
The URC Youth Handbook

“Our mission is to discover God, to help each other grow in the Christian Faith, and through our lives reflect God’s love to all.”

The URC Youth Mission Statement

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Purpose and Scope

This document contains the Structures and Guidelines of the United Reformed Church Youth. It is owned by the United Reformed Church Youth Assembly. Sections A, B and C contain the Structures, and any subsequent changes should be approved by the United Reformed Church Youth Assembly. Section D contains the Guidelines, and may be amended by the United Reformed Church Youth Executive should it be deemed to be necessary. This document should be read, and may only be amended, in line with the URC Youth Framework, which is owned by the URC Children's and Youth Work Committee. It should also be read in line with the URC Youth Assembly Standing Orders, which form an important part of the URC Youth structures.

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Introduction

A brief history

The youth of The United Reformed Church, formerly termed 'FURY' (Fellowship of the United Reformed Youth), has a long and precious history. Its earliest origins lay in the respective youth organisations of the Congregational and Presbyterian churches prior to their union in 1972, and the first FURY Chair was in post in 1973. A great number of URC members were involved in FURY, in so many different ways, whilst aged between 11 and 25, and the importance of community among young people (at local, Synod and Assembly level) in the URC endures to this day.

In 2005 significant changes to the structures of FURY were made, with FURY Council becoming FURY Advisory Board (FAB) and the FURY Chair becoming FURY Moderator. However, following the Children's and Youth Department restructuring from 2012 to 2013, the opportunity to review the FURY structures arose once again. In light of this opportunity, whilst undergoing consultation and much prayerful consideration the following paper set out in as much detail as is possible the operational guidelines for the activities of the United Reformed Church Youth at an Assembly level. It was first adopted by FURY Advisory Board, acting on behalf of the URC Youth Assembly, at its September meeting of 2015.

The Children's and Youth Work Committee, in light of its mandate set by the URC General Assembly, has the responsibility to take important decisions about the framework of the URC Youth structures. It will be up to the URC Youth Assembly, however, to make the decisions about the full operational details of the URC Youth. The URC Youth Assembly, or the URC Youth Executive acting on its behalf, will be free to review and revise these guidelines as it sees fit, so long as it does so within the boundaries set out by the framework which has been adopted on behalf of the young people of the URC.

What's in a name?

The term 'FURY' was used for around forty years, and it is no wonder that in time it has become associated with many positives - community, fellowship, the collective term for the young people of the URC. However, notwithstanding the emotional tie to the term felt by many of those historically involved, the consensus around the country among those working at a Synod or Assembly level was that this term has become increasingly less well known among the young people currently aged 11-25 who are associated with the URC. Sadly, this has meant that the term 'FURY' has ceased to fulfil its purpose and, unfortunately, has even been exclusive to some.

So, the term 'United Reformed Church Youth' instead of 'FURY', is adopted with the full intention that all the positive things that FURY has been, and has described, will continue - but for an even wider group of current young people in the URC.

For the avoidance of doubt:

'United Reformed Church Youth' now supersedes 'FURY' in referring to all URC activities at an Assembly and Synod level which relate to young people aged 11 to 25. 'URC Youth' shall also be used to describe all those young people who have some affiliation or connection with a local URC. It is hoped that local churches will continue to use 'FURY' as the name of their youth group, Sunday youth provision, etc, where applicable. Whilst it may be tempting to shorten 'URC Youth' to 'URCY', there is a danger that in doing so those who are unaware of this acronym being excluded and so this should be avoided, both verbally and in writing.

The Handbook

This document contains three sections. It should be read in conjunction with the URC Youth Assembly Standing Orders and the URC Youth Framework.

Section A

Details the function of the bodies of the URC Youth.

Section B

Contains the role descriptions for the members of the URC Youth Executive.

Section C

Details the policies and procedures necessary for the good governance of the URC Youth.

Section D

Contains a number of helpful appendices which outline and explain various functions of the URC Youth and also how the Youth Assembly fits in the wider structures of the URC.

Section A - Structures Functions of the URC Youth

The United Reformed Church Youth Assembly

Purpose

The United Reformed Church Youth Assembly (Youth Assembly) is a primary gathering within each year for the URC. It is both an Assembly, in that there is discernment of matters of business and worship, and an event, in that there are informative aspects, such as workshops. In order to fulfil its purpose, the Youth Assembly must therefore call together young people drawn from the breadth of the URC, facilitate the election of the URC Youth Executive (Youth Executive; see below), and resolve those items of business brought before it.

Planning

The Children's and Youth Work Office, in conjunction with the Youth Executive, shall be responsible for the planning and preparation of Youth Assembly. The role of the Youth Executive shall be to give general direction, and to be as involved in both the planning and delivery of the Youth Assembly as possible. The role of the Children's and Youth Work Office will be to give administrative support in every aspect, and where necessary to facilitate the Youth Executive's planning.

Practicalities

The 2014 review process clarified that the Youth Assembly is accountable through the Children's and Youth Work Committee within the structure of the URC. The Youth Executive thus sits in an analogous relationship to the Youth Assembly as the Assembly Executive sits in relation to the URC General Assembly.

The Standing Orders of the Youth Assembly are based on those adopted for use by the URC General Assembly, with some modifications which reflect the nature of the Youth Assembly, and because there are some aspects of the more substantial General Assembly Standing Orders which are unnecessary for Youth Assembly. Key differences include the absence of 'En-bloc Voting' and in the way in which 'Consensus Decision Making' is used.

Matters of business may concern: items of discussion, resolutions brought by the Youth Executive, Synod Youth Executives, or by young people in attendance at Youth Assembly including ecumenical guests, the election of Youth Executive members, and the induction of the Youth Executive.

The United Reformed Church Youth Executive

Purpose

The purpose of the United Reformed Church Youth Executive (Youth Executive) is twofold:

- i) to provide youth representation throughout the URC and to represent URC Youth outside of the URC, and
- ii) to carry out the work of the URC Youth Assembly. This will include assisting in the planning of Assembly-level URC Youth events, carrying out the work of the URC Youth Assembly passed by resolution, and ensuring any necessary work to support the URC Youth structures is completed.

The Youth Executive should also seek to inspire young people in pursuing their relationship with God, in playing an active part in the Church, and in joining in the mission of the Church. Where possible, the Youth Executive should also support and encourage the Church at a local and Synod level in doing the same.

Constitution

The Youth Executive shall be made up partly of members elected at the Youth Assembly and partly of representatives appointed by each Synod. Those standing for election for or seeking appointment to the Youth Executive should be aware that they must be aged 16 - 25 (inclusive) for the entirety of their term of office, and must be able and willing to make the Induction Vows in good conscience (see below).

Elected members:

- Youth Assembly Moderator
- Youth Assembly Moderator Elect (two year term, one spent as Moderator Elect, and following induction at the next year's Youth Assembly, one year spent as Moderator)
- Youth Assembly Executive and General Assembly Representative (two year term)
- Equality and Diversity Representative (two year term)

Appointed Members:

- 13 Synod nominees to be representative of their Synods (two year term)
- Pilots Representative (two year term - appointed by the Pilots Executive)

Co-opted Members:

- If necessary, to a maximum of four

Ex officio:

- Youth Executive Chaplain (one year term; invited by the Youth Assembly Moderator)
- Clerk to YA

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- Head of Children's and Youth Work Development
 - A Children's and Youth Development Officer

Practicalities

The Youth Executive is constituted such that it exists as the executive body to the Youth Assembly; the relationship between these two councils should be considered analogous with that of Assembly Executive and General Assembly.

The Youth Executive shall meet four times annually, except in extraordinary circumstances where it may be necessary for additional meeting(s) to be called. The Youth Assembly Moderator will be responsible for the preparation of the Agenda of each meeting, which should be circulated a full three weeks in advance. All Youth Executive Elected Members and Appointed Members shall be responsible for submitting a report a full two weeks in advance of each meeting. The Moderator shall be responsible for determining in advance the content and format of the reports, based on the business of the meeting.

During Youth Executive meetings, the Youth Assembly Moderator or Moderator Elect will normally chair the business sessions. The Members shall have full speaking and full voting rights. Those ex officio and guests shall have full speaking but no voting rights. The work of the Youth Executive will be divided among those who are present according to the gifts and experiences of the group. If completing the specific tasks of the Communications Co-ordinator or Secretary are beyond the capability of the group, the Youth Executive may co-opt additional members to complete this work (see specific role descriptions). If the need for other co-opted Appointed Members should arise, a clear role description identifying the responsibilities anticipated must be written in advance of any individual being approached to consider such a role by the Youth Executive. Co-opted members are invited to join the Youth Executive to meet a specific need over a time-bound period, in order to fulfil a function not already met by the existing group.

Where resolutions are passed at Youth Assembly, this work will often become part of the Youth Executive agenda. The Youth Executive may choose to carry out this work independently, to create task groups (the proposer and seconder may be part of such a task group if they wish; the task group may be a working group of the Youth Executive or a separate group which works independently, and is accountable to the Youth Executive), or to liaise with the General Assembly standing committees regarding moving the work forward (see Standing Order 4.11). The Youth Executive should ensure that the proposer and seconder are kept informed and involved in the work arising from the resolution which they have moved, as appropriate. Where a Task Group is formed, it must have a clear remit, time frame and anticipated demonstrable outcomes, and a member of the Youth Executive will be tasked with maintaining a link between the Task Group and the Youth Executive.

Code of Conduct

Members of the Youth Executive shall be expected to honour the Youth Executive Code of Conduct (see below).

Role descriptions

All Youth Executive members will have a clear role description setting out their responsibilities, to whom they are responsible and the support they can expect to receive. A Youth Executive member who is unable to fulfil their responsibilities in line with their role description, without the ongoing agreement of the Moderator, may be unable to continue in their role.

Young people are an integral part of the United Reformed Church - they are part of the whole. Their voice is highly respected in the councils of the Church and, at times, has been at the forefront of shaping the church's thinking. But young people still remain a marginalised group and their representative numbers at the decision making bodies of the church remain proportionally low. The firm conviction that youth participation and representation is vital for the life of the United Reformed Church has strongly influenced the different roles and responsibilities of those elected to serve on the Youth Executive.

The age restriction for Youth Executive members, who must be 16-25 years inclusive for the entirety of their term of office, exists in order to safeguard those who are younger than 16, due to the amount of travel and nature of the work undertaken by the Youth Executive, and to ensure that those serving on Youth Executive are not outside of the URC Youth age range. It is hoped that those under the age of 16 will be able to serve as they are called at a Synod and local level, and that those over the age of 25 will continue to contribute to the life and witness of the URC as they transition out of the URC Youth age range.

Youth Executive members will normally serve for a maximum of two consecutive terms of office (each of two years in length, or a total of four consecutive years).

Induction Vows

All Youth Executive Members, called to serve the United Reformed Church by God, are required to make the following vows before taking up office:

URC Youth Assembly Moderator and Members of the URC Youth Executive, in light of the Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church and understanding the role to which you have been called, do you confess anew your faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

We do

In dependence on God's grace, do you reaffirm your trust in Jesus Christ as saviour and Lord, and your promise to follow and to seek and to obey his will all the days of your life?
We do

Do you believe that the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people?
We do

Section B - Structures

Role Descriptions

Youth Executive Role Descriptions

Youth Assembly Moderator

Role Description:

The Youth Assembly Moderator is an elected role. The Youth Assembly Moderator leads the Youth Executive and moderates the Youth Assembly. Acting as a point of unity, and also using their wider perspective on the whole Church, the Moderator informs discussions and makes key decisions regarding the life and work of the URC Youth. The Moderator represents the URC Youth both within the URC and beyond, and represents the URC within the URC Youth networks.

The Youth Assembly Moderator will:

- ◆ Strive to follow the URC Youth Mission statement, and provide vision and encouragement in how the URC can reach and disciple young people in following Jesus Christ
- ◆ Moderate the Youth Assembly
 - Prior to the Youth Assembly: in ensuring that appropriate planning is undertaken and executed and in communicating with those who book to attend
 - During the Youth Assembly: in moderating the programme, enable all business matters to be resolved prudently and sympathetically to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and in ensuring that Standing Orders are adhered to (taking decisions where necessary)
- ◆ Lead the Youth Executive
 - In leading the four weekend residential Youth Executive meetings
 - At meetings: in setting the agenda, ensuring logistical provision is made and liaising with the Chaplain, CYDO Trainer and HCYWD
 - In-between meetings: in ensuring effective communication between the Youth Executive is maintained, and that allocated tasks are completed
 - Support Youth Executive members pastorally and in their roles
- ◆ Represent the URC Youth, and play an active part
 - At Assembly Executive
 - At General Assembly
 - On the Children's and Youth Work Committee
 - Wherever the opportunity and/or need arises
- ◆ Communicate effectively with the wider URC
 - Whether online, in print or in person in order to be an advocate of young people within the URC
- ◆ Support the Moderator Elect
 - By enabling them in their role and working closely with them
- ◆ Delegate as necessary
 - Whether to the Moderator Elect, URC Youth Executive or Children's and Youth Work Office, as appropriate

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- ◆ Receive
 - Expenses paid for agreed Assembly work
 - The support of the Children's and Youth Work Office, the Chaplain and the CYDO
 - An induction meeting at Church House
 - ◆ After serving as the Youth Assembly Moderator
 - Handover to the Youth Assembly Moderator Elect
 - Be available, according to their gifts, talents and experience, in the pool of former Youth Assembly Moderators to support the ongoing work of the URC Youth

Youth Assembly Moderator Elect

Role Description:

The Youth Assembly Moderator Elect is an elected role. The Youth Assembly Moderator Elect supports the Moderator in leading the Youth Executive and moderating the Youth Assembly. Acting as a point of unity, and also using their wider perspective on the whole Church, the Moderator Elect informs discussions and makes key decisions regarding the life and work of the URC Youth. The Moderator Elect represents the URC Youth both within the URC and beyond, and represents the URC within the URC Youth networks.

The Moderator Elect will:

- ◆ Work closely with the Moderator, acting as their deputy when it is appropriate for them to do so,
- ◆ Use their time as Moderator Elect to learn as much as possible about the workings of the URC and the role of Moderator
- ◆ Undertake independent pieces of work according to their gifts and talents and the needs that arise
- ◆ Represent the URC Youth, and play an active part
 - At Assembly Executive
 - At General Assembly
 - On the Children's and Youth Work Committee
 - Wherever the opportunity and/or need arises
- ◆ Be a member of the URC Youth Executive
 - In attending the four weekend residential Youth Executive meetings
 - In representing and being a voice for young people in the URC as part of the Youth Executive
 - In being involved with the planning and facilitating of the Youth Assembly
- ◆ Receive
 - Expenses paid for agreed Assembly work
 - The support of the Moderator, Children's and Youth Work Office, the Chaplain and the CYDO
 - An induction meeting at Church House

Youth Assembly Assembly Executive and General Assembly Representative

Role Description:

The Youth Assembly Assembly Executive and General Assembly Representative is an elected role. The Youth Assembly Representative will be a member of the Youth Executive, who plays a vital role in representing the URC Youth at Assembly Executive and General Assembly and communicates matters of importance back to the Youth Executive and Youth Assembly. The Youth Assembly Representative will liaise closely with the Moderator and Moderator Elect in dispensing these duties.

The Youth Assembly Representative will:

- ◆ Strive to follow the URC Youth Mission statement
- ◆ Represent the URC Youth, and play an active part
 - At Assembly Executive
 - At General Assembly
- ◆ Communicate effectively between Assembly Executive and General Assembly, and the Youth Executive and Youth Assembly
- ◆ Be a member of the URC Youth Executive
 - In attending the four weekend residential Youth Executive meetings
 - In representing and being a voice for young people in the URC as part of the Youth Executive
 - In being involved with the planning and facilitating of the Youth Assembly
- ◆ Receive
 - Expenses paid for agreed Assembly work
 - The support of the Moderators, Children's and Youth Work Office, the Chaplain and the CYDO

Equality and Diversity Representative

Role Description

The Equality and Diversity Representative is an elected role. The Equality and Diversity Representative will be a member of the Youth Executive, who plays a vital role in Equalities Committee and communicates matters of importance back to the Youth Executive and Youth Assembly. The Equality and Diversity Representative will liaise closely with the Moderator and Moderator Elect in dispensing these duties.

The Equality and Diversity Representative will:

- ◆ Shall strive to ensure equal opportunities across all of the URCY work and activities so that these are accessible to the entire membership.
- ◆ Shall act as point of contact for queries concerning equality and diversity issues within URCY
- ◆ Giving direct support when needed to Synod Representatives when required
- ◆ Keep up to date with current and relevant legislation and policies within the church and state that affect URCY
- ◆ Hold a position on the URC Equalities Committee

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- ◆ Ensure URCY considers the needs, voices and opinions of special interest groups
 - Including but not limited to LGBTQ+, faith, disability, young parents, and multicultural groups
 - ◆ To update and review the current URCY Inclusion Policy, advocating for change where necessary
 - ◆ Represent the URC Youth, and play an active part
 - On the Equalities Committee
 - Wherever the opportunity and/or need arises
 - ◆ Be a member of the URC Youth Executive
 - In attending the four weekend-residential Youth Executive meetings
 - In representing and being a voice for young people in the URC as part of the Youth Executive
 - In being involved with the planning and facilitating of the Youth Assembly
 - ◆ Receive
 - Expenses paid for agreed Assembly work
 - The support of the Moderator, Children's and Youth Work Office, the Chaplain and the CYDO
 - An induction meeting at Church House

Synod Youth Representative

Role Description

The Synod Youth Representative (SYR) is a synod-appointed role. Thus, the synod has discretion as to how the SYR is selected, supported and called to account. However it is anticipated that the appointment will be for two years, and that the SYR will be able to rely on a certain level of support from their Synod.

See below further guidance for Synods seeking to appoint a Synod Youth Representative.

The Synod Youth Representative will:

- ◆ **Be a member of the URC Youth Executive**
 - Represent and be a voice for young people in the URC as part of the Youth Executive
 - Be involved with the planning and facilitating of the Youth Assembly

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- ◆ **Represent young people and the Synod as a member of the URC Youth Executive**
 - Attend the URC Youth Executive meetings
 - Report back and initiate the work of the URC Youth Executive across their Synod
 - Attend the annual URC Youth Assembly

 - ◆ **Represent and be the voice of young people within the Synod**
 - At annual gatherings of the Synod
 - On the Synod Children's and Youth Work Committee (or similar body with responsibility for the overall strategy for children's and youth work across the Synod)
 - As part of the Synod Youth Executive (or similar body of young people working on behalf of their peers within the Synod)

What can a Synod Youth Representative expect from their Synod?

- Support from the Synod Children's and Youth Work Development Officer (or equivalent)
- Support from the Synod Children's and Youth Work committee/forum with allocated agenda time at meetings, where appropriate
- Renumeration of personal expenses incurred whilst carrying out responsibilities of the post as agreed with Synod Children's and Youth Work committee
- Access to CYDO time and Synod owned resources for youth gatherings and events
- To have access to mail shots, for the promotion of Youth related material

What can a Synod expect from its Synod Youth Representative?

- Arrange reports or presentations to Synod meetings
- Arrange meetings with Cluster/Area meetings or other committees as required
- Participation in Children's and Youth Work committee or similar group, including a regular report
- Arrange visits to interested churches as required

What can the Assembly Youth Executive expect from Synod Youth Representative?

- Regular updates of information and news from their Synod
- Attendance or representation at the URC Youth Executive meetings
- Full participation as a member of the URC Youth Executive
- A conscientious approach to specific roles undertaken as a member of the URC Youth Executive
- Attendance at the URC Youth Assembly

What can Synod Youth Representative expect from the Assembly Youth Executive?

- Induction meeting in Church House, where possible
- Regular contact and support from the Moderators and the Children's and Youth Work office
- Relevant training and support as part of the regular gatherings
- Expenses paid for agreed Assembly work

Champion for Younger Youth

Role Description

The champion for younger youth is appointed by youth assembly. This representative champions the voices of the 11-17s age group within the URC. The champion of younger youth is responsible for representing the views and opinions of 11-17s within the URC, both directly and indirectly, at Youth Executive meetings in a way that is reflective of the views of these young people.

The Champion for Younger URC Youth will:

- ◆ Strive to follow the URC Youth Mission Statements
- ◆ Represent 11-17s at various events where appropriate
- ◆ Represent younger youth:
 - On the Youth Executive
 - At Youth Assembly
 - Wherever the opportunity and/or need arises
- ◆ Be a member of the URC Youth Executive
 - In attending two youth executive meetings physically or remotely
 - In representing and being a voice for young people in the URC as part of the Youth Executive
 - In being involved with the planning and facilitating of the Youth Assembly
- ◆ Communicate effectively between the Youth Executive, Youth Assembly and any other applicable groups
- ◆ Receive:
 - Expenses paid for agreed Assembly work
 - The support of the Moderators, Children's and Youth Work Office, the Chaplain and the CYDO

The representative can be any URC Youth age to apply for the role, but if the individual applying is between the ages of 14-16 they must have support from their synod- e.g. getting to and from meetings. This will enable more people to apply for the role and means those who wish to apply won't be disadvantaged due to their age.

Communications Coordinator

The Communications Coordinator ensures that there is effective and appropriate communication between the Youth Assembly and Youth Executive, the URC as a whole and the wider world. The Communications Coordinator may be co-opted, if the Moderator and HCYWD agree that there is such a need.

The Communications Coordinator will:

- ◆ Strive to follow the URC Youth Mission statement
- ◆ Work closely with the Moderators to maintain a communications strategy
- ◆ Ensure that a communications plan is maintained and delivered effectively

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- ◆ Monitor, moderate and curate the URC Youth website and social media streams
 - ◆ Ensure that Communications Guide (below) is followed and that the URC Social Media Guidelines are adhered to
 - ◆ Work with the URC Communications Department to foster good relations and ensure coherence between the URC Youth communications and URC communications
 - ◆ Be a member of the URC Youth Executive
 - In attending the four weekend residential Youth Executive meetings
 - In representing and being a voice for young people in the URC as part of the Youth Executive
 - In being involved with the planning and facilitating of the Youth Assembly
 - ◆ Receive
 - Expenses paid for agreed Assembly work
 - The support of the Moderators, Children's and Youth Work Office, the Chaplain and the CYDO

Secretary

Role Description

The Secretary ensures the effective administration of the Youth Executive. The Secretary may be co-opted, if the Moderator and HCYWD agree that there is such a need.

The Secretary will:

- ◆ Strive to follow the URC Youth Mission statement
- ◆ Ensure the effective administration of the Youth Executive
 - In issuing calling notices for Youth Executive meetings
 - In ensuring that the agenda is set, collating reports and circulating them prior to Youth Executive meetings
 - In taking accurate and effective minutes and circulating them in good time
- ◆ Be a member of the URC Youth Executive
 - In attending the four weekend residential Youth Executive meetings
 - In representing and being a voice for young people in the URC as part of the Youth Executive
 - In being involved with the planning and facilitating of the Youth Assembly
- ◆ Receive
 - Expenses paid for agreed Assembly work
 - The support of the Moderators, Children's and Youth Work Office, the Chaplain and the CYDO

Chaplain (ex-officio)

Role Description:

The Youth Assembly Chaplain will be appointed by the Youth Executive, at the invitation of the Moderator, for a year long term of office.

The Youth Assembly Chaplain will:

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- ◆ Strive to follow the URC Youth Mission statement
 - ◆ Provide pastoral care and support to the Youth Executive, alongside the HCYWD and CYDO
 - ◆ Be an ex officio member of the URC Youth Executive
 - In attending the four weekend residential Youth Executive meetings in order to lead the group in worship
 - In representing and being a voice for young people in the URC as part of the Youth Executive
 - In being involved with the planning and facilitating of the Youth Assembly, particularly the worship
 - ◆ Receive
 - Expenses paid for agreed Assembly work
 - The support of the Moderators, Children's and Youth Work Office, and the CYDO

Youth Assembly Clerk (ex-officio)

Role Description:

The Youth Assembly Clerk is appointed by the Youth Executive. The Youth Assembly Clerk will be available to offer guidance on matters of procedure and polity to the Youth Assembly, throughout the year but especially at the Youth Assembly. The Clerk will be invited to attend Youth Executive meeting immediately preceding the Youth Assembly, and provide guidance to the Youth Assembly where appropriate (in checking the wording of motions to ensure that they are in order, and during the course of business).

The Clerk will have at least two years experience of Youth Assembly prior to coming into post, but may be aged up to 28 years old inclusive in the course of their two year term. If the Clerk is within the URC Youth age range, they shall be entitled to vote at Youth Assembly; if they are 26 or older at the time of the Assembly they shall not.

The Youth Assembly Clerk will:

- ◆ Strive to follow the URC Youth Mission statement
- ◆ Guide the URC Youth Assembly in matters of procedure, polity and good order
- ◆ Hold a strong knowledge of the URC Youth Structures and Guidelines, and a good awareness of the wider URC's structures, in order that they are able to guide the URC Youth Assembly and advise on any proposed changes to the Structures, Guidelines and Standing Orders
- ◆ Be invited to attend the Youth Executive meeting immediately preceding the Youth Assembly
- ◆ Receive
 - Expenses paid for agreed Assembly work
 - The support of the Moderators, Children's and Youth Work Office, the Chaplain and the CYDO

CYDO (ex-officio)

Role Description:

A CYDO is appointed by the HCYWD on a yearly basis in order to support the Youth

Executive at their meetings and throughout the year, including in the delivery of appropriate training.

The CYDO will:

- ◆ Strive to follow the URC Youth Mission statement
- ◆ Provide pastoral care and support to the Youth Executive, alongside the Chaplain and HCYWD
- ◆ Offer professional expertise and deliver training for the Youth Executive, as appropriate
- ◆ To deputise for the HCYWD if necessary
- ◆ Provide support and guidance to the Moderators and other Youth Executive members
- ◆ Be an ex officio member of the URC Youth Executive
 - In attending the four weekend residential Youth Executive meetings
 - In representing and being a voice for young people in the URC as part of the Youth Executive
 - In being involved with the planning and facilitating of the Youth Assembly
- ◆ Receive
 - The support of the Moderators, Children's and Youth Work Office, and the Chaplain

Head of Children's and Youth Work Development (ex-officio)

Role Description:

The Head of Children's and Youth Work Development (HCYWD) is a member of the Youth Executive by virtue of their employment, and plays an important part in supporting and enabling the work of the Youth Executive.

The HCYWD will:

- ◆ Strive to follow the URC Youth Mission statement
- ◆ Provide pastoral care and support to the Youth Executive, alongside the Chaplain and CYDO
- ◆ Offer professional expertise for the Youth Executive, as appropriate
- ◆ Guide the Youth Executive through the wider structures of the URC, and enable access to them
- ◆ Provide support and guidance to the Moderators and other Youth Executive members
- ◆ Be an ex officio member of the URC Youth Executive
 - In attending the four weekend residential Youth Executive meetings
 - In representing and being a voice for young people in the URC as part of the Youth Executive
 - In being involved with the planning and facilitating of the Youth Assembly, and in being responsible for ensuring its delivery
- ◆ Receive
 - The support of the Moderators, Children's and Youth Work Office, the Chaplain and the CYDO

Section C - Structures Policies

Youth Executive Code of Conduct

This guidance sets down the expectations of members of the URC Youth Executive.

The conduct of the Youth Executive members is built on the fundamental ethos of the URC Youth, as set out in the Mission Statement:

“Our mission is to discover God, to help each other grow in the Christian Faith, and through our lives reflect God’s love to all.”

Youth Executive members are called to be advocates on behalf of, role models to, and ambassadors for, URC Youth.

When accepting a position on the Youth Executive, the member takes on the responsibility of upholding the URC Youth Mission Statement and accepts that their actions are accountable to the Youth Assembly and before God.

Guidance:

- ◆ Keep God in mind in everything you do and strive for a Christ like attitude at all times.
- ◆ Respect all staff and fellow participants, showing an understanding of others’ feelings, beliefs and opinions.
- ◆ Challenge the issue, not the person.
- ◆ Encourage participation at all times.
- ◆ Be inclusive at all times and consider the welfare of others.
- ◆ Communicate well: listen to others and think before you speak.
- ◆ Take responsibility for our own actions.

Things to remember:

- ◆ Do treat everyone equally and with respect
 - ◆ Do model the behaviour you wish others to follow
 - ◆ Do respect others’ right to personal privacy
 - ◆ Do provide and maintain an atmosphere/environment conducive for the sharing of concerns
 - ◆ Do encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes they do not like
 - ◆ Do remember that all Youth Executive Members are in a position of trust and should avoid situations that compromise their integrity
 - ◆ Do remember that someone else might misinterpret your words or actions
-
- ◆ Do not have any inappropriate physical or verbal contact with others
 - ◆ Do not jump to conclusions about others without checking facts
 - ◆ Do not make suggestive gestures or remarks, even in fun

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- ◆ Do not let suspicion, disclosure or allegation of abuse go unrecorded or unreported
 - ◆ Do not rely on just your good name to protect you
 - ◆ Do not believe “it could never happen to me”

In the event that a member of the Youth Executive struggles to follow this Code of Conduct, care and support will be offered by the Moderators, Head of Children’s and Youth Work Development and/or the Children’s and Youth Work Development Officer. If the member is a Synod Representative, appropriate consultation with the relevant Synod will be necessary.

If care and support does not bring positive resolution, it may be necessary for the member to stand down from their role. If there is disagreement between the member and those providing the support, consultation with the officers of the Children’s and Youth Work Committee should be made.

If the member ultimately feels that they have been treated unfairly in the application of this Code of Conduct, their final right of appeal shall rest with the Deputy General Secretary - Discipleship of the United Reformed Church.

URC Youth Policy of Inclusion

Statement of Intent

The United Reformed Church Youth believe that all people are created in God's image and are loved by God. In his ministry Jesus showed God's love by his openness to all people.

The URC Youth strives to be an inclusive group, putting into place all that is within our means to achieve this as fully as possible. The URC Youth recognise that seeking to become more inclusive is an ongoing journey, which will continue into the future, and that it is one which we will need to be constantly mindful of.

The URC Youth therefore intends in spirit and in deed to promote equality of opportunity and diversity in all spheres of its activity. It acknowledges that people are called to be diverse and lively, inclusive and flexible through the sharing of the gospel.

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

The URC Youth affirm and join in the 2005 declaration (URC General Assembly 2005 Resolution 52):

The United Reformed Church declares itself to be a Multicultural Church welcoming all cultures and ethnicities in worship witness and service, and celebrating the diverse gifts of the whole people of God for the mission and ministry God calls us.

The URC Youth affirm and join in the Multicultural Church, Intercultural Habit Charter (URC General Assembly 2012 Resolution 27):

In modelling a habit of generous lives we

1. will be open, trusting and joyful to the leading of God's Spirit¹
2. commit ourselves to deepening our discerning and re-reading of our biblical and theological bases for our intercultural life together²
3. will affirm new and different experiences, recognising a variety of expressions of the one faith³

¹ Vision 2020 Statement 1 *Spirituality and Prayer*. Acts 2:5-11; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18.

² Vision 2020 Statement 1 *Spirituality and Prayer*; Statement 2 *Identity*; Statement 6 *Evangelism*. Isaiah 56:6-8; Isaiah 65:17-25; Revelation 21:1-7; Ruth; Matthew 1:1-17; Acts 10.

³ Vision 2020 Statement 5 *Hospitality and Diversity*; Statement 3 *Christian Ecumenical Partnerships*. Genesis 1:26; Psalm 133:1; Matthew 28:19; John 17:11,23; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Galatians 3:27-29.

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4. will journey beyond our cultural comfort zones and boundaries⁴
 5. will seek to become an enlarged, inclusive, welcoming, and justice-seeking community⁵
 6. will engage in transformation of heart, mind, structure and policy, seeking habits that redress power imbalances, challenge systemic injustice, generously cultivate diverse leadership, and seek full participation of all⁶
 7. will work intentionally towards mutuality in giving and sharing for all of us are in need and all must be mutually inconvenienced for the sake of the other and the gospel.⁷
 8. commit ourselves to the constant habit of self-examination, life-long learning, and reflection through on-going education, training, monitoring and evaluation of our intercultural engagement.⁸

⁴ Vision 2020 Statement 8 *Global Partnerships* and Statement 4 *Community Partnerships*. Jonah; Matthew 15:21-28; 28:19-20; Mark 7:24-30; Genesis 28:10-19; Acts 8:26-40.

⁵ Vision 2020 Statement 2 *Identity*, Statement 9 *Justice and Peace* and Statement 10 *Integrity of Creation*. Psalm 148; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 4:3-5; Revelation 7:9; Micah 6:8.

⁶ Vision 2020 Statement 7 *Church Growth* and Statement 9 *Justice and Peace*. Luke 19:1-10; John 10:10; Acts 10:34; Romans 12:1-2; Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 8:27-33; Luke 1:46-55; Luke 4:16-30; Romans 16:1-16.

⁷ Vision 2020 Statement 1 *Spirituality and Prayer*, Statement 5 *Hospitality and Diversity* and Statement 9 *Justice and Peace*. Luke 7:18-23; Luke 10:25-37; John 4:1-39.

⁸ Vision 2020 Statement 1 *Spirituality and Prayer*; Statement 2 *Identity*; Statement 7 *Church Growth* and Statement 9 *Justice and Peace*. I Corinthians 9:1-33; 2 Corinthians 5:16-20; Philippians 3:12-16.

Section D - Guidelines

Synod Youth Representatives - Further Guidance

Synod Appointment

Recognising the complexity in having different Synod structures, there is considerable flexibility in the appointment of each Synod Youth Representative, but in order to allow coherence the following pattern will need to be followed by all Synods. The Moderators and Children's and Youth Work Office will be able to provide assistance and guidance to Synods wherever it is requested.

Synods are free to appoint an individual to the role however they choose to do so. This might be via: their Synod Nominations Committee, Synod Youth Executive or Synod Children's and Youth Work Committee (or equivalent bodies); an election where those of URC Youth age have an opportunity to vote; or at the invitation of the Synod CYDO, Synod Clerk or Synod Moderator; or by other appropriate means.

It will be the Synod's responsibility to ensure that an individual is appointed in due time, ideally to serve for a two year term of office, and normally for no more than two terms of office, or four years. They should ensure: any individual appointed has:

- ◆ a clear understanding of what is being asked of them
- ◆ has seen the role description contained in this Handbook
- ◆ an explanation of what will be expected of them in their Synod
- ◆ knows what support will be available to them from within the Synod.

It will be up to each Synod to decide if they wish to appoint an individual who no longer lives in their geographical location on a full time basis (e.g. a university student).

Synods should notify the Children's and Youth Work Office of whom their appointed Synod Youth Representative will be for the following year (Youth Assembly to Youth Assembly) by the 30th November (approximately two months prior to Youth Assembly). If the Synod is unable to appoint an individual, the Children's and Youth Work Office will work with that Synod in order to try and find an appropriate individual. If this is not possible by the 31st December (approximately one month prior to Youth Assembly), an election, to be held at Youth Assembly, will be triggered. It may be that Synods appoint an individual at a November Synod meeting, or even before then, but their term of office will commence and close at Youth Assembly because of the nature of the work and yearly cycle of the Youth Executive. This allows, however, for an incoming Synod Youth Representative to shadow an outgoing Synod Youth Representative.

Youth Assembly Election

In order to ensure that the Youth Executive is able to maintain its work, and to encourage all Synods to appoint an individual to represent them, any space not filled by a Synod

which does not appoint a Synod Youth Representative will be opened for election at Youth Assembly.

In the first instance, those young people attending from such a Synod will be offered the opportunity to elect a representative from within their number. If this does not result in the appointment of a Synod Youth Representative by 16:00hrs on the second day of the Assembly, an open election will be triggered. In the event of an open election, the person elected shall serve the Synod they are elected to represent.

In the event of an election at Youth Assembly, the term of office shall, initially, be for one year in order to allow the Synod time to find an individual to fulfil the role. If the Synod does not find an individual to fulfil the role, the elected member will be invited to serve for a further year. The Role Description shall remain substantially the same but recognising that the office holder may not reside in the Synod, they will be expected to relate to the Synod in an appropriate manner (they may not be able to attend Synod meetings but should still report, for instance). It will be the responsibility of the Synod to ensure that effective communication with their Synod Youth Representative is established and maintained.

This election mechanism should be considered a last resort rather than a norm.

In the event that more than one Synod is unable to appoint their Synod Youth Representative, no Synod may fill more than one of those vacancies at the time of the election. So, the most individuals from any one Synod amongst the Synod Youth Representatives at any one time is two.

The election of any Synod Youth Representatives at Youth Assembly shall be conducted in accordance with the URC Youth Assembly Standing Order Five.

Nominating Moderators of General Assembly

History

At Youth Assembly 2022 a resolution was passed asking General Assembly to allow nominations for Moderator of General Assembly to come from Youth Assembly in addition to the synods. This was in response to a historic lack of diversity among elected General Assembly officers. Following this resolution being passed at General Assembly, Youth Assembly is now able to nominate moderators of General Assembly.

Process

Nominations for Moderator for General assembly will proceed as set out in Standing Order 9. This process is based on those adopted for use by synods, with some modifications which reflect the unique nature of the Youth Assembly.

The nomination process set out in the standing orders stipulates that potential nominees should not be asked for permission to be nominated at Youth Assembly. If Youth Assembly votes to support the nomination then the name of the nominee is communicated to the general secretary, who only then will ask them for their permission for their name to go to General Assembly for election. This is because in the past nominees have been more likely to seriously consider allowing their nomination to go to General Assembly for election once they have the confidence and support of a nominating body, whereas when potential nominees are asked for permission before the nomination is brought, they are more likely to say no straight away.

Public vs Private information

Because nominees are not asked for permission in advance, it is also inappropriate for any information to be shared about them which is not public. This means that in the pen portrait provided by those nominating an individual cannot contain any private information about that individual. Public information is any information about a person which is public available, so for example any information which can be found on church websites, the URC address book. If information which has been posted on social media is included in the pen portrait, it should be ensured that this information is able to be viewed by anyone, and was not posted to a private audience.

An example of information which is public and so could be shared may look something like this:

- ◆ **“The nominee would be a good moderator of General Assembly because they have many years experience leading X Church”**

The church in which a minister is actively serving is almost always public information, and so would be acceptable to share in a nomination at Youth Assembly.

An example of information which may not be public may look like this:

- ◆ **“The nominee would be a good moderator because they are married to X person and have 3 children, and it’s good to have a moderator who is married and has children”**

Information about who someone is married to or how many children they have may be something that the person proposing the nomination knows from personal experience, but isn’t available to the general public. The proposer would need to check that this information about the nominee is publicly available, either on a public social media profile or church website for example.

Youth Executive will check that all information shared about a nominee is public, and may consult the Clerk of General Assembly for advice concerning the appropriateness of information shared.

Partnerships

Introduction

In the rich tapestry of both ecumenical and wider life, there are many organisations which exist where it might bring benefit to the URC Youth for the Youth Assembly to establish a partnership of some kind or another.

Forming a new partnership

By its very nature, forming a partnership is a two way process. As such, it should be for the URC Youth Executive to undertake the necessary work in order to form a new partnership. However, it will be in order for Youth Assembly to ask the Youth Executive to explore whether the formation of a new partnership with a specific organisation might be possible. The Children's and Youth Work Committee must be consulted prior to the forming of any new partnership, because there are likely to be reputational or financial considerations to be made.

In order to form a new partnership, the Youth Executive must be able to demonstrate:

- ◆ Why the partnership is being formed
- ◆ What the partnership will seek to achieve, and how this will be measured
- ◆ That the partnership will be within the values and ethos of the United Reformed Church
- ◆ How long the partnership is to be entered into for in the first instance, which shall be at most two years
- ◆ How the partnership will bring benefit to the URC Youth and URC Youth Assembly, and how the partnership will help the URC Youth live out its mission statement
- ◆ How the URC Youth will be able to benefit the partner organisation
- ◆ Who will own the relationship with the partner organisation on a day to day basis - this will usually be the Children's and Youth Work Office

Review and closure of a partnership

All partnerships must be reviewed on a regular basis (but at least biannually) against the same criteria which is to be considered upon entering a new partnership. It may be that a partnership will endure for a long period of time; equally, it is good and healthy to recognise when a partnership which was once beneficial has come to the end of its useful duration, in which case it should be brought to an end.

As budget holder, the Head of Children's and Youth Work Development will have a role to play in the formation, maintenance and closure of any partnership agreements.

Communications Guide

Introduction

The purpose of our presence on social media is to inspire, engage and equip the URC Youth, and to inform about Assembly level activities. This Communications Guide is designed to give a steer as to how this should look.

The URC Youth Social Media Streams

The URC Youth has a strong online presence, which includes: the URC Youth website (www.urcyouth.org.uk), the URC Youth Facebook page, the URC Youth Facebook group and the URC Youth Twitter account, and a presence through the children's and youth work pages on the URC website. Each has a subtle difference in its purpose.

Through these streams, content from around the URC and the wider church which inspires, engages or equips young people in their faith will be shared. The primary URC communication channels, the Joint Public Issues Team, British Youth Council and the Christian Aid Collective would be examples of those whom we work closely with for regularly sharing content - and where we share others' key content, they may well return the favour. Any shared content should, nonetheless, link to our own social media purpose. Social media also gives a platform for advertising, but this should be limited to those events and opportunities endorsed by the URC Children's and Youth Work department.

The Mods' Blog

Hosted on the FURY Website, the Moderators' Blog has existed in various formats over the years. In March 2014, it was relaunched with the following vision:

- *Fulfilling the URC Youth Mission Statement:*
- *Promoting engagement between children and young people with their local church, Synod activities and the Assembly programme*
- *Encouraging healthy communication between the local church, Synod and Assembly levels by sharing appropriate news of what the URC Youth Executive are working on, where the URC Youth Executive are representing the children and young people of the URC, and to share opportunities for children and young people in the URC*

On a practical level, the content of the Mods' Blog is at the discretion of the Moderators, but should contain a personal response to all that they are doing in their respective roles of Moderator and Moderator Elect. The blog should be updated at least monthly, and make good use of a wide variety of media (photos, videos, infographics etc.). The URC Youth Executive has a role to play in acting as a sounding board for ideas of future blog topics and in providing feedback to the Moderators.

In order to ensure that published blogs are of a high quality, a peer review system will operate, whereby the author of the blog will share the draft with the other Moderator, the Communications Co-ordinator, the CYDO trainer and the Head of Children's and Youth Work.

Good Social Media Content

Good social media content is:

- ◆ **High quality** - have we got the basics (spelling, grammar, presentation) right?
- ◆ **Authority** - do we have the authority to talk about what we are talking about?
- ◆ **Image led** - a tweet containing a link which also includes a picture is *much* more likely to be clicked on than a tweet simply containing a link.
- ◆ **Shareable** - will people want to share it? Are the share options clear?
- ◆ **Unique** - is our content different - does it stand out?
- ◆ **Personal** - does our (unique) voice come through?
- ◆ **Humorous** - humour is human and therefore personable, so where used appropriately can be very effective.
- ◆ **Timely** - There are certain times of day when people are more likely to be online and therefore reading content; scheduling is sometimes a good way to go about this.
- ◆ **Relevant** - if something big is happening online (or, indeed, offline) creating content that is relevant to it and releasing it in a timely manner will help that content do well.
- ◆ **Actionable** - if we are pushing really good content and inspiring/engaging/equipping, we need to give those involved things they can go on to do.
- ◆ **Coherent** - is our messaging consistent and clear across all our social media streams? Does it also make sense?

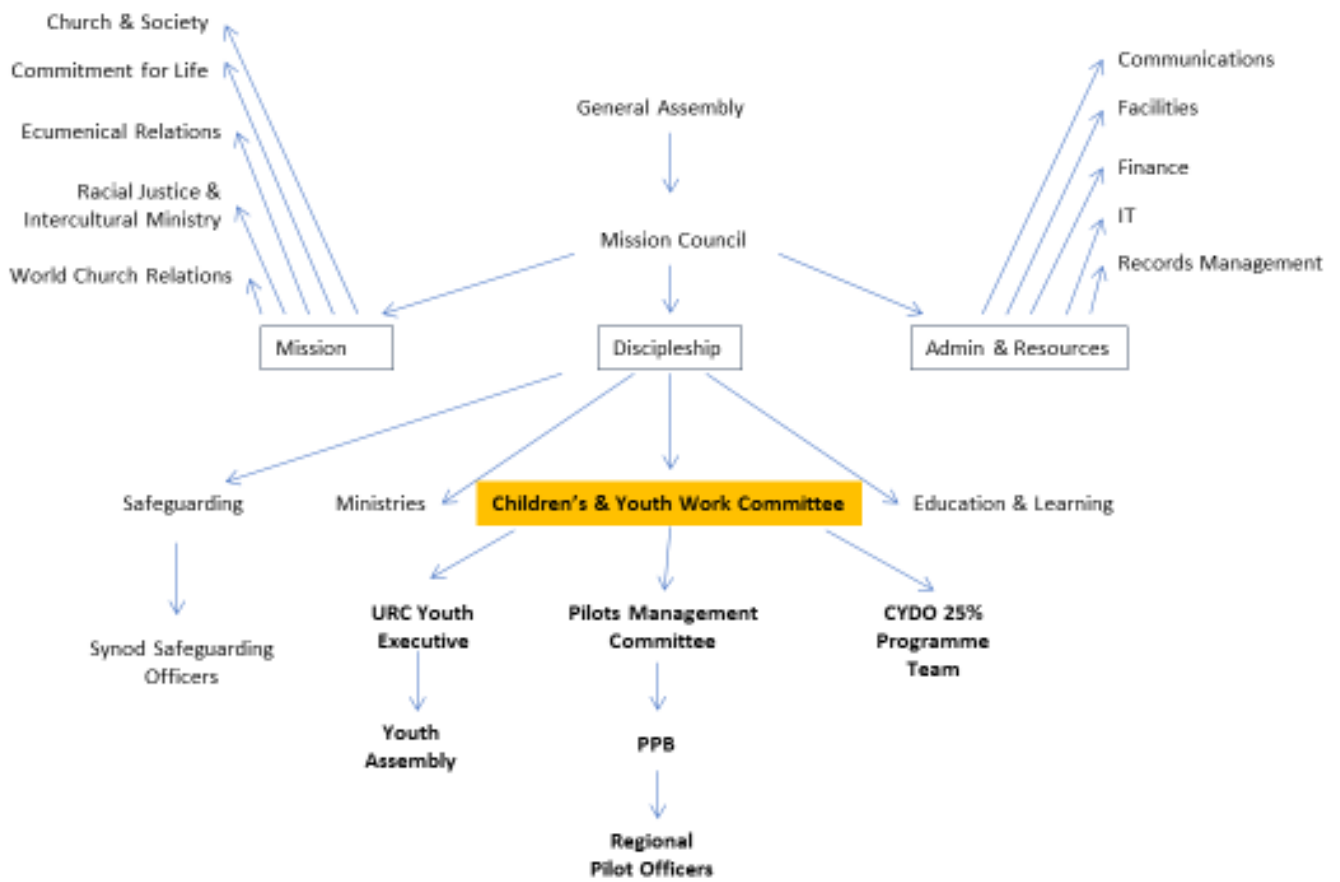
The URC Social Media Guidelines

It should be noted, however, that all those who produce or share content through the URC Youth social media streams should be familiar with, and abide by, the URC Social Media Guidelines (adopted at the November 2014 Mission Council). The result of any breach, alleged or material, of these Social Media Guidelines will be the immediate suspension of access to the Social Media Streams for the individual responsible until such a time that a thorough investigation has been undertaken by the Youth Assembly Moderator and the Head of Children's and Youth Work Development (either of whom will not be responsible for such an investigation if the breach, alleged or material, is made by themselves).

The Law

Those who produce or share content through the URC Youth social media streams should also ensure that they do not breach any legislation which affects what can and cannot be said online.

Structure of the URC Standing Committees



Jargon Buster

Within the URC there are many acronyms and names used which, until you get to know them, can be bewildering. This Jargon Buster is a list of some such acronyms and terms which are used at an Assembly/Synod/Local level and a simple explanation of what they stand for/mean.

Word/Acronym	Explanation
URC	The United Reformed Church is a Christian denomination (a religious group within Christianity) with roots in the Reformation of the 17th Century.
Synod	The URC is divided into thirteen Synods by geographical location.
URC Youth	The URC Youth is the body of young people aged 11 to 25 associated with the United Reformed Church.
URC Youth Executive	The URC Youth Executive is the executive body of the URC Youth Assembly, and exists to provide representation for and of the URC youth, and to carry out the work of the URC Youth Assembly.
Youth Assembly/ FA	The URC Youth Assembly is the annual Assembly level URC Youth business meeting and event, held in January. It used to be called FURY Assembly .
WDYT?	What Do You Think? is a build up event held for members of the URC Youth prior to each General Assembly.
GA	The General Assembly of the URC usually meets biennially (once every two years) and is the final authority within the Church. Representatives are sent from every synod, and the Assembly consists of worship, business, discussions and presentations (much like Youth Assembly, but on a bigger scale). Two Moderators of General Assembly, appointed at the last one, oversee the Assembly and chair the business of Assembly.
Assembly Executive (formerly Mission Council)	Assembly Executive is given authority by General Assembly to carry out the work of the URC in between Assemblies. The other committees within the URC (including CYWC and Youth Executive) send representatives to attend Assembly Executive meetings, to report the work that they are doing and communicate with the rest of the United Reformed Church.
CYWC	The Children's and Youth Work Committee is one of the standing committees of the General Assembly. It supports, encourages and promotes work among children and young people. It oversees the work of the CYDO team and is responsible for ensuring the ongoing success of the URC Youth and Pilots. It also ensures that concerns of children and young people are fully taken into account throughout the church, facilitating the involvement of young people at every level.
CYDO	Children's and Youth Development Officer.
HCYW	Head of Children's and Youth Work.
CYWPO	Children's and Youth Work Programme Officer.
Pilots	Pilots is a non-uniformed Christian organisation for all children and young people, and is a part of the United Reformed Church, though Pilots Companies exist in many denominations. It's divided into four age groups, members can be aged between 5 and 18 years old. Pilots companies often (but not always) meet on mid-week evenings and use discussions, games and projects to explore, complement and celebrate Christian teaching and development.