

# Paper D1

## The discipleship development fund

### Education and learning committee

Proposal to establish a discipleship development fund managed by the resource sharing task group

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Professor Neil Messer <a href="mailto:neil.messer@winchester.ac.uk">neil.messer@winchester.ac.uk</a> The Revd Fiona Thomas <a href="mailto:fiona.thomas@urc.org.uk">fiona.thomas@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council resolves:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>To accept the principles and processes for a discipleship development fund put forward in this paper by the education and learning committee, in alignment with the strategy accepted by Mission Council in March 2018</b></li><li><b>To operate the discipleship development fund through the existing inter-synod resource sharing mechanism</b></li><li><b>To allocate £100,000 to the first year of operation of the fund (June 2019 to May 2020), to be disbursed according to the policy laid out in appendix A of this paper as an initial step</b></li><li><b>To appoint the resource sharing task group (RSTG) to design the permanent DDF processes, in consultation with the finance and education and learning committees, and present this to Mission Council for approval no later than March 2020.</b></li></ol>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	The paper focuses on supporting the development of disciples, in tune with <i>Walking the Way. Living the life of Jesus today</i> . It aims to start using the proceeds from the sale of the Windermere Centre building.
<b>Main points</b>	The advice from discussion groups at Mission Council in November 2018 was that vision should lead resourcing, and that resourcing should be directed to where it has best effect. This paper proposes both a relatively modest, practical way to get started, and the use of an established mechanism to develop a bolder use of funds in due course.

<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper D1 Mission Council November 2018 and Paper D2 Mission Council March 2018.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Officers of the resource sharing task group and the finance committee.

## Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	The proposed fund of £100,000 in the first year draws on funds designated for this purpose in the education and learning committee budget; the investment income from the capital from the sale of the Windermere Centre building; and 5% of the capital from the sale of the Windermere Centre building. It would augment budgets already set aside by synods for discipleship development.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	No direct impact, although there may be ecumenical projects which could benefit from the involvement of individuals supported by the fund.

## The discipleship development fund (DDF)

### 1. Introduction

1. This paper follows on from paper D1 presented by the education and learning committee (E&LC) to Mission Council in the November 2018 meeting which reminded Mission Council of the discipleship development strategy (DDS) and the agreements made in Mission Council in March 2018:  
[https://urc.org.uk/images/MissionCouncil/March\\_2018/D2.pdf](https://urc.org.uk/images/MissionCouncil/March_2018/D2.pdf)

- 1.1 During the November 2018 meeting of Mission Council, discussion groups were asked to comment on how the funds from the sale of the Windermere Centre might be used. Three options were given: income, some capital and income, or all of the capital. The feedback from the discussion groups is summarised in appendix B. Although not providing definitive answers they generally agreed that action flows from vision. The responses have encouraged the E&LC, with the help of others, to formulate the following proposals for the discipleship development fund (DDF), which if they are approved in principle by Mission Council will be worked out in more detail in ways explained in this paper.

1.2 The DDF proposals are covered under the following sections:

- Alignment with the DDS
- Principles of the DDF
- Processes
- Next steps.

## 2. Alignment with the DDS

2.1 The DDF is clearly part of the means by which the DDS seeks to help individuals, congregations, and the Councils of the church to 'Walk the Way' and 'Live the life of Jesus today'. The fund is in tune with the values embodied in the strategy: inclusion, equity, generosity, and hope. While the mapping of existing resources available through synods and other committees is yet to be completed, this process is likely to be aided by working together on the first year's implementation of the DDF.

## 3. Principles of the DDF

3.1 **Equitable.** All lay<sup>1</sup> people will have access to the fund in ways that take their needs seriously, within the context and aims of the DDS.

3.2 **Enduring.** The fund will be needed for the foreseeable future. Although seeded by the proceeds from the sale of the Windermere Centre, the fund will require further resources in the future.

3.3 **Driven by the DDS.** The purpose of the DDF is to support the implementation of the DDS by giving lay people access to financial resources to support their development, in line with the DDS. It is anticipated that the DDS will need to be updated from time to time, which may then have implications for the use of the fund.

3.4 **Steered by DDF policy.** The education and learning committee is responsible for producing the policy steering the use of the fund. Mission Council is responsible for amending and approving the policy. The current draft of the policy is given as appendix A.

3.5 **Operated by synods.** The total amount available each year from the DDF will be allocated to the synods by the resource sharing task group (RSTG) in consultation with the synods through the inter synod resource sharing (ISRS) mechanism. Each synod will then be responsible for issuing grants to its own people in line with the approved policy. This is to ensure that those taking decisions about grants are as close as possible to those applying for them. Each synod will report back annually to the RSTG on its use of the fund, and the RSTG

---

<sup>1</sup> Lay refers to all who are in good standing with their local church who are not ordained as ministers of word and sacrament, nor commissioned as CRCWs or Assembly-accredited lay preachers (as these groups already have access to separate funding). This embraces elders, church members and adherents of all ages including children and young people. It is for the local church meeting to define who they would consider to be eligible for support.

will provide a report to the education and learning committee, in a format to be agreed by the education and learning committee. The RSTG will also negotiate annually with the synods, through the ISRS mechanism, on the need for further funding.

## 4. Processes

4.1 **There are three processes needed to operate the DDF.** These are income, budgeting, and grants. Although described below, these are yet to be designed in detail. A recommendation covering their design is included below.

4.2 **DDF income.** The fund will be seeded initially by the Windermere building proceeds. Once these are exhausted the fund will be topped up by the synods using a process similar to that used by the ISRS mechanism for the Church Building Fund.

4.3 **Synod DDF budgets.** It is anticipated that each synod will be allocated an annual budget for their part of the DDF to be spent in that year. This will be above and beyond the amount which they are already setting aside for the support of lay people from their own funds. Should a synod wish to exceed their DDF budget there needs to be a process through which their budget can be increased by the resource sharing task group (RSTG) if appropriate. Synods which are currently less able to set aside funds of their own will be given preferential access to the DDF.

4.4 **DDF grants.** Synods will make grants to suitable candidates in accord with the DDF Policy. Once a year, synods will provide the RSTG with a summary of the grants they have made (by category, not recipient's name) and assess the impact of the awards they have made, with a view to informing policy amendments if needed. The RSTG will subsequently provide an annual DDF grant report to education and learning. There will be a simple standard application form designed by the education and learning committee for use by synods.

## 5. Next steps

5.1 **Design of funding approach.** There is a need to design carefully the complete funding approach, which will take time, and is unlikely to be completed in 2019. There is also a desire on the part of Mission Council to start using the fund as soon as possible. To enable these incompatible needs to be satisfied, a temporary solution is recommended.

5.2 **Temporary solution.** The temporary solution is intended to cover the period from June 2019 to May 2020. This will enable permanent proposals to be agreed in the Mission Council in March 2020 and implemented by June 2020. For the temporary solution there would be a total budget for the DDF equal to 5% of the capital, plus the expected income from the capital during that time (about 4%),

plus the £20,000 already allocated from the education and learning budget for 2019. In round figures this will be about £100,000. This budget will be allocated to the synods by the RSTG at its meeting in May 2019, based on its understanding of the financial strengths of the synods, with a view to the financial resources being available to the synods from June 2019. This will give them time to estimate their needs beyond what they are already allocating to funds for individual lay development.

- 5.3 **Permanent solution.** Mission Council is invited to appoint the resource sharing task group (RSTG) to design the permanent DDF processes, in consultation with the finance committee and the education and learning committee, this design to be presented to Mission Council for approval no later than March 2020. The RSTG is already used to working out the equitable use of resources among synods, and their task would be to design the processes to allow for more substantial uses of the funds in tune with some of the ideas suggested in the feedback given in appendix B.

# Appendix A – Policy for the discipleship development fund

(draft dated 16.3.19)

(This is for the period June 2019 to May 2020)

**1. Who is eligible to claim this support?**

Applicants will be committed member or adherents, including young people, of a congregation within the United Reformed Church who are exercising, or want to exercise, a form of lay ministry which is endorsed by their church meeting and their synod. This is intended to be permissive rather than restrictive, and so it could be ministry exercised locally (e.g. eldership or children's work etc.) for a particular pastorate, or regionally. It could also be used to enable someone to develop their discipleship in their life beyond the church. The DDF is not open to Ministers of Word and Sacraments, CRCWs, or Assembly accredited lay preachers as there are other designated funds available for those groups.

**2. What is provided?**

What is needed – although this would normally be restricted to £200 per calendar year per application. It will be for the applicant's synod to decide whether or not to offer a higher level of funding from the DDF.

**3. What can this money be used for?**

The DDF is intended to contribute to the development of lay people and therefore the purposes for which it can be used are as broad as the purposes generated by creativity and vocation, in line with the URC's discipleship development strategy (DDS). The eligible learning activities would include, without being restricted to:

- Courses (at any level) at any of the United Reformed Church Resource Centres for Learning
- Courses and learning events through other learning providers
- Books and resources related to a particular topic
- Attendance at synod learning events
- Travel costs for attending learning events

**4. What criteria should each request fulfil?**

The support requested must be used for enabling the individual's learning for discipleship, so the applicant making the request should be able to say what they expect to learn and how they will use this learning in their area of service for God. This can be within the church, the community or an institution in which they are serving. The application will need to define how and when the outcomes will be assessed.

**5. Are there any restrictions?**

All eligible lay people will have access to the funds, although priority will be given to those who:

- a. cannot get sufficient funding from any other source, e.g. from their church, synod, employment, and their own funds
- b. would not be able to make use of the development opportunity without a grant.

**6. How are applications made?**

Applications are to be made to the synod using a standard form designed by the URC's education and learning committee. Applications should be made well before the beginning of the course or learning event. Retrospective applications will not necessarily be met. Application forms will be obtainable through the synod office and should be sent for authorisation to the designated synod officer. The synod office will be able to advise on who this is, although it should normally be made clear on the application form.

**7. How are grants paid?**

Grants authorised by the designated synod officer are usually paid by the synod by reimbursement to the recipient upon presentation of proof of payment relating to expenditure made. Where necessary the synod can pay the training provider directly.

## Appendix B

### Summary of the outcomes from group discussions at Mission Council November 2018

#### 1. Background

Eight groups met and were asked to discuss Paper D1, which offered three main options for using the proceeds from the sale of the Windermere Centre (£850k) within the context of *Walking the Way. Living the life of Jesus today*. The options given were:

1. Using interest only
2. Using interest and some of the capital
3. Using all the capital

For the full paper see:

[www.urc.org.uk/images/MissionCouncil/Nov2018/D1\\_\\_Education\\_and\\_learning\\_committee\\_\\_Honouring\\_the\\_Windermere\\_Centres\\_legacy\\_through\\_the\\_discipleship\\_development\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.urc.org.uk/images/MissionCouncil/Nov2018/D1__Education_and_learning_committee__Honouring_the_Windermere_Centres_legacy_through_the_discipleship_development_strategy.pdf)

There were four questions in the paper for discussion, and pairs of groups were asked to start with specific questions.

#### 2. Outcomes

##### 2.1.1 Overall messages from the groups

- Vision should come first, and that then determines the spending
- This should be part of a long-term strategy, in the current situation
- Identify connections, resources, gaps and needs at the outset
- Develop discipleship to change the culture of the church
- Develop people rather than buildings
- Focus on the local and nourish the roots
- The legacy of the Windermere Centre is about lay development and taking risk, so be bold

##### 2.2 Considering the options

*Two groups (A, B) favoured option one. They and other groups said about this option:*

- a. It would allow for capital spending in the longer term, as churches would take time to get used to using a fund
- b. Link it with inter-synod resource sharing so that it makes a difference
- c. It could be used for training within churches on facilitation skills, discipling, and online learning



*Three groups (D, E, H) favoured option two. They and other groups said about this option:*

- d. Set up a fund to which synods and committee could apply
- e. Know the need first by connecting with what's already going on in synods
- f. Empower locally, resource nationally – without being staffed from the centre
- g. Give funding to synods to use for lay development
- h. There may be a need to build capacity for managing a bidding system
- i. Support intentional communities – take risks and be kingdom-focused

*Three groups (C, F, G) favoured option three. They and other groups said about this option:*

- j. Use it all over a given timeframe in order to turn round something specific and targeted
- k. Support intentional communities
- l. Support fresh expressions/mission-shaped ministry by restoring the full-time coordinator's post
- m. Take risks, be bold, and do something new
- n. Give start-up funding for new initiatives in targeted areas
- o. Communication is vital to ensure that people access the funding
- p. Invest in one or two small Windermere-style properties to be community houses, for intentional community along the lines of the Mission House in Amsterdam.

### **3. Conclusions**

- i. There's a desire to do something new, but not yet consensus over what that should be, other than attraction to the idea of supporting intentional communities and local development of people for building up the kingdom.
- ii. *Walking the Way* as a guiding vision has not yet "landed" with people consistently.
- iii. The education and learning committee's work on the discipleship development strategy is going in the direction that people are asking for.
- iv. The "joining the dots" task of producing an accurate picture of the resources being set aside by synods, Assembly committees and RCLs is increasingly urgent. When the URC knows what and where it's currently investing in the whole people of God it will then be in a better position to identify the areas of need and growth.
- v. Option one would offer a positive way forward for the time being, and leave options two and three open for the future. Making the interest available as a discipleship development fund would assist interaction with synods, while further work is done on coming to a common vision for discipleship development.

*Secretary for Education and Learning  
Summarised 18.12.1*