Paper C1

Terms of Reference for the Ministries Committee

Ministries Committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Ms Elizabeth Hall **ministriesconvener@urc.org.uk** Deputy General Secretary (Ministries) The Revd Nicola Furley-Smith **Nicola.Furley-Smith@urc.org.uk**
Action required	**Decision.**
Draft resolution(s)	**Resolution 3** **Assembly Executive delegates responsibility to Ministries Committee to make necessary revisions to Ministries policies as needed.** **Resolution 4** **Assembly Exxeceutive approves the changes to the Terms of Reference for the Ministries Committee.**

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Assembly Executive delegates responsibility to Ministries Committee to make necessary revisions to Ministries policies as needed.
Main points	The Ministries Committee currently lacks the clear delegated authority available to some other General Assembly committees to make minor and operational amendments to policies and processes within its remit. As a result, even changes which do not alter an agreed policy or principle may need to return to the General Assembly for approval. At the most recent General Assembly, this contributed to 11 separate Ministries papers being presented. The proposed revision to the Committee's Terms of Reference would: • give the Ministries Committee delegated authority to make minor, operational and administrative changes to policies, procedures, guidance and processes within its remit; • bring the Committee more closely into line with delegated arrangements operating elsewhere in the Church; • enable necessary minor changes to be made without waiting for the General Assembly cycle; and

	• retain clear safeguards so that substantive changes of policy or principle, constitutional matters, and changes materially affecting rights or responsibilities continue to be referred to Assembly Executive or General Assembly, as appropriate. The proposal therefore seeks to ensure that decisions are taken at the appropriate level while maintaining the accountability of the Ministries Committee to the General Assembly.
Previous relevant documents	A2 Terms of Reference for Ministries Committee GA 2025
Consultation has taken place with...	N/A

Summary of impact

Financial	None.
External (eg ecumenical)	None.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Committee is responsible for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Work, Assembly Accredited Lay Preaching, Assembly Accredited Lay Pioneering, Eldership and Stepwise, together with such other ministries and learning programmes as may from time to time be entrusted to it by the General Assembly. 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 by promoting the policies of the Church, advocating ministry in its widest sense, supporting ministry in its varied forms, and facilitating formation, training, learning and development throughout the life of the Church.

1.2 Recognising that the life and mission of the Church depends not only upon accredited ministries but upon the discipleship, learning and service of all God's people, the Committee has responsibility for the strategic oversight and development of denominational lay learning and discipleship initiatives, including Stepwise and any successor programmes. It shall encourage and support accessible, high-quality opportunities for theological reflection, discipleship, leadership development and vocational discernment, enabling people of all ages and backgrounds to grow in faith and confidence in service. In carrying out this responsibility, the Committee shall work collaboratively with Synods, Resource Centres for Learning, local churches and other councils of the Church to ensure that learning opportunities are rooted in the Reformed tradition, responsive to contemporary contexts and supportive of the Church's participation in God's mission.

2. Delegated Authority

2.1 The Ministries Committee exercises authority delegated to it by the General Assembly in relation to the ministries of the United Reformed Church and such other functions as the General Assembly may determine from time to time. In carrying out its work, the Committee acts on behalf of the General Assembly and is accountable to it for the proper discharge of those responsibilities.

2.2 The present arrangements do not, however, provide the Ministries Committee with the same clarity of delegated authority enjoyed by some other committees of the General Assembly. In those areas, committees are able to exercise delegated responsibility for matters falling within their remit, while remaining accountable to the General Assembly and referring matters of substantive policy or principle to the appropriate council of the Church.

2.3 The absence of equivalent delegated authority for Ministries means that matters which are essentially operational are delayed in their implementation. In particular, where a policy or process has previously been agreed by the General Assembly, even relatively minor amendments may need to be brought back to the General Assembly for approval. This can include changes which do not alter the underlying policy or principle but simply clarify wording, update terminology, address an anomaly or improve the operation of an existing process. At the most recent General Assembly, this contributed to 11 separate Ministries papers being brought to the Assembly, a number of which concerned relatively minor amendments to existing policies and processes rather than substantive matters of policy.

2.4 This is not the most effective use of the Assembly Executive or General Assembly's time and can also mean that necessary operational changes have to wait for the Assembly cycle before they can be implemented. The purpose of this delegated authority is therefore to establish a clearer distinction between minor or operational changes, which may properly be made by the Ministries Committee, and substantive changes of policy or principle, which remain matters for the Assembly Executive or General Assembly, as appropriate.

2.5 In exercising this delegated authority, the Committee shall have responsibility for the implementation, administration and regular review of policies, procedures, guidance and operational processes relating to accredited ministries, lifelong learning, ministerial formation, deployment, ministerial support and well-being, standards, accreditation and such other matters as fall within its remit.

2.6 The Committee may approve minor amendments to such policies, procedures, guidance and operational processes where these are necessary to clarify wording or remove ambiguity; ensure consistency between related policies and procedures; reflect changes in terminology, roles, committee structures or administrative arrangements; improve the operation or accessibility of an existing process; correct omissions, anomalies or unintended consequences; or respond to changes in legislation, regulation or recognised good practice.

2.7 Such delegated authority may only be exercised where the amendment does not materially alter the policy or principle previously agreed by the General Assembly or Assembly Executive, nor materially alter the rights, responsibilities or ecclesial relationships of ministers, candidates, churches, Synods or other councils of the Church.

2.8 Where a proposed change is substantive, represents a significant change of policy or principle, materially alters such rights or responsibilities, or concerns a matter previously determined or expressly reserved by the General Assembly or Assembly Executive, the matter shall be referred to the Assembly Executive or General Assembly, as appropriate, for approval.

2.9 Nothing within this delegated authority permits the Committee to make changes to the Basis of Union, the Structure of the United Reformed Church, the Manual, or any other matter requiring the authority of the General Assembly.

2.10 The Committee may take such decisions as are necessary for the effective administration, oversight and development of the ministries and learning programmes entrusted to its care and may delegate specific responsibilities to its sub-committees within their approved terms of reference. The Ministries Committee remains accountable for the exercise of any authority so delegated.

Appendix 1

Terms of reference for Ministries Committee

Committee	Ministries.
Convenor	Appointed by General Assembly following the nominations safer recruitment process (to be included in the numbers below in Committee makeup).
	Deputy General Secretary (Ministries).
Members	Five members with experience of the ministries and a range of learning and serving opportunities across the church including eldership, lay preaching, training and development, children and youth (four lay and one ordained); a Synod Moderator; Convener of the Accreditations sub-committee; Convener of the Assessment Board; An RCL Principal representing College Connective; A URC Youth representative; A representative from the Ministries and Learning Forum; Head of Ministries Learning and Development.
In attendance when required (to cover their areas of expertise)	Convener of MoM sub-committee Convener of Retired Minister' Housing sub-committee Relevant staff members.

Length of term	Initial terms of four years which may be extended for a further term.
Minute Secretary	PA to the Deputy General Secretary (Ministries).
Frequency of meetings	Five times per year (36 hours). January, April, June, September and November (four online and one in person).
Sub groups/sub-committees	The committee has the authority to create sub-committees from time to time to forward its work. Where those sub-committees carry out delegated tasks from the functions of the General Assembly, the Assembly itself shall delegate them through adopting terms of reference or resolution. Otherwise, the committee shall determine the structure of its sub-committees as necessary. As of Assembly July 2026, the sub-committees are: Assessment Board Accreditations sub-committee Ministries and Learning Forum Ministries Support and Wellbeing sub-committee and Retired Ministers' Housing sub-committee.
Quoracy	Eight.
Accountability & Reporting Duties	General Assembly.
Terms of Reference Review	Every four years.

Responsibilities

The Committee is responsible for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Work, Assembly Accredited Lay Preaching, Assembly Accredited Lay Pioneering, Eldership and Stepwise, together with such other ministries and learning programmes as may from time to time be entrusted to it by the General Assembly. Through its main committee, sub-committees and Forum, it is concerned with facilitating the ministry of the whole people of God in the United Reformed Church by promoting the policies of the Church, advocating ministry in its widest sense, supporting ministry in its varied forms, and facilitating formation, training, learning and development throughout the life of the Church.

Recognising that the life and mission of the Church depends not only upon accredited ministries but upon the discipleship, learning and service of all God's people, the Committee has responsibility for the strategic oversight and development of denominational lay learning and discipleship initiatives, including Stepwise and any successor programmes. It shall encourage and support accessible, high-quality opportunities for theological reflection, discipleship, leadership development and vocational discernment, enabling people of all ages and backgrounds to grow in faith and confidence in service. In carrying out this responsibility, the Committee shall work collaboratively with Synods, Resource Centres for Learning, local churches and other councils of the Church to ensure that learning opportunities are rooted in the Reformed

tradition, responsive to contemporary contexts and supportive of the Church's participation in God's mission.

The committee is intentionally committed to taking seriously the place of safeguarding, equality, diversity and inclusion, Net Zero and being an anti-racist church in all we discuss and decide, listening intentently to all voices.

1. The Committee is concerned with central care and conditions of service of chaplaincies in industry, healthcare, higher and further education, prisons and in the armed forces and 'special category' ministry.

2. Along with Synods it has concern for the well-being of Ministers of the Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Workers, Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers, Locally Recognised Worship Leaders, Assembly Accredited Lay Pioneers, Special Category Pioneers and Elders including supervision where appropriate, appraisal, self-evaluation and counselling.

3. It has a number of interlinked and interdependent areas, and works closely with the Faith in Action Committee, the CYDO+ team, the Synod Training and Development+ Network, the College Connective and the Ministries and Learning Forum.

4. The Committee has oversight of the Ministries budget.

5. The Committee has oversight of the Assessment Board and all relevant sub-committees.

6. Its particular responsibilities are:

6.1 advocacy, recruitment, selection and training of candidates for Ministry of the Word and Sacraments (MWS) and Church Related Community Worker (CRCWs) in co-operation with the Synods;

6.2 relations with Resources Centres for Learning, Synods and external bodies which train MWS and CRCWs, both stipendiary and non-stipendiary, Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers, Locally Recognised Worship Leaders, Assembly Accredited Lay Pioneers, Special Category Pioneers and Elders on behalf of the URC;

6.3 oversight along with Synods of the EM2 and EM3 processes, policies and funding;

6.4 development and revision of policies and processes to support the ministries of the church;

6.5 development and revision of the policies and processes to support lay learning of the church including Stepwise and its successors;

6.6 development and revision of policies and processes and management of the statistics related to deployment;

6.7 development of new ministries to support the life and mission of the church;

6.8 oversight of lifelong learning for the accredited ministries of the church ensuring they are accessible, inclusive, integrated and involve coperation and collaboration across the whole denomination; it has delegated authority from General Assembly under functions v vi vii as laid down in the *Structure* of the United Reformed Church in *The Manual;*

6.9 oversight of lifelong lay learning including Stepwise or its successor ensuring accessible, inclusive, integrated and involve coperation and collaboration across the whole denomination;

6.10 work with other committees to ensure best practice in relation to Ministries of the church;

6.11 work with the other departments to ensure best practice in relation to Ministries of the church;

6.12 any other pieces of work deemed necessary by the church.

Delegated Authority

The Ministries Committee exercises authority delegated to it by the General Assembly in relation to the ministries of the United Reformed Church and such other functions as the General Assembly may determine from time to time. In carrying out its work, the Committee acts on behalf of the General Assembly and is accountable to it for the discharge of those responsibilities.

In exercising this delegated authority, the Committee may develop, implement, review, amend and withdraw policies, procedures, guidance and operational processes relating to accredited ministries, lifelong learning, ministerial formation, deployment, ministerial well-being, standards, accreditation and such other matters as fall within its remit, provided that such changes are consistent with the Basis of Union, the Structure of the United Reformed Church and the Manual.

The Committee may take such decisions as are necessary for the effective administration, oversight and development of the ministries entrusted to its care, including the delegation of specific responsibilities to sub-committees where authorised to do so. Matters involving constitutional change, amendments to the Basis of Union, the Structure of the United Reformed Church, the Manual, or matters expressly reserved to the General Assembly, shall be referred to the General Assembly for determination.

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 instruct task groups from beyond its membership to develop specific pieces of work.