to one of whom they can pass a complaint for being dealt with in the manner described below.

Step two: What to include in your complaint

To be able to handle the matter appropriately the Church official named in step one must have some details from you in order for a complaint to be properly investigated. This means that you need to write to them or email them, setting out:

- who you are, plus your contact details
- whether you are a Church member, and any office you hold
- exactly what the nature of your complaint is
- exactly which persons – minister of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Worker, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the Church – or situations you are complaining about
- specific details of the circumstances (including, where possible, names of individuals, places, dates etc), along with any supporting evidence to back up your complaint
- Information about any informal attempts that have been made to resolve the issue that has given rise to the complaint
- the outcome you are hoping for

If you need help or assistance to set out the above in writing, the person named in step one will help you with this, or invite someone else to assist you in setting out your complaint.

Details need to be given as quickly as possible and as fully as possible. The Church cannot accept complaints where there is unreasonable delay in giving details after a

complaint is made, or where details are withheld and an attempt made to add further matters as the complaint progresses.

Upon receipt of your written complaint, the appropriate Church official named in step one will acknowledge this in writing, normally within a calendar week. All information which you supply in connection with your complaint will be treated sensitively. So far as is possible while still enabling your complaint to be properly dealt with, the information which you give will be treated confidentially, but a copy of your complaint will be shown to the respondent once it has been received and settled.

Step three: Ascertaining that the complaint falls within the scope of the Complaints Procedure

On receipt of a written complaint, the appropriate Church official named in step one (or their appointed deputy) must judge whether:

- a) The complaint is about a matter that the body of the Church they represent is responsible.
- b) That the complaint is one which falls under those handled by this policy.

Where the appropriate Church Official named in step one above does not judge that the complaint fulfils these criteria, they will inform the complainant that the matter cannot be addressed under this Complaints Procedure, often at the time they acknowledge they have received the complaint, but at least within five calendar days of sending the initial acknowledgement. Where appropriate, they will offer advice on the appropriate place to lodge the complaint.

Where the appropriate Church Official named in step one above judges that the complaint fulfils these criteria, they will confirm as much to the complainant, and notify the respondent that the process has been initiated.

Step four: Ensuring that appropriate informal processes seeking resolution have been used

The experience of the Church and other organisations is that complaints are resolved most effectively, to everyone's satisfaction and in a timely fashion when informal process leads to resolution. It may be that the parties have already tried various informal ways to resolve the complaint, through conversation, through the informal help or mediation of other people involved in the situation, or through more formal mediation which might have been arranged by the local church or the Synod. Where this is the case, the Church Official named in step one will talk with the complainant, and where appropriate the person(s) being complained about, to ascertain that such informal processes have indeed reached a point that moving to a more formal process needs to be the next step. They will do this as quickly as possible and inform the complainant that the process will move to Stage Three, normally within one calendar week.

Where no informal attempts to resolve the complaint have been made, the Church Official will attempt to take reasonable steps to ensure that informal process is used to seek a resolution or to ascertain that such a course of action is inappropriate. This may include:

- Speaking further with the complainant and the person(s) complained about to better understand the situation, and to explore whether through conversation it is possible to come to an understanding of the issue underlying the complaint and resolve it to everyone's satisfaction

- Inviting, with the complainant's permission and the permission of the person(s) complained about, an appropriate person to offer some mediation to seek a resolution of the issue at hand
- Determining that there are good reasons why seeking an informal resolution is an inappropriate course of action in this case (for example, but not exclusively, where someone involved is a vulnerable person or the complaint concerns bullying, harassment or abusive behaviour).

Normally, it would be expected that attempts to find an informal resolution would happen within eight weeks of the start of Step four. Where, for some reason, there is a necessary delay to the start of that process (for example, by it taking time for an appropriate mediator to be found or by the unavoidable absence of people involved in the situation) it may take longer. In a situation where all concerned participating in an informal process wish it to continue for longer, and the Church Official deems that this is constructive, it shall be allowed to continue until the Church Official determines the process is no longer constructive. It will often be the case that after further conversations initiated by the Church Officer receiving the complaint, or mediation from someone they appointed to offer it, a resolution has been arrived at to everyone's satisfaction. When this happens, the Church Official involved, having ascertained that from all parties, will let the complainant and other parties involved know in writing that the matter is now resolved, and the complaint ended.

If at the end of a process to seek an informal resolution, this has not been possible, and the complainant wishes the matter to be progressed to Stage Three of this process, the relevant Church Official will inform the complainant that Stage Three is to be initiated.

If the Church Official decides that there is no good reason not initially to seek a resolution through informal processes, and the complainant declines to take part in any such informal process, the complaint will be ended, and the relevant Church Official will inform the complainant of this in writing.

Making a complaint – Stage Two

Mediation

This stage of the process is described in Step four above and consists of an attempt by an independent third-party, not otherwise involved in the events leading to the complaint, and with no association with any of the parties, to resolve the issue through the employment of mediation techniques.

If this mediation process fails to result in resolution, the complaint passes into Stage Three.

Making a complaint – Stage Three

Formal investigation

Step one – appointment of Investigator(s)

On receipt of a written complaint, and having determined that the complaint falls within the remit of this policy and that informal attempts at resolving the issue have not been successful, the appropriate Church official named in Stage One (or their deputy) will ask an independent person or persons to consider the complaint and write a report setting

out the facts, evaluating available evidence, reaching whatever conclusions are possible, and recommending an outcome. This shall be done as quickly as possible, but the Church may take whatever time is necessary to appoint such a person or persons. Where it is judged by the Church Official that the issues involved are particularly serious or complex, they are advised to appoint more than one investigator, who will work as a team.

Step two – The conduct of the investigation

The independent investigator(s) will contact the complainant to discuss their complaint and if appropriate, to arrange to meet with them.

The independent investigator(s) may similarly meet with the respondent. They shall make such enquiries as they consider appropriate, including, if appropriate, with people involved in the situation other than the complainant and the respondent. They may hold more than one meeting separately with the complainant and with the respondent. If they consider this to be appropriate and both parties consent, they may also consider possibilities of restorative justice.

On any occasion where the independent investigator(s) meets with the complainant, the complainant is entitled to have present another person, who may speak by invitation; where there is more than one meeting, it is helpful if this is the same person.

On any occasion when the independent investigator(s) meets with the respondent, the respondent shall be entitled to have present another person, who may speak by invitation; again, where there is more than one meeting, it is helpful if this is the same person.

Summary notes will be kept of all meetings throughout the process, which shall be drafted by, and remain the property of, the Church.

If at any stage during the investigation it becomes clear to the investigator(s) that the matter should more properly be considered under the auspices of the Ministerial Disciplinary or Incapacity Procedures, of the disciplinary process for Office Holders, the investigator(s) should recommend that action to the appropriate Church official.

Step three – The Investigators Report

The independent investigator(s) will write a report for the Church Official setting out the facts, evaluating available evidence, reaching whatever conclusions are possible, and recommending an outcome. A draft copy of the report will be shown to the complainant and the respondent to give both parties the opportunity to correct any errors of fact contained within the report (and only errors of fact, they may not change the stated opinions and conclusions of the investigator/s). The investigator(s) will endeavour to submit the final, checked, report to the Church Official for review within twelve calendar weeks of beginning the investigation, and will keep parties informed on progress throughout.

For particularly complex matters, or where people's availability is very limited, the process may take longer still.

The Church Official will review the report to ensure that it adequately sets out the facts of the case, evaluates the available evidence, reaches whatever conclusions are possible and recommends an appropriate outcome. When the Church Official is satisfied

with the report, it will be agreed as final, and sent to both the complainant and the respondent. It is to be treated as confidential, except to the extent required to implement the findings of the report.

Step four: The outcome

Upon completion of their enquiries, the independent investigator(s) will hope to have achieved one of the following possible outcomes (although this list is not exhaustive):

- The complainant is satisfied that the matters raised in the complaint have been resolved
- The complainant and the respondent have reached a mutual agreement that the matter need go no further
- The independent investigator(s) offer(s) advice to the respondent(s) as to their future conduct
- The independent investigator(s) make any other recommendation(s) that seem(s) to them appropriate.
- The complaint has been withdrawn
- The complaint has been dismissed, or
- The complaint having been dealt with, the matter is, despite no agreement having been reached, nonetheless concluded.

Review

There are two points in the process where a review may be called for:

1. The complainant may call for a review at the end of Stage One if they feel that the relevant Church Official named in stage one of part one (or their deputy) has incorrectly determined that the process does not continue to Stage Two.
2. The complainant, or the respondent, may call for review at the end of Stage Three if either believes the investigation was not carried out appropriately, or new information or evidence which had been withheld, either intentionally or not, has come to light and should be considered.

Stage One review

If the complainant feels that Stage One was not carried out appropriately, they may call for the outcome to be reviewed. The complainant must submit their request for review in writing to the relevant Church Official (see next paragraph) within two calendar weeks of receiving notification that the complaint will not be progressed beyond Stage One.

Local Church processes will be reviewed by the Synod Clerk or their deputy of the relevant Synod, to whom the complainant should address the request for review. Synod processes will be reviewed by the General Secretary or their deputy, to whom the request for review should be addressed. For General Assembly processes, where the General Secretary or their deputy was the appropriate Church Official handling the complaint, the process will be reviewed by someone appointed by the Officers of the Assembly and the request for review should be submitted to the Clerk to the Assembly or their deputy.

The reviewer will consider the complainant's written complaint, the decision of the Church Official to whom the complaint was made, and they may choose to speak with the complainant and the relevant Church Official.

Only one review is possible. The review may determine one of two things:

1. The Stage One outcome was appropriate, in which case the complaint is ended, and the complainant will be informed in writing.
2. The Stage One outcome was inappropriate, and the complaint should be progressed to Stage Two or Stage Three. In this case, Stage Three will be handled by the appropriate Church Official of the Council of the Church that reviewed the decision (so for reviews of local church decision, the appropriate Church Official to handle Stage Three would be the Synod Clerk or their deputy, for Synod processes, the appropriate Church Official to handle Stage Three would be the General Secretary or their deputy, or for General Assembly, the Officers of Assembly would determine who handled Stage Three after a decision of the General Secretary or their deputy had been reviewed).

Stage Three review

If the complainant or the respondent are unhappy with the outcome of Stage Three, they may ask for it to be reviewed. They must submit their request for review within two calendar weeks of having received the final copy of the Stage Three report. There are only two grounds on which a review may be requested:

1. That Stage Three was not carried out appropriately.
2. That new information or evidence which had been withheld, either intentionally or not, has come to light that may change the outcome of Stage Three.

Local Church processes will be reviewed by the Synod Clerk of the relevant Synod or their deputy, to whom the request for review should be addressed. Synod processes will be reviewed by the General Secretary or their deputy, to whom the request for review should be addressed. General Assembly processes, where the General Secretary or their deputy was the appropriate Church Official handling the complaint, will be reviewed by someone appointed by the Officers of the Assembly and the request for review should be submitted to the Clerk to the Assembly or their deputy. The complainant or respondent must set out in writing the reasons why they believe Stage Three was carried out inappropriately, or the nature of the new information or evidence that has come to light that may change the outcome, and the reasons why it has not come to light until now.

The reviewer will examine the initial complaint, the report of the investigator(s) and any other paperwork they deem it appropriate to request. They may speak with the complainant and the respondent, and anyone else they deem appropriate. The purpose of the review is not to repeat wholesale the investigation, but to assess whether the investigation was appropriately carried out, and the report and any recommendations are appropriate to the results of the investigation. Only where the reviewer has grounds to believe there was a substantial failing in the investigation, may they themselves undertake any necessary further investigation to arrive at their conclusions. Where new information or evidence has come to light, and the reviewer is satisfied that there is good reason why it was not produced, then the complaint could be referred back to the investigator(s) or it could be reconsidered in full by the reviewer with the benefit of the new evidence or information.

There are two possible outcomes of a Stage Three review:

1. It is determined that the Stage Three investigation was appropriately carried out and the report stands. In this instance the complainant and respondent will be informed in writing, and the complaint will be ended.
2. The reviewer provides an amended report with a different outcome and/or recommendations.
3. The reviewer provides an amended report with the same outcome and recommendations, but which recognises and records that significant information or evidence has come to light albeit that it does not affect the outcome and recommendations.

The Stage Three reviewer will endeavour to reach their conclusions, and inform the complainant and the respondent of them, within six weeks of the review being lodged.

Only one Stage Three review is possible. The outcome of a Stage Three review is final, cannot itself be reviewed, and the matter is ended.

General provisions

1. This policy shall only apply to Local Ecumenical Partnerships in so far as it relates to people or buildings under the oversight of the United Reformed Church.
2. Where there remains dissatisfaction following the conclusion of the complaints process:
 - a) where the complaint concerns a local church, its minister of any of its officers, a Synod pastoral committee (or similar committee) may ask for a version of the report and its conclusions, produced in such a way as to maintain confidentiality, in order to consider whether any lessons may be learnt to aid good practice
 - b) where the complaint concerns a synod or its officers, an appropriate committee or advisory group of the Assembly may ask for a version of the report and its conclusions, produced in such a way as to maintain confidentiality, in order to consider whether any lessons may be learnt to aid good practice
 - c) where the complaint concerns the work of the General Assembly or its post-holders, the Officers of General Assembly may ask for a version of the report and its conclusions, produced in such a way as to maintain confidentiality, in order to consider whether any lessons may be learnt to aid good practice.

Such reviews are only to consider whether lessons may be learned to aid good practice and do not constitute of re-opening of the case.

3. Where the party expressing dissatisfaction is acting vexatiously, maliciously or wilfully refusing to accept the report, the other party to the complaint should not be troubled further.
4. This discretion to follow up the outcomes of a complaint is not subject to review or appeal.

A GUIDE TO THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

to be read in conjunction with the Complaints Procedure (Section Q)

STAGE ONE

Stage One of the complaints procedure is the triage stage where complaints will be taken seriously, but may be redirected to other places.

Stage One seeks to ascertain three things:

- a) That the complaint is about something that is within the remit of the body receiving it.
- b) That the complaint is an appropriate complaint to be handled using the procedure (rather than another procedure).
- c) That all appropriate forms of informal attempts to resolve the complaint (Stage Two) have been tried before the complaint moves to Stage Three.

Guidance as to the appropriate recipient of a complaint is contained in step one.

Guidance as to the information needed for a complaint to be considered is contained in step two.

On receipt of a complaint the appropriate church official must ascertain that the complaint falls within the scope of the complaints procedure (see step three).

The appropriate church official will then ascertain whether informal processes have already been used to resolve the issue, or whether they might be (see step four).

STAGE TWO

Stage Two of the complaints procedure allows for the involvement of mediation as a tried and trusted means of resolving an issue without recourse to the more formal procedure that is Stage Three of the process.

STAGE THREE

Stage Three of the complaints procedure is the formal investigation of a complaint that, a) properly falls within the remit of the complaints procedure (Stage One), and b) has already sought resolution through informal processes (Stage Two).

In step one, an investigator (or investigators) is appointed by the appropriate church official (to be determined in each case) who received the complaint in Stage One.

Step two allows for the investigator(s) to meet with both the complainant and respondent(s) (ie, the person complained about). Both the complainant and respondent may be accompanied for such meetings.

In step three, the investigators draft a report, sending a draft to both complainant and respondent(s) for the correction of factual errors only. The report will then be submitted to the appropriate church official who received the complaint in Stage One. The report will then be sent to the complainant and respondent(s).

Step four summarises the range of conclusions (outcomes) which the investigator's report might reach:

- The complainant is satisfied that the matters raised in the complaint have been resolved
- The complainant and the respondent have reached a mutual agreement that the matter need go no further
- The independent investigator(s) will offer advice to the respondent(s) as to their future conduct.

- The independent investigator(s) make any other recommendation(s) that seem(s) to them appropriate
- The complaint has been withdrawn
- The complaint has been dismissed, or
- The complaint having been dealt with, the matter is, despite no agreement having been reached, nonetheless concluded

Stage Three allows for a review after either Stage One and/or Stage Three.

Paper R1

Section O Appendix Y – Lessons learned reports

MIND Advisory Group

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Andy Braunston andy.braunston@urc.org.uk
Action required	Adoption of resolution.
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Assembly resolves to add the following wording to Section O Appendix Y paragraph 16:</p> <p>Within one month of the conclusion of any case, reports to assist the General Assembly's Advisory Group on Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline, or any group or committee succeeding to its functions in keeping this Process under review, are to be prepared and transmitted to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission for Discipline</p> <p>a) by the Investigation Team and b) by the Panel or Commission which last dealt with the case.</p> <p>In addition the minister, minister's representatives, complainants and the Synod will be invited to offer feedback.</p> <p>The Secretary of the Assembly Commission for Discipline is to pass these reports on to the Secretary of the Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline Advisory Group.</p>

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To expand the number of people who can offer feedback at the end of the case to aid the MIND Advisory Group in its role of continual review of the discipline process.
Main points	Following discussion at General Assembly 2022 the MIND Advisory Group undertook to change the process so that a range of people are invited to feedback at the end of a case to aid with the ongoing review of the process. Currently, the Investigation Team and Assembly Commission are required to report; this resolution invites others to contribute to the post case learning process.
Previous relevant documents	General Assembly 2022 Paper R6.
Consultation has taken place with...	The Synod Moderators.

Summary of impact

Financial	None.
External (eg ecumenical)	

Paper R2

Section O Appendix K – size of Disciplinary Investigation Panel

MIND Advisory Group

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Andy Braunston andy.braunston@urc.org.uk
Action required	Adoption of resolution.
Draft resolution(s)	Assembly resolves to change Section O Appendix K Paragraph 1 as follows: The Disciplinary Investigation Panel comprises up to eighteen 24 members of the United Reformed Church appointed by the General Assembly or, in its name, by Assembly Executive. The Assembly Nominations Committee, in proposing names for the Panel, is to have regard...

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To increase the number of people in the Investigation Panel.
Main points	General Assembly's decision to offer a Panel member to assist a minister subject to the Section O process means four investigators are needed for each case. Six more members will help when multiple cases are run at the same time and will ensure their workload is not onerous.
Previous relevant documents	General Assembly 2022 Paper R5.
Consultation has taken place with...	The Synod Moderators.

Summary of impact

Financial	None.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Paper S1

Annual safeguarding report

Safeguarding Committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Roger Jones, Convenor rjones@urcsouthern.org.uk Sharon Barr, Designated Safeguarding Lead sharon.barr@urc.org.uk
Action required	For information.
Draft resolution(s)	None.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Share the annual safeguarding report data with Assembly Executive.
Main points	The report outlines the main findings from local churches and Synods.
Previous relevant documents	None.
Consultation has taken place with...	Safeguarding Committee members.

Summary of impact

Financial	None.
External (eg ecumenical)	None.

The annual safeguarding return report is usually taken to General Assembly, however due to the delay in being able to access the data from the annual church safeguarding returns by Synod Safeguarding Officers (SSO's) that was not possible this year, therefore it is being reported on at Assembly Executive having been discussed and agreed at the Safeguarding Committee in September 2022.

The qualitative and quantitative data in this report is captured from the annual safeguarding return completed by all local Church Safeguarding Coordinators and then from SSO's analysis of the data in their Synod reports to the URC's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Frustratingly, the report, although invaluable in the information it identifies, does not capture a denomination wide picture of safeguarding, nor have previous years reports when not all Synods have submitted their returns. This was explored at the Safeguarding Committee in September and the plan is for the DSL to seek an understanding of why this is from SSO's at their next meeting in January 2023 and see if any issues can be overcome and secondly to work with Moderators of Synods to raise awareness and encourage greater involvement in the safeguarding information gathering processes.

The information collected in the report has already been used to shape sessions for SSO's on self-harm, as that was identified as a concern many churches deal with. The data will continue to be used to develop safeguarding policy, practice and training across the denomination.



ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING REPORT

THIS ONLY INCLUDES DATA FROM WESSEX, SOUTHERN, THAMES NORTH, WALES, SCOTLAND, YORKSHIRE AND NORTHERN

INTRODUCTION



79% of churches completed safeguarding annual returns
13% of churches have no safeguarding co-ordinator
47% of churches reviewed their policy in the last year

Comments:

There is a need to increase the number of churches who are reviewing their policies annually which is in line with GP5 and the Charity Commission guidance, the new Elders as Trustee training has highlighted this responsibility and the next Safeguarding newsletter can promote this as an expectation on churches. Synod Safeguarding Officers will use the data for churches without safeguarding coordinators to focus on supporting these churches to recruit to the role or help with with alternative options if their own coordinator is not a possibility.

SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

Number of concerns related to children: 27
Number of concerns related to adults: 112
Total number of concerns raised to outside agencies - 86



Comments:

There was disparity from the data that was submitted by Churches to the data that was held by SSO's. The implementation of the case management system should support this with more accurate data. There are also two synods who are reporting significantly more cases than others so the DSL will seek to support this synod to see why this is the case. The main types of cases that are being supported by SSO's include Domestic Abuse and self harm/neglect. The bespoke training packages should seek to cover these areas as a priority and some useful resources for these should be included in the next safeguarding newsletter.

PASTORAL CARE & SUPPORT



Comments:

Due to uptake in training and understanding of safeguarding, churches are more aware to report and offer support in safeguarding cases. The support available is ad-hoc and specific to each case, the URC does not have a support package or provider for abuse cases.

MANAGING RISK

26- known offenders who pose a risk to children or adults at risk attending URC Churches
25- Agreements in place for these individuals



Comments:

The importance of the annual return has been highlighted here as the data has shown that there is one high risk offender in one of the URC churches that does not have an agreement in place and this is being addressed by the SSO. Currently GP5 states that the DSL should have details of all these agreements and they do not have this data, once the case management system is in place this will be easier to achieve.

SAFEGUARDING TRAINING



Total number of people receiving training
-Foundation- 634
-Intermediate - 470

Comments:

Continued support from the Training Development Coordinator is required from synods in the development and review of training packages in line with the URC Training Framework.

SAFER RECRUITMENT

Comments:

It is clear from the annual synod returns that we need to raise awareness of the Safer Selection of Elders documents and this can be through the Safeguarding Newsletter and the review of GP5.



Churches are becoming more aware through training about the importance of safer recruitment.

Blemished Disclosures are addressed via SSO's, there is a lack of consistency with the response times to completing these, so GP6 should seek to set guidance on this.

LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Comments:



LEP collaborative working and networking is sporadic across synods with some having joint meetings and others, not. Nationally the DSL has been working with her ecumenical partners to produce guidance for LEPs on managing safeguarding and also around information sharing. The DSL is a member of the Christian Forum for Safeguarding and minutes from these are shared with SSO's.

There is a sense that there is now an increase in understanding and awareness of safeguarding in the church due to it being on the agendas at General Assembly, the positive promotion of safeguarding by SSO's and high profile events such as IICSA into Faith organisation.

The on-line church return still needs some work as some of the questions were not understood and therefore the data was incorrect.

The Synod returns also need to be rethought as there was not 100% return rate which then throws out all the data for a national report. Is there another way of capturing the data and what is useful for the different audiences for example DSL, Safeguarding Committee and General Assembly.