URC LOCAL CHURCH SAME-SEX MARRIAGE PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE

[Headline]

***X Name* United Reformed Church to offer/now offers marriage services to same-sex couples**

[1.Key details:]

The members of **XX** United Reformed Church in **XX** voted at a Church Meeting on **X date** to register their church building as a venue offering full marriage services to same-sex couples.

This vote was made possible after a resolution was passed at the United Reformed Church General Assembly (the denomination’s highest policy-making body) in July 2016, allowing local United Reformed churches to register for weddings of same-sex couples.

Having been empowered by the URC at national level, the Church Meeting of members at **XXX Church** voted by a majority of **X%** to register the building for same-sex weddings.

[2. Quotes eg:]

**Xxx Church Minister, the Revd X**, expressed his/her personal willingness to conduct weddings for same-sex couples at the church. He/she said:

**“Xxxxxxx”**

[Further quote If applicable]

**“xxxxxx”**

[3. Give next steps]

 The first wedding of a same-sex couple at **XXX Church** took place/will take place on **xx date**.

OR

**XX church** has so far conducted **X number** weddings of same-sex couples, with another **[x number]** services planned over the next **X months**.

[If a service has already taken place, an additional quote could be included newly-weds/others involved]

[3. Closing/background para]

The URC General Assembly decision in 2016 followed legislation in 2013 and 2014 bringing recognition for same-sex marriage into law in England, Wales and Scotland. The legislation stipulated that religious organisations would have to ‘opt in’ if they wished to offer these marriage services.

Further information for editors

1. Same-sex partnerships were first recognised in law in the UK by the Civil Partnerships Act of 2004.
2. The United Reformed Church General Assembly of 2012 granted consent for local churches within the United Reformed Church to register civil partnerships in their buildings.
3. United Reformed churches that wish to offer marriage services to same-sex couples believe that all couples in committed relationships who wish to solemnise their marriage vows before God should have the right to do so.
4. United Reformed churches are not obliged to register their properties for same-sex marriages. It is a matter for local ‘opt-in’, if the local church so decides.