

Paper M1

The Daily Devotions and Daily Devotions Sunday Service

The General Secretariat

Enabling resolution to initiate work on the future of the Daily Devotions Sunday Service

Basic information

Contact name and email address	The General Secretary: The Revd Dr John P Bradbury john.bradbury@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council instructs the General Secretariat to consult widely and bring costed proposals to General Assembly 2021 with a view to making the Daily Devotions and the Daily Devotions Sunday Service a continuing feature of the life of the United Reformed Church.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To explore the future of the Daily Devotions and the Daily Devotions Sunday Service.
Main points	To invite the General Secretariat to explore possible options for the future of the Daily Devotions Sunday Service.
Previous relevant documents	
Consultation has taken place with...	The Secretary for Ministries; the Walking the Way Project Manager; The Revd Andy Braunston.

Summary of impact

Financial	None – potential cost of ministry and / or staff time in the future.
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 four thousand people receive the Daily Devotions every day, and around one and a half thousand 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 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. Whilst 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.

It still remains unclear when in-person worship will resume for many, and Sunday services have now been commissioned until the end of 2021.

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.

There are a variety of ways in which the Daily Devotions and the Sunday service might be extended in ways that help support and develop people in their lives of discipleship. 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. 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 wide 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 the Sunday Service could be developed and used, including:

- for the housebound
- 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.

Consultation would be needed with a wide variety of stakeholders, and there would be a range of questions that would need addressing, such as (but by no means exclusively):

- Who would benefit from on-going Daily Devotions and the Daily Devotions Sunday Service?
- What sort of human resources would be necessary? Would this include a role for an ordained minister of Word and Sacraments? What proportion of someone's time might be necessary to develop the possibilities?
- What would the costs be?
- How might this development fit with the continuing felt need for extended membership of the URC, or emerging forms of virtual church life?
- What might a longer term vision for the possible extensions of this piece of ministry be?