

Mission Council –

Appendix Two

A Minister for Digital Worship post

Basic information

Contact name and email address	The General Secretary: john.bradbury@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Resolution 03 1. General Assembly resolves to create a General Assembly ‘Minister for Digital Worship’ post, full-time, for an ordained minister of Word and Sacraments under the terms of the Plan for Partnership and to fund appropriate administrative and digital editing support. As General Assembly post it will be for an initial term of seven years, with the possibility of renewal. Resolution 04 2. General Assembly instructs the General Secretariat, through consultation with the Human Resource Advisory Group, to finalise a Job Description and Person Specification for the role.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To create a ministerial post for someone to specialise in ‘Digital Ministry’, with the express aim of making the ‘Daily Devotions’ and the ‘Daily Devotions Sunday Service’ a permanent feature of the life of the United Reformed Church and to explore ways of extending worship and discipleship development digitally.
Main points	To create a General Assembly Digital Ministries post, funded according to the Plan for Partnership, for an initial seven-year term with associated administrative and digital editing support.
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council Paper M1.
Consultation has taken place with...	The Ministries Department, the Walking the Way Project Manager, the General Secretariat, the Finance Committee, Mission Council.

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Summary of impact

Financial	A stipend would come from the M&M fund as per the Plan for Partnership, and it is estimated that the total on-costs for expenses and administrative support would be £30,000pa. A manse may need to be provided, or a housing allowance, depending on the circumstances of a post-holder.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

The Daily Devotions have become a treasured part of the life of the United Reformed Church.

It emerged as a personal initiative of the Revd Andy Braunston, and the United Reformed Church owes Andy a debt of thanks for his vision and commitment to this piece of work. Around 4,000 people receive the Daily Devotions every day, and about 1,500 people are accessing the Daily Devotions Sunday Service. The Sunday service began at the start of lockdown in 2020, and has become a key means by which many members of the United Reformed Church have been able to continue worshipping whilst in-person worship is suspended.

As lockdown extended, the pressure of time became such that it was increasingly difficult for Andy to maintain the level of output. While a wide range of people from the diversity of the life of the United Reformed Church write devotions and lead worship, the editing is time-consuming. The General Secretariat has made available some resources to allow for some of the editing work to be contracted out.

We propose that it is time to consider making the Daily Devotions and Daily Devotions Sunday Service an integral part of the life of the United Reformed Church in an on-going fashion, and to make a full-time appointment of a minister to serve in a post to explore how these exciting initiatives can be extended to serve the development of worship, discipleship and mission for individuals and congregations of the United Reformed Church.

There are a variety of ways in which the Daily Devotions and the Sunday service might be extended. For example, the Daily Devotions could become Bible study material for local use in small groups. A Zoom Bible study group based on the material might also be possible - creating a sense of community in a disconnected world. Through digital means, pastoral support might be possible for those for whom the Daily Devotions have become their primary experience of church. The recordings of each Daily Devotion have recently been added to a range of podcast providers, making it easier for people to access them. These podcasts could be promoted and developed further allowing people within and without the URC to make use of them.

The Daily Devotions Sunday Worship could serve the wider life of the United Reformed Church in a future where we anticipate the closure of many congregations following the pandemic. There are a variety of ways in which it could be developed and used, including:

- for the housebound

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- for those who wish to supplement, for whatever reason, local church worship
- for those who have moved away from a URC and wish to continue in some sort of fellowship with us (maybe as a supplement to their local non-URC or maybe instead of a local expression of church)
- where a church finds it hard to get pulpit supply but can operate either a DVD player / memory stick / CD player into the church's sound / AV system
- those whose church has closed but wish to form a fellowship group
- those in the 'Wider Fold'.

The emphasis has deliberately been on the low-tech end of the possibilities that technology offers us, particularly with the thought to support those who find engaging with complex new technology challenging, but who can click a link, play a podcast, or listen to a CD that someone has burnt for them. The services could, however, be offered in a video format making them a more attractive pulpit supply resource for some more technically enabled churches who struggle to find worship leaders.

As a ministry engaged with worship and preaching, and with a sacramental aspect through digital celebrations of Holy Communion, along with a discipleship development and potential pastoral aspect, it is appropriate that this role be for an ordained minister. For some, it is possible that the minister appointed may come to feel like 'their minister', and it may be that forms of pastoral support and experiencing fellowship become possible in digital form.

This is a piece of ministry that would have something of a feel of emerging feel to it – it will need to develop according to the possibilities inherent within the wider context and that present themselves. As such, it will be important for the role-holder to take time to explore the context of the work – in this case, a wide digital community – to explore the possible ways in which the ministry may develop and Christian community be fostered. There is an expectation that the role-holder would need to be alert to the diversity of the United Reformed Church culturally and theologically, and ensure that diversity is represented in the worship and discipleship development offered. This is not, at the moment, a proposal to form a new 'digital congregation' rooted around the Daily Devotions Sunday Service, but it is possible the work could lead in this direction (which would require further resolutions of the General Assembly). It is likely, however, that for some, this form of digital ministry would be their primary connection with the United Reformed Church.

It would be possible to view this role as only about maintaining the daily devotions and the Sunday Service as they have been. In that case, it could probably be a part-time role. But there are exciting possibilities to explore a far wider and deeper range of digital resources for the life of the United Reformed Church if the post is full-time. A full-time post would also give us the opportunity to support the work of the Worship Resources Advisory Group more deeply, who currently are served by the Revd Elizabeth Gray-King, who will retire later this year (and whose roll will not be replaced). The post-holder would be able to act as staff-secretary to this group, which will assist in keeping strong relationships between worship resources for physical congregations alongside resources appropriate within the digital context.

To ensure the best use of a minister's time, the role would need supporting in terms of administration and digital editing. We estimate that this might be a 30% role for someone, and that this may be able to be lodged within the Communications Team at Church House (and thus potentially extend the support the communications team can

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offer in terms of digital editing more generally). On top of the stipend, national insurance and pension contributions (which would be as for any minister) we estimate the local expenses of a minister to be around £10,000 (council tax, water rates, mileage, IT costs etc – this is the recommended figure that Ministries use for SCM applications). The costs of administrative and digital editing support for a 30% post would be £14,200 (including on-costs). If a housing allowance were offered instead of a manse, this would reduce the local expenses, but give an added expense in terms of the housing allowance itself. The Finance Committee are satisfied that we can realistically fund this piece of work in this way.

We are aware that there is currently no established protocol for the establishment of pieces of ministry which serve the wider United Reformed Church, lodged at the level of the General Assembly. The Special Category Ministry programme is designed to supplement the ministry of synods and requires the ministry to be located in a specific synod. Individual committees have long established staff secretary posts at Church House which may be filled by ministers. Mission Council and General Assembly have previously adopted recommendations of the Human Resources Advisory Group about the staffing structure at Church House and which posts are for ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament, which are lay posts (though we have some ministers serving in 'lay' posts) and which are open to minister or lay people. The Ministries Committee takes an overall strategic view of the ministries of the church and how they best serve the church. There is a clear determination by the General Assembly that only it may create posts for ministers working within the General Assembly level of church life. There are clearly some discrepancies and ambiguities in the current situation, but it is felt inappropriate to delay the progress of a flourishing piece of work whilst those procedural ambiguities are resolved. The General Secretariat, however, commits to reviewing these ambiguities and bringing potential ways to clarify the situation to a future Mission Council or General Assembly.

A draft Job Description and Person Specification is attached. We are inviting Assembly to empower the General Secretariat to finalise these, in consultation with the Human Resources Advisory Group, before the post would be advertised. The post-holder would be accountable to the Deputy General Secretary for Discipleship, and whilst it is envisaged it would be based remotely from Church House, the minister would be a part of the Discipleship staff team and where appropriate, be able to relate to and serve the committees of the General Assembly when their specialism was helpful. The role would also relate into the Mission Department, particularly relating to wider ongoing reflection on digital ministries being enabled by the Walking the Way Project Manager. We would expect, following good practice, that there would be a small management group for the role, chaired by the line manager. Frequent evaluation and appraisal of the ministry would be integral to the management of the role. A small support group would be formed to support the minister and the development of the ministry.

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Job Description

Job Title	Minister for Digital Worship
Area / Department	Discipleship Department
Reporting to	The Deputy General Secretary Discipleship
Direct Reports	None – administrative support will be provided
Location	This role could be fulfilled from anywhere within the UK. Occasional travel to Church House, London, will be necessary.
Travel	Occasional travel in UK
Working Hours	As per the Plan for Partnership
Salary Band	Stipend as per the Plan for Partnership
Job Summary: To develop a range of digital worship and ministry for the United Reformed Church, continuing and extending the Daily Devotions and Daily Devotions Sunday Service format. To explore how new forms of Discipleship Development for individuals and congregations might be fostered to supplement the Daily Devotions initiative. To support the work of the Worship Resource Reference Group in ensuring that the United Reformed Church makes easily available a wide range of quality worship resources for the work of the whole church.	

Background: This ministry is being created to continue and extend the Daily Devotions and Daily Devotions Sunday Service initiative. These have been hugely popular and successful, and daily over 4,000 people receive the daily devotion. The Sunday Service is engaged with around 1,500 times at the moment, and it is expected that this resource could be developed for the housebound, those unable to connect directly with a local congregation, or for congregations who are lacking adequate leadership in worship. It is hoped that this piece of ministry will explore new ways in which individuals and congregations may deepen their experience of worship and discipleship through the use of digital media. The expectation is that this is making use of the low-tech end of digital media, to enable as wide an appropriation of the ministry as possible including amongst demographics who are hesitant about technology.

Principal responsibilities and duties

Daily Devotions

1. To source a wide range of authors for daily devotions that reflect the diversity of the United Reformed Church.
2. To ensure appropriate editing and dissemination of the Daily Devotions.
3. To publicise the daily devotions widely.
4. To explore the means by which material from the daily devotions can be utilised to form the basis of wider discipleship development materials.
5. To keep up to date appropriate databases for the dissemination of material that is GDPR compliant.

Daily Devotions Sunday Service

6. To source a wide range of worship leaders to prepare and deliver acts of worship, reflecting the full diversity of the United Reformed Church.
7. To ensure that worship is reflective of the URC's commitment to being a multicultural church with an intercultural habit, and to being an intergenerational church.
8. To regularly lead worship for the Daily Devotions Sunday Service.
9. To develop the possibility of filmed versions of Sunday worship with a view to this being appropriate for congregations to use within the context of local fellowship.
10. To promote and appropriately disseminate the Daily Devotions Sunday Service.

Developing Digital Ministries

11. To keep abreast of developments within digital ministry, and to network appropriate for the exchange of best practice.
12. To explore ways in which digital ministry might extend to discipleship development experiences and resources for individuals and congregations.
13. To explore and develop appropriate means of using digital means to offer fellowship and pastoral support with those for whom the Daily Devotions Sunday service is their primary experience of the church.

Supporting appropriate worship and liturgical materials for the United Reformed Church

14. To act as Secretary of the Worship Resources Reference Group.
15. To be aware of developments in worship and liturgy and enable the dissemination of appropriate material to the wider United Reformed Church.
16. To assist in the development of new worship and liturgical resources for the United Reformed Church where appropriate.

Working with Committees [and volunteers]

This section lists the type and level of interaction that this role has with committees and other groups. It will vary from time to time and as directed by the [insert role].

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1. The Worship Resources Advisory Group.
 2. Any relevant General Assembly Committees as and when necessary.
 3. With a wide variety of volunteer writers and supporters of the Daily Devotions.
 4. With a wide variety of worship leaders for the Daily Devotions Sunday Service.
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Expected Standards

This section refers to the way in which the job is done rather than the duties / responsibilities.

1. Communicate effectively with colleagues and internal and external contacts.
2. Actively foster an environment which nurtures equality and cherishes diversity.
3. Act in ways that protect own and others' health, safety and security.
4. Work collaboratively to develop a customer service culture which fosters continuous improvement.
5. Take responsibility for own personal development and support the development of others to enhance their skills and knowledge.
6. Promote, monitor and maintain best practice in data protection principles and practice.
7. Actively promote, manage and maintain best practice in Safeguarding.

This job description reflects the overall scope and responsibilities of the role. However, it is not an exhaustive list, and the job holder is expected to undertake any other reasonable duties that might be requested. All jobs change or evolve over time in order to meet organizational or departmental needs, and this job description will therefore be subject to periodic review and change if required.

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Person specification

Job Title: Minister for Digital Ministries

Requirements	Essential	Desirable	Measurement
Education and qualifications	1. A degree in theology or equivalent.		Application Form
Experience and Knowledge	2. Experience of local pastorate ministry. 3. Experience of digital ministries. 4. Excellent working knowledge of worship and liturgy in the Reformed Tradition. 5. Excellent working knowledge of the diversity of the United Reformed Church. 6. An understanding of the principles of safeguarding in a digital context. 7. An understanding of faith within society and the public square.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of digital ministries beyond the local. • Experience of assisting new forms of ministry and Christian communities to emerge. 	Application Form, presentation and Interview
Skills and Abilities	8. Excellence in worship leading and preaching. 9. Effective use of digital technologies. 10. A working knowledge and understanding of digital editing. 11. Effective pastoral skills. 12. Proven abilities in enabling discipleship development. 13. Excellence in crafting resources for worship and liturgy. 14. The ability to manage work to tight deadlines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellence in audio-visual digital formats. • Experience in managing volunteers. 	Application Form, presentation and Interview.

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	15. An ability to minister contextually and be a reflective practitioner.		
Other	16. DBS enhanced disclosure.		