

Paper D/H2

Locally Recognised Worship Leaders and Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers

Ministries and Education and Learning Committees

Basic information

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Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council adopts the process for becoming a Worship Leader or Lay Preacher as detailed in this paper.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	Paper D2 Mission Council March 2020 withdrawn.
Consultation has taken place with...	Synod Lay Preaching Commissioners, Synod Moderators, TDO network, Resource Centres for Learning, Education and Learning and Ministries Committees.

Summary of impact

Financial	None.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	The training pathways for both Locally Recognised Worship Leading and Assembly Accredited Lay Preaching would be recognised ecumenically.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The ending of TLS left the denomination with a gap in provision of an adequate course for worship leading and lay preaching.
- 1.2 In exploring Stepwise as a replacement, it became apparent that Stepwise as non-accredited and unassessed. To make it a programme to be accredited and assessed would change the purpose of Stepwise.
- 1.3 Therefore, both Education and Learning and Ministries were left with the dilemma of needing to provide

- a) an immediate response and
 - b) a clear solution which could be embraced by synods and the wider URC.
- 1.4 Until Mission Council endorses a new direction of travel, and whilst there is a gap in provision, the current suggestion for anyone wanting to train to be a Lay Preacher is that they embark on Stepwise Faith Filled Life as a way of beginning the learning journey. If there is a desire for something more, we would encourage the synod to speak to the Resource Centres for Learning and ask for them to access some of their modules.
- 1.5 Discussions with a variety of people including the Synod Moderators, the RCL Principals, those in the TDO Network and the Lay Preaching Commissioners as well as the Education and Learning and Ministries Committees. The representative of the Methodist Church on Education and Learning Committee fully supported the new approach. Much good thinking has come from our conversations and the following is offered as the proposed direction of travel.

2. General Principles

- a) There is a need for locally based, locally trained worship leaders to serve in their local context (one Church, multi-Church pastorate or mission partnership) as evidenced at the Enquirer's Event in October and at the end of February where we have several people wishing to engage with Worship Leading but not Lay Preaching.
- b) In a denomination the size of the URC questions have been asked about whether we need two 'sorts' of lay preachers raising questions of why would anyone wish to become Assembly Accredited? Our consultation has led us to believe what is needed at this time in the life of the URC is support and training for worship leading and lay preaching.
- c) The outcome of thinking has led us to develop proposals for training that, we believe, show how much we value 'good' training that takes time to engage with, and allows for growth over a period of time.
- d) The processes below also allow for building on previous learning and, in studying to become a Lay Preacher, the course can be tailored to the individual, bearing in mind previous learning and individual needs.
- e) The training of lay people is more vital than ever as our deployment conversations continue. But equally there is a need for ecumenical parity. The Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher process stated below means we have a course that is comparable with our mainstream ecumenical partners and would, therefore, hold a status that is recognisable.
- f) The proposed structure for training those called to a ministry of worship leading encourages personal discipleship development alongside worship leading experience and learning. The ministry will be exercised within the United Reformed Church and so using existing URC learning and education provision is important.
- g) Using Stepwise as the learning platform for Locally Recognised Worship Leaders has its advantages as it is a URC developed foundational learning programme that encourages discipleship development; it is ecumenical and is designed as an intergenerational learning resource. This means that we can enable disciples of all ages, and all stages, to develop their worship leading skills and talents. Many synods are already engaged with Stepwise and have people trained to facilitate the learning streams. During 2020 when everything went online, Stepwise came into its own and can be accessed by people scattered geographically, which increases its reach and accessibility.
- h) Using the Resource Centres for Learning means utilising the skills and expertise of those already offering ministerial training and encourages lay training alongside those training for ordained ministry.

Appendix 1

Locally Recognised Worship Leaders

1. Some people wish to offer themselves to lead prayers, to preach, to lead services in their own church community. They are a vital resource for our churches both now and in the future in a denomination with its deployment issues and reducing numbers of Ministers of Word and Sacraments (MWS). There is an increasing number of people who feel called to offer themselves for this service and, as such, it needs to be recognised and valued as a ministry in its own right and a place to grow from.
2. To support this ministry, it is important that we provide good opportunities for developing lay discipleship and would be named: Locally Recognised Worship Leaders.
3. Training (using the process offered below which accesses Stepwise streams OR following a synod developed course) would offer the exploration of worship leading, reflecting on this learning, provide opportunities to practice skills developed and apply learning. This process would be synod based and accredited and participants would become Locally Recognised Worship Leaders.
4. Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers would remain a formally recognised ministry within the URC. These are people who feel a call to wider service in the synod by offering themselves as a more itinerant preaching resource and one that is more widely recognised and transferable if a person moves within the United Reformed Church. We offer below the suggestion for this training, to be offered URC wide, emanating from, and working, with the Resource Centres for Learning.
5. It is becoming clear that we are moving towards a variety of opportunities for service that allow for progression and accounting for prior learning, if appropriate:

Locally Recognised WL ► Assembly Accredited LP ► NSM Model 4 ► NSM ► SM MWS and CRCW* (MWS and CRCW)

6. **Recommended training: Locally Recognised Worship Leaders (LRWL):**
 - 6.1 Definition: Worship Leaders, leading worship in their local context where they are a member, individually or as part of a team.
 - 6.2 Study can be done as part of a group or joining other individuals to create a study group, from different church contexts.
 - 6.3 The training recommended, for synods to offer and assess, to those wishing to deepen their engagement with Scripture and the leading of worship opportunities, would be:
Completion of
 - **Stepwise Faith Filled Life**
 - **Stepwise Faith Filled Worship**
 - **A portfolio** that is created as an ongoing part of study (reflections, journaling, resources, worship material and other evidence using a variety of media, as preferred)
 - **A final presentation** (using technology, art or other format) or **1000 word essay**
 - **An assessed service** (as a group or individual).

- 6.4 The service would be assessed by the Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner / Advocate or someone deputising for them, with appropriate recognition and a commissioning service.
- 6.5 This would take approximately 18 months to two years and allows time for growth and development.

Proposed process:

1. Potential Worship Leader (or group from a local church context) contact(s) the Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner or Advocate or TDO (or equivalent);
2. Church meeting gives approval for training;
3. The synod ensures that everyone has a DBS / PVG check and completes a Safeguarding course before starting training;
4. The person / group register(s) for Stepwise and embark(s) on their learning journey, supported by the synod through the Lay Preaching Commissioner / Advocate, with regular contact. Cost is between £5 - £30 per stream on a "pay what you can" basis.
5. A portfolio is developed during the learning journey, including Stepwise extension tasks.
6. Final presentation, or 1000 word essay, is given / submitted and assessed service takes place.
7. This leads to Synod Recognition or a recommendation made to continue with a further time of study to continue to develop skills.
8. For Locally Recognised Worship Leaders there will be a Commissioning service in the local context.

OR Recognising that some synods have their own synod recognised worship leading course (ideally with similar content and similar time span of 18 months to two years to allow for development and growth).

Appendix 2

Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers

1. **RECOMMENDED TRAINING: Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers (AALP): Training would take place through the Resource Centres for Learning (RCLs) and needs to be accessible, inclusive and thorough, taking account of prior learning and individual needs.**

This suggested programme led by the Resource Centres for Learning (which would take approximately two years and would have specific times of the year for beginning study) covers:

Section one – personal development

- 1a: Learning skills
- 1b: Personal devotional life

- 1c: Understanding reflective practice
- 1d: Different spiritualities, linking in with the Reformed tradition
- 1e: Personal resilience and finding God in difficult times.

Section two – crafting worship

- 2a: What is worship? Putting an order of service together
- 2b: Reformed tradition of worship
- 2c: Leading public prayer
- 2d: Hymns and music in worship.

Section three – the word

Audit (complete and have assessed) the level 4 Biblical Module from Common Awards

- 3a: The Bible in worship
- 3b: What is a sermon? What are the alternatives to a 'one-15-minute-sermon slot'?
- 3c: Putting together a sermon. Alternative 'models' for the 'one-15-minute-sermon slot'

Section four – the theology of the URC

Undertake the Ethos and History of the URC course.

- 4a and 4b: Sessions based on The Nature Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church
- 4c: Working ecumenically.
- 4d: Our inter-faith context.

Section five – contextualising

- 5a: Contextualising worship and preaching.
- 5b: Taking account of different learning styles and personality types.
- 5c and 5d: Two sessions with input from C&YW: C&Y / URC today; inter-generational worship.
- 5e: Pastoral care and confidentiality around worship.

2. Delivery

We believe that mixed-mode will be best. That might mean some sessions by Zoom and some pre-recorded with work to be done around them by the student. We feel that two weekends a year (or a 'summer school' / equivalent) would be helpful both for community-building and for personal 'assessment' purposes by the RCL.

3. Additionally:

Check that there is an up to date / DBS or PVG certificate and Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk course completed.

Safe Boundaries in Pastoral Practice (RCL version of SSS)

Equality and Diversity training

Worship and the Art of Public Speaking (including speech therapist, and being videoed and 'critiqued')

Regular assessed worship (or elements of worship building up to full act) – Synod Mentor regularly feeds back; RCL Tutor to visit twice a year. Student needs to demonstrate growth and response to comments from Mentor and Tutor.

This additional learning will be tailored to individual needs and will be offered as appropriate and potentially alongside other students (not just Lay Preachers).

(Many lay preachers may already have attended training in leading funerals and in presiding at Sacraments, so we did not wish to make this compulsory. However, RCLs could provide such training at the request of the student if they register that interest at the beginning of their course.)

4. Proposed process: the role of the synod

We note that this programme is for General Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers whose ministry will not only be focussed on their existing synod. However, we anticipate synods would wish to be involved, and the RCLs would wish them to be a partner in this training. The following is suggested:

- 4.1 A candidate approaches Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner / Advocate and / or the TDO (or equivalent) and meets with them to explore call and complete paperwork, if appropriate. LP Commissioner/Advocate contacts Secretary for Ministries. (Exact process tbc once training process is agreed by Mission Council.)
- 4.2 Church Meeting gives approval for training.
- 4.3 The synod offers a Mentor, ideally an experienced LP to meet regularly with the student to:
 - a) reflect with them on their course
 - b) be present when they lead worship (parts of worship) and feed back to them.
 - c) reflect on extracts from journal with student to help them develop as reflective practitioners.

Lay Preaching Commissioner / Advocate to be responsible for arranging, or taking on, this role.
- 4.4 The synod ensures that everyone has a DBS / PVG check and completes a Safeguarding course before starting training
- 4.5 The candidate attends the History and Ethos course.
- 4.6 The Lay Preaching Commissioner / Advocat liaises with RCL about Safeguarding, Funerals and Sacraments training either already provided to the student, or the synod may prefer to offer such training if they already have training planned.
- 4.7 Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner / Advocate to keep in contact with Lay Preacher in training.

Portfolio includes: journaling, book reviews, reflection, preparation of prayers, worship material, service preparation, work with mentor, written assignments, intergenerational experience, optional reflection on sacraments and funerals. (More detail in document).

5. Assessment

The Mentor to talk to the RCL Tutor on a six-monthly basis and to raise any concerns with the RCL, if necessary, in between times.

- 5.1 Student to meet with the Mentor every two months, and with RCL Tutor once a term when the Tutor will ensure any concerns raised by the Mentor are discussed and future 'action points' noted.
- 5.2 Annual assessment of portfolio at a meeting of student, Mentor and Tutor. Mentor and Tutor agree:
- at the end of Year one, what progress needs to look like in Year two; (advice may be given that the student is not suitable for General Assembly accreditation and the synod will offer pastoral and vocational support)
 - at the end of Year two, what, if anything, is further needed before the RCL signs off on Assembly Accreditation. (Advice may be given that the student is not suitable for General Assembly accreditation and the synod will offer pastoral and vocational support).
- 5.3 Tutor and College Principal (or another Tutor if the personal Tutor is the College Principal) to make the final decision on signing off on Assembly Accreditation. The Lay Preachers' Leaving Certificate should then be granted (with or without funerals' 'permission').
- 5.4 Recognition within the Lay Preacher's Church and synod through a Commissioning Service.

6. Other relevant considerations:

- Prior learning will also be considered during the training.
- This programme of study will take individual needs into consideration, particularly in relation to specific needs or previous education.

7. Costings

- 7.1 In terms of showing the 'workings' of real costings we have included:
- Tutor's preparation, delivery and assessment
 - Administration costs
 - Registry costs.
- 7.2 The sums have been done on the basis of a cohort of six and using as the basis the fee paid to an external tutor for taking responsibility for a module (preparation, delivery and marking) which is, at present, £1,400 per module. We felt that, in terms of the work involved, this programme was the equivalent of two modules. There are 16 sessions to a module and the sessions above are more than that, plus the time spent on being a personal tutor, liaising with the Mentor and synod, and visiting and assessing services. The year's library fee is needed because undertaking an audited course in one year would give free access to the library, but not in the other year.

That gives us a costing of (at 20-21 costs – they are reviewed each year) **for a two-year course:** £2,800 / 6 = 470 (slightly rounded up)

+ audit fee per student	200 (fixed cost)
+ notional admin and registry fee per student	60
+ one year's external library membership per student	60
+ allowance in case of external speakers' expenses	50
Total	£840 - £1000

Additional costs: travel, accommodation, mentor and tutor's travel

- 7.3 The costings are not the charge to the student. Although costings are higher than TLS we believe this gives extremely good value for money. Should the cost be prohibitive for a student, a grant may be made available.