

# Paper C1

## Ministries Committee Report

### Ministries Committee

#### Basic information

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<b>Action required</b>	For information
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To update General Assembly on the work of the Ministries Committee, its sub-committees, the Lay Preaching Advocates Network and the Ministries and Learning Forum
<b>Main points</b>	
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Ministries Committee Report to General Assembly 2025
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Ongoing consultation across the denomination

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	None
<b>External (eg ecumenical)</b>	None

#### Ministries Committee

*The committee is responsible for the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Work, Assembly Accredited Lay Preaching, Assembly Accredited Lay Pioneering and Eldership. Through its main committee and sub-committees, it is concerned with facilitating the ministry of the whole people of God in the United Reformed Church, through working to promote the policies of the church; advocating ministry in its widest sense; supporting ministry in its varied forms; facilitating the formation, training and learning for accredited ministries of the church.*

#### Membership:

Convenor: Mary Thomas

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary (Ministries)

Nominated members:

Gill Bates, Elizabeth Hall, Terry Jinn, Lesley Moseley, Dean Taylor

Convenor of the Accreditations sub-committee: Alison Micklem

Convenor of the Assessment Board: Bill Gould

Synod Moderator: Jamie Kissack  
Minister for Digital Worship: Andy Braunston  
Resource Centre for Learning (RCL): Principal: Adam Scott

In attendance as required:

Convenor of the Maintenance of the Ministry (MOM) sub-committee: David Coote  
Convenor of Retired Ministers' Housing Society (RMHS) sub-committee: Paul Whittle  
Leadership in Worship Network: Maggie Kirkbride

## **1. A Committee in transition with an expanded remit**

1.1 This report is brought at a time of significant transition. A revised committee structure has required new patterns of working to be established, while at the same time receiving a broader and more integrated remit than previously. This has involved not simply the incorporation of Education for Ministry, Phase 1 (EM1), EM2 and EM3, but also the substantial body of work that accompanies them: the education, formation and ongoing development of all the accredited ministries of the Church. Taken together, this represents a significant expansion in both scope and responsibility. It creates the opportunity for a more coherent and integrated approach to ministerial formation, holding together discernment, training and lifelong development across the whole ecology of ministry, and reflects a theological conviction that formation is not bounded by ordination or commissioning, but is sustained throughout the life of the Church and held corporately within its councils.

1.2 This expansion of responsibility has taken place within a context of limited capacity. While the Committee has sought to respond faithfully to the breadth of its remit, the scale of the work now being held has inevitably affected pace and prioritisation. This report is therefore offered not only as an account of work undertaken, but as an honest reflection of the pressures under which that work is being carried, and the implications this has for the Church as a whole.

## **2. Capacity constraints and the pace of work**

2.1 Across the breadth of work, a consistent tension is evident between the scale of what is required and the capacity available to deliver it. As will be evident from the number and range of papers brought to this Assembly, the current portfolio spans ministerial formation, active and inactive ministry, retirement review, sabbaticals, sickness and ill-health processes, expected standards, theological education, lay ministry, pioneering, chaplaincy, stipend principles and ministerial wellbeing. Each of these areas carries not only operational demands, but also significant theological, pastoral, legal and financial weight.

2.2 The consequence is that some areas of work have had to be staged or deferred. Work on chaplaincy and ministry in liminal spaces, for example, awaits the full establishment of the Head of Ministries Learning and Development role, and the reshaping of EM2 is unlikely to be fully operational before 2027. This is not simply a matter of administrative delay; it signals a wider denominational risk. Under-capacity inevitably affects pace, responsiveness and resilience, and this should be recognised as part of the strategic context within which the Church is seeking to order its life and ministry.

### 3. **A whole ecology of ministry**

3.1 A consistent theme emerging from the work is the need to understand ministry as an ecology rather than a set of discrete roles. Ministry in the United Reformed Church is not constituted by isolated offices, but by a living and interdependent body, in which different forms of ministry are discerned, authorised and exercised in relationship to one another. Ministers of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Workers, both stipendiary and non-stipendiary, Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers, Assembly Accredited Lay Pioneers, Locally Recognised Worship Leaders, Elders, and Elders in Local Leadership together form the ministerial life of the Church. Each has its own integrity, calling and pattern of formation, yet none exists in isolation, and none can be sustained apart from the others.

3.2 To speak of an ecology is therefore to make a theological claim. It recognises that ministry is held within the life of the whole Church, discerned through its councils, and sustained through patterns of mutual accountability, support and formation. It also acknowledges that pressure or change in one part of the ecology inevitably affects the whole. Questions of stipendiary ministry, lay leadership, vocations and training cannot be addressed in isolation but must be considered together if the Church is to remain faithful and sustainable.

3.3 Within this developing ecology, the establishment of the Ministries and Learning Forum is a significant step. Bringing together colleagues from Ministries and Faith in Action, Resource Centres for Learning and Synod networks, the Forum seeks to hold learning, formation and discipleship more coherently across the Church. Its areas of focus - Elders' training, vocations, and discipleship development (including pathways such as Stepwise and the Church Leadership Programme) - reflect a growing recognition that the sustainability of ministry depends not only on ordained pathways, but on the formation, confidence and discipleship of the whole people of God.

3.4 Such an ecology does not imply interchangeability. Rather, it requires clarity about the distinctive nature of each ministry, alongside a renewed understanding of their interdependence. It calls for greater coherence in how ministries are discerned, formed, authorised and supported, and for a shared understanding across the Church of how different ministries contribute to worship, mission, pastoral care and governance. The future life of the Church will depend not simply on sustaining particular roles, but on nurturing a pattern of ministry that is relational, accountable and responsive to the context in which the Church is called to serve.

### 4. **Sustainability of stipendiary ministry**

4.1 Consideration of the sustainability of stipendiary ministry has been central to the work brought to this Assembly. Recent Assessment Conferences have seen very low numbers of candidates for stipendiary Ministry of Word and Sacraments, while the projected pattern of retirements continues to reduce available capacity over the coming years.

4.2 In bringing the accompanying paper, the Committee has sought to focus the Church's attention on a single, pressing question: **what level and pattern of stipendiary ministry is the United Reformed Church called to sustain in the years ahead?** This question moves beyond matters of affordability alone and

invites deeper theological discernment about the nature and purpose of ministry within the life of the Church.

4.3 The issue is therefore not simply numerical or financial. It concerns the proclamation of the Word, the right administration of the Sacraments, pastoral care, conciliar oversight, ministerial wellbeing and the capacity of local congregations to flourish. There is a growing recognition that the Church is at, or very close to, a tipping point, and that the response required cannot be reactive. Rather, it must be whole-church, strategic and rooted in theological reflection on what it means to be the Church in this time and place.

## **5. Ministerial standards, accountability and fitness to practice**

5.1 A significant body of work brought to this Assembly reflects a developing and more integrated approach to ministerial standards, accountability and fitness to practise. What is presented is not a series of isolated policy developments, but a connected suite of work which together seeks to clarify expectations, strengthen oversight, and ensure that ministry is exercised in ways that are safe, accountable and faithful to the Church's calling.

5.2 At the heart of this is the recognition that ministers serve in positions of trust. Clarity regarding ministerial status has therefore emerged as a pressing issue. There remain ministers on the roll for whom current activity, accountability and authorisation are not always clearly understood. This raises pastoral, safeguarding and reputational concerns for the Church. It is essential that the Church is able to identify who is authorised to act in its name, and under what conditions that authorisation is held.

5.3 The development of the Active and Inactive Ministers policies forms a key part of this work. These seek to provide clearer definitions of activity, accountability, good standing and fitness to practise, alongside more consistent patterns of oversight. This includes consideration of regular communication with ministers, the role of Synods in maintaining appropriate accountability, and clearer expectations in relation to safeguarding, mandatory training and the public representation of ministry.

5.4 Alongside this, work to consolidate competencies and expected standards into a clearer and more authoritative framework is intended to articulate more fully what is required of those who hold ministerial office. This is not simply a regulatory exercise, but one that seeks to support ministers in understanding the nature of their calling and the expectations that flow from it, providing a basis both for accountability and for ongoing formation and development.

5.5 The continued development of Safer Sacred Space training forms an important part of this wider framework. Its emphasis on reflective practice, self-awareness and the maintenance of healthy boundaries recognises the relational nature of ministry and the trust placed in those who exercise it. In this context, the integrity of ministry is not secured solely through formal processes, but through the cultivation of wise, attentive and accountable practice.

5.6 The Committee has also given attention to the place of reasonable adjustments within ministerial life. This reflects a commitment to ensuring that those who are called to ministry are enabled to exercise that calling as fully as possible,

including where disability or long-term health conditions are present. At the same time, it recognises the need for clarity and consistency, ensuring that adjustments are grounded in appropriate professional assessment and held within a framework that maintains the essential responsibilities of ministry.

5.7 These strands of work are closely connected to a growing awareness of the importance of ministerial wellbeing. Wellbeing cannot be treated as a discrete or reactive concern, but must be understood in relation to workload, deployment, expectations, support structures and the changing nature of ministry itself. Ensuring that those who are called to serve are sustained in that calling is integral to the health of the Church as a whole.

5.8 Taken together, this suite of work begins to form a more coherent framework within which questions of conduct, capability and wellbeing can be held appropriately. It provides a necessary foundation for the ongoing development of disciplinary processes, ensuring that any such processes are not isolated or reactive, but are rooted in a clear understanding of ministry as a position of trust, exercised within the life and accountability of the whole Church.

## **6. Reshaping ministerial formation**

6.1 A further significant strand of work concerns the reshaping of ministerial formation across the life of the Church. What is emerging is not a series of discrete adjustments, but a move towards a more coherent and integrated pattern which holds together discernment, initial training, early ministry and ongoing development. This reflects a growing recognition that formation is not confined to a particular stage, but is a lifelong process, held corporately within the Church and exercised within its councils.

6.2 Within this, work to draw together Education for Ministry, Phase 1 (EM1), EM2 and EM3 has been central. In particular, proposals for EM2 signal a shift towards a more structured and intentional approach, including the development of a portfolio-based framework. This seeks to enable reflective practice, clearer articulation of learning, and more consistent support during the early years of ministry. It also provides a means of ensuring that ministers are accompanied, challenged and affirmed as they grow into the responsibilities of ordained or commissioned service.

6.3 Alongside this, EM3 has been identified as an area requiring renewed attention. Uptake remains relatively low, and continuing professional development is not yet consistently embedded within ministerial life. Consideration is therefore being given to the development of a more intentional programme of ministerial development from 2027 onwards, one which would provide clearer expectations, accessible pathways and a stronger culture of ongoing learning. Such work recognises that the changing context of ministry requires ministers to continue to grow in understanding, skill and resilience throughout the whole of their service.

6.4 Questions arising from Non-Stipendiary Ministry (Local) have also contributed to this wider reflection. While this pathway has enabled new expressions of ministry to emerge, it has highlighted issues of consistency, clarity and robustness in relation to formation and training. In particular, concerns have been raised about the coherence of training pathways and the absence, in some cases, of clearly recognised qualifications.

- 6.5 It has therefore been recognised that NSM (Local) ministry cannot be considered in isolation. Those entering this pathway are still being formed for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments, even where that ministry is exercised within a particular local context. Questions of expectation, formation and accountability must therefore be held within the wider framework of ordained ministry and within the developing ecology of ministry as a whole.
- 6.6 Taken together, this work points towards the need for a more coherent, consistent and theologically grounded approach to formation across all pathways of ministry. It invites the Church to consider not only how ministers are prepared for particular roles, but how a culture of formation can be sustained which enables all those called to ministry to grow in faithfulness, competence and confidence over time.

## **7. Lay leadership and vocations**

- 7.1 A further significant area of development has been a renewed and more intentional focus on lay ministry, leadership and vocations. This arises not as an isolated strand of work, but as a necessary response to the wider questions facing the Church about sustainability, formation and the shape of ministry for the future. Elders, Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers and Assembly Accredited Lay Pioneers are not peripheral to the Church's life; they are integral to its worship, mission, pastoral care and governance. Yet it has become clear that patterns of support, formation and ongoing development have not always been consistent or sufficiently resourced.
- 7.2 In response, the work of the Ministries and Learning Forum has begun to provide a more coherent space in which these questions can be held together. Bringing into conversation colleagues from Ministries, Faith in Action, Resource Centres for Learning and Synod networks, the Forum is helping to shape a more integrated approach to learning and formation across the Church. Its current areas of focus—Elders' training, vocations, and wider discipleship development—reflect a recognition that the strengthening of ministry begins with the formation of the whole people of God.
- 7.3 Particular attention is being given to the formation of Elders. As those who share in the spiritual leadership and oversight of the local church, Elders require not only initial preparation but ongoing development in confidence, theological understanding and leadership. Work is therefore underway to consider how training for Elders might be strengthened, resourced and made more accessible, ensuring that this vital ministry is properly supported across the denomination.
- 7.4 Alongside this, the question of ongoing development for Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers has been brought into sharper focus. While initial accreditation provides a strong foundation, there is a growing recognition that opportunities for continued learning, reflection and enrichment are essential if this ministry is to flourish. This includes not only the deepening of theological understanding and preaching practice, but also engagement with the changing contexts in which worship is offered.
- 7.5 The work on vocations is equally significant. If the Church is to sustain and renew its ministerial life, it must attend carefully to how vocation is recognised, nurtured and encouraged at every level. This includes ordained and commissioned

ministry, but also lay ministries and emerging forms of service. There is a need for a more intentional culture in which calling is discerned corporately, supported locally and accompanied through appropriate pathways of formation.

- 7.6 Proposals relating to lay pioneering have been considered within this wider context, and the Committee is grateful for the work undertaken by Seedbeds in developing a vision for pioneering that is attentive to local mission, innovation and engagement with communities. The approach offered has helped to stimulate important reflection on how the Church might respond creatively and faithfully to emerging contexts. At the same time, it has been recognised that such work needs to be carefully integrated within the theological identity, polity and practices of the United Reformed Church. Questions of accreditation, formation, accountability and alignment with existing structures therefore require further discernment. It has been judged helpful to pause the development of new proposals at this stage, not as a rejection of the work, but as an opportunity to reflect more fully on how pioneering ministry can be most fruitfully embedded within the Church's wider approach to formation and ministry
- 7.7 Alongside the consideration of these proposals, there is a growing recognition that the training and formation of Assembly Accredited Lay Pioneers would benefit from further development. There is clear affirmation of the importance of pioneering ministry, and of the contribution made by Seedbeds in shaping this area of work. The task now is to build on this foundation, exploring how formation pathways can be strengthened so that they are both contextually responsive and firmly rooted in the theological and conciliar life of the United Reformed Church. This includes ensuring that training is appropriately robust, coherent and sustainable, and that it equips those called to pioneering ministry not only for innovation, but for ministry that is accountable, well-supported and able to flourish within the life of the denomination.
- 7.8 Taken together, this work signals a shift towards a more intentional and theologically grounded approach to lay ministry and leadership. It recognises that the future life of the Church will depend not only on the number of ordained ministers, but on the confidence, formation and discipleship of all who are called to serve. The task before the Church is therefore not simply to sustain existing patterns, but to nurture a culture in which vocation is recognised, ministry is supported, and leadership is exercised faithfully across the whole Body.

## **8. Daily Devotions**

- 8.1 Daily Devotions continues to be a significant point of outward engagement for the United Reformed Church, offering a regular rhythm of prayer, scripture and reflection that extends well beyond the gathered congregation. Its reach into homes, workplaces and daily routines enables the Church to be present in the ordinary patterns of life, often connecting with those who may have little or no other contact with a local congregation.

In this way, it serves not only as a resource for discipleship, but as a quiet expression of the Church's public witness – accessible, consistent and rooted in the Reformed tradition of Word and prayer. It reminds us that ministry is not confined to physical spaces, but is exercised wherever people encounter the gospel, and that the Church's voice, when offered with care and theological integrity, has the capacity to speak meaningfully into a wide and diverse context.

8.2 The Committee is pleased to note that Amy Boon has now been appointed as Digital Content Assistant, bringing dedicated capacity to support and develop this important area of the Church's outward-facing ministry.

## **9. A large number of policies!**

9.1 The Committee is bringing a significant number of revised policies to this General Assembly. This should not be understood as policy revision for its own sake, but as a necessary consequence of the wider revision of the Section O disciplinary process. That work has required related ministerial policies to be reviewed and aligned, so that the Church's processes are consistent, pastorally attentive and properly accountable.

9.2 Together, these revisions seek to ensure that matters relating to ministerial conduct, capability, status and support are held within a coherent framework. The aim is to provide greater clarity for ministers, Synods, committees and office-holders, while ensuring that the Church acts with fairness, transparency and care.

## **10. Conclusion**

10.1 This report has set before the General Assembly a substantial body of work which, taken together, reflects both the scale of the challenges facing the United Reformed Church and the seriousness with which they are being engaged. Across questions of formation, sustainability, accountability, wellbeing and the shaping of ministry for the future, there is a clear direction of travel: towards greater coherence, deeper theological grounding, and a more integrated approach to the life of the Church. Much of this work remains in development, and will require continued discernment by the councils of the Church. It is offered in the hope that it will assist the Assembly in its shared task of seeking how we are called to be faithful in this time and place.

10.2 In the midst of this, it is a particular pleasure to welcome the Revd Dr Phil Wall as the new Head of Ministries Learning and Development. His appointment comes at a significant moment, and it is anticipated that his experience and insight will play an important role in shaping and sustaining this work in the years ahead.

10.3 The Committee also wishes to record its thanks to those who have completed their service. Professor Bill Gould, the Revd Terry Jin and the Revd Lesley Moseley have each contributed generously to the life and work of the Committee, bringing wisdom, experience and careful attention to the matters before them. Their contributions have been valued and are received with gratitude.

10.4 In a particular way, the Committee offers its sincere thanks to the Revd Mary Thomas in her role as Convenor. Through a period of considerable transition and expanding responsibility, she has provided wise, steady and gracious leadership. Her ability to hold together complex strands of work, to create space for thoughtful discussion, and to guide the Committee with clarity and care has been deeply appreciated. Her service has been instrumental in enabling the Committee to undertake its work with both integrity and purpose.

## Accreditations sub-committee report

*Maintaining the roll of ministers, this sub-committee accredits those applying for inclusion after training, and those coming from other denominations. It is concerned with numbers and recruitment. It also deals with applications for special category ministries. It supports the work of CRCW ministry.*

Convenor: Alison Micklem

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary (Ministries)

Members: Bill Gould (Convenor of the Assessment Board), Jamie Kissack (Synod Moderator), Mary Thomas (Convenor of Ministries Committee), Marie Trubic (Church Related Community Worker (CRCW post-holder), Carole Marsden, Joanne Patterson.

### 1. Certificates of Limited Service

Certificates of Limited Service allow a minister of another denomination to serve in, and be paid by, the URC, in a specified post only and for a limited period of time. They provide a flexible way of responding to particular local ministry needs and opportunities.

2 new certificates has been issued in the last year, no certificates have been renewed and no certificates have been closed because of retirement.

Yufen Chen (Presbyterian Church of Taiwan) until 31/12/2028

Karl Hanton (Baptist Union of Great Britain) until 01/10/2028

### 2. Certificates of Eligibility

Ministers who have come from other denominations to serve in the United Reformed Church make a vital contribution to the URC as a whole. Ministries Committee is responsible to General Assembly for oversight of the projected number of ministers for future years. On the basis of these projections and other relevant factors, decisions are made concerning the number of certificates of eligibility that can be issued to ministers of other denominations for both stipendiary and non-stipendiary service, enabling them to receive a call to service in a pastorate or post.

Since last General Assembly, there have been 39 applications. Five Certificates of Eligibility have been issued in the past 12 months, to ministers from the Church of Scotland (1), Church of England (1), United Churches of Christ (USA) (2), Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (1).

### 3. Admission to the Roll of ministers of the Word and Sacraments (from 1 April 2025 to 30 April 2026)

**By ordination and induction:** Margaret Elizabeth Dexter-Brown, Susan Ann Knight, Clare Nutbrown-Hughes, Maurice Philips Omorojie, Tina Louise Wilson

**By transfer from other churches:** Packiaraj Asirvatham (Church of South India), Juan Cruz (Presbyterian Church in the Philippines), Nomaqhawe Marambi (United Church of Zambia)

**By changes within the Roll of Ministers:** There have been no changes within the roll of ministers.

## Deletions from the Roll of Ministers:

### By resignation

Lucy Berry  
Matthew James Rigden

### By transfer to another denomination

None to report

### By deletion under the disciplinary process

Naison Mavesere Hove

### Re-admission to the Roll

Robert Vaughan Jones

## 4. Jubilee Ministers

### Celebrating 70 years of ordained ministry in 2026:

Robert William Courtney, Charles Knowlson Meachin, David Stollery Morris

### Celebrating 60 years of ordained ministry in 2026:

Clabon James Allen, Robert Andrews, David Batchelor, Michael John Cruchley, David Murray Cuckson, Lesley Gordon Giller, Rosemary Ruth Hartley, Glyn Jenkins, Kenneth William Marsh, Hugh Nixon McKee, Donald William Norwood, Leonard Rees Phelps, David Alistair Pratt, Rodney Alan Ward, Leonard John Wigg, David Wiseman

### Celebrating 50 years of ordained ministry in 2026:

Derek Corner, Jack William Dyce, Brian O'Neill, David Raymond Peel, David Trafford, Elizabeth Anne Welch.

## 5. Ministers who have retired from 1 April 2025 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2026:

Bridget Jane Banks, Philip Anthony Brooks, Heather Cadoux, Andrew Coyne, Christopher James Ford, Annette Elizabeth Haigh, Helen Margaret Higgin-Botham, Terence James Hinks, Michael Alan Hodgson, Anthony William Howells, Trevor Jamison, Craig M Jesson, Susan McCoan, Alison Mills, Zaidie Antonette Orr, David Brown Pattie, Jeremy James Phelps, Neil Stuart Riches, Jonathan Douglas George Sermon, Michael Shrubsole, Lynda Joyce Spokes, Anthony John Spring, Peter Fred Stevenson, Alison Anne Termie, Julian Paul Thomas, Nigel Uden, Helen Amy Elizabeth Warmington, Cecil Ernest White, Ruth Angela Wollaston, Philip James Woods.

## 6. Ministers who have died from 1 April 2025 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2026

Name of Minister	Age	Date of Death
William James Nicol	94	02/04/2025
John Heywood-Thomas	98	06/04/2025
James L McCormack		08/04/2025
Gwendoline Mary Barr	99	05/05/2025
James Martin	90	20/05/2025
Margaret Elizabeth Laurie	92	26/05/2025
George Clifford Graham Bembridge	75	04/06/2025
David Roy Viles	91	05/06/2025
Alexander David Mabbs	59	13/06/2025
Roy Patrick Bones	92	16/06/2025
Alison Frances Hall	86	19/06/2025

Robert Francis Damer	85	20/06/2025
Michael James Rigney	80	22/06/2025
Alwyn John Knight	84	23/06/2025
John Wadhams	91	25/06/2025
Malcolm Hill	95	01/07/2025
Ambrose David Wright	92	08/07/2025
Alan Frederick Edward Wise	99	08/08/2025
Valerie Ann Towler	76	12/08/2025
Peter Charles Cruchley	59	15/08/2025
Kenneth Mervyn Coles	81	17/09/2025
Harold Robert Tonks	93	20/09/2025
Robert John Way	90	26/09/2025
Janet Calderley	67	03/10/2025
Robert Freeland Philip	85	14/10/2025
Peter Digby Ball	68	26/10/2025
Stephen Alexander Wilkins	76	27/10/2025
Barbara Plenderleith	88	18/11/2025
John Mackenzie Chisholm	95	07/12/2025
Antony Richmond Ritchie	93	09/12/2025
Elizabeth Jean Brown	91	13/12/2025
Brian Sadler Stone	96	13/12/2025
Keith Leonard Havers	96	14/12/2025
John Alan Stanyon	96	02/01/2026
Robert John Blows	88	09/01/2026
Derek Charles Redfern	82	14/01/2026
Geoffrey Herickx	86	31/01/2026
Colin George Bones	71	02/02/2026
John Colbeck Durell	79	22/02/2026
Elizabeth Denise Megson	86	28/02/2026
Kenneth Harris	94	28/02/2026
Myra D Dillistone	89	11/03/2026
Malcolm Bernard Clarke	76	11/03/2026
Lillian Evangeline Dean	94	21/03/2026
Graham Herbert Dadd	72	26/03/2026
Lesley Anne McNeil	82	07/04/2026
Michael John Lay	94	07/04/2026
James Norman Walker	97	11/04/2026
Meryl Court	80	11/04/2026
Michael John Bemrose Spencer	83	19/04/2026
James Ronald Garfitt	97	22/04/2026

## 7. Admissions to the Roll of Church Related Community Workers(from 1 April 2026 to 30 April 2026):

### **By commissioning:**

None to report

### **Deletions from the Roll of Ministers:**

None to report

### **By resignation:**

None to report

### **By transfer to another denomination**

None to report

### **By deletion under the disciplinary process**

None to report

### **CRCWs who have retired from 1 April 2025 to 30 April 2026:**

None to report

## 8. Roll of Assembly-Accredited Lay Preachers

### **Assembly Accreditation**

The following have received Assembly accreditation between 1 April 2025 and 30 April 2026 as a result of having completed a URC course of study or having prior accreditation from another denomination:

02 North Western	James Mawdsley
03 Mersey	Helen Bennett
03 Mersey	Pat Cansfield
03 Mersey	Gail Rose
04 Yorkshire	Claire Nutt
11 Southern	Leonard Martin
13 Scotland	Laurence Wareing

### **2026**

10 Thames North Neil Mackin

### **Assembly re-accreditation** between 1 April 2025 and 30 April 2026

None to report

### **Deletions from the Roll of Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers by resignation, removal and / or transfer to other Churches or death** from 1 April 2025 and 30 April 2026

#### **Death**

Roger James Allen  
Ralph David Graham Bradshaw  
Lindsey Anne Cole  
Hugh Trefor Suddick  
Wendy Elizabeth Smith

### **Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers Retired from 1 April 2025 and 30 April 2026:**

Alan John Myers  
Thelma Edna Roberts

## 9. Roll of Assembly-Accredited Lay Pioneers

### Assembly Accreditation

The following have received Assembly accreditation between 1 April 2025 and 30 April 2026 as a result of having completed a URC course of study or having prior accreditation from another denomination:

04 Yorkshire	Clare Nutt
13 Scotland	Sarah McGrory

### Assembly re-accreditation between 1 April 2025 and 30 April 2026

None to report

### Deletions from the Roll of Assembly Accredited Lay Pioneers by resignation, removal and / or transfer to other Churches or death from 1 April 2025 and 30 April 2026

None to report

### Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers Retired from 1 April 2025 and 30 April 2026:

None to report

## Assessment Board Report

Assessment Board Convenor: Professor Bill Gould

Assessment Board Convenor elect: Martyn Needs

Secretary to the Board: DGS (Ministries)

Assessors: Members: Liz Mullen (2), Keith Reading (3), Jamie Kissak (4), Samuel Silungwe (5), Mark Tubby (7), Gerald England (8), Sue McCoan (10), Martyn Needs (10), Jacob Bali (11) Sohail Ejaz (11) Simon Loveitt (11) Mercy Nimako (11), Jan Adamson (13).

### 1. Flow of candidates

Since the 2025 report, one Assessment Conference has been held (March 2026). Seven candidates were considered by the Board, of whom 5 were recommended for Education for Ministry Phase 1 (EM1) training.

March 2026 Assessment Conference	Ministry	Number of candidates	Number accepted
	Stipendiary	1	1
	Non- Stipendiary	1	1
	Non-Stipendiary (Local)	5	3
	CRCW	0	0
Total		7	5

Date of Conference	Ministry	Number of candidates	Number accepted
March 2026	Stipendiary	1	1
	Non-stipendiary	1	1
	Non-stipendiary (Local)	5	3
	CRCW	0	0
	CRCW NSM	0	0
	CRCW NSM (Local)	0	0
Total		7	5

## 2. Students in Training by Synod as of 30 April 2026

Synod	Ministry	Student
01	Non-Stipendiary (Local)	Ann Sinclair
02	CRCW	Joanne West
	Non-Stipendiary	Timothy Hopley
	Stipendiary	Thomas Miller
03	Non-Stipendiary	Rita Griffiths
04	Non-Stipendiary	Caroline Pathak
05	Non-Stipendiary	Andrew Bodsworth
06	CRCW	Bev Lyne
	Non-Stipendiary	Rachel Coward
	Stipendiary	Edward Lyne
		Nathanael Paul
07	Non-Stipendiary	Robert Dart
	Stipendiary	Machrina Ejaz
		James Instone-Brewer
		Joanne Moreira
		Charlotte Remblance
08	Non-Stipendiary	Rachel Leach
	Stipendiary	Alex Mabbott
09	Non-Stipendiary	John Sinclair
	Non-Stipendiary (Local)	Susan Nichols
	Stipendiary	Abigail Perrow
		Simon Peters
10	CRCW	Rachel Harvey
	Stipendiary	Azeem Bakhsh
11	Non-Stipendiary (Local)	Lynne Le Masonry
	Non-Stipendiary	Joyce Edeki
		Gail Marshall-Jones
	Stipendiary	So Young Jung
		Yukyung Kim
		Zeerak Shahbaz
13	Non-Stipendiary (Local)	Eilidh Young
	Non-Stipendiary	Margaret Higton
	Stipendiary	Yvonne Hamilton

3. Students in Training statistics as of 30 April 2026

	Students in Training	Anticipated Entry into URC Service			
	April 2026	2026	2027	2028	2029
<b>Stipendiary</b>					
Luther King Theological College (LKTC) Church Related Community Worker (CRCW) Resource Centre for Learning (RCL)*	2	1	1	0	0
LKTC Minister of Word and Sacrament (MWS) (RCL)*	6	2	1	1	2
Scottish College (RCL)	2	0	0	1	1
Westminster College (RCL)	7	2	3	1	1
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Non-Stipendiary</b>					
LKTC CRCW (RCL)*	1	0	0	0	1
LKTC MWS (RCL)*	4	0	2	0	2
Scottish College (RCL)	2	1	0	0	1
Westminster College (RCL)	5	1	2	0	2
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Non-Stipendiary (Local)</b>					
LKTC CRCW (RCL)*	0	0	0	0	0
LKTC MWS (RCL)*	1	1	0	0	0
Scottish College (RCL)	2	1	1	0	0
Westminster College (RCL)	1	1	0	0	0
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>

4. Ordinations and Commissionings including Certificates of Eligibility

	Type of Ministry	Date of Ordination	Date into URC	Ministerial Service History for Yearbook
Clare Nutbrown-Hughes	Stipendiary	30/08/2025		South Wales Valleys Pastorate 2025-present
Tina Louise Wilson	Stipendiary	06/09/2025		Norwich Area URC Mission Partnership (Ipswich Rd Norwich, St Peter's Jessop Rd Norwich LEP, Wroxham and Hoveton URC, Wymondham URC) 2025-present
Susan Ann Knight	Non-Stipendiary (Local)	06/09/2025		Reigate Park 2025-present
Maurice Philips Omorojie	Stipendiary	20/09/2025		Synod Directed 2025-2026; St Andrew's, Cheam 2025- ; Sanderstead 2026-present
Margaret Elizabeth Dexter-Brown	Non-Stipendiary (Local)	05/10/2025		East Cheshire & Derbyshire Borders Missional Partnership 2025-present
Packiaraj Asirvatham	Stipendiary	08/06/2008	01/06/2025	Ponders End, Palmers Green and Winchmore Hill 2025-present
Juan Cruz	Stipendiary	02/08/2004	21/02/2026	Wilmslow, Macclesfield & Bollington and Lymm URC 2026-present
Nomaqhawe Marambi	Stipendiary	21/02/2016	21/03/2026	Lancashire East Missional Partnership 2026-present

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## **Maintenance of the Ministry (MoM) sub-committee report**

*Advises on the level of stipend and ministers' conditions of service through the 'Plan for Partnership'. It is also concerned for pensions through the Pensions Executive.*

Members:

Convenor: David Coote

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary (Ministries)

Convenor of the Ministries Committee: Mary Thomas

Deputy Treasurer: Vaughan Griffiths

Convenor of the Pensions Committee: Janet Tollington

In attendance:

Payroll Officer

Mary Steele

1. Over the past year we have undertaken our work in relation to the various sickness cases that come up over the year and those which involve longer term sickness and periods where ministers are unable to perform their duties. These are reviewed in line with the Plan for Partnership and with a great deal of sensitivity in the individual cases. We like other professions and workplaces, are still seeing the effect of the covid pandemic being related in sickness cases. We are grateful for the work of Mary Steele in the MoM office, who pays the stipends, monitors the sickness cases and brings to the attention of the committee when decision need to be made, organizes the medical and moderators report and deal with the correspondence.
2. We have also dealt with situations which fall outside the paramotors of what is allowed by the Plan for Partnership which are again dealt with as sensitively as possible. Since the last General Assembly with have consulted on the changes to the Plan of Partnership which came to that General Assembly and have tweaked them where it was felt further clarification was needed after the consultation.
3. There has also been a review and an updating of the expenses policy for non-stipendiary ministers. We have also agreed to attach a copy of the Terms of Settlement to the Plan for Partnership as we consider these should be owned by the denomination. We have also reviewed and updated the grant and loans that are available on a yearly basis. The Fixed Car allowance will also be added to this list, and various forms connected with these grants are being updated.
4. The stipend increase for this year was recommended based on the agreed formula which is based on CPI and Average Weekly Wage and this produced a recommendation for the increase of 4.3%. This recommendation was slightly above the rate of CPI at the time of calculation and also slightly higher than last year's recommendation and also CPI was lower at time of calculation last year.
5. Over the year there have been discussions concerning the possible coming together of the MoM sub-committee and the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee (PRWC) as one committee as there is overlap in the work they each undertake. The results of those discussion have resulted in the paper which has been brought to General Assembly this year.

6. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the committee for their giving of their time and for the sensitivity with which they have dealt with the cases over the last year.
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## **Retired Ministers Housing Society (RMHS) sub-committee report**

*Be the point of liaison between Ministries and RMHS on behalf of the URC and tenants, ensuring that all eligible member are adequately housed and supported in retirement.*

Convenor: Paul Whittle

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary (Ministries)

Members:

David Coote, Martin Camroux, David Lawrence, Don Nichols

1. The work of the RMHS Sub-Committee has been relatively easy during the past year, owing to the positive operational changes that have been taking place within the Society. The Sub-Committee has welcomed the new ways in which the Society has been operating and the fact that this has been reflected in improved services to and relationships with tenants. We are pleased that staffing levels are now close to where they should be and that governance has improved, in part by some restructuring of the working of the Board.
  2. A particular benefit to tenants has been the change in the provider of emergency and out of hours repairs and the Sub-Committee has welcomed the significantly improved service this has achieved.
  3. We retain our responsibility to bring practical matters of concern to the Board, but welcome the fact that action has been taken on a number of such issues raised by the Sub-Committee over the past few years.
  4. We welcomed that the Board has been strengthened by some appointments from outside the URC of people with housing experience, including a new chair, and that the post of the Interim Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Irmani Smallwood, has been made permanent.
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## **Lay Preaching Advocates Network report**

*Be responsible for the advocacy of Assembly Accredited Lay Preaching and Locally Recognised Worship Leading within the United Reformed Church.*

1. The Advocates for Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers (AALPs) and Locally Recognised Worship Leaders (LRWLs) has met once since the last General Assembly to reflect on current developments in lay ministry formation, accreditation and support across the United Reformed Church.
2. The advocates have reflected on the developing transition from a more formal committee structure within Ministries Committee to a network model of working. This change has been welcomed positively. The network approach allows advocates from across the Synods to share experience, resources, concerns and good practice more collaboratively and less procedurally than before. In a context

where lay ministry continues to develop in diverse ways across the Church, the network model was seen as encouraging flexibility, mutual support, shared learning and stronger communication between Synods.

3. The work this year has included:
  - a revised registration process for Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers (AALP) and Locally Recognised Worship Leaders (LRWL) has been introduced, including:  
a new accessible electronic application form with clearer information regarding church membership and references and clearer expectations regarding accredited ministry;
  - a more streamlined approach to accreditation processes;
  - an emphasis on the importance of appropriate support and training for those involved in assessment, including the development of online training opportunities for assessors;
  - an emphasis on the importance of a 5 yearly refresher training for AALPs;

Several Synods reported encouraging growth in the number of LRWLs and those undertaking AALP training.

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## **Ministries and Learning Forum report**

*The functions of the forum are to be a place of oversight and coordination for the technical, policy, governance and finance decisions and actions for the education/learning work undertaken by the Resource Centres for Learning (RCLs) on behalf of the General Assembly*

Members:

Deputy General Secretary (Ministries)

Deputy General Secretary (Faith in Action)

Principal of Luther King Theological College: Adam Scott

Principal of the Scottish College

(Congregational and United Reformed): John McNeill Scott

Principal of Westminster College: Peter McEnhill

Children's Youth Development Officer: John Stevenson

Training and Development Officer: Lucy Cooke

1. The Ministries and Learning Forum has met three times since General Assembly to consider a wide range of matters relating to discipleship, lay learning, ministerial formation and continuing development across the life of the United Reformed Church (see the Faith in Action report for the remit and make-up of the committee). It has reflected on the growing commitment across the denomination to creating a more coherent and sustainable culture of lifelong learning.
2. The Forum identified three significant and interconnected streams of work which will continue to shape priorities over the coming period. These are to be denominationally designed but locally delivered:
  - the development of training and formation for Elders;

- the continuing development of the “You’re Welcome” ethos and history programme; and
- the strengthening of vocational discernment, formation and continuing development pathways across lay and ordained ministries.

### 3. *Elders*

The development of Elders’ training emerged as a significant priority. The Forum recognised that, whilst Elders hold a central leadership role within the conciliar life of the Church, provision for training and ongoing formation remains uneven across the denomination. Discussion therefore focused on developing more coherent and accessible learning pathways, including portfolio-based approaches and the use of online platforms.

Work will now begin on defining the required content, delivery methods, costs and overall framework, before bringing proposals to the two . It was suggested that the existing URC Learning Hub should form the foundation for this work, with resources developed in a familiar Stepwise-style format, for example ‘Faith Filled Eldership’, building on approaches already well recognised across the Church.

### 4. *You’re Welcome*

The URC’s “You’re Welcome,” an Introduction to the ethos and history of the URC course continues to play an important role in introducing Ministers of other denominations, Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers and others to the theology, polity and ethos of the URC. The Forum reflected positively on the increasingly interactive nature of the “You’re Welcome” course, particularly its movement away from purely information-based delivery towards a more reflective and participative model of learning.

The use of case studies drawn from real situations within the life of the Church was seen as especially valuable in helping participants engage not only with the structures and polity of the United Reformed Church, but also with the culture, ethos and patterns of conciliar discernment which shape its life. Discussion-based learning was recognised as enabling participants to wrestle with the practical realities of ministry, accountability, decision-making and relationships within the denomination in ways that are both grounded and formative.

At the same time, the Forum recognised the opportunities offered by developing additional video and digital learning resources. Such materials could provide accessible introductions to key themes within URC theology, history, polity and practice, whilst also supporting ongoing ministerial and lay formation. There was interest in exploring professionally produced resources that could be used flexibly within a range of contexts, including Education for Ministry pathways, Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher training, Elders’ development and wider discipleship programmes. The Forum recognised that high-quality digital resources could help strengthen consistency of learning across the denomination whilst remaining adaptable for local use and discussion.

### 5. *Vocation – New beginnings*

The Forum also recognised the growing importance of developing accessible resources around vocation and discernment for use within local churches. There was a shared awareness that conversations about calling are too often left until individuals have already reached formal candidating processes, rather than being nurtured naturally within the ordinary life of congregations. The development of denominationally rooted

vocation resources was therefore seen as an important way of helping churches become places where gifts can be recognised, explored and encouraged at an earlier stage. Particular emphasis was placed on ensuring that such resources are accessible, practical and usable within local contexts.

The intention is to equip ministers, Elders and congregations to engage confidently in conversations about discipleship, service and ministry in all its forms, including lay leadership, pioneering, accredited ministries and ordained ministry. By making vocational reflection more visible and approachable within the life of local churches, the Forum hopes to encourage a healthier culture of discernment in which individuals are supported to recognise both the breadth of ministry within the Church and the ways in which God may be calling them to serve.

### 6. *And Endings*

The Forum also reflected on the ongoing development of resources to support churches approaching closure or significant transition. It was recognised that many pastorates would benefit from accessible conversation starters and theological resources to assist them in discerning faithful endings and new possibilities for mission and ministry.