

# Paper M2

Membership of the United  
Reformed Church, The General  
Assembly and Mission Council  
Clerk

United Church 2014  
Church 2014  
Reformed Church 2014  
Church 2014



# Paper M2

## Clerk: Membership of the United Reformed Church, The General Assembly and Mission Council

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Margaret Carrick Smith clerk@urc.org.uk
<b>Action required</b>	Decision on recommendations to General Assembly and on a proposed change to the Rules of Procedure.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>See text of paper</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Clarity and consistency concerning the membership of the United Reformed Church, the General Assembly and Mission Council.
<b>Main points</b>	
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The officers of the Assembly, the officers of the Law and Polity Advisory Group and the officers of the Synod of Scotland (concerning paragraph 5).

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	

# Membership of the United Reformed Church, The General Assembly and Mission Council

## Membership Matters

1. During the meeting of Mission Council held in November 2013 an issue arose concerning whether those who were not members of the United Reformed Church (URC) could be members of the Assembly and Mission Council. The matter arose in connection with the three new Deputy General Secretary posts, but has wider relevance. Furthermore, there are some related issues and it now seems appropriate to gather them together for the sake of clarity and consistency.

## The General Assembly

2. On the whole, the Structure is silent on the question of whether members of the Assembly must be members of the URC. When it was first drafted it may well have been assumed that those representing (then) District Councils would be members. As new categories of membership were added to the list, in some cases it was specified that they must be drawn from the URC membership, but nothing is laid down about the matter in general.

3. At General Assembly in 2006 a resolution was passed (number 51) which stated that, with a few exceptions, members of Assembly should be members of the URC. However, this decision was not enshrined in the Structure, and so is not widely known. I now propose that the Structure be amended to clarify this point.

4. At the same time as proposing this amendment I suggest that another change be considered. The Structure currently states that: "Where the moderator of synod is an officer of the Assembly, a committee convener or otherwise entitled to membership of the Assembly, the synod concerned shall appoint a substitute as its representative". Whilst it is clearly appropriate that if the moderator of a synod is an officer of the Assembly an alternative synod representative should be appointed, the view has been expressed that since being a convener of a standing committee does not impede the synod moderator from representing the synod appointment of a substitute in that case is unnecessary. I therefore suggest that the Structure be amended to restrict this provision.

5. I am suggesting one other change which, if accepted, will result in the need for an amendment to the Structure. Currently the Synod of Scotland has six additional representatives to the Assembly, under category 2.(6)(h). At the time of union these additional places were put in place in lieu of all former chairmen of the Congregational Union of Scotland being entitled to membership as were all former chairmen, presidents and moderators of the other constituent parts of the URC. Since that time, of course, that provision has been altered so that now only 2 of the former leaders in England and Wales are members (see category 2.(6)(j)). It is therefore now proposed that the Synod

of Scotland should no longer be entitled to an additional six representatives. The officers of the Synod of Scotland have indicated that they would be willing to accept this change. The removal of these additional representatives does not itself require a change to the Structure, and I therefore propose the following resolution which, if passed by the Assembly, would take effect for the 2016 Assembly:

### **Resolution 1**

**Mission Council agrees to propose the following resolution to General Assembly:**

**General Assembly agrees that with effect from the General Assembly of 2016 there shall no longer be six additional representatives of the Synod of Scotland under category 2.(6)(h).**

6. The resolution which follows contains, in addition to those outlined in paragraphs 3 and 4 above, a proposed amendment to the Structure to add the former chairmen of the Congregational Union of Scotland to the list in category 2.(6)(j). If Resolution 1 is not passed, that amendment will be removed from the resolution. I propose the following resolution:

### **Resolution 2**

**Mission Council agrees to present the following resolution to General Assembly:**

**General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to the Structure of the United Reformed Church:**

#### **Paragraph 2.(6)**

**Amend the first sentence to read: “The General Assembly which shall embody the unity of the United Reformed Church and act as the central organ of its life and the final authority, under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, in all matters of doctrine and order and in all other concerns of its common life shall consist of members of the United Reformed Church (save for those in categories (g), (l), (m) and (n)) as follows:”**

**Amend category (d) by the deletion of the words: “, a committee convener or otherwise entitled to membership of the Assembly,” so that it reads: “Where the moderator of synod is an officer of the Assembly the synod concerned shall appoint a substitute as its representative”.**

**Amend category (f) by the deletion of the words: “being members of the United Reformed Church,” (twice).**

**Amend category (j) by the addition of the words: “former chairmen of the Congregational Union of Scotland,” before the words: “provided that” and delete the words “such former officers are members of the United Reformed Church and that”**

**Amend category (k) by the deletion of the words: “, being members of the United Reformed Church,”**

**{N.B. The current text of the categories of membership in the Structure is shown in Appendix 1.}**

7. I propose that Mission Council should recommend to the Assembly that the three deputy general secretary post-holders should be members of the Assembly, and therefore propose the following resolution:

### **Resolution 3**

**Mission Council agrees to propose the following resolution to General Assembly:**

**General Assembly agrees to appoint the deputy general secretary administration and resources, the deputy general secretary discipleship and the deputy general secretary mission as members of Assembly under category 2.(6)(n).**

8. Since it is the intention that normally the deputy treasurer will, in due course, be appointed as the treasurer, who as convener of the finance committee must be a member of the URC, I propose that it should be determined that the deputy treasurer should be a member, and also that Mission Council recommend to the Assembly that s/he be appointed as a member of Assembly. I therefore propose the following resolution:

### **Resolution 4**

**Mission Council agrees to propose the following resolution to General Assembly:**

**General Assembly agrees that the deputy treasurer shall be a member of the United Reformed Church, and further agrees that the deputy treasurer for the time being shall be appointed as a member of Assembly under category 2.(6)(h).**

9. It is currently not explicitly stated that the clerk of the Assembly should be a member of the URC. I propose that Mission Council amend the Rules of Procedure to rectify this by means of the following resolution:

### **Resolution 5**

**Mission Council resolves to amend the Rules of Procedure of the United Reformed Church as follows:**

**Amend paragraph 5.1 so that it reads:**

**5.1 The General Assembly shall appoint a clerk of Assembly who shall be a member of the United Reformed Church. The Nominations committee shall submit a name to the General Assembly for appointment as clerk, for six years in the first instance, renewable for a maximum additional period of four years, but ensuring an overlap with a period of service of the general secretary.**

## MISSION COUNCIL

10. When the membership of Mission Council was determined in 1992 the legal adviser was included as a full member. S/he is not, however, a member of Assembly, but “in attendance”. The Law and Polity advisory group (LPAG) has considered this as part of its work following the report of the Resolution 38 Commission, and Mission Council has before it a paper from the LPAG which recommends that in future the legal adviser be in attendance at Mission Council rather than a member.

11. At its meeting in November 2013 Mission Council agreed to recommend to the Assembly that the convener of the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee should be a member of Mission Council. (13/42(5))

12. Also in November 2013 the officers proposed that the three deputy general secretaries should be members of Mission Council. This was deferred for further consideration. The officers now present the proposal again in the light of this clarification of the position of those who are not members of the URC.

13. Mission Council, contrary to the implication of its name, is not a council of the church. It does not have a separate section in the Structure. Originally, this body was the Executive Committee. Of course the nature and functions of Mission Council differ from those of the old Executive Committee, but for most of its work it functions as a Committee of the Assembly. At other times, however, it acts on behalf of the Assembly. The Structure makes it clear that members of standing committees must be members of the URC. Therefore in line with both the General Assembly and the standing committees it is proposed that it be stated explicitly that (with a few exceptions) members of Mission Council should be members of the URC.

14. Sometimes the officers receive requests from synods and other bodies for permission to send observer(s) to Mission Council. The resolution which follows seeks to bring clarity to this issue.

15. I propose the following resolution which deals with all the above issues:

### Resolution 6

**Mission Council agrees to present the following resolution to General Assembly:  
General Assembly agrees that the membership of Mission Council shall be:**

1. **Moderators of Assembly**
2. **Moderators-elect**
3. **Immediate past moderators**
4. **General secretary**
5. **Deputy general secretaries**
6. **Clerk**
7. **Treasurer**
8. **Deputy treasurer**
9. **Conveners of all Assembly standing committees**
10. **Synod moderators**
11. **Three further representatives of each synod**
12. **Three representatives of FURY (including the FURY Moderator)**
13. **Chair of the United Reformed Church Trust**

**With the exception of those in category 5 (the deputy general secretaries) all the above shall be members of the United Reformed Church. The legal adviser and the convener of the Law and Polity advisory group shall be in attendance with the right to speak at all times, but not to use consensus cards or to vote.**

**Staff secretaries shall be in attendance with the right to speak (except during the decision stage of the consensus process) but not to use consensus cards or to vote.**

**Up to two ecumenical representatives may attend with the right to speak at all times, but not to use consensus cards or to vote.**

**Also present shall be the moderators' chaplains, the minute secretary, the consensus adviser (pending separate decision) and other staff members as agreed by committee conveners and the general secretary. These may participate in group sessions, and may speak during plenary sessions with the consent of the Moderator.**

**From time to time there may be visitors and/or observers present by prior arrangement with the general secretary. They shall not have the right to speak or participate in any way during plenary or group sessions, unless with the explicit consent of the Moderator.**

## APPENDIX 1

### **Extract from the Structure as at December 2013**

2.(6) The General Assembly which shall embody the unity of the United Reformed Church and act as the central organ of its life and the final authority, under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, in all matters of doctrine and order and in all other concerns of its common life shall consist of:

- (a) Such number of representatives of synods (ministerial and lay in equal numbers) as the General Assembly shall from time to time determine. These numbers shall be calculated proportionately to the total membership of each synod, as recorded in the year book of the United Reformed Church (at present this calculation shall be such as to produce a total of synod representatives not exceeding 250);
- (b) Among the representatives of synods shall be included at least two from each synod aged 26 or under, at the date of appointment. Should a synod prove unable to make such an appointment it may appoint from another synod but these persons must be 26 or under at the date of appointment;
- (c) The moderators of the General Assembly and of the synods, and such other officers of the General Assembly as the General Assembly shall from time to time determine (The Assembly has determined that the clerk of Assembly and the general secretary shall be members of Assembly);

- (d) Where the moderator of synod is an officer of the Assembly, a committee convener or otherwise entitled to membership of the Assembly, the synod concerned shall appoint a substitute as its representative;
- (e) The convener of each of the standing committees of the General Assembly;
- (f) A staff representative and a student representative being members of the United Reformed Church, from each of such theological colleges as the General Assembly has designated as resource centres for learning, and a staff representative and a student representative being members of the United Reformed Church, from such other colleges or centres as shall from time to time be designated by the education and learning committee as engaged in significant training for the United Reformed Church;
- (g) Such number of representatives from the partner churches of the United Reformed Church outside of Britain and Ireland as the Assembly shall from time to time determine (currently six);
- (h) Such other ministers, church related community workers and members of the United Reformed Church as the General Assembly shall from time to time determine (the Assembly has added to its membership one serving United Reformed Church chaplain to the forces, nominated each year by the organising secretary of the United Board, in consultation with the three principal chaplains, and six representatives of the Synod of Scotland);
- (i) The two most immediate past moderators of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church;
- (j) Two in total from the following: former moderators of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, past chairmen of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, past presidents of the Congregational Church in England and Wales, former moderators of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, former chairmen or presidents of the Annual Conference of the Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland, former presidents of the Annual Conference of the Re-formed Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland, provided that such former officers are members of the United Reformed Church and that they shall have been elected by a college consisting of all such past and former moderators, presidents and chairmen as are members of the United Reformed Church;
- (k) Such number of representatives of the Fellowship of United Reformed Youth, being members of the United Reformed Church, as the Assembly shall from time to time determine (at present three);
- (l) Representatives of other denominations in the United Kingdom as the General Assembly may from time to time determine (currently six);
- (m) A representative of the Council for World Mission;
- (n) Such number of Assembly-appointed staff as the General Assembly may from time to time determine;
- (o) The chair of the United Reformed Church Trust.