

# Paper A2

## Modern Slavery Statement

### Business Committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Victoria James <a href="mailto:victoria.james@urc.org.uk">victoria.james@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Adopt the URC's Modern Slavery Statement.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Assembly Executive:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1. Adopts the Modern Slavery Statement.</b></li><li><b>2. Asks Synods and local churches to develop policies in response to this Statement and to implement appropriate supporting procedures.</b></li><li><b>3. Notes the commitment from Church House to implement a Modern Slavery Policy and revise other policies in response to this statement while also implementing procedures to underpin the policy and overarching statement.</b></li></ol>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Adopt a statement on Modern Slavery for the denomination under which local, churches and Synods as well as Church House will develop appropriate policies to meet the expectations of the statement.
<b>Main points</b>	A Modern Slavery Statement has been prepared following a Resolution brought to General Assembly in 2021. This Statement is aimed to be denomination wide, and Assembly Executive is asked to adopt it on that basis. Thereafter, Synods and local churches are encouraged to develop policies which support this statement and deliver its expectations, Church House having made progress in this regard.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper X1 General Assembly 2021 – Resolution 50 Order Paper Friday 30 June 2023.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	General Secretariat Equalities Committee Church House Connective Synod Moderators Synod Clerks URC Trust Legal Advisor – Andy Middleton Safeguarding Committee Synod Safeguarding Officers

	Members of West Midlands Synod (Synod from which original resolution was brought).
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## Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	There may be some cost implications if we need to procure contracts from different providers. The extent of this impact is currently unknown.
<b>External (eg ecumenical)</b>	None.

### 1. Background

- 1.1 West Midlands Synod brought the original Resolution seeking that a Modern Slavery Statement is prepared, and that Church House implements a policy thereunder. Albeit later than originally intended, the Statement is now before Assembly Executive for Adoption.

### 2. Proposed statement

- 2.1 After consultation, the proposed statement is set out in Appendix 1. Assembly Executive is asked to adopt this Statement.

### 3. Next steps

- 3.1 If Assembly Executive adopts this Statement, then Church House will finalise its policy to put the Statement into practice and develop other policies accordingly to ensure the statement is fully implemented. Such policies can be made available to Synods and Churches to help them as they seek to respond to the Statement.

# Appendix 1

## The United Reformed Church Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement

### Introduction

This Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement relates to actions and activities during the financial year ending 31 December 20XX.

The United Reformed Church and its associated bodies (“the URC,” “we,” “us,” “our”) takes a zero-tolerance approach to modern slavery and human trafficking in all its forms. We strive to act with integrity and transparency in all business dealings and to put in place effective systems and controls to safeguard against any form of modern slavery taking place in our churches, in our business and in our supply chains. We all have a duty to be alert to risks, however small. Everyone in the URC has an obligation to report their concerns so that management can address them.

There are several types of modern slavery. Human trafficking, forced labour, debt bondage and bonded labour, slavery based on descent (where people are born into it), child slavery, early and forced marriage, and domestic servitude are the most prevalent. Slavery comes in numerous forms, but they all involve the coercive exploitation of the most defenceless individuals. Most often, this is due to their exclusion and poverty, and when legal systems break down and fail to adequately protect the vulnerable.

People can be particularly vulnerable to modern slavery when external circumstances push them into taking risky decisions in search of opportunities to provide for their families, or when people find they are simply pushed into jobs in exploitative conditions. Anyone could be pressed into forced labour, but people in vulnerable situations – such as being in debt, or not having access to their passport – are particularly at risk. Crises like the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change can make people even more vulnerable to exploitation.

According to the 2021 Global Estimates, there are 49.6 million individuals in modern slavery on any given day; of these, 27.6 million are involved in forced labour, and 22 million are in forced marriages. <sup>i</sup>

<sup>ii</sup>The Global Slavery Index estimates that 122,000 people in the UK are victims of modern slavery. <sup>iii</sup>Only 3,998 of these potential victims were referred to the Home Office between April and June 2023 (National Referral Mechanism).

### Our organisational structure

The URC is a family of Christians who meet in local churches across England, Scotland, Wales, the Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man. We are part of the worldwide family of Reformed Churches, a group of more than 70 million Christians. There are three decision making councils in the URC outlined below:

- Church Meeting – for local churches
- 13 Synods – led by a Synod Moderator
- General Assembly – the denominational decision making body.

Through our conciliar structure as a charitable organisation, we seek to fulfil the Church's objectives via extensive relevant programmes.

The URC's denomination-wide governing body is the General Assembly. Normally it meets every year, to discuss and decide the Church's mission and way of life. The General Assembly has a number of committees that oversee the ongoing work of the denomination.

This statement covers the business activities of all URC councils and committees across the wider denomination.

### Our policies

We are dedicated to identifying and preventing modern slavery and human trafficking in our supply chains and business dealings. We have essential policies in place to help us put effective processes and controls in place to lessen the likelihood that modern slavery may occur within our business or in our supply chain.

The following policies set down our approach to the identification of modern slavery risks and steps to be taken, to prevent slavery and human trafficking in our operations:

- **Whistleblowing policy:** We encourage the reporting of suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, including instances of modern slavery and human trafficking.
- **Anti-Bribery, and Fraud policy:** Our policies outline our position on bribery, corruption, and fraud as well as how we will prevent, identify, report, and investigate such crimes.
- **Good Practice 6 Safeguarding Guidance:** Sets out the actions the URC takes to promote a safer culture, by protecting those that are at risk of being abused.
- **Gift Policy for Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers:** Sometimes, people or families will present or offer personal gifts to ministers. This policy establishes a process for registering such presents, protecting ministers from any accusations of malpractice.
- **HR and Employment Policies:** We have a wide range of HR Policies to ensure that staff are properly appointed, paid fairly and benefit from fair employment practices. We commit to being a Real Living Wage Employer.
- **Procurement Policy:** Church House is developing a policy to establish the factors which must be followed when selecting suppliers to assist in ensuring that a good business partner is selected and includes supplier reputation and compliance with relevant laws and ethical procedures. Synods and local churches are encouraged to develop a similar policy.
- **Modern Slavery Policy:** Church House will implement a policy overseeing the approach and process towards managing and minimising the risk of modern slavery and human trafficking from occurring in our supply chain. This policy can be made available as a template to Synods and local Churches.
- **Additional Policies:** In view of the Modern Slavery Policy's implementation, other policies, such as the Ethical Investment Policy Statement will be reviewed.

With the exception of the HR policies, the policies listed above apply equally to staff (including church workers), ministers, trustees, volunteers, and anyone engaged on a temporary basis. They are monitored by relevant policy owners on a biennial basis.

## Training

We recognise that it is everyone's responsibility to safeguard others and we need to ensure that people holding specific roles and responsibilities are specifically equipped to protect vulnerable groups.

To ensure a good understanding of the risks of modern slavery and human trafficking and the mitigations in place, specific training is provided in conjunction with the Clewer Initiative, who have trained our Synod Safeguarding Officers to deliver their package throughout the denomination. Training is available through the Synods and is also offered from the Assembly Safeguarding team. It is available to anyone who wishes to access it. Training dates are circulated via the Safeguarding newsletter.

## Due Diligence processes for slavery and human trafficking

To help identify and monitor the risk of modern slavery and human trafficking in our supply chain, we commit to reviewing our existing suppliers in accordance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015. The URC's due diligence process includes building long-standing relationships with suppliers and making clear our expectations of business partners. We commit to include anti-slavery and human trafficking provisions in all our contracts with suppliers. Where we discover we have been engaging in business with a supplier in support of modern slavery and/or human trafficking, all ties will be immediately cut.

## Actions and future commitments

To reduce the possibility of modern slavery or human trafficking occurring in our organisation and supply chain, we plan to implement the additional steps listed below:

- Continue to uphold related policies aforementioned, and implement URC Modern Slavery policies, in churches, Synods and Church House, ensuring we undertake training and awareness raising
- Review existing contracts, to improve the visibility of our key supplier relationships and terms
- Ensure that new contracts have relevant modern slavery clauses included in them.

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1. <sup>i</sup> [https://cdn.walkfree.org/content/uploads/2022/09/12142412/GEMS-2022\\_Report\\_EN\\_ExecutiveSummary\\_V4.pdf](https://cdn.walkfree.org/content/uploads/2022/09/12142412/GEMS-2022_Report_EN_ExecutiveSummary_V4.pdf)

2. <sup>ii</sup> <https://cdn.walkfree.org/content/uploads/2023/09/29084706/GSI-Snapshot-United-Kingdom.pdf>

3. <sup>iii</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/modern-slavery-national-referral-mechanism-and-duty-to-notify-statistics-uk-april-to-june-2023/modern-slavery-national-referral-mechanism-and-duty-to-notify-statistics-uk-quarter-2-2023-april-to-june#:~:text=Overall%2C%20of%20the%203%2C998%20potential,annually%20since%20the%20NRM%20began.>