

Paper H1

Basis of Union Paragraphs 19-24: Ministry in the United Reformed Church

Ministries Committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	John Bradbury john.bradbury@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Resolution 26 General Assembly adopts the changes to Schedule A of The Manual with regards to Ministry in the United Reformed Church (paragraphs 19-24).

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Following agreement at General Assembly 2024, Resolution 26 was referred to Synods. No Synod has objected.
Main points	Ministers of the Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers are called to serve by God and, as members of the church, live out their committed discipleship as office-holders, in which their membership, service to, support and relationship with the Church and community has never created, has never been intended to create, and does not create any contractual relations.
Previous relevant documents	Paper H6: Basis of Union Paragraphs 19-24: Ministry in the United Reformed Church, GA 2024.
Consultation has taken place with...	Synods.

Summary of impact

Financial	None.
External (eg ecumenical)	In line with our ecumenical partners.

1. Ministers of the Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers (thereafter known as ministers) are members of the Church who live out their committed discipleship as office-holders not employees, in which their service to the Church and community, together with the support provided by the Church, has

never created, has never been intended to create, and does not create any contractual relations.

2. The relationship between and office-holder and the Church arises from the constitution of the Church.
3. Hitherto, while the status of an office-holder and their relationship with the Church is implicit in the governing documents of the Church, it is not explicitly described. Doing so helps provide clarity.
4. The additions to Schedule A (in blue) clarify the relationship between ministers and the Church as one of an office-holder.
5. Resolution 26 was agreed at General Assembly 2024 and was referred to Synods. There have been no objections.

Schedule A Paragraphs 19-24

Ministry in the United Reformed Church

19. 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. This service is given by worship, prayer, proclamation of the Gospel, and Christian witness; by mutual and outgoing care and responsibility; and by obedient discipleship in the whole of daily life, according to the gifts and opportunities given to each one. The preparation and strengthening of its members for such ministry and discipleship shall always be a major concern of the United Reformed Church.
20. For the equipment of his people for this total ministry the Lord Jesus Christ gives particular gifts for particular ministries and calls some of his servants to exercise them in offices duly recognised within his Church. The United Reformed Church recognises that Christ gives himself to his Church through Word and Sacrament and through the total caring oversight by which his people grow in faith and love, the exercise of which oversight is the special concern of elders and Ministers. Those who enter on such ministries commit themselves to them for so long as God wills: the United Reformed Church having solemnly acknowledged their vocation and accepted their commitment shall appoint them **as committed disciples** to their particular ministry and give them authority to exercise it within the church, setting them apart with prayer that they shall be given all needful gifts and graces for its fulfilment, which solemn setting apart shall in the case of Ministers and Elders be termed ordination and in the case of Church Related Community Workers be termed commissioning. In the United Reformed Church all ministries within the life of the Church shall be open to both men and women. Appropriate affirmations of faith shall be made by those entering upon all ministries within the life of the Church.
21. Some are called to the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments. After approved preparation and training, they may be called to be Ministers of local churches, or missionaries overseas, or to some special and approved ministry, and are then ordained and inducted to their office. The ordination and induction of Ministers shall be in accordance with Schedules C and D. They are commissioned to

conduct public worship, to preach the Word and to administer the Sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight, and to give leadership to the church in its mission to the world.

Their service may be stipendiary or non-stipendiary, and in the latter case the service is given within an area of a Synod, and in the context it has approved.

22. Some are called to the ministry of Church Related Community Work. After approved preparation and training, they may be called to be Church Related Community Workers in a post approved by the United Reformed Church, then commissioned to the office of Church Related Community Worker, and inducted to serve in a particular post for a designated period. This commissioning and induction shall be in accord with Schedules D and F. Church Related Community Workers are commissioned to care for, to challenge, and to pray for the community, to discern with others, God's will, for the well-being of the community, and to endeavour to enable the Church to live out its calling to proclaim with love and mercy through the working with others in both church and community for peace and justice in the world. Their service may be stipendiary or non-stipendiary, and in the latter case their service is given within the area of a Synod and in a context it has approved.
23. Ministers of the Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers are called to serve by God and, as members of the Church, live out their committed discipleship as office-holders, in which their membership, service to, support and relationship with the Church and community has never created, has never been intended to create, and does not create any contractual relations.
24. The Church cares for and supports these office-holders, whether stipendiary or non-stipendiary, through careful training, loving nurture, and prayerful oversight. As office-holding members of the church, Ministers of the Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers are accountable through the Church's various Councils for the satisfactory performance of their ministries. Through the Councils of the Church, discernment through the Holy Spirit is found regarding: accepting candidates for ministry, the nurture and support necessary for flourishing of Church and office-holder, their deployment to particular ministries, the oversight necessary for healthy discipleship and for the circumstances when it is necessary to lay down the responsibilities of being an office-holder.