

Paper F1

The URC's Position on Assisted Dying

Worship, Faith, and Order Committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Andy Braunston, Co-Secretary: Worship, Faith, and Order andy.braunston@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Resolution 10 Assembly Executive instructs the Worship, Faith, and Order Committee to: a) prepare a discussion paper for Assembly 2026 to help discern if the 2007 decision is still our understanding of the Mind of Christ. b) explore with partner churches their approach to working in jurisdictions where Assisted Dying is legal. c) prepare, by the end of 2026, liturgical and pastoral resources for use in cases where Assisted Dying is an option or has been chosen.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To test the mind of Assembly Executive regarding the URC's position on Assisted Dying and to come to a mind on the need for pastoral and liturgical resources around Assisted Dying given that parts of the United Reformed Church will exist in a context in which Assisted Dying is, or is about to, become legal.
Main points	To explore if the Assembly 2007 position on Assisted Dying still reflects the URC's discernment of the mind of Christ. To acknowledge the difficult pastoral situations which might arise and to consider developing pastoral and liturgical resources for use were Assisted Dying becomes a reality (it is already legal in one jurisdiction where the URC operates and is likely to become legal in several more in 2026). To explore what partnership churches, in the UK and beyond, are doing in this area and.
Previous relevant documents	Report on Assisted Dying and Record of Assembly 2007.

Consultation has taken place with...	
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Summary of impact

Financial	none
External (eg ecumenical)	none

The URC's position on Assisted Dying was last discussed by Assembly in 2007 which resolved, as Resolution 51:

- i) **As Christians we regard all human life as being God given, and therefore precious; we believe that death is not the end and we have faith that there is a more perfect life to follow.**
- ii) **We recognise that there is a time to die and that there are circumstances in which it will be wrong to continue to provide treatment designed to prolong life.**
- iii) **We recognise that some palliative treatment for the terminally ill makes the patient more comfortable and pain free but can also hasten death. We believe this to be acceptable, as long as the intention of the treatment is pain relief and comfort of the patient.**
- iv) **We could not support legislation that would empower medical staff to intervene in ways which deliberately seek to assist a patient to die. We would therefore oppose any change in the law to permit voluntary euthanasia or assisted suicide.**
- v) **We believe that a Living Will or Advance Directive which has been prepared by a patient of sound mind, can be helpful for carers and relatives; however we do not believe such a document should be used to facilitate a person's death.**
- vi) **We believe that additional resources are needed to provide more uniformly available and more high-quality palliative care.**
- vii) **We recognise the valuable contribution made by carers. We express our prayerful support for those who work in, and promote hospices, and others who care, befriend and provide support for the dying.**

Since then, Assisted Dying has been legalised in the Isle of Man, a draft Bill is to be discussed in the States of Assembly in Jersey in January 2026 and the Scottish Parliament has a Bill in Stage 2 where it is working through various amendments with a view to it being voted on before the Holyrood Elections in May 2026.

The URC, therefore, already has URC congregations in jurisdictions where Assisted Dying is legal, or likely to become law, by the end of 2026. A Bill is currently in the House of Lords which would, if passed, legalise Assisted Dying in England. No Bill has, yet, been introduced into the Welsh Senedd.

The Worship, Faith, and Order Committee, therefore, asks Assembly Executive to consider whether or not a change to our current position, as outlined in Resolution 51 (above), is desirable and should that be the case to bring appropriate discussion documents and resolutions to General Assembly 2026.

Furthermore, given the changed and changing legal context, the Worship, Faith, and Order Committee would seek the mind of Assembly Executive regarding provision of resources to help pastoral work with those who chose to have an assisted death as well as those who struggle with the aftermath of that decision.

The Worship, Faith, and Order Committee also asks Assembly Executive whether it would consider it helpful were appropriate liturgical resources developed for use in contexts where Assisted Dying has been legalised.

Should Assembly Executive be minded to approve all or any of these suggestions, then the Worship, Faith and Order Committee will consult with partner churches and how they intend to work with this issue.