

Protocol for a Minister to Minister Exchange (Ministerial Exchange)

1. Introduction

The United Reformed Church supports the broader understanding that the Gospel of Christ can be achieved through the exchange of leadership for the purpose of sharing ideas, learning from different perspectives and identifying those things we hold in common though our loyalty to Christ. Recognizing that what we share in Christ is of far greater significance than the unique ways we seek to serve, we also recognize that our uniqueness can be a means of stimulating renewal and growth. For this reason, we commit ourselves to be open to each other so that we might all learn and benefit. As part of the covenant relationship, a minister should first and foremost recognize their role as a learner in the adventure. In the same way the local church(es) recognizes their roles as hosts and bearers of a tradition.

When the opportunity arises for a minister to participate in an exchange abroad there are certain criteria which both parties must agree to. No one should be unduly disadvantaged by the exchange and the desired outcome is that the experience will be beneficial for others apart from the minister. These parties are the Synod (usually through the Synod Moderator and/or Pastoral Committee and who have a formal role in agreeing sabbaticals) and the local church(es). The Synod should take seriously its pastoral responsibility for the local church(es) and decide whether, if the minister has previously shared in an exchange whilst in that pastorate, whether it is appropriate for them to be involved in another. On the whole exchanges are very positive experiences for churches as well as ministers but there is inconvenience that needs to be dealt with – expecting church officers and worshippers to face this too often would seem to be unreasonable. The local church(es), through the elders meeting, should be given a meaningful opportunity to consent or not to an exchange.

2. Process for exchanges:

2.1 Initial enquiries shall be directed to the Secretary for Ministries.

2.2 For ministers wishing to come from overseas:

2.2.1 Upon enquiry the Secretary for Ministries will send the minister an application form/profile;

2.2.2 Upon receipt of the completed form the Secretary for Ministries will confirm that the applicant's own denomination is a member of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, the Council for World Mission or the World Communion of Reformed Churches and the applicant is in good standing with their denomination;

- 2.2.3 Exchanges are for 3 months or less. The MoM sub-committee took the decision supporting ministers from outside of the UK for a period of less than 12 months was prohibitive on grounds of cost. This would include sponsorship, visa and healthcare supplement costs and removal and resettlement costs under the Plan for Partnership (to which someone receiving a stipend would be entitled). An exchange would not encounter the same issues as they would not be under the plan but would remain a minister of their home church during the exchange period;
 - 2.2.4 Any consideration longer than 12 months will be considered under the processes of Certificate of Eligibility (when applicable) and Certificate of Limited Service (when applicable);
 - 2.2.5 Once an application has been received, the Secretary for Ministries would send the profile of the minister to the Synod Moderators to seek potential pastorates/URC ministers to exchange with;
 - 2.2.6 The Synod Moderator should inform the Secretary for Ministries of a potential match;
 - 2.2.7 The Secretary for Ministries will inform the Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries who will draw up an Exchange Agreement (see Appendix 1);
 - 2.2.8 The minister will need to provide an up to date DBS check or equivalent (police check) at their own expense;
 - 2.2.9 Following the exchange an evaluation report should be sent to the Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries on what has been learned, what went well and what didn't. This will be shared with the Ministries Office.
- 2.3 For those URC ministers wishing to go abroad:
 - 2.3.1 Enquiries should be made to the Secretary for Ministries who will advise on the internal protocol;
 - 2.3.2 The Secretary for Ministries will consult with the Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries for the potential of locations and possibilities;
 - 2.3.3 URC ministers will need to be responsible for complying with the visa requirements of participating denominations;
 - 2.3.4 URC ministers will need to be responsible for complying with the safeguarding requirements of participating denominations;
3. The participating churches will need to
 - 3.1 Ensure the manse is in good order;
 - 3.2 Provide pastoral support to the exchange minister and their dependents for the duration of their stay;
 - 3.3 Make available access to resources for medical care, dentistry, banking, legal counsel and insurance if such services become necessary;
 - 3.4 Expenses for travel shall be paid in full upon receipt of a written claim;
 - 3.5 Free use of the manse shall be provided if it is the property of the church/Synod. If it is the property of the local church/Synod an agreement of the trustees shall be drawn up. Routine costs of operating the manse shall be the responsibility of the owner;

- 3.6 Free use of the car shall be provided if it is the property of the church/Synod. If it is the property of the local church/Synod an agreement of the trustees shall be drawn up. Routine costs of operating the car shall be the responsibility of the owner (ie. petrol). Fully comprehensive insurance costs shall be the responsibility of the local church/Synod;
- 3.7 For further helpful considerations kindly read the checklist (see appendix 2)

APPENDIX 1

AN EXCHANGE AGREEMENT

This agreement shall include the preparation for the exchange, the exchange itself and reflection upon and evaluation of the International Exchange between:

and

(Churches)

and

(Exchanging Ministers)

Exchanging Ministers

We, the leaders of the two congregations identified above commit ourselves to the support of a broader understanding of the Gospel of Christ to be achieved through the exchange of leadership for the purpose of sharing ideas, learning from different perspectives and identifying those things we hold in common though our loyalty to Christ. Recognizing that what we share in Christ is of far greater significance than the unique ways we seek to serve, we also recognize that our uniqueness can be a means of stimulating growth. For this reason, we commit ourselves to be open to each other so that we might all learn and benefit.

As part of the covenant relationship, the church ministers first and foremost recognize their role as students in the adventure. In the same way the churches recognize their roles as hosts and bearers of a tradition.

Participating Churches

1. The church agrees to provide a team of supportive lay members. The team shall take responsibility for ensuring good communication between exchanging minister and local congregation, community and wider church; ensure day to day matters of accommodation,

transport and living arrangements are attended to; provide pastoral support and generally ensure that the exchange process provides for both church and minister the best outcomes possible.

2. The church agrees to make available access to resources for medical care, dentistry, banking, legal counsel, insurance -- if such services become necessary, it is assumed the cost for such services will be borne by the individual.
3. The church agrees to provide opportunities for fellowship both in church-wide activities and in opportunities with member families in the church.
4. The church agrees to provide access to other church professionals both from within the Denomination and beyond, where it will help the visiting professional to more fully understand the dynamics of ministry.
5. The church agrees to provide an allowance for travel costs, telephone, internet access and other necessary expenses according to local allowance provisions.
6. The church agrees to provide introductory resources in the form of annual reports, church history, video tape or other photographic description of the church, its life, its work, as well as the community in which the church resides. This information is to be provided sufficiently in advance of the exchange to allow it to be used both by the minister and the other church in the exchange.
7. The church agrees to engage in a comprehensive evaluation of the exchange identifying any unique aspects, strong points, weaknesses -- to be shared with the exchanging ministers and their denominational bodies. Such evaluation to have input from the Support Team in each context.
8. The church agrees to support the exchange with corporate and personal prayer throughout the time of preparation, execution and evaluation.

Exchanging Ministers

1. We agree to provide the free use of personal residence whether it is privately held or the property of the church. If the residence is the property of the church, then a memorandum or agreement of the official Board shall be attached to the basic agreement.
2. It shall be understood that the routine costs of operation of the residence shall be the responsibility of the owner.
3. We will provide reasonable transportation in good working order identifying any idiosyncrasies or instructions to enable its adequate performance. The name of the person 'able to make decisions regarding maintenance and repairs shall be provided to the incoming minister. It is understood that the costs of operation for the vehicle(s) shall be the responsibility of the incoming minister, unless otherwise stipulated.
4. We agree to provide complete information regarding the services of worship, their content and who is responsible for the component parts; what is expected of the exchanging minister regarding preparation of the bulletin, interaction with the music leadership and any other details necessary to the preparation and conduct of worship.
5. We agree to identify the general dynamics of weekly schedule and what responsibilities would be expected to be assumed by the visiting minister. In this regard, a sample of weekly schedules and any special activities likely to occur in the time frame of the exchange should

be included in documentation for advance preparation.

6. We agree to identify persons with unique and special concerns likely to become the responsibility of the visiting minister.
7. We agree to clarify in advance of the exchange what expectations there might be for the administration of Sacraments and steps necessary to achieve permission to administer the Sacraments.
8. We agree to identify whether or not the visiting minister would be expected to (or allowed to) perform marriages.
9. We agree to provide adequate information through the lay-support team regarding the conduct of funerals, if that becomes necessary. (A part of the preparation includes a description of the role the exchanging minister has played vis-a-vis family visitation and interaction with funeral directors.).
10. The terms of the agreement shall be shared with Denominational leadership for its evaluation and support.

The contractual relationships agreed to are to be understood as representing the commitments and concerns of the church ministers and churches involved.

Endorsements:

Representing _____ Church

Lay leader _____ Title _____

Church Professional _____

And

Representing _____ Church

Lay leader _____ Title _____

Church Professional _____

Date _____

Copies for each church and church professional.

Also send a copies to:

Secretary for Ministries and Secretary of Global and Intercultural Ministries
The United Reformed Church
86 Tavistock Place
London WC1H 9RT
The United Kingdom
Email:
ministries@urc.org.uk
global.intercultural@urc.org.uk

APPENDIX 2

Check List

1. For participating churches. Ensure
 - a) information about the pastorate is fully available for the exchange minister either a recent pastorate profile or Local Mission and Ministry Review; an information pack on the area(s) which may include practical suggestions on shops, pharmacy, local attractions and necessary/useful local contacts including resources for medical care, dentistry, banking, legal counsel, insurance are available where necessary; where the care of a pet may be expected, clear instructions including expectations would be most helpful.
 - b) the Elders work with the exchange minister to identify priorities for the duration of the exchange;
 - c) clarification is made in advance as to what the expectations are for celebration of the sacraments including baptism;
 - d) clarification is made in advance as to what the expectations are for conducting weddings and funerals;
 - e) the manse is in good order;
 - f) running costs of car and travel have been fully costed;
 - g) a small team of lay members is available to offer support to the minister and their family;
 - h) Synod is aware of the exchange and make introductions where applicable with the Moderator and Synod staff;
 - i) an evaluation report is sent to the Secretary for Ministries and Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries at the close of the exchange.