

Paper A6

Revised Terms of Reference for the Pastoral, Reference and Welfare Committee

Business Committee

Basic information

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Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Resolution 3 General Assembly adopts the revised terms of reference for the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee as contained in Paper K1 of General Assembly 2024.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To propose revised Terms of Reference for the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee.
Main points	Amendments proposed to aid clarity and reflect experience.
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council, November 2020 – Paper I1.
Consultation has taken place with...	Chief Operating Officer.

Summary of impact

Financial	None.
External (eg ecumenical)	

Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee Terms of Reference

Committee	Pastoral Reference and Welfare.
Convenor	Appointed by General Assembly.
Secretary	Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship).
Ex Officio members	Synod Moderator (appointed by the Synod Moderators' Meeting) Treasurer or Deputy Treasurer General Secretary.
General Assembly Appointed members	Two lay members One minister member.
Length of term	Four years.
In attendance (to cover their area of expertise)	Secretary for Ministries.
Minute Secretary	Personal Assistant to the Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship).
Meeting frequency	Three times per year (usually February, July and November) using video-conferencing.
Sub-groups / sub-committees	None. However, the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee works with the Maintenance of Ministry Sub-committee (MoM Committee), a sub-committee of the Ministries Committee.
Quoracy	Four (including at least two Assembly-appointed members).
Accountability and reporting duties	Biennially to the General Assembly. However, the report will only deal with general matters, and the committee will not report on, nor may it be questioned on, individual cases.
Terms of Reference review	March 2027.

Context

Synods, through their pastoral committees (or equivalent) and their Synod Moderators, are the primary locus of care and oversight for ministers and congregations.

The Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee (the committee) exists to

1. consider cases which are referred to it, normally by Synod Moderators, and
2. to have oversight of the welfare funds of the General Assembly.

As such, the committee seeks to offer support and assistance after other sources have been explored, but no relevant assistance has been found to be available.

The committee has key responsibilities across several interlinked and interdependent operational areas. These areas are:

- Synod Moderators' Meeting
- Finance Committee
- MoM sub-committee.

Responsibilities

1. The committee will consider the cases of United Reformed Church ministers and congregations which are referred to it because of some perceived pastoral need by Synod Moderators, Assembly Executive or the Officers of Assembly.
2. On referral, the committee will seek to enable the minister's service within the URC to be continued, if that is seen by all concerned to be appropriate, and to this end may consider financial support for a course of retraining, or therapy, or counselling.
3. On referral, the committee may initiate discussion with the Synod Moderator and Minister about alternative forms of service for a minister, within or outside the URC, and may seek help (practical, financial, professional) in consultation with the minister to make this happen.
4. On referral, the committee may authorise the MoM sub-committee to provide stipend or part-stipend, and may authorise the Chief Finance Officer to pay other necessary expenses (including accommodation costs) to a minister not in pastoral charge for a specific period. Such period will not exceed six months in the first instance, but may be extended by the committee. The MoM sub-committee (or such other body as shall in future carry out the functions of the sub-committee) or the Chief Finance Officer will accept this authority for payment.
5. In each case, the committee will make clear to the minister concerned, through the Synod Moderator, the period for which payments will be made, and if it may be extended.
6. The committee will respond to any questions posed to it by the Payroll Manager regarding applications for welfare grants.
7. The committee, in consultation with the Finance Committee, will determine the level of welfare grants to be paid from Assembly funds.

Confidentiality

It is evident that the work of the committee will be confidential and pastoral. Nevertheless, it will need to keep a record of its meetings. The committee's conclusions should be recorded, given to the person concerned, and shared with others directly involved in the matter who need to know the outcome. It would be inappropriate for the committee as a body or individual members of it to divulge any additional information about ministers or churches concerned.

Risk management

The committee will review the Risk Register as it relates to its key responsibilities at least once per year, but will add additional risks as and when they arise.

Conducting business

Additional meetings can be scheduled, with reasonable notice, if business requires it.

Decisions can be taken via email, with the same rules of quoracy applying. Such decisions will be recorded by the Convenor / Secretary and noted at the next meeting, with updates on progress as needed.

Expertise from outside its membership can be utilised for projects, and it may instruct task groups from beyond its membership to develop specific pieces of work. The committee has the power to seek external professional advice if it is deemed necessary, with reference to the Chief Operating Officer for unbudgeted professional fees.

The committee has discretion to seek input from the wider staff team, as deemed necessary.