

To: Members of Mission Council,
staff in attendance and observers

February 2018

Dear Colleagues,

**Mission Council
Monday to Wednesday 19 to 21 March 2018
High Leigh, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire**

I look forward warmly to seeing you at Mission Council, and write now to mention several practical matters as we prepare for the meeting.

1. There will be an introduction session at 12 noon on the first day for new Mission Council members, to outline processes and procedures, introduce the Assembly officers, and explain some items of business. Old timers who would like to attend are welcome too. A full version of our rules for procedure is in the 'Standing Orders' (which are also used at General Assembly). These can be found on the URC website at www.urc.org.uk/about-mission-council.html
2. At General Assembly and Mission Council meetings we take certain business *En Bloc*. The fact that an item is listed as *En Bloc* does not make it less important than timetabled items. Rather, the *En Bloc* list contains those items where the Moderators think that decisions might be reached responsibly without further discussion. You will see that the agenda includes a slot when these items will be voted on.

I suggest you read the *En Bloc* papers first. This will give you time to contact the author of a paper if you have questions. Authors' names and email addresses are noted on the cover sheets. If you think any of these papers need discussion at Mission Council, particularly if you disagree with a proposed course of action, you may ask that a piece of business be removed from *En Bloc*. A sign-up sheet will be available at the meeting, where you can list the paper you wish to be withdrawn. If an item gets three signatures by close of business on the first day, it will be withdrawn from *En Bloc* and added to our agenda, with time given for discussion.

I need to remind you too that we really rely on every Mission Council member to read the papers and take note of information to relay back to their synods. In using the *En Bloc* method of decision-making there is no wish to bury information or to avoid discussions which Mission Council ought to have. We must all ensure the appropriate flow of information from Mission Council to the synods.

3. You should already have a number of papers from the first mailing: a cover letter, an expenses form, directions to our venue, a list of members, and (for new members) 'What we are about in Mission Council.' If any of these are missing, please contact Helen Munt at Church House, 020 7916 8646, helen.munt@urc.org.uk
4. Observers and URC staff who are not members of Mission Council should not participate in decision-making. Staff members are welcome to speak but, like observers, they should not use orange and blue cards.
5. I remind you that we are not expected to post on social media sites during business sessions. This restriction only applies when Council is in session; members may join in online debates during breaks, about business that is completed (although not on business that has only been adjourned to a later

session of the meeting). As ever, everything shared on these sites is the responsibility of the author and subject to the same defamation laws as any other written communication.

6. All bedrooms are en-suite (except for a small minority which aren't – those who are not in an en-suite room will have already received an email from Helen Munt). To comply with the venue's health and safety regulations, please do not bring food from outside into the Centre, nor take food from the dining room to your room.
7. Below are the papers expected at the meeting, listed according to the ways the Moderators presently mean to address them:

Category A: En Bloc

B1	Children's and youth work committee	
D1	Westminster College Governors	
H1, H2, H3	Ministries committee	
I1	Mission committee, re Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana	
I2	Additional mission Committee paper	*
I3	Walking the Way	
J1	Nominations committee	
J2, J3	Additional Nominations papers	*
K1	Pastoral Reference	
P1	Complaints Policy	
R1, R2	Safeguarding	
T1	Ministerial Disciplinary Process	
V1	Resource sharing task group	

Category C: Consensus Decision Making

D2	Education and Learning: discipleship development strategy	
L2	URC Trust: approach to risk management	*
M1	Supporting the Church's worship	
Y1	Procedure for electing Assembly Moderators	
Z1	The Synod Moderators: criteria for pruning	

For discussion but no resolution

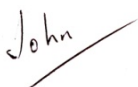
F1	Faith and Order: scripture and the Church	
G1	Finance committee: planning for the budget	
L1	URC Trust: Church House and the Windermere Centre	*
M2	The Church's hymnody	
N1	Future of General Assembly	

8. A number of papers, which have to be prepared late, are marked above with an asterisk.* These will be available online a few days before the meeting and, if you have requested a hard copy of the papers, this will be available on arrival at the meeting.
9. During worship at Mission Council, the Moderators and Chaplains will draw on the Letter to the Philippians, and they invite us to read and reflect on this letter ahead of our meeting.

As always, please come to share, listen, reflect and discern together, and to support each other in fellowship outside the formal timetable. Let us treat one another with grace as together we seek the guidance of God.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,



Mission Council

High Leigh, Hoddesdon,
Hertfordshire
19 to 21 March 2018



The
United
Reformed
Church



www.urc.org.uk

Set and published by communications team, Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT
on behalf of Mission Council.

Groups – March 2018

The first named person in each Group is asked to act as group Leader and the second named person in each group as Reporter.

<p>A</p>	<p>HELEN LIDGETT <i>Leader</i> GEORGE FARIS <i>Reporter</i> Ray Adams Tina Ashitey Gwen Collins Derek Estill David Herbert Keir Hounsome Chris Parker Fiona Thomas David Thompson Pam Tolhurst</p>	<p>B</p>	<p>DAVID GREATOREX <i>Leader</i> PETER KNOWLES <i>Reporter</i> Francis Brienen Elaine Colechin Ruth Dixon Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor Jacky Embrey Simon Fairnington Tony Haws Fran Kissack John Samson Alan Spence</p>
<p>C</p>	<p>PETER MEEK <i>Leader</i> ELIZABETH CLARK <i>Reporter</i> Bridget Banks James Coleman Bernie Collins Jake Convery Bill Gould David Grosch-Miller Rachel Lampard Margaret Marshall David Pickering Steve Summers</p>	<p>D</p>	<p>PHILIP NEVARD <i>Leader</i> HELEN MEE <i>Reporter</i> Craig Bowman John Ellis Ken Forbes Rita Griffiths Katie Henderson Graham Hoslett Morag McLintock Andrew Prasad Phil Wall Alan Yates</p>
<p>E</p>	<p>RICHARD CHURCH <i>Leader</i> CLARE DOWNING <i>Reporter</i> Melanie Campbell Ian Hardie Martha McInnes Jim Merrilees Marilyn Piper Chris Reed Mark Robinson Victor Russell Paul Whittle</p>	<p>F</p>	<p>DICK GRAY <i>Leader</i> NICOLA FURLEY-SMITH <i>Reporter</i> James Breslin Adrian Bulley David Coaker Gwen Jennings Rosie Martin Simeon Mitchell Sam Richards Maureen Shepherd Kevin Watson</p>
<p>G</p>	<p>SIMON WALKLING <i>Leader</i> JOHN PIPER <i>Reporter</i> Susan Brown Andrew Evans Natalie Gibbs Michael Jagessar Shirley Miller Andrew Mills Jenny Mills Bill Robson Nigel Uden</p>	<p>H</p>	<p>PHILIP BROOKS <i>Leader</i> RUTH WHITEHEAD <i>Reporter</i> Jane Baird Chris Byrne Steve Faber Joan Grindrod-Helm Brian Jolly Hannah Jones Charles Mather Neil Messer Andrew Middleton</p>

Mission Council Agenda

19 to 21 March 2018

Please note that this running order can only be provisional. The Moderators will adjust it if items get dealt with more quickly, or take longer, than we initially expect.

Monday 19 March		
12:00 – 12:45	Introduction session for new MC members	
12:00 – 12:45	<i>Registration in the Main House reception area</i>	
1:00	Lunch	
Session One		
2:00 – 3:30	Opening Worship Introductions and administration Minutes from November 2017 Matters arising	
3:30	Tea Break <i>Access to rooms available</i>	
Session Two		
4:30 – 6:15	Financial projections The Synod Moderators: criteria for doing things well	G1 Z1
6:45 – 8:00	Dinner	
Session Three		
8:00 – 9:15	Resourcing worship in the URC The Church's hymnody: introduction Evening prayers	M1 M2
Tuesday 20 March		
8:30	Breakfast	
Session Four		
9:15 – 10:45	Morning worship Education and Learning: discipleship development	D2
10:45	Coffee	

Session Five 11:15	The Future of General Assembly Scripture and the Church	N1 F1
1:00 – 2:00	Lunch	
Session Six 2:00 – 4:00	Free time or remaindered business	
Session Seven 4:30 – 6:30	En Bloc Business Nominations: supplementary reports Morrell and Jones: electing Assembly Moderators The Church's hymnody: digest of responses	En Bloc J2 & J3 Y1 M2
6:45 – 8:00	Dinner	
Session Eight 8:00 – 9:30	Communion Service with Moderators' Reflections	
Wednesday 21 March		
8:30	Breakfast	
Session Nine 9:30 – 11:15	Opening Prayer The URC Trust: Church House and Windermere The URC Trust: risk management Remaindered business	L1 L2
11:15 – 11:45	Coffee	
Session Ten 11:45 – 12:45	Farewells, thanks and closing worship	
1:00	Lunch and departures	
1:45 – 3:00 (max)	Meeting of committee convenors	

Paper B1

Children's and youth work committee

Update March 2018

Church 2017
United
Church **2018**
Reformed
Church Church 2018

Paper B1

Children's and youth work committee

Update March 2018

Basic information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Jenny Mills (committee convenor) revdjmill@btinternet.com
Action required	Questionnaire for review to be distributed, completed and returned by Misson Council members.
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To update Mission Council on the progress of the Review and the thinking of the children's and youth work committee on current and future developments.
Main points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Children's and Youth Work in the URC – progress • The Big Speak Out event • Greenbelt • Crossfire Camp • Gathering for local church children's, family and youth workers
Previous relevant documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's and Youth Work Review Terms of Reference • Children's and youth work committee minutes October 2017 • Mission Council Report from November 2017 children's and youth work committee update.
Consultation has taken place with...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The General Secretary • The Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship). • The children's and youth work committee. • Education and Learning (The Revd Fiona Thomas) • Assembly arrangements committee

Summary of Impact

Financial	Costs to be met from the CYWC budget and from Pilots fund
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Potential for improved ecumenical links. Engagement with other partners is possible, depending on the outcome of Review and actions of HCYW.

Update March 2018

Staffing

1. Dr Sam Richards as Head of Children's and Youth Work since 1 November 2017 has settled into her post well.
2. We are interviewing for a new fixed-term Programme Officer, to replace Simon Peters, as he has been appointed to the role of Walking the Way Project Manager.
3. We are recruiting a part-time Pilots Coordinator to take over the Pilots Desk and enable more proactive promotion.

Review

4. As agreed at Mission Council in May 2017, a full and wide-ranging review of Children's and Youth Work in the URC is underway, led by a core group of Dr Sam Richards, Ms Mary Hawes (CofE), the Revd Samuel Silungwe and Mr Steve Summers. The main reasons for the necessity of the review relate to the massive budget cuts agreed by Mission Council and the restructuring of the CYW Department which were implemented in 2013. The CYW Programme was not reviewed or altered as a response at that time. These factors have had an impact on the CYW Department since then and now we need to develop a clear process for moving forward with this vital area of work within the Church, aware of the limitations all these changes have had.
5. Key areas being looked at are the effectiveness of the CYDO team working arrangements and the URC-wide programme they support; the future of Pilots; the relationship between local church, synod and URC-wide priorities and work with children and young people; hearing from children and young people; and the extent to which The Charter for Children in the Church has been embraced and implemented.

Current and future developments

6. **The Big Speak Out** from 6 to 8 July is an event for all young people aged 11-18 connected with the URC, running alongside General Assembly in Nottingham. The event is organised by Pilots, and has grown out of a desire to replace the Children's Assembly and the Pilots V&N (Voyagers and Navigators) event. There will be an opportunity for the young people to make a presentation to General Assembly, and to receive visitors from General Assembly. Pilots will generously meet half the cost for every young person. We hope that further help with funding will be available from local churches and synods, and grants towards travel costs may also be available from the Children's and Youth Work small grants fund to enable as many young people as possible to attend. A gathering of Pilots leaders will take place at the same time in the same venue.
7. **Greenbelt:** Children's and Youth Work will be contributing to the URC presence at the Greenbelt Festival this August bank holiday weekend, and has contributed to the budget for this. URC Youth are planning 'cake and debate' sessions, and Pilots hope

- to contribute to the youth programme. We are recruiting a team of URC Youth ambassadors (one from each synod) to take part in the URC activities, promote Greenbelt in their areas, and have a fantastic weekend with a half-price ticket. The URC at Greenbelt project team, which involves representatives from local churches, synods, and the Mission, Discipleship and Communications teams, is being jointly coordinated by Simon Rudiger (CYDO Thames North) and Hannah Jones (Youth Assembly Moderator). We aim to involve as many churches as possible, building on the success of the knitted feast last year. URC Youth Assembly will consider a motion to encourage synods to contribute to funding for the URC partnership with Greenbelt as a key opportunity for youth development given the decline of synod youth camps.
8. **Crossfire Camp:** 25 to 28 May 2018 Stathern Lodge, Leicestershire, is for young people aged 12+. It is a weekend to explore more about faith in Jesus Christ through teaching, small groups, worship and a whole range of fun activities, organised by GEAR, for URC Youth. This is an important part of the range of events that we seek to provide for the breadth of the URC.
 9. **An autumn gathering for local church children's, family and youth workers** is being planned by a task and finish group to support, resource and network those responsible for work with children, families and young people. This will be a low-cost Saturday event, with the option to arrive the night before for a social meal. We hope that local churches and synods will be able to contribute to travel costs for any who need this.
 10. **URC Youth Assembly** is happening as this report is being compiled – they will be considering a new role of Diversity and Inclusion Officer. URC Youth are being invited to be part of a JPIT Youth Forum. They are being invited to act as stewards for World Council of Churches meeting Geneva in June.
 11. The CYW committee has developed themes for the next three years and offers these to the wider Church. 2018: Pilgrimage, 2019: One Body, 2020: Common Ground. Resources for exploring 2018's theme of Pilgrimage and developing all-age worship have been produced by Pilots for the whole URC, and will be received by every church in March.
 12. Children and Youth Work are seeking to bring an intergenerational approach to the key URC-wide focus of Walking the Way. We have contributed to groups working on WtW, the Discipleship Development Programme and Stepwise. The monthly website resources from March onwards will look at the Ten Holy Habits for children, families, young people and young adults. We seek to foster an intergenerational spirit of being pilgrims together in 2018 and beyond.
 13. Finally, as Convenor, I would like to share my joy at the developing relationships between the CYW Committee and Department and other committees and representatives. We have had some constructive conversations about WtW and Stepwise, Equalities and intergenerational Church. These set the scene for increasingly joined-up thinking. We are particularly well served by our Youth Executive in opening and prompting discussions and encouraging the wider Church to listen and participate in the conversations.
 14. I would also like to add thanks to Sam Richards as she really has 'hit the ground running' in such a positive way, and also to Simon Peters, Heather Wilkinson and Carole Sired in these months of massive change. Now that both Simon and Carole have moved onto to other departments in the URC, I am sure they will continue their valuable work for our Church, still championing the cause of our children and young people and the contributions they make to the life of the URC.

Paper D1

Governors of Westminster College, Cambridge

Appointment of Tutor in New
Testament Language, Literature
and Theology

United Church 2017
Church 2018
Reformed Church 2018
Church 2018

Paper D1

Governors of Westminster College

Appointment of Tutor in New Testament Language, Literature and Theology

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Nigel Uden nigel.uden@urc.org.uk
Action required	To note the appointment of a New Testament Tutor for Westminster College, Cambridge.
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Informing Mission Council that due process has been completed.
Main points	A successful process of advertising, shortlisting and interview has resulted in an appointment to the post, which will become vacant in summer 2018, when the Revd Dr Yak hwee Tan moves on.
Previous relevant documents	Governance of Westminster College, General Assembly Record, 1996, Appendix 1, College Appointments Committee, 2.2.4.2, page 14.
Consultation has taken place with...	All relevant parties: education and learning committee; URC Human Resources; Cambridge Theological Federation; University of Cambridge Divinity Faculty; Westminster staff and students.

Summary of Impact

Financial	Salary as agreed for a lay post-holder.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	This post will operate, as for the current post-holder, in the ecumenical setting of teaching and learning within the Cambridge Theological Federation and more widely.

Appointment Process

1. After three years in post, the Revd Dr Yak hwee Tan steps down in the summer of 2018 from her post as Tutor in New Testament Language, Literature and Theology at Westminster College, Cambridge. The Governors moved to fill the vacancy as soon as possible, eager to avoid a gap in provision of core biblical teaching at Westminster. An Appointment Committee, chaired by the Revd Nigel Uden, Convener of Westminster's Board of Governors, was established. This included representatives of the college teaching staff (the Principal), the convener of the College's Board of Studies, a representative of Westminster's students, a representative of the biblical teachers of the Cambridge Theological Federation, a representative of the Divinity Faculty of the University of Cambridge, the Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources) and the Secretary for Education and Learning.
2. The post was advertised widely through the middle of 2017, and a total of 29 applications were received from around the world. Long-listing and short-listing created invitations to four candidates to attend Westminster in late November. All candidates had opportunities to see round the college, meet key administrative staff, talk informally with students and have a meal with other members of the college teaching staff. Each candidate presented teaching material to the entire appointment committee and a number of students, and participated in two interviews with two sets of four members of the appointments committee. The entire committee then met to discuss the outcome.
3. A unanimous decision was taken to appoint Dr Christine Joynes, the founder Director of the Centre for Reception History of the Bible, University of Oxford, since 2002. Dr Joynes, who is an active member of a Baptist church, brings a very strong academic portfolio, rich experience of teaching and tutorial work, and a passion for sharing the New Testament with diverse groups beyond the academy. She was very well received by Senatus, bursarial staff and the student body; believing she will be a rich complement to the college community, Westminster is delighted that Dr Joynes has accepted this appointment.

Paper D2

Education and learning committee

Walking the Way of
Jesus as disciples:
“They who learn as they follow”

United Church 2017
Church 2018
Reformed Church 2018
Church

Paper D2

Education and learning

Walking the way of Jesus as disciples: “they who learn as they follow”

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Professor Neil Messer, Convenor The Revd Fiona Thomas, Secretary fiona.thomas@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Mission Council</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. commends the work done by the education and learning committee towards producing a viable, costed strategy for lay training and congregational development as requested in May 2017 b. endorses the plans for further financial work by the education and learning committee and resource-sharing task group in conjunction with the synods c. and anticipates receiving and adopting the criteria and scoping for a Discipleship Development Fund at its meeting in May 2019.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	The paper uses the results of the information gathering and consultation processes since May 2017 as the basis of a strategy for lay training and congregational development. The first nine pages of the paper describes the strategy. The short Appendix A gives financial detail, and the longer Appendix B provides background information, particularly for people who may be coming to this discussion for the first time.
Main points	<p>Set within the overall vision of the United Reformed Church’s focus on missional discipleship expressed as <i>Walking the Way. Living the life of Jesus today</i>, and incorporating the significant undertaking for the <i>Stepwise</i> programme which Mission Council endorsed in November 2017, the paper puts forward a strategy which connects the vision and the programme. The main points are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the importance of a congregationally-driven needs analysis for discipleship development • the completion of a resource mapping process instigated by the education and learning committee in September 2017 • close financial work to be carried out between the synods by the resource-sharing task group.
Previous relevant documents	Resolution 6, Mission Council May 2017.
Consultation has taken place with...	Synods and Resource Centres for Learning. The Secretary of the resource sharing task group has been co-opted to the education and learning committee for 18 to 24 months from 2017.

Summary of Impact

Financial	One of the outcomes of the strategy is expected to be a clear proposal for using the income from the proceeds of the disposal of the Windermere Centre building for discipleship development.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	No direct impact.

Walking the Way of Jesus as disciples: “They who learn as they follow”

Strategy summary

As God has loved you,
so love the world and its people as you encounter them,
with all the imagination, energy, wisdom and resources available to you.

1. Origins of the strategy

- 1.1 This strategy for individual and congregational development across the United Reformed Church was commissioned from the education and learning committee by Mission Council in May 2017. The appendix to the current paper provides relevant background information and thinking which is summarized in points 1.2-1.6 here.
- 1.2 The education and learning committee has developed a draft strategy through consultation with synods by e-mail and two face to face meetings.
- 1.3 The starting point for the strategy is the URC’s participation in God’s mission to the world as most recently expressed by General Assembly 2010 in relation to Vision2020. The ten statements of Vision2020 indicate the destination and means of journeying for the church’s ongoing pilgrimage.
- 1.4 The strategy is intended to be the connective tissue between the United Reformed Church’s overall approach to missional discipleship embodied in *Walking the Way. Living the life of Jesus today* and programmatic strands of that approach. These include *Stepwise*, the whole church discipleship programme which will become available from September 2018 and the regional offerings developed within individual synods.
- 1.5 Mission Council requested a strategy for lay training and congregational development. Taking heed of unhappiness with the term “lay” which emerged during the consultations with synods, this paper refers to a discipleship development strategy. One of its outcomes will be a discipleship development fund.
- 1.6 The sources for the proposed discipleship development fund will become clearer during the implementation of the strategy during 2018. One of the potential sources identified so far is the annual income from the proceeds of the disposal of the Windermere Centre building.

2. Walking with a purpose

- 2.1 The goal of the discipleship development strategy is that the people of the United Reformed Church are equipped to:
 - a. participate joyfully and generously in the mission of God to the world

- b. take the challenges, resources and responses to mission seriously
- c. walk the way of Jesus and live the life of discipleship.

2.2 This strategy seeks to help individuals, congregations, and the Councils of the church to 'Walk the Way' and 'Live the life of Jesus today'. It is developed mindful of a variety of contexts, including the lived reality of the URC today with its challenges and opportunities, the variety of communities and settings (geographical and network based) within which congregations and individuals live, the changing place of religion in society, the faith passed on to us and the hope which is within us as disciples of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The United Reformed Church's dynamic response to these realities currently includes the encouragement of congregations to engage in *Holy Habits* and other discipleship experiences, the design and development of *Stepwise*, active collaboration between Resource Centres for Learning, and significant human, financial and technical other resources devoted to individual and congregational development in synods. These are all part of existing strategies for individual and congregational development.

2.3 There are four intertwined aspects to this strategy:

- Accounting for hope
- All are pilgrims on the journey
- Ask, seek, knock: God-given senses in the service of learning
- Bread for the journey, shared and replenished

Each of these is described below, and followed by action points which express the what, the how, the who, and the timing for each action.

3. Accounting for hope

Disciples will be equipped to 'give an account of the hope that is in them' with gentleness and reverence (1 Peter 3.15-16a)

- 3.1 Gospel becomes good news when it is passed on by word of mouth and lived experience. The Bible becomes a living document when it informs the loving service of followers of Jesus. The Kingdom is glimpsed when Christians take their faith onto the frontline of their daily lives. What connects all these is the conversations and stories that believers shape, tell and act upon.
- 3.2 For people of the Way, story-telling is how we encounter truth(s): not in crisp propositions, but in messy tales of encounters between people and people, between people and creation, between people and God. It is in the collision and re-fashioning of stories that we learn and grow. Story-telling and story-living is a community activity: nurturing relationships; breaking down barriers; enabling us to recognize the commonality of our experience; offering us possibilities of imagining a different way of being and living; sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed. Our search for confidence and purpose, for mission and meaning, for life lived with God's active presence, can only be a shared, ongoing encounter between our stories and God's stories. Our church strategies must enable this.
- 3.3 Time and again, discussion of mission in the URC has brought us back to the centrality of prayer, in all its many forms, which roots us individually and collectively in God.

3.4 The starting point for growing disciples is the lived experience of the people of the church and the communities around them. People in leadership are expected to develop the confidence of existing disciples to evangelise in ways that love, liberate and lead.

3.5 Action points:

What	How	Who	Timing
Create opportunities for people to encounter the living God, whether they already identify themselves as followers of Christ or not.	Every URC congregation to have had access to a Holy Habits group (or similar).	Congregational leaders with the support of synods.	By December 2020
Encourage every member and adherent in their prayer life and relationship with God.	Double the number of subscribers to <i>Daily Devotions</i> .	Ministers of Word and Sacraments, CRCWs, elders, Lay Preachers, Youth and children's workers to advocate.	By December 2020
Conversation with members and adherents about how they are accessing support for learning about and through their faith.	Holy Habits groups (or similar).	Congregational leaders, supported by synods.	As part of Walking the Way.

4. All are pilgrims on the journey

- 4.1 The use of the word “all” in this case means “all the people involved in each congregation and its communities, whether at the core of activities or on the fringes of the church’s attention who express curiosity about God.” This strategy seeks to support their development as followers of Jesus through their personal, spiritual, intellectual, and physical growth.
- 4.2 This aspect of the discipleship development strategy is intended to address the realities of inequality by emphasising equitable access to resources and opportunities. Asking six people to buy and read the same book in English, which is only available to them in printed form in a small font, assumes that they are all equally at ease with the language, cost, format, and visual ability. Similarly, providing the material only in a free downloadable podcast assumes that they all have access to the internet and can communicate through hearing. Treating everyone from an unconsciously biased assumption of “the norm” tends to perpetuate inequalities. Being equitable takes the different strengths, experiences, abilities and needs of people into account.
- 4.3 Within a strategy for individual and congregational development across the URC the tendency should be towards openness and responding to opportunities for growth rather than rationing or restricting opportunities. The sower sows abundantly never knowing which seeds will produce a harvest (Matthew 13, Mark 4, Luke 8) rather than precision drilling (one seed per pre-sited hole).
- 4.4 Life-long learning is a part of a disciple’s journey. From the youngest to the oldest we need to be open to hear the voice of God and to act upon it. There are many ways

that God speaks and many forms for learning to take. What is important is that opportunities are provided for people to have the chance to deepen faith and discipleship in a variety of ways and learning styles.

- 4.5 The United Reformed Church is committed to providing these opportunities in both online and face to face forms to ensure that all have the chance to develop their faith whatever their age, ability, circumstance, cultural background, and gender.

4.6 Action points

What	How	Who	Timing
Preparation of criteria for eligibility for support through the Discipleship Development Fund.	As a starting point, use work already done on eligibility for membership of General Assembly by young people.	Education and learning committee and relevant bodies in synods.	End of December 2018.
The <i>Stepwise</i> programme to be inter-generational and owned by people of all abilities and cultural backgrounds.	The design of the programme to be intentional in these aspects.	Task and finish group to give clear criteria to the design groups having consulted with practitioners.	Already started; first stream from September 2018.
Ensure that <i>Stepwise</i> material is age appropriate and has been trialled by practitioners.	Connection with CYDO team.	Education and learning and task and finish group.	During initial design phases, 2018 to 2020.
Ensure that <i>Stepwise</i> material is vocation appropriate and has been trialled by practitioners.	Active connection with reference groups and practitioners as relevant.	Task and finish group.	During initial design phases, 2018 to 2020.
Possibility of funding for Specific Learning Differences assessments to be explored.	Include in Discipleship Development Fund criteria.	Education and learning committee and relevant bodies in synods.	March 2019
Work on financial equality and equity with reference to childcare (costs and availability).	Survey and snapshots to feed into criteria for Discipleship Development Fund.	Education and learning, finance and equalities committees, with synods.	March 2019
Address geographical constraints by offering more across synod boundaries – possibly by compiling an Assembly Training Calendar. With open invitations.	Synods to send info regularly to Education and learning to collate via URCLC.	Education and learning and TDOs to coordinate, in collaboration with synod offices.	Start date September 2018 to give time to collate.
Better access to, and use of Resource Centre for Learning tutors through deepened	Continued collaboration on one-to-one basis. Collaboration	Synod Moderator identified to attend education and learning	Synod Moderator attending education and

conversations between RCLs and synods. Initiated by the stakeholders (RCLs and synods) with outcomes collated at the education and learning committee to provide overview.	with synod clusters where possible. Synod Moderators to be represented at education and learning committee.	committee. Discussions with Nominations about permanent membership or co-option.	learning committee from May 2018.
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5. Ask, seek, knock: God-given senses in the service of learning

5.1 Active learning happens by reflection on practice, as has been shown in many places and times. People grow in discipleship through mentoring, accompaniment, trying things out and reflecting on the experience, mutuality in giving and receiving, learning together. The individual disciple’s relationship with Jesus is lived out in community (Mark 6.7, Luke 10.1, I Thessalonians 1.1). Our understanding of ourselves as people of faith and action deepens through prayer, study, and interaction with other people. Individuals and congregations grow as they experience, explore, and express God’s love for the world in ways that are contextual, creative, and authentic.

5.2 The Blended Learning Framework commended by the education and learning Committee in 2017 discusses at some length how a variety of methodologies can be brought together so that contemporary technologies serve the learning needs of groups and individuals: www.blgtreporturc.org.uk/

5.3 The church needs disciples who are committed to long lasting relationship building. It is in these relationships that we as Christians invest in the ongoing development of others and in ourselves. Within this we affirm the vital importance of mentoring and mutual encouragement to develop good practice, provide support and encouragement and build up individual and common life:

“Research has shown that, while knowledge can be transmitted in a variety of forms and media, learning occurs in interactive relationships. Mentoring is an interactive learning relationship, providing a significant point of connection in an increasingly fragmented world.” ¹(‘Relational Leadership’ by Walter Wright IVP 2009 edition).

As part of our ongoing strategy, we will look at how to increase the awareness and confidence of our members and lay leaders in the role of mentoring others, give encouragement for all to identify mentors for themselves, and provide the appropriate resources to develop the necessary gifts, skills and aptitudes, in order that we all continue to grow in our own vocation and discipleship.

5.4 Action points

What	How	Who	Timing
The <i>Stepwise</i> programme will encourage a wide diversity of learning	The framework to be included in the guidance given to the design groups.	<i>Stepwise</i> task and finish group.	Already started; first stream available from September 2018.

¹ *Relational Leadership* by Walter Wright, IVP (2009 edition).

methodologies for individuals and congregations, through supported blended learning.			
Develop on-line learning through <i>Stepwise</i> which is robust, accessible and user-friendly.	Ongoing technical and design support to ensure accessibility, with training for users and deliverers to gain best value.	Dedicated professional staff, using an existing well-supported platform.	From the start of <i>Stepwise</i> , so that support is available immediately and habits are formed.
Form a regional community of face-to-face learners, responding to geographic spread and personal demand.	Centrally and regionally co-ordinated, with RCLs involved in flexible ways.	<i>Stepwise</i> team, RCLs, existing synod field staff, and people in ministry.	As <i>Stepwise</i> launched, so people are not isolated.
Encouragement of local and informal learning – e.g. in families, to help the formation of disciples of all ages.	Setting up champions /ambassadors for discipleship regionally and with focus on specific areas (e.g. families; youth; different workplaces). TDOs, CYDOs, MEs, mentoring and preparing materials. Regional/ denominational gatherings to provide coherence, share good practice etc.	Synods, education and learning committee.	As part of <i>Walking the Way</i> , to fit best with the whole approach. First gatherings in Autumn 2018.
Help local churches to explore new ways of learning and doing theology together with an intentional focus on missional discipleship.	Develop existing base; Ministers Gathering 2018; synod schools; through the processes used in Church Life Reviews.	Synod field staff (TDOs, CYDOs, MEs); Ministers of Word and Sacraments; CRCWs. RCLs to provide support.	Ongoing, with fresh focus as part of <i>Walking the Way</i> .
Encourage Ministers of Word and Sacraments, CRCWs and other authorised leaders as they lead, facilitate, grow confidence in new ideas and approaches, and manage conflict and disagreement in healthy,	Best done within synods sharing good ideas and practice across and between regions. Encourage what already exists and focus on what works.	Synods - Moderators and field officers, drawing in resource people as appropriate.	Ongoing

life-giving and diverse ways.			
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6. Bread for the journey, shared and replenished

- 6.1 God's grace and overflowing generosity are at the heart of mission. Therefore our strategizing about developing people and congregations is rightly informed by sharing resources in a spirit of generosity. Such a spirit should go right through every part of the church, and we should have confidence that people will respond to that.
- 6.2 It is important to draw on the strengths and prioritise the needs of the people who tend to be marginalised, whether they are within the church or are found and encountered outside congregations. The context of each congregation or pastorate will be an important factor in the local shape that discipleship development takes.
- 6.3 Sustainable development is built on a realistic assessment of resources (both human and financial) and by managing the expectations of individuals and congregations. Discipleship is costly (Luke 14. 25-33). The church acting collectively will seek to ensure that access to resources is available to all parts of the United Reformed Church, overcoming obstacles of geography and the inherited unequal distribution of personnel and funds across the synods.
- 6.4 We arrive at the point we are today with the inheritance from our independency and diversity in which synods function individually and inequality exists. This fact needs to be acknowledged as a reality. The choices which we make as a body are therefore about moving towards equity in both human and financial resources.
- 6.5 Whilst there is concern about lack of capacity/connection on the ground, our strategy should take into account the resources that we already have. A positive vision will release the resources we don't realise we already have, acknowledging that the 'we' belongs to different levels of governance within the church.
- 6.6 The starting point is the premise that this strategy is a 'bottom up' model, where the expectations, desires, dreams and requirements of individuals and congregations are sought, heard and taken seriously.
- 6.7 Decisions made by a conciliar church are necessarily taken in different places, and our structures may not always allow us to liberate human and financial resources in ways that seem desirable, as quickly as we would wish. Developing courses in an integrated, coherent yet flexible way across the UK means rethinking the way we've done things up until now.
- 6.8 "Resources" include: people who can facilitate, enable, train and teach; buildings; materials, e.g. *Holy Habits*, *Stepwise*; money. The sharing and the shortages are possibly more about people (staff and volunteers) than money, plant, materials, etc. Synods rich in human resources might be asked to invest staff time in designing resources which people in other synods can deliver, or inter synod resource sharing could include people as well as funds.
- 6.9 Action points:

What	How	Who	Timing
Produce an overall picture of human, financial and other resources currently being invested by synods, RCLs and General Assembly in discipleship development.	Mapping exercise which started in September 2017.	Education and learning committee to pursue those synods which have not yet responded.	End March 2018.
Analyse the results identifying areas of commonality and variation; gaps in resources in synods, churches, individuals.	Individual conversations with synods to fully understand the responses.	Secretary for education and learning and Secretary for RSTG.	End June 2018.
State clearly the budget needed for <i>Stepwise</i> from 2019 onwards, showing where this uses funding previously committed to TLS and the Windermere Centre.	Make projections from known costs in 2018.	Education and learning finance sub-committee (which includes the Treasurer) and resource sharing task group (RSTG).	Autumn 2018.
Conduct a “needs analysis” of what is required overall for discipleship development including and beyond <i>Stepwise</i> .	Augment the mapping of what synods, education and learning and RCLs are doing with a SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Resources/Results) assessment.	Education and learning committee team and RSTG to take the lead, drawing on synods and other relevant bodies.	End December 2018.
Establish the budget that is required to deliver this strategy.	Costing the results of the needs analysis.	Education and learning finance sub-committee (inc Treasurer) and Secretary of RSTG.	End Feb 2019.
Work towards guidelines for financial support to which people in each synod should have access.	Continued dialogue between relevant bodies.	Education and learning committee and RSTG.	End Dec 2018.
Prepare guidance on how inequalities in financial resources should be addressed.	Work with synods and inter synod Resource Sharing.	RSTG.	End February 2019.

Prepare guidance on how inequalities in human resources might be addressed.	Work with synods and inter synod Resource Sharing.	Joint synod meetings (annual group meetings), Education and learning committee and RSTG.	End February 2019.
Emphasise the role of ministers and authorised leaders as encouragers of discipleship and facilitators of learning.	An appreciative inquiry into “What makes a minister effective at discipling?”	Up to two synods with education and learning to work on this initially.	To start in early 2019.
Identify and equip Ministers of Word and Sacraments, CRCWs, and other authorised leaders with the appropriate gifts, motivation and skills to recognise and release the gifts of the people with whom they minister.	Through synods, RCLs and Church House team.	Synod networks, especially EM2/3 Officers.	Ongoing.
Establish and adopt the scope, objectives, eligibility criteria, disbursement mechanism, and monitoring process for a discipleship development fund.	Joint consultation in March 2019 between education and learning committee and RSTG drawing together relevant preparatory work described in action points above.	Education and learning committee and RSTG in conversation with URC Trust and Treasurer and other relevant individuals and bodies.	Agreement by May 2019 Mission Council.

7.0 Distance and pacing

- 7.1 There are a number of specific and measurable targets in this strategy, in tune with the expectation that one function of a strategy is to achieve measurable outcomes. When discussing participation in God’s mission it’s not always easy to measure impact quantitatively but more fruitful to look for qualitative measures of process, e.g. whether it was a positive or negative journey. It’s about walking alongside people and supporting a process, rather than seeking a specific product. God will use people we might not choose, and God’s foolishness is wiser than the wisdom of the world. The progress of the strategy will be assessed and kept under review through qualitative review methodologies such as social audit, and the generative approaches being used in appreciative accountability.

7.2 Action points:

What	How	Who	Timing
Monitor uptake of <i>Holy Habits</i> groups, or equivalent by URC congregations.	Include a question in annual returns 2018 to 2021.	Communications, prompted by education and learning	Start for 2018 return if possible.
Monitor the number of subscribers to <i>Daily Devotions</i> , starting from when it became part of <i>Walking the Way</i> .	Provide six monthly numbers.	Daily Devotions coordinator	From 1 January 2018.
Periodic review of progress of the strategy.	Report to Mission Council.	Education and learning committee.	May 2019.
Review the adoption and implementation of a Discipleship Development Fund.	Report to General Assembly.	Synod Moderators.	July 2020.

Glossary of acronyms used in this paper

E&LC Education and learning committee

RSTG Resource sharing task group – established by Mission Council

RCL Resource centre for learning

TDO Training and development officer (generic term covering various post titles)

CYDO Children and Youth Development Officer

ME Mission Enabler (generic term covering various post titles)

EM2/3 Education for Ministry phase 2/3

Appendix A: Financial clarifications

1. It is still to be known what the proceeds will be from the eventual disposal of the Windermere Centre building. Therefore it is not yet possible to predict the eventual size of any Discipleship Development Fund, but it is possible to work out the principles on which such a fund would operate. It is also possible to estimate existing funds which could be earmarked for 'kickstarting' the fund. Early work done on mapping resources, principles for equity in support, and strengthening connections between existing mechanisms for resource-sharing will bear fruit once the figures from the disposal of the Windermere Centre building become clear.
2. There is wording in Mission Council Resolution 6 May 2017 which needs explanation. It is the understanding of education and learning committee Convenor and Secretary who were at the Mission Council meeting that "proceeds from any disposal" means that only the annual income on any capital obtained would be assigned to a Lay Development Fund [now to be called a Discipleship Development Fund to be consistent with section 5 above], not the capital itself. This is the consistent understanding given by the previous URC Treasurer when speaking to the matter at Mission Council and in conversations with the education and learning finance sub-committee.
3. Of the almost £125,000 which would otherwise have been allocated in the education and learning committee budget for 2018 to support for the Windermere Centre:
 - 3.1 £20,000 has been re-assigned to the communications committee for the staffing of the iChurch project which emerged from the Windermere Centre and is now managed within the work of the communications committee;
 - 3.2 £85,000 has been allocated to three posts related to discipleship development (Lay Development Coordinator, Lay Development Assistant, Instructional Designer), and redundancy costs for two TLS posts. From August 2018 the Lay Development Coordinator and Lay Development Assistant posts will be supported by funds previously allocated to the staffing of TLS.
 - 3.3 £20,000 has been provisionally set aside in 2018 to be put towards the Discipleship Development Fund. This whole amount will be available for disbursement in this year once clear principles and criteria for the use of the fund have been agreed.
 - 3.4 The above figures were included in the URC budget for 2018, and the areas concerned were mentioned in paragraph 8 of Paper G1, as agreed by Mission Council in November 2017.
4. At the present time the inter-disciplinary *Stepwise* task and finish group are exploring the principle that there will be no more than a nominal participation charge for engagement in each of the *Stepwise* streams. This is because:

- 4.1 The development cost for *Stepwise*, as a URC-wide programme and relying on the involvement of a wide range of people, is being borne for the whole of the URC through the education and learning committee budget.
- 4.2 *Stepwise* is being designed for flexible delivery which draws on existing ecumenical courses and materials where relevant. There will be charges for purchasing materials external to the URC, or where synods decide that residential events are desirable and feasible. In such cases it is expected that the Discipleship Development Fund would be a source of help where necessary to enable individuals or congregations to participate in *Stepwise*.

Appendix B:

Background – how we got here

1. Background

- 1.1 One of the outcomes of the discussions of the future of the Windermere Centre at Mission Council in October 2016 and May 2017 was the request for a coherent strategy for lay development in the United Reformed Church expressed in Resolution 6, May 2017:

Mission Council supports in principle the use of the proceeds of any disposal [of the Windermere Centre] for lay development, and

- a) believes that there is an increasingly apparent and urgent need for a viable, costed strategy for lay training and congregational development across the URC, and calls for the development of such a strategy;
- b) agrees that this strategy needs to take account of existing lay training and development resources and opportunities available within and beyond the URC and needs to be sensitive to the varied geography and the uneven distribution of financial and human resources across the synods;
- c) asks the education and learning committee to facilitate the development of this strategy, with the active involvement of relevant people from the synods and the URC Resource Centres for Learning;
- d) recognises that such training and development needs to be delivered in a variety of ways which are likely to include online, face to face and residential components; it must be easily accessible to all in the URC.
- e) therefore instructs the education and learning committee to bring to Mission Council in March 2018 proposals for these proceeds to be used as a designated Lay Development Fund which will enable an outworking of the developed strategy.

Extract from report of Mission Council meeting, May 2017

2. Towards preparing a strategy

- 2.1 A strategy is a high level plan to achieve one or more goals under conditions of uncertainty. It describes how the ends (goals) will be achieved by the means (resources).
- 2.2 Responding to Mission Council's instructions, the education and learning committee discussed in depth taking forward the resolution when it met in June 2017. This was in the light of outcomes from consultations on whole church learning carried out by the committee from 2013 to 2016 (*Learning Church, Next Chapter, two Big Picture meetings and the Roundtable to Enable Learning*). The committee set aside a small group to work towards the strategy commissioned by Mission Council. The group initiated a mapping process to find out from synods and Resource Centres for

Learning what financial and human resources they currently make available for lay development. This took the form of questions which were sent to synods on 1 September, along with an invitation to send representatives to a consultative gathering on 6 October, and a background brief for the gathering. The outline of a possible strategy emerged from that meeting, with individuals volunteering to write specific paragraphs. These were received and shaped into a draft strategy which was discussed in detail by the reconvened consultation on 9 January 2018. Comments from small groups and plenary sessions were gathered and fed into the next draft which was further worked on by the education and learning committee at a special meeting for the purpose on 29 January 2018. The external facilitator for the two consultative gatherings was the Revd Dr Stephen Heap, a Baptist minister with a background in congregational development and adult learning who currently works at Winchester University.

3. A starting point: the URC's participation in God's mission (John 3.16 God so loved the world...)

"God makes disciples, not us. We share the Gospel, we walk alongside, we encourage, raise awareness etc but it is ultimately that they open their hearts to God and allow God to do what God does. I have anxiety about a strategy that says: do this and you will make disciples."

Participant in strategy consultation, 9 January

The consultative gatherings were of the strong view that any strategy for lay training and congregational development must start from an understanding that the church is participating in God's mission to the world. Disciples of Christ are co-workers with God.

A place to start (and using the paragraph numbering from that document) is the theological basis for a URC mission framework which was included in the reports to General Assembly 2010 in relation to vision2020:

- 3.1 The Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church speaks of the church's responsibility to offer itself and the world to God in worship; to receive and express the renewing life of the Holy Spirit in each place and in its total fellowship; to declare the reconciling and saving power of Jesus Christ, to live out Christ's ministry of caring, forgiving and healing love; and to bear witness to Christ's rule over the nations. Though not explicitly mentioned, it is clear that mission is fundamental to the existence of the church.
- 3.2 A much stronger focus on mission is visible in the *Growing Up* report, adopted by the 1999 General Assembly. The United Reformed Church was expressing its intention to focus on faithful participation in God's mission, rather than on the future of the URC as a Church. "Growing Up" attempted to reawaken the Church to the fact that it is mission-shaped and that in the words of Emil Brunner, it 'exists by mission as fire exists by burning'. This found further expression in the strapline of the Catch the Vision process in 2004: 'called to be God's people, transformed by the Gospel, making a difference for Christ's sake'.

- 3.3 Vision2020 builds on this understanding of mission and the church's role in it. It takes as its fundamental starting point that mission is God's activity and entails all that God is doing to transform this world into the reign of God. It is a mission that finds its ultimate expression in Jesus and continues throughout history through the Spirit. The focus and scope of God's mission is the transformation of all created reality into what God intended in creation.
- 3.4 The Church is called, sent and empowered by God, through the Holy Spirit, to join in God's mission of transformation. It is the Church-in-mission that is recognisably the community of the followers of Jesus.
- 3.5 God's mission is to be understood as all that God is doing to transform the world into God's reign. Therefore mission has a comprehensive character. The Growing Up report expressed this in the Five Marks of Mission. Vision2020 builds on these in its ten statements of mission and purpose.
- 3.6 If mission is God's mission and is all that God is doing to transform this world, then mission is contextual. It is the Holy Spirit who helps us discern how God is at work in each place. It is in the power of the Holy Spirit and through constant reflection and prayer that we are enabled to give shape to the Good News in ways that address directly the lives of the people around us.

4. *Walking the Way, Living the Life of Jesus today*

- 4.1 Paper M2 to Mission Council, May 2017 laid out a number of objectives for a missional discipleship task group which in due course became the *Walking the Way* steering group. These objectives included that it should devise a discipleship scheme for the United Reformed Church which reflects the Church's commitment to participation in the *Missio Dei* as described in the mission framework in paragraph 3. In November 2017 Mission Council endorsed the work being done on the *Stepwise* programme, which is an intentionally programmatic strand of *Walking the Way*.
- 4.2 One source for the URC's current emphasis on missional discipleship is the mission committee's experiences through vision2020 and its ongoing exploration of ways of encouraging evangelism. It can be argued that the URC's current understanding of mission is encapsulated in the approaches encouraged through *Walking the Way, Living the life of Jesus today*. The lay training and congregational development strategy commissioned by Mission Council clearly needs to be a part of *Walking the Way, Living the life of Jesus today*.
- 4.3 Since being designated as Resource Centres for Learning by General Assembly in 2006, the three Colleges serving the United Reformed Church and the 13 synods have persisted in seeking ways to work together for the benefit of congregations. Appointment to new staff posts from their own resources by Northern College and Westminster College in 2017 has helped this, with the Scottish College already working closely with the Synod of Scotland and Northern Synod. The focus on missional discipleship expressed in *Walking the Way, Living the life of Jesus today*

is shared by Colleges, synods, and Assembly committees who are all separately and collectively exploring what this means for them.

5. Moving beyond the terminology of “lay training”

- 5.1 Almost all of the synods and the RCLs were represented at one or the other of the consultative gatherings on 9 October and 6 January, and a significant number of participants were able to be present at both. One consistent emphasis was the inadequacy of the term “lay training” to represent what the gatherings felt should be the focus of the strategy. For some people the term is too closely associated with equipping elders and Lay Preachers, and therefore narrower than what is intended in the strategy. Other people feel that exactly those ministries risk being overlooked in the general use of the word “lay”. Using “lay” raises other questions, for are not elders ordained, and are not Ministers of Word and Sacraments members of the *laos*? The United Reformed Church does not tend to refer to “the laity”. Suggestions included replacing “lay training” with “missional discipleship”, although the latter is already intended to cover both individual and collective development, thus repeating what is meant by “congregational development”. “Personal development” was considered in place of “lay training” but that phrase does not quite capture what is intended either.
- 5.2 It was therefore suggested during the consultation on 6 January 2018 that the commission from Mission Council be rephrased as “To develop a viable, costed strategy for individual and congregational development across the United Reformed Church.”
- 5.3 The education and learning committee meeting on 29 January revisited the terminology, accepting the disquiet about the word “lay” but recognising that it is important to use language which resonates with people of faith in subtle dimensions which go beyond what they might hear from public life and engagement. *Walking the Way* is about wholelife missional discipleship, expressed in the term “faith on the front line” used by the London Institute on Contemporary Christianity. *Stepwise* is a significant programmatic strand within *Walking the Way* which is being designed to take disciples of Jesus further on their journey with God and their communities of all shapes and sizes. Therefore discipleship is a key word and there is an argument to be made for calling this a “discipleship development strategy”.
- 5.4 The parallel risks in attaching the word “discipleship” to the strategy are that people throughout the URC may:
- 5.4.1 Reduce the vision of *Walking the Way* to the strategy, and in so doing be disappointed that the vision is not practical enough and the strategy is not visionary enough
 - 5.4.2 Limit the outworkings of the strategy to support only for *Stepwise*
 - 5.4.3 Treat the strategy as something separate to, or in competition with, *Walking the Way* and *Stepwise*

5.4.4 Be confused by the apparent proliferation of variety of ways in which the United Reformed Church is encouraging one another to be outward looking, missional, and evangelistic.

5.5 It was agreed that these risks will be lessened if Mission Council accepts that the discipleship development strategy is essentially a means of knitting together the various resources which already exist or may exist in future within the United Reformed Church in synods and General Assembly Committees for releasing discipleship energy. The shape of the knitting will emerge from continued close collaboration between General Assembly Committee and synods.

5.6 The main outcome of the strategy is a clear, user-friendly, and equitable means of answering key questions from individuals and pastorates:

- Where do I/we go for the support which will help me/us to follow Jesus in the direction that I/we are being challenged and inspired to take?
- How do I/we access such support?

5.7 Taking considerations of the use of language into account, the education and learning committee concluded that it is worth proceeding with calling this a “discipleship development strategy”. Such a title does not overcome the existing converging/diverging/parallel lines between “mission development” and “discipleship development” which is seen in many places in the URC, but perhaps no strategy can be expected to solve everything by itself. It is a step towards greater coherence in resourcing disciples of Christ in their participation in God’s mission to the world.

Paper D3

Education and learning committee

Training for authorised elders

United Church 2017
Church 2018
Reformed Church 2018
Church 2018

Paper D3

Education and learning committee

Training for authorised elders

Basic Information

Contact	Fiona Thomas fiona.thomas@urc.org.uk
Action required	For information
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Reporting on the completion of a remit from General Assembly.
Main points	Training material for authorised elders is now available on the URC website.
Previous documents	General Assembly papers 2016: Reports pages 90-107, and in particular Resolution 18.
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of Impact

Financial	No impact on central budget.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Structured and supportive training is likely to give this pattern of Christian service greater respect among ecumenical partners.

Training for authorised elders

1. Important decisions were taken at General Assembly in 2016 about the ministry of elders in our churches, with particular regard to their presiding at sacramental services. One of these decisions, Resolution 18, directed the education and learning committee to prepare training material, so that people who are asked to become authorised elders may take up this responsibility confidently and effectively.
2. The material is now available on the URC website, and may be used by synods according to the needs of their churches. Go down the menu headed 'Ministers and Office-Holders', to 'Education and Training'.
3. The education and learning committee reports that it has fulfilled the remit of this Assembly resolution.

D3

United Reformed Church · Mission Council, March 2018

Paper F1

Faith and order committee

Scripture and the Church

United Church 2017
Church 2018
Reformed Church 2018
Church 2018



Paper F1

Faith and order committee

Scripture and the Church

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Dr Alan Spence, Convenor alanandsheila@gmail.com
Action required	Reflection
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	The committee has spent much time in recent years reflecting on the URC's relationship and response to scripture. Alan Spence will share some of that thinking with Mission Council.
Main points	As above. A digest of some of the committee's work follows this template.
Previous relevant documents	Nothing very recent.
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Better engagement with the views and beliefs of other Christians and churches.

Scripture and the Church

Sola scriptura in the United Reformed Church

1. What role should the bible play in the corporate decisions that we make as a church? It is a serious question that has arisen in recent debates in the General Assembly and it is worthy of serious consideration.

Our history

2. The United Reformed Church was formed comparatively recently but its ancestral line can be traced back through British Puritans, Independents and Presbyterians, European Reformers, Latin Catholicism including theologians such as Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas, and the Greek speaking churches represented by their bishops at the Council of Nicaea. It goes right on back to the Jewish community of the Way who gathered together for prayer on the day of Pentecost. One of the strands that unites these outwardly disparate communities is the content of their faith, determined as it has been by their common scriptures. In the many debates that have shaped the doctrines, creeds and confessions that have brought our churches to where we are today, the bible has always played a decisive role. Protagonists in the arguments determining the theological understanding of Christians have consistently sought to show how their doctrines reflected the true mind and intention of the scriptures.
3. This does not mean that the church has felt constrained or limited by the terminology of the bible in its theological formulations. For instance, scholars in the fourth century found it necessary to introduce the non-biblical word *homoousion* (of one substance) in order to describe adequately the relation of Jesus to God in the face of subtle Arian arguments that undermined his divine status. Similarly, the use of the term *trinity* to explain the nature of the God who is made known in the life of Jesus and the dynamic experience of the Holy Spirit was quite novel.
4. This dependence of our forebears on the scriptures in determining the content of Christian faith and practice was neither naïve nor unreflective. Commenting on the temptation to use the bible as a scientific manual Augustine of Hippo wrote in his book *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* some 1600 years ago:

‘Often, a non-Christian knows something about the earth, the heavens, and the other parts of the world... it is thus offensive and disgraceful for an unbeliever to hear a Christian talk nonsense about such things, claiming that what he is saying is based in Scripture. We should do all we can to avoid such an embarrassing situation, which people see as ignorance in the Christian and laugh to scorn.’

5. Further it was generally recognised that there is a spiritual dynamic in properly understanding and interpreting the scriptures. The Apostle Paul wrote: ‘God has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant – not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills but the Spirit gives life’ (2 Cor 3:6). True understanding requires spiritual enlightenment. ‘I believe so that I may understand’ was the insightful maxim of Anselm of Canterbury.
6. Sometimes the implications of the bible message have remained hidden in its pages for centuries. It was William Wilberforce, a British reforming politician in the late 18th century, who helped us to see that a gospel of genuine freedom requires the abolition

of slavery even though the text did not appear to explicitly demand it. Secular feminists have enabled us to understand that the logic of their equal status before God as divine image-bearers encourages women in the modern world to go to university if they so wish, to vote, and to receive the same salaries as their male counterparts. Marxist liberation theologians have opened our eyes to God's concern that there should be justice for the poor, the dispossessed and the powerless. This divine mindfulness for the cause of the oppressed was always there in the text but, blinkered as it is, the church sometimes failed to give it due attention. Environmentalists have made us more aware of our biblical duty before God to act as responsible stewards and caretakers of the earth. Our own sinfulness is recognised as being closely related to the pains of our planet.

Our founding documents

7. The United Reformed Church shares in this rich biblical heritage with other Christian communities and has affirmed the determining role that the Scriptures play in the expression of its own faith. Augur Pearce reminds us of some of its formal statements (paras 8-14 below).
8. We 'acknowledge the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people'.ⁱ We also assert that the Church's life 'must ever be renewed and reformed according to the Scriptures, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit',ⁱⁱ and that study of the Scriptures is one of the ways through which 'God makes known in each age his saving love, his will for his people and his purpose for the world'.ⁱⁱⁱ And although we acknowledge the church's duty to be open to the Spirit's leading and its right to make new declarations of faith, this acknowledgment is made 'under the authority of Holy Scripture',^{iv} which suggests that any fresh corporate understanding of the faith in our church must reflect the truth of the Bible.
9. We are a confessing church which affirms together, particularly at ordinations and inductions, the shared content of our biblical faith in the Statement of the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church. Such public confession is a central feature of the public expression of our unity. We declare openly that we share a common faith.
10. Our own tradition, however, is also one of non-conformity. That is why we are determined to defend the right of an individual in good conscience to come to their own view of the meaning of scripture and not to be bound absolutely by the corporate interpretation. So it is that the church 'believing that it is through the freedom of the Spirit that Christ holds his people in the fellowship of the one Body', commits itself in the Basis of Union to uphold the rights of personal conviction; though acknowledging that the assertion of these rights may sometimes injure its unity and peace (and therefore, presumably, need to be restrained).^v
11. In many cases when individuals are not able to assent to our foundational doctrines they will leave the United Reformed Church, which is their privilege. But assertion *within* the church of the right to such divergent views is more likely to injure its unity and peace the more public it is, the more fundamental is the belief in question and the more recognized is the dissident's role among us. For a non-serving elder to maintain there is a divine mandate for corporal punishment and to act accordingly in their family circle, despite what was said on this topic by the Assembly of 1999, would be less divisive than for a Synod Moderator at an ecumenical service to deny the existence of the Holy Spirit.

12. Councils of the church can form their own views on questions where the Basis, Structure and any other doctrinal formulations of the church are silent. Those conclusions should be reached with reference to the Word of God discerned in Scripture as the supreme authority for faith and conduct. That discernment is we trust aided by the Spirit present within the council concerned, by the wisdom of other councils through consultation and by the insights of the past, through the heritage of predecessor churches and the wider tradition of Christendom.
13. The General Assembly is described as 'embodying the unity of the United Reformed Church' and as 'the final authority, under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, in all matters of doctrine'.^{vi} Its functions include both declaring doctrine and interpreting what has been declared. It can 'alter, add to, modify or supersede the Basis of Union or any other form or expression of the ... doctrinal formulations of the United Reformed Church'. This amending function is restricted by the requirement to consult (at least) the mind of the church's provinces and nations through their synods.^{vii} But without altering formulations, and therefore without pursuing that particular mode of consultation,^{viii} it can also 'interpret all forms and expressions of the ... doctrinal formulations of the United Reformed Church'.^{ix} Thus it can – if it sees fit – say in more detail what is meant by the Basis of Union assertions of belief in the call of Israel,^x the showing forth of Christ's sacrifice in the Lord's Supper^{xi} or the member's promise of faithfulness in public worship.^{xii} And in so doing it is to be 'recognised by members of the United Reformed Church as possessing such authority, under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, as shall enable it to exercise its functions'.^{xiii}
14. This does not mean that General Assembly is to be regarded as an authoritative interpreter of Scripture. The bible is regularly expounded by ministers and other preachers, by biblical scholars and systematic theologians, each sharing the insights that specialist knowledge, skills and inspiration combine to suggest. But no exposition is 'authoritative' in the sense that others are bound to accept it. Individuals also ask for the Spirit's guidance when they read Scripture, and believe that they receive it. If the Assembly comes to feel that the Word of God discerned in Scripture for our time and place is so clear and so compelling on a particular topic that it needs to be spelt out in the church's doctrinal formulations, it can supplement those accordingly after the required consultation. That will be authoritative in the sense described earlier.

The problem

15. In practice, however, we in the councils of the United Reformed Church have sometimes struggled to determine our theological, moral and social questions by reference to the scriptures. Further, we are generally reluctant to exercise any form of discipline over those among us who write or speak publicly against the central articles of our faith however damaging such views might appear to be to the unity of the church. Why is this?
16. From his doctoral thesis Romilly Micklem argues that what we have in the United Reformed Church is a supreme source of authority for our life of faith, and a separate conciliar structure for managerial authority, which is neither constituted nor in a *de facto* position to make determinations on the validity or otherwise of specific readings of scripture. The reasons for this are complex but have much to do with the lack of shared traditions of interpretation. Put bluntly, Micklem holds that the URC does not have enough of a common framework or shared tradition for the interpretation of scripture to be carried out meaningfully as a collective enterprise. This makes for a very rich diversity... but it also makes for insular bodies or silos of interpretation,

between which interpreters cannot work collaboratively, because they do not have enough common ground on which to build together. Let us consider more closely how these ways of interpretation have come about.

Ways of interpretation in the past

17. It is of course true that everyone approaches the scriptures with their own interpretive framework whether or not they recognise it. There is no neutral space or value-free position from which we can study the Bible. We all bring to the reading of the text our own particular world-view which has been shaped by our intellectual history, our religious experience and our cultures.
18. This was the case from the very beginning. The first Christians, transformed by their experience of divine salvation in Jesus, read the Jewish Scriptures as a Christian text. They believed that its pages were inspired by the Spirit of Christ and saw them as referring to him and the events of his life almost everywhere. This way of interpreting the Old Testament is particularly apparent in the book of Hebrews which relativized the significance of Moses, the Levitical priesthood and the Jewish cult with the coming of the Messiah. Jesus was recognised as a son and not just a servant of God; an eternal priest and not one of a passing community of priests whose work was never completed; his death was a sacrificial act which was effective in securing the forgiveness of sins unlike the blood of bulls and goats. In short Christ was understood as the reality of which Jewish religious practice was no more than a shadow.
19. A rather different interpretive key was the distinction Paul made between grace and law, or faith and works in the redemptive process. In the unfolding history of salvation the giving of the law through Moses was viewed by him as no more than a temporary measure, in due course living under the Torah was to be superseded for the people of faith by the coming of Christ. Consequently early Christians did not believe that civic and ceremonial laws in the Old Testament applied directly to them. As to the moral law their interpretive key was love. This simple notion 'to love God and one's neighbour' learnt from Jesus, summarised for them all that the law and commandments demanded. This meant not an easing of the requirements of the moral law but a radicalisation of them. In the past the notion of an eye for an eye might have been a valid response to those who mistreated us, but now we are called to love our enemies.
20. It was not long before different ways of interpretation began to develop in the new Christian communities. In the face of the speculative theories of Christian Gnostics, Irenaeus spoke of the 'rule of faith' (a core set of Christian beliefs) and the (unwritten) apostolic tradition as interpretive safeguards to counter unrestrained speculation. In the city of Alexandria, initially through the person of Origen, a way of reading the scriptures developed which favoured allegorical interpretations and sought to discover in the text three levels of meaning: the literal, the moral and the spiritual. Somewhat in conflict with this was a group of theologians living in Antioch who emphasised literal, historical and linguist approaches to the text. What is important for us is to recognise is that during the crucial debates about the person of Christ in the fourth and fifth centuries theologians from these opposing schools made concessions and nuanced their positions so that they might come to a common mind on what was most central to their faith.
21. *Sola scriptura* ('by scripture alone') is consequently not a claim that we can read the bible without the interpretive frameworks that have developed throughout the history of the church. Rather it is the view that all of our theological formulations, creeds,

confessions and statements of faith are themselves subject to the critique of the scriptures.

22. Logicians will recognise that we have here an interpretive circle. The Scriptures are to act as a critique of our religious formulations, but it is these formulations which shape the framework by which we tend to interpret the Scriptures. How do we break out of our closed interpretive schemes?
23. We do so by open and fearless dialogue with other Christians, other churches, other traditions and by engagement with the shared theological history of the church. The Holy Spirit has been given to the church as community so that we might come to the truth together. A dialogue of spiritual openness is essential. One of the most divisive debates in the Christian Church was that between Luther and Rome over the nature of justification. Recent discussions between Lutherans and Catholics have led to a nuanced joint declaration with very little that still separates the two parties on this matter. The Holy Spirit can and does enable the people of God in humility and openness to come to a shared understanding of the mind of the Scriptures.

Ways of interpretation today

24. What has modernity brought to the table in the matter of biblical interpretation? Here are just three of the significant new approaches that have come to influence the religious sensibilities of our age.
 - 24.1 A scientific approach. The Age of Reason encouraged the application of scientific method to the study of the Scriptures. It began with trying to determine which of the various early copies of the original manuscripts were most trustworthy but went on to raise questions of authorship, sources and dates of the various books of the Bible. The methodology used to understand other ancient texts was now applied to the Scriptures. Historical criticism of this sort initially challenged many orthodox beliefs of the church particularly those relating to the person of Christ. Nevertheless such an approach now generally informs, at least to some extent, the way the majority of Biblical scholars of all traditions view the Scriptures.
 - 24.2 A subjective approach. As a response to the religious cynicism initially fostered by the use of the scientific method Friedrich Schleiermacher encouraged us to think of theology not as a study of God as such but as a study of human spirituality or piety. In particular, he viewed it as an examination of our sense of absolute dependence on God. In his classical work *The Christian Faith* Schleiermacher brilliantly transposed classical Lutheran dogmatics into a systematic theology based on the shared phenomenon of human spirituality. Celebrated as the father of liberal theology Schleiermacher has influenced the way many now approach the Bible. They would understand it as saying something about our experience of God rather than about the objective reality of God. Theological truth is consequently viewed as a subjective construct rather than as an external reality that exists independently of human experience.
 - 24.3 A neo-orthodox approach. The Reformed theologian Karl Barth was deeply distressed that his liberal German theological professors colluded with the rise of German nationalism. He believed that an interpretive method that had nothing to say about injustice was deeply flawed. He went on to construct his immense theological masterpiece *The Church Dogmatics* around the concept of divine revelation. Barth summarised the gospel as God speaks to man, God enables man to hear him speak. Central to this way of approaching the Scriptures is his emphasis that Jesus as the

'Word of God' is in effect the dynamic act of divine self-communication. Apart from this speech-act of God all human spirituality is according to Barth empty and meaningless. This way of interpretation encouraged many to approach the Bible humbly as the place where God might speak to them and bring them to salvation. For in Barth's thought revelation and redemption are not to be neatly distinguished.

25. John Proctor has helpfully highlighted three kinds of attitude to scripture flowing out of approaches such as these that now guide Christian enquiry:
- 25.1 Pre-modern: 'Truth is given to us'. This approach is still alive, and we call it 'pre-modern' because it seems not to lean at all heavily on the historical and critical work of the last couple of centuries. It seeks to view the text as authoritative, and to emphasise that the Church's task is to learn from scripture and thus to form an organised body of belief about God and about Christian behaviour. An obvious strength of this approach is that it takes seriously the given-ness of the biblical text and of the canon. A common weakness is that it does not always ask careful questions about the context or genre of individual texts. Even though the approach is often accompanied by quite a subtle hermeneutic, which sets aside for example much of the Old Testament legal material, it is less common to hear this hermeneutic being explicitly articulated.
- 25.2 Modern: 'Knowledge comes through reasoned enquiry'. This approach is a product of the age of reason. It owes something to the rise of science, with its pursuit of causes and explanations. It responds too to the academic emphasis in recent generations on the historical character of the Bible books and on the need to read them against their own contexts. In Reformed churches this approach has quite a democratic tone, as it allows church members to ask honest questions, and resonates to some extent with our ideas of sola scriptura (the Bible is not fenced off by church teaching) and clarity (people can find out for themselves).. An obvious strength is that reading biblical material historically takes seriously the historical character of our faith – God became human in a particular time and place. A weakness of the approach is its tendency to become a cul-de-sac: we ask questions about the past, then do not know how to learn wisdom from these about the present and future. Apparently Walter Brueggemann once said, 'You can't do without the historical-critical method. But you can't do much with it.'
- 25.3 Post-modern: 'Reality is personally experienced.' Talking of post-modernism seems recently to have gone out of fashion. But in its day it taught us to use our imagination to engage with scriptural texts, and to let our own perspective illuminate and inform our encounter with ancient words. If something in the text resonates for us, then scripture comes alive. A strength of this approach is that it takes experience seriously, and acknowledges that we all learn from experience, about many of the most vital and central aspects of life – for example about love, or conflict. So when we encounter either of these realities in the Bible, our personal story can alert us to some of the angles and depths in the text we are reading, in ways that a wholly detached encounter (were such a thing possible) could never do. A weakness is, of course, that deeply subjective readings of scripture may owe more to us than they do to the Bible. Attending to some of these is one way that Christians can attend to one another: hearing exegesis that arises from within another person's story can, on occasion, be a complement and corrective to my own subjectivity, prejudice and ignorance.
26. These ways of reading the Bible are not put forward as neat alternatives that allow us to choose our own way forward and allow other Christians to do as they wish. Rather they are a challenge for us to be open to one another as we seek to come to a common mind in the presence of the Spirit. We must learn to listen to ways of reading

that are different from our own as we seek a common biblical understanding of the issues before us. A shared engagement with the Scriptures in rigorous dialogue with other Christians, near and far, past and present, is in large part what it means to act as a conciliar community. This is how we practise the principle of 'sola scriptura'.

Questions:

1. Should we look to the Scriptures to determine the direction of our denomination?
2. How are we to come to a common view of the meaning of the scriptures in a broad church such as ours?
3. Does Paul's comment 'the letter kills but the Spirit gives life' have any significance for the way we should use the scriptures in our church councils?

ⁱ BU 12 and Schedules B, D and F

ⁱⁱ BU 6r

ⁱⁱⁱ BU 13

^{iv} BU 18

^v BU 10

^{vi} Structure 2(6)(intro)

^{vii} Structure 2(6)(xi) and 3

^{viii} Though Structure 4 still requires 'the fullest attempt to discover the mind of the other councils or of local churches likely to be affected'.

^{ix} Structure 2(6)(x)

^x BU 1

^{xi} BU 15

^{xii} BU Schedule A

^{xiii} Structure 1(3).

Paper G1

Finance committee

Update on 2019 Financial Projections



Paper G1

Finance committee

Update on 2019 Financial Projections

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Ian Hardie ianzhardie@googlemail.com
Action required	To note
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To update Mission Council on work done since its November 2017 meeting; and To indicate how finance committee intends to proceed in preparing the 2019 budget.
Main points	A way has been found to address the Lay Staff Pension Scheme deficit which avoids any increase in the annual contributions required of the URC Trust and other employers within the Scheme. The level of projected deficit for 2019 (largely attributable to the need for increased contributions to the URCMPF) has reduced since the previous meeting of Mission Council and the committee is of the view that it is at a level which can be sustained for a year. The implications of the latest actuarial valuation of the MPF, as well as other changes referred to in this paper, will become clearer towards the end of 2018 and we will then be better able to consider the medium term financial situation.
Previous relevant documents	Paper G1 Mission Council November 2017
Consultation has taken place with...	Northern College and those synods which are employers within the Lay Staff Pension Scheme; the URC Pension Executive; the URC Trust; The Retired Ministers' Housing Society; and Synod Treasurers.

Summary of Impact

Financial	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None

Update on 2019 Financial Projections

1. Paragraph 16 of paper G1 for the last Mission Council indicated that “March Mission Council or 2018 General Assembly [was] likely to be asked to consider steps which might be taken to address the financial position of the Church going forward with a view to bringing the 2019 and subsequent budgets nearer to balance”. At that meeting the Committee flagged up two main areas of uncertainty on both of which some further work has been done.

Lay Staff Pension Scheme

2. Paragraph 11 of the November 2017 paper explained that the URC Trust had agreed to transfer £2 million into the Lay Staff Pension Scheme by the end of 2017 to avoid the Scheme Trustee requiring a substantial increase in annual pension contributions from January 2018 by all Scheme employers. This was intended to give the URC and all other employers within the Scheme time to be appraised fully of the situation and consulted about how to address it without an immediate and substantial increase in contribution rate, potentially leading to wholesale slashing of budgets.
3. A meeting of all the employers within the Scheme was held on 17 November 2017. Details of the current position and options for addressing it were outlined. While recognising that those representatives attending on behalf of each employing body had no authority to commit their synod/college or the URC Trust, all those present agreed to recommend to those bodies that a sufficiently large lump sum proportionate to each one’s share of the overall Scheme deficit should be paid over via the URC Trust to the Lay Staff Scheme Trustee by 30 June 2018 to avoid any increase in annual contribution rate before 2021 at the earliest. This would require a further lump sum of around £1.4 million being paid to reduce the deficit of which the URC Trust would contribute approximately £628,000 in addition to the £2 million transferred to the Trustee in 2017.
4. It is likely to be the end of April before it is known whether each employer has agreed to this approach, but all the indications to date are that the representatives believe that their recommendation will be accepted. If this proves to be the case, there will be no need to increase the URC Trust budget for 2019 to allow for extra employer contributions to the Lay Staff Scheme. That will be true also for the budgets of the other employers within the Scheme.
5. It is important to recognise that the employers within the Scheme are legally responsible for eliminating its deficit and that the lump sums in question are therefore honouring commitments which the various URC bodies have already incurred. They are the minimum the Scheme Trustee is willing to accept to make progress in removing the employers’ indebtedness without increasing the annual contribution rate.

URC Ministers' Pension Fund (URCMPF) Scheme

6. Paragraph 15 of the November 2017 paper reminded Mission Council that a major uncertainty existed as to the level of employer contributions to the URCMPF Scheme likely to be required from January 2019. The preliminary results of the triennial valuation of the Scheme's assets and liabilities as at 31 December 2017, which will determine the contribution level from next January, will not be reported by the actuaries to the URC Ministers' Pension Trust until June 2018 at the earliest. As a result there is still no evidence to displace the assumption made some time ago that the increase required in employer contributions to provide for future benefits within the Scheme is likely to be of the order of £0.5m per annum.
7. However, more recent prudent projections of the likely costs of ministry during 2019 suggest it would be possible to reduce the overall budget for ministry by £250,000 compared with our projections produced during 2017. This would reduce the potential 2019 deficit to just over £320,000.
8. Although Mission Council indicated some time ago that it did not want to call on synods to provide support for the URCMPF after 2015, in fact one synod has continued to provide voluntary support thereafter.
9. In addition, on behalf of the finance committee, the URC Treasurer has spoken to various other Synod Treasurers over the past year about the potential increase in future pension contributions and three of those synods either already have agreed, or are in the process of agreeing, that they will donate a percentage of the proceeds of non-manse property sales to the URCMPF to help in offsetting the proposed increased pension contribution costs. Much of this giving was anticipated at the time the previous projections were prepared; but we estimate that an additional £30,000 or £40,000 might be anticipated from this source in an average year.
10. At this stage it is unclear whether any other synods might follow the lead of the four synods referred to in paragraphs 8 and 9 above.
11. Subject to that, and the detailed budget work normally done over the summer, it seems likely that we would be left with around £280,000 additional costs to absorb within the 2019 URC Trust budget.
12. Finance committee has considered whether and how it might be appropriate to reduce funding available under other budget headings to bring the 2019 budget nearer to being in balance. However, we are conscious that the figures we are working with at present are based on assumptions rather than concrete figures. Accordingly, we have judged it too early to consider making other budget cuts ourselves or to invite Mission Council to consider doing so.
13. Instead, as we prepare the 2019 budget over this summer, we propose to defer taking any deliberate steps to reduce other parts of the URC budget to eliminate any potential deficit.
14. This means that some of our reserves may be required in 2019 to absorb any deficit which ultimately emerges when the final URCMPF figures are known and it becomes clearer whether any other synods have chosen to follow the lead of those referred to in paragraphs 8 and 9 above.
15. At this stage it is difficult to give any more than a rough approximation of the potential impact of this on our available reserves. Page 11 of the 2016 Trustees' Report

indicated that, at the end of that year, readily available unrestricted funds totaled £15.6m: but that the aim should be to have between £6m and £12m available in a normal year. Estimating the movement in such reserves is a complex exercise but, after taking into account the amounts committed to the refurbishment of Church House, the amount contributed to the Lay Staff Pension Scheme during 2017 and early projections of the surplus in that year, the finance committee believes the equivalent available funds at the end of 2017 are likely to be not too far from £12m to £12.7m.

16. As indicated in paragraph 3 above, it will be necessary to commit £628k from reserves during 2018 to meet our obligations to the Lay Staff Pension Scheme. If the 2018 outcome is broadly in line with the 2018 budget, the available reserves at the end of 2018 may be roughly of the order of £11.5m to £12m. In other words, the available reserves would still be towards the top end of the range which we indicated we should be aiming to maintain.
17. In that context, in the view of the finance committee, incurring a deficit of up to £280k in 2019 would be manageable for that one year. Hence our intended approach to preparing next year's budget.

Paper H1

Ministries committee

Ministries updates

United Church 2017
Church 2018
Reformed Church 2018
Church 2018

Paper H1

Ministries committee

Ministries updates

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Paul Whittle moderator@urceastern.org.uk
Action required	None
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To explore a range of questions of current concern with respect to different aspects of the ministry of the church.
Main points	This paper explores a range of ministry issues, including call, models of non-stipendiary ministry, certificates of eligibility, and the use of the ministry budget for funding additional ministries.
Previous relevant documents	None of direct relevance.
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	No direct immediate impact.

Ministries Updates

1. Ministries committee is currently working on a number of key issues that were mentioned at the last, or previous, Mission Councils. It is appropriate to offer some updates.
2. Ministries committee continues to address the question of call and concurrence and how that can be practised taking account of today's changing situation for many churches and pastorates. We recognise both the practical and theological issues and the need to take account of how calls have been received and accepted in our denomination and its antecedents. We anticipate bringing something substantive to General Assembly.
3. Ministries committee has continued its thinking about the valuable resource that is non-stipendiary ministry. It recognises the importance of relevant and appropriate ministry for the church in the twenty-first century. As requested by the last meeting of Mission Council, work has been initiated on what might be described as a Model 4 non-stipendiary ministry, more locally based in all senses. We will bring a proposal to establish this to General Assembly.
4. As previously notified, ministries committee has initiated the process of issuing ten certificates of eligibility for stipendiary Ministers of Word and Sacraments over a period of three years. The first four such certificates have now been issued and the first of the recipients are beginning to seek a call to a URC pastorate.
5. Ministries committee is currently negotiating with finance committee to ensure that funding is available for the 'funding additional ministries' pilot proposal presented to, and agreed by, the last Mission Council. We are inviting 'bids' to receive this money from all synods who wish to be considered for the pilot, and the next meeting of the ministries committee in late June will decide on the two successful bids. This varies the original suggestion of consulting the RSTG as to the allocation of initial funding, but seems a fairer approach. It is hoped that the first monies will be available for the financial year 2019.

Paper H2

Ministries committee

Guidelines on conduct and
behaviour for authorised elders

United Church 2017
Church 2018
Reformed
Church 2018
Church

Paper H2

Ministries committee

Guidelines on conduct and behaviour for authorised elders

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Paul Whittle moderator@urceastern.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, adopts the guidelines on conduct and behaviour for authorised elders contained in appendix 1 of this paper.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To adopt guidelines presented to Mission Council in May 2017.
Main points	To set guidelines on conduct and behaviour for those appointed to serve as authorised elders.
Previous relevant documents	Paper H3 at Mission Council May 2017.
Consultation has taken place with...	The document was presented to Mission Council in May 2017. No comments have been received beyond those made at the time.

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	No direct immediate impact.

Guidelines on Conduct and Behaviour for authorised elders

1. At the May 2017 meeting of Mission Council the ministries committee, as requested by General Assembly, presented a draft of guidelines on conduct and behaviour for authorised elders.
2. A few comments were made, and the draft was broadly welcomed. No further comments have been received.
3. Ministries committee has therefore made some very minor amendments to the document presented in May 2017 and now presents the guidelines for adoption.
4. The committee has already recommended that authorised elders should be asked to sign the document when they come into office, as a matter of clarity and good practice. But, even if a particular authorised elder has not signed, the Guidelines still apply, in the name of the Church, to that person.

Appendix 1

Guidelines on Conduct and Behaviour for authorised elders

Introduction

In 2016 the General Assembly agreed that the pattern of presidency at the sacraments if the minister in pastoral charge is not available should be as follows:

1. The Church Meeting may invite another Minister of Word and Sacraments
2. If such a minister is not available, the Church Meeting may invite an elder (or accredited lay preacher) authorised by the synod, in accordance with the provisions of §25 of the Basis of Union: elders of the local church and accredited lay preachers regularly conducting worship there should be considered first
3. Authorisation for such presidency by the synod, normally of members from within the congregation concerned, should be for an initial period of three to five years (according to synod judgement), including a probationary year on first appointment, with the possibility of renewal. Before renewal there should be consultation by the synod with the congregation, and a review of its needs.

Authorised Elders in this document refers to those appointed by the synod under 2 above, whether elders or lay preachers. Such appointees agree to abide by these guidelines on conduct and behaviour.

Faithful living

Those appointed will take account of the need to model a Christian lifestyle including:

1. Live a Christian life as persons of prayer and integrity
2. Be committed to growing in faith and discipleship and developing the gifts each has been given
3. Avoid doing anything to undermine the spiritual health of another
4. Regard all persons with equal respect and concern and not discriminate against anyone on the basis of gender, race, age, disability or sexual orientation
5. Refrain from using privilege or power for personal advantage or gain, whether financial, emotional, sexual or material
6. Work collaboratively with ministers/CRCWs, elders, members and lay preachers where appropriate
7. Seek advice from others if in doubt about one's competence to deal with any issue or situation
8. Engage positively with all the councils of the church.

Authorised elders will:

9. Remember that the worship of the local church is an expression of the worship of the whole people of God
10. Treat honourably the traditions and practices of the United Reformed Church
11. Be sensitive to the particular patterns of worship life in the congregation for which they are authorized
12. Undertake such training as determined by the synod in line with the requirements of General Assembly
13. Engage positively with the review process at the end of the probationary year and at the end of the appointment period
14. Hold a valid Disclosure and Barring Service certificate or comply with an alternative Ministries Office disclosure process where this is not possible
15. Be supportive of any changes the church and synod may wish to make at the end of the appointment, recognising that changes within the pastorate may mean there is no ongoing need for an authorised elder or that it is appropriate for someone else to take on the role.

Paper H3

Ministries committee

Proposed amendments to the Plan for Partnership

United Church 2017
Church 2018
Reformed Church 2018
Church 2018

Paper H3

Ministries committee

Proposed amendments to the Plan for Partnership

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Paul Whittle moderator@urceastern.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council agrees the amendments to the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration set out in this paper.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To amend the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration
Main points	The maintenance of the ministry sub-committee has agreed that there are a number of minor amendments required to tidy up the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration and these are set out in the attached document.
Previous relevant documents	None of direct relevance.
Consultation has taken place with...	Current Plan for Partnership available on the URC website in the Finance section under information.

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None

Proposed amendments to the Plan for Partnership

inserts shown in italics

deletions shown in bold

para 6.1.3 Maternity/Adoption/Paternity provisions: ministers/CRCWs are entitled to statutory pay and leave and full details of the arrangements can be obtained from the MoM Office. Although office holders are not entitled to additional maternity/adoption/*shared parental* leave, and Keeping in Touch (KIT) days, the General Assembly has agreed that these provisions should be extended to ministers/CRCWs.

The above change is proposed in response to the introduction by HM Government of new arrangements for Shared Parental Leave.

para 10.3 Retirement removal grant

Removal costs within the United Kingdom shall be paid on the first removal of a minister/CRCW following final retirement from a pastoral charge or from an appointment paid under the terms of the Plan (or to the spouse of a minister/CRCW who dies before retirement) provided that at least two estimates have been obtained. The cost of the lowest estimate will be met up to the maximum shown in Appendix A. *Where special circumstances mean that the lower estimate is significantly higher than this maximum, the MoM sub-committee shall have discretion to exceed the maximum.*

Appendix C Removal Costs

The receiving local church is responsible for paying the costs of removal (see para 6.3.3). Where the removal is within the United Kingdom reimbursement of up to 50% of the cost incurred (subject to a maximum reimbursement shown in Appendix A) is available from the Ministry and Mission Fund and application should be made via the MoM Office. *Where special circumstances mean that 50% of the sum paid by the church is significantly more than this maximum, the MoM sub-committee shall have discretion to exceed the maximum.*

Where a minister/CRCW is called from abroad reimbursement from that Fund to the local church will be based on the removal costs from the port of entry.

The above changes are proposed following discussion of a particular situation where removal expenses were higher than normal due to temporary disability.

Appendix D – **National Assembly** Manse Guidelines

The above change is an overdue tidying up of terminology with regard to denomination-wide references.

Paper I1

Mission committee

Partnership Re-Commitment
[The UK congregations of
the Evangelical Presbyterian Church,
Ghana, and the United Reformed
Church]

United Church 2017
Church 2018
Reformed Church 2018
Church

Paper I1

Mission committee

Partnership Re-Commitment [The UK congregations of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana, and the United Reformed Church]

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Bernie Collins and Michael Jagessar michael.jagessar@urc.org.uk
Action required	Mission Council to affirm the Partnership Re-commitment, and endorse the following resolution (similar to that agreed in 2017 re the PCG) as a matter of good order and practice.
Draft resolution(s)	<p>a) Mission Council welcomes and affirms the Partnership Re-commitment between the UK congregations of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana, and the United Reformed Church.</p> <p>b) Mission Council recommends as good practice, and requests Church Meetings to consider seriously, the principle that an individual should not serve as an elder in both of these churches simultaneously. This would not prevent an individual serving as an elder in one denomination, and at a later time serving as an elder in the other.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	As resolution
Main points	Re-affirmation of the URC's partnership with the growing UK Congregations of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana.
Previous relevant documents	2011 Memo. of Understanding between the EPCG and the URC. Mission Council Paper I2 of May 2017, re the Presbyterian Church of Ghana.
Consultation has taken place with...	Mission committee Dialogue Group (URC and EPCG).

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Refreshing a long-standing relationship; helping to pave the way for EPCG to apply to join Churches Together in England.

Partnership Re-Commitment

[UK congregations of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana,
and the United Reformed Church]

1. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana (EPCG) and the United Reformed Church (URC) have had a long relationship as partner Churches. On 15 May 2011 the EPCG and URC affirmed in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) their vision of sharing a common commitment to mission in the UK through partnership, and their desire to nurture Reformed Churches for immigrants from Ghana which will be in formal relationship with the both the URC and the EPCG.
2. Since then the EPCG has established congregations in England and Germany, and their mission and ministry continue to grow. In local contexts, especially in London, some EPCG communities share the worship space of URC Churches, URC ministers work collaboratively with EPCG colleagues, EPCG ministerial colleagues share in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic ministers' (BAME) gatherings, and there are ongoing conversations around ways that the EPCG (UK) and the URC can support each other's ministry.
3. Believing that we are guided by the Holy Spirit into a continuing relationship of mutual friendship and partnership in the work of the Gospel, we sense that the time is right for the URC and the EPCG (UK) to re-affirm:
 - our common faith in the living and true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
 - our common heritage as Reformed Churches within the Reformed family of Churches
 - our sharing in, as partners, a common missional calling, a commitment to growing the Church and deepening Christian discipleship, and a desire to enable each other's mission and ministry, as God's Spirit will lead us
 - our commitment to give and receive from each other, learn from one another, to pray for one another, and to consider practical ways of sharing resources where possible, as we seek to serve and walk the way of abundant life of God in Christ.
4. This renewal of our commitment, as set out in the first resolution above, would re-affirm our long and strong partnership links and our desire to grow and deepen our relationship in new and mutually enriching ways
5. Over the last year there has been a series of meetings between members of the mission committee and senior leaders in the EPCG, and these conversations continue. One of the practical issues discussed was that of overlapping eldership which we felt would merit attention and guidance from the respective Councils of both churches. To this end, we bring before Mission Council the second resolution above.
6. The resolution would not require an elder presently serving with both churches to resign immediately from one or the other. But it would mean that as soon as this overlapping service could reasonably be ended (for example on the completion of a stated term in one of the churches), the elder should take the opportunity to stand down. After this they would only serve in one denomination at any one time.



Paper 13

Mission and Discipleship

*Walking the Way: Living the life
of Jesus today*
The Walk Continues...

United Church 2017
Church 2018
Reformed Church 2018
Church

Paper I3

Mission and Discipleship

The Walk Continues...

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Richard Church richard.church@urc.org.uk Francis Brienen francis.brienen@urc.org.uk
Action required	Take note
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	This is an update on the continuing work of <i>Walking the Way: living the life of Jesus today</i> , supporting the United Reformed Church's denomination-wide focus on Missional Discipleship.
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council 11/15 Papers M1 and M2 Mission Council 3/16 Paper M1 General Assembly Reports 2016, p.11 Mission Council 10/16 Paper M1 Mission Council 5/17 Paper I8 Mission Council 10/17 Paper I3.
Consultation has taken place with...	Mission committee Education and Learning Communications Children's and Youth Work Neil Hudson, London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC).

Summary of Impact

Financial	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

The Walk Continues...

Since Mission Council last met in November 2017, work on supporting the United Reformed Church's denomination-wide focus on Missional Discipleship has continued apace. This paper emphasises key developments in *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today*, highlights resources which are now available to support individuals and congregations in exploring Missional Discipleship, and offers an update on future work.

1. Collaboration, Support and Advocacy

- 1.1 The *Walking the Way* steering group met in January 2018 to further unpack some of the core concepts and principles of Missional Discipleship to help in planning future work and direction. Dr Sam Richards, our Head of Children's and Youth Work, assisted the steering group in exploring how to keep a truly intergenerational focus at the heart of everything we do. Neil Hudson of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC) helped us to explore issues surrounding the accompaniment of local churches in supporting all people in recognising and living out their call to Missional Discipleship. These sessions have greatly enriched the work of the steering group.
- 1.2 As a result of these collaborations, the steering group highlighted the need to maintain two-way contact with synods. As such, the steering group agreed that synods will be consulted on how Missional Discipleship fits into each synod's structure and strategy. We will use this insight to work individually with synods to ensure effective working relationships with each of them and with the local churches within them.
- 1.3 Work on *Stepwise* continues. This educational model will be offered as a programmatic element of *Walking the Way* to support participants, in ways suitable to their unique needs, in deepening their awareness, knowledge and experience of faith and Missional Discipleship. *Stepwise* will also help people connect with the people and contexts around them as they share their learning experience with others.
- 1.4 Following a series of fruitful meetings with various Church House departments and areas of work, it is clear now, more than ever, that there are many potential points of convergence and collaboration to explore across the denomination in terms of building a Church which supports all people in their Missional Discipleship journey. *Walking the Way* is all about noticing and using these opportunities to work together as we all seek to walk ever closer with Christ.

2. Update on Resources

- 2.1 *Walking the Way* is now present on social media! Members of Mission Council are invited to follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, liking and sharing our posts as far and widely as possible. Our social media and web pages will be the main

sources of news, information and resources, so please encourage people to keep visiting these regularly for the latest updates.

- 2.2 Connected with this is an innovative new web page design for resource sharing. Using a Venn diagram design, users will be able to find resources specific to their needs in an efficient, interactive and fun way without needing to trawl through lists of files and links. This should already be active and accessible through our web pages when Mission Council meets. Suggestions for materials on Mission and Discipleship for inclusion in this resource sharing system should be sent to wtw@urc.org.uk for consideration by the steering group.
- 2.3 The series of study booklets delving further into *Holy Habits*, by Andrew Roberts, reported to Mission Council in November 2017, is now available to purchase through the United Reformed Church's Bookstore. These highly recommended materials offer individuals and congregations an opportunity to look further into the ten habits of (Missional) Discipleship covered in the original book, re-imagining them for personal and community life in the twenty first century.
- 2.4 Liturgical ideas for Lent are now available through our webpages to help congregations consider how Jesus' time in the wilderness in preparation for his work might influence their relationship with Missional Discipleship.
- 2.5 A collection of intergenerational activity suggestions is also available through our webpages to assist congregations in allowing generations to inspire and influence each other in Missional Discipleship.

3. Future Work

- 3.1 The upcoming Ministers Gathering (April 30 to May 3) will provide a key opportunity to work with Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers in seeking to build a Church which truly caters for the needs of all people in living out their call to Missional Discipleship.
- 3.2 Plans for the film project reported to Mission Council in November 2017 have evolved into a series of videos which will explore each of the *Holy Habits* through real-life examples to inspire discussion and action in local congregations. Links to these videos will be available on our webpages and social media when they are released.
- 3.3 The steering group looks very much forward to working more closely with the LICC on developing an accompaniment programme to support churches in exploring what it truly means to Walk the Way of Christ in their own contexts. The LICC has extensive experience in this regard, we are keen to learn from and share more widely.
- 3.4 Work continues on planning and commissioning Messy Church and Godly Play sessions on Missional Discipleship. Further updates will be given in due course.

Paper J1

Nominations committee

List of nominations

United Church 2017
Church 2018
Reformed Church 2018
Church 2018

Paper J1

Nominations committee

List of Nominations

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Ray Adams ray.adams12@btinternet.com Mr George Faris gfaris48@gmail.com
Action required	
Draft resolution(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Mission Council notes and approves the changes set out in Section A of the report to the list of Nominations agreed in May 2017 and as amended in November 2017. 2) Mission Council appoints according to the list of nominations in section B and C of the report. 3) Mission Council agrees the changes to the governance of Westminster College in section D of the report.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To clarify various details of the Nominations list. 2) To appoint members of various committees and posts. 3) To review the governance of Westminster College.
Main points	See detail of report.
Previous relevant documents	Nominations list in Minutes of Mission Council, May 2017. Mission Council Papers J1 and J2, November 2017.
Consultation has taken place with...	All synods are represented on the committee. Westminster College.

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Some of these roles involve ecumenical contact and collaboration.

List of Nominations

A. Amendments to published list of nominations

Mission Council is asked to note and approve the following additional amendments to the Nominations list that was agreed in May 2017 and amended in November 2017.

2.2 Nominations committee

- i. The National Synod of Wales member is now the Revd Adrian Bulley.

3.1 Mission committee

- i. Ms Chris Eddowes has succeeded the Revd Ron Forster as the Northern Synod member. Chris will serve until 30 June 2021.

3.1.5 Rural Strategy Group (United Reformed Church/Methodist Church)

- i. The Revd Steve Faber has succeeded the Revd Ruth Whitehead as the Synod Moderator co-chairing the group. Steve will serve until 30 June 2021.
- ii. The Revd Peter Ball serves on this group, and should therefore be added to the Nominations List. Peter will serve until the end of General Assembly 2020.

4.1 Ministries committee

- i. The Revd Sally Thomas was appointed to serve to 2019, not 2018.

B. Extension of term of service

1.4 Listed buildings advisory group (LBAG)

The Convenor of the Listed Buildings Advisory Group is appointed by Mission Council on the recommendation of the LBAG. The Convenor is normally appointed for three years at a time, and normally for a limit of two terms. Mr Peter West (Eastern Synod) will complete six years' service as Convenor at the 2018 Assembly. The group would like Mr West to stay on for one further year, and he would be willing to do so, but he does not wish to serve longer than that. LBAG will expect to recommend a new name during 2018, to take over as Convenor in July 2019.

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council extends the term of service of Mr Peter West as Convenor of the listed buildings advisory group to 30 June 2019.

C. New appointments

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council makes the following appointments:

1.3 Law and polity advisory group

The Revd Dr John Bradbury to be Convenor-Elect with immediate effect and Convenor from the end of General Assembly 2018 until the end of General Assembly 2022.

2.6 Pastoral Reference and Welfare committee

Professor Malcolm Johnson to be a member with immediate effect until the end of General Assembly 2022.

5.3 Equalities committee

The Revd Anne Lewitt to be Convenor-Elect with immediate effect and Convenor from the end of General Assembly 2018 until the end of General Assembly 2022.

9.2 Westminster College: Board of Governors

The Revd Jan Adamson to be a Governor from the end of General Assembly 2018 until the end of General Assembly 2024.

D. Board of Governors at Westminster College

The nominations committee was asked recently about the length of service of General Assembly appointed governors at Westminster College. The governance of the college was considered by Mission Council in May 2013 (see Paper J5: *The Composition of the Board of Governors at Westminster College*) and by General Assembly in 2014 when Resolution 30 removed the Secretary for Education and Learning from the list of governors – the secretary now attends meetings of the board but is not a governor.

After discussions with interested parties the following resolution is brought to Mission Council:

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council agrees:**1. There shall be 3 classes of Governors of Westminster College:**

Class A: nominated by the nominations committee and appointed by General Assembly or Mission Council for a six-year term, which may be renewed. The nominations committee will ensure a regular rotation of Governors.

Class B: nominated by a General Assembly nominating group and appointed by General Assembly or Mission Council.

Class C: appointed by the named institution or group.

2. The 15 Governors shall be as follows:

Ref	Class	Role
1	A	Convenor
2	A	Clerk (to the Governors)
3	A	Honorary Treasurer (of the College)
4	A	General Assembly Governor 1
5	A	General Assembly Governor 2
6	A	General Assembly Governor 3
7	A	General Assembly Governor 4
8	A	General Assembly Governor 5
9	B	Principal
10	C	Cambridge Theological Federation representative
11	C	University of Cambridge representative
12	C	Anglia Ruskin University representative

13	C	Teaching Staff representative
14	C	Student representative
15	C	Cheshunt Foundation representative

3. The Secretary for Education and Learning and the URC Treasurer are normally in attendance.



Paper K1

Pastoral reference and welfare committee

Adjustment of remit

United Church 2017
Church 2018
Reformed Church 2018
Church 2018

Paper K1

Pastoral reference and welfare committee

Adjustment of remit

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Richard Church richard.church@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council assigns the responsibilities in paras 2.1 to 2.3 below to the safeguarding advisory group.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Some matters presently assigned to the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee would be dealt with more competently by the safeguarding advisory group.
Main points	As above
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council Paper N, May 2013.
Consultation has taken place with...	URC Safeguarding Officer.

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Better handling of some reputation issues.

Adjustment of remit

1. Committee membership

This is currently as follows: Mrs Wilma Frew (Convenor, to 2019), the Revd Richard Church (Executive Secretary, ex officio), the Revd Clare Downing (from July 2013), Mrs Pam Sharp (from July 2015), Rev Camilla Veitch (from July 2016), one member vacancy, the Revd John Piper (Deputy Treasurer, ex officio), the General Secretary.

2. Pastoral Reference work

When the sexual ethics advisory group concluded its work formally in 2012 some of its functions were passed over to the pastoral reference and welfare committee. Several of these items would now be better carried by the safeguarding advisory group.

- 2.1 Item 1 (a) was 'to encourage information, understanding and guidance of events'. The policy and procedure in response to alleged incidents of sexual harassment and abuse is now the responsibility of SAG.
- 2.2 Item 2 (a) covers the Pastoral Reference team co-ordinator role, and the named synod adviser role (currently the Synod Safeguarding Officer). This too should be the responsibility of the safeguarding advisory group.
- 2.3 The Past Case Review process, Phase Two, developed processes for adjudicating on cases of alleged lay misconduct. This was also overseen by SAG.
- 2.4 At a recent meeting, the committee recognised that circumstances had changed since Mission Council agreed that oversight of the above matters be given to PRWC. For example,
 - i) In 2016, the URC appointed its first full time Safeguarding Officer to work with a growing team of Synod Safeguarding Officers.
 - ii) The whole of our Safeguarding work is undertaken in the light of Good Practice 4 which sets out the policies and practices by which the Church discharges its responsibility in this area.
 - iii) The oversight of Safeguarding falls under the safeguarding advisory group who have indicated their willingness to take responsibility for this legacy of SEAG's work.
- 2.5 PRWC therefore seeks Mission Council's permission for these responsibilities to be transferred to the safeguarding advisory group.

Paper M1

General Secretariat

Resourcing the Church's worship

United Church 2017
Church 2018
Reformed Church 2018
Church 2018

Paper M1

General Secretariat

Supporting the Church's worship

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Richard Church richard.church@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Mission Council is invited to approve one of the following:</p> <p>EITHER</p> <p>a) Mission Council directs the General Secretariat to consult and to make proposals to General Assembly (or Mission Council acting on its behalf) for a Worship Reference Group that would report to Faith and Order;</p> <p>OR</p> <p>b) Mission Council does not wish to make new provision for resourcing the Church's worship at present.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Structural provision at Assembly committee level for supporting and resourcing the Church's worship.
Main points	There is a case for new structural provision. This paper asks Mission Council to take a view on the strength of that case, and on a particular proposal for meeting it.
Previous relevant documents	None
Consultation has taken place with...	Faith and order committee; URC Silence and Retreats Group; URC Music.

Summary of Impact

Financial	A small budget would be needed for any new group to meet. Particular projects would need to be considered as they arose.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	The possibility of more effective liaison with those who resource worship in other Churches.

Supporting the Church's Worship

1. In 2007, General Assembly decided that the Doctrine, prayer and worship committee would be subsumed into the mission committee. There had been a faith and order reference group – a sub-group of both the DPW and ecumenical committees, covering matters where those two areas overlapped. After 2007, the role of FORG grew as they picked up things that mission committee simply didn't have time to do. In March 2012, Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, converted what was the faith and order reference group into a standing committee of Assembly.
2. However, the networks which had seen the Doctrine, prayer and worship committee as the natural repository for their work discovered soon that there was no Assembly committee whose remit extended to their sphere of interest. URC Music and Silence and Retreats have a keen sense of purpose, yet they feel hampered by the lack of an obvious point of contact.
3. Thankfully this has not led to a lack of worship resources, as various committees have generated new resources. The intervening years have continued to see the mission committee, the discipleship team, communications staff and other creative individuals working on a plethora of material, of which the *URC Prayer Handbook, Feasts and Festivals, Walking the Way* and the *Daily Devotions* are examples. The recently refreshed URC website gathers this material helpfully together under a button that sits high on the front page.
4. So what is the problem? The Church lacks a group whose task it is to look proactively at the need to refresh our liturgical materials on a regular basis – for example, to review and possibly supplement *Worship from the URC* (2003), or to consider what hymn resources might be prepared to follow on from *Rejoice and Sing* (1991).
5. If Mission Council believes that this is a vacuum which needs to be filled, the most natural link committee is Faith and Order. Mission committee looks beyond the URC, at wider relationships, and would not sensibly be able to add worship to that portfolio. Faith and Order has a keen sense of what has enriched the Church in the past, and it would be better placed than Mission to resource our worship in the present. When Faith and Order was asked about this, it did not wish to add this work to its present duty. It would, however, be willing to act as parent committee for a small subgroup.
6. The purpose of bringing such a group into being would be to:
 - 6.1 Encourage and where necessary coordinate the work that is presently being done to produce worship resources
 - 6.2 Ensure proactively that the URC does not fall behind in its revision and renewal of liturgical resources, and commission new work where necessary

- 6.3 Support existing networks as they develop and deepen the life of faith through literature, retreats, quiet days, and events for musicians and worship leaders.
7. The choice of two resolutions invites Mission Council either to encourage this suggestion by requesting that further work be done to make it practical and specific, or to discourage the venture. If the latter choice is made, we shall have to accept the present rather diffuse resourcing of the Church's worship. And while the former choice would require the investment of some time and effort on the part of a few, we could probably fairly readily find such people, who would have the gifts, interest and motivation to help the Church with work of this kind.

Paper M2

General Secretariat

The Church's Hymnody

United Church 2017
Church 2018
Reformed Church 2018
Church

Paper M2

General Secretariat

The Church's Hymnody

Basic Information

Contact	John Proctor john.proctor@urc.org.uk
Action required	Informal consideration only, at this stage.
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	What the URC sings.
Main points	A variety of hymnbooks are used around the URC. Does this mean that congregations have the resources they need?
Previous documents	None
Consultation has taken place with...	The communications committee has been asked for comment. Otherwise it seemed important for Mission Council to reflect on this matter before any wider consultation were undertaken.

Summary of Impact

Financial	Not yet known.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	This is an attempt to discern our own practice and needs. If we wanted to take new steps to meet some of these needs, we might want to ask about ecumenical opportunities too.

The Church's Hymnody

1. A reputable Christian publisher has made an informal approach to indicate possible interest in producing a hymnbook designed specifically for the URC. This paper is an attempt to gather some outline information about what our congregations actually do, and what they need. If there is need for new resources, and interest too, then we ought at least to ask what sort of new work might be within reach of our capacity and budget; taking those points forward in detail would be a discussion for another day. But if there is no need, or not much interest, then we should not go further. We already have a hymn book of our own, compiled within and for our own fellowship, in *Rejoice and Sing* (1991), and we may find that this still suffices as a specifically URC resource.
2. The communications committee has been asked for comment and will be able to contribute at Mission Council.
3. Members of Mission Council are, collectively, acquainted at first hand with many of the URC's congregations. Members are asked to complete the questionnaire below, in regard to the congregation you know best.
4. Should you feel that you know a few congregations well enough to answer for them all, please do continue your responses on the reverse of your questionnaire. More information will probably be more helpful than less.
5. A summary of the picture that arises from the responses will be presented to MC on day two or three, and we can see where it has led. It will inevitably be impressionistic rather than systematic, but not entirely without value.

M2

United Reformed Church · Mission Council, March 2018

Questionnaire on hymn books

Please respond in regard to a church you know well.

1. Name of this church (so that we shall know if someone else has also written about it).
2. Is it a URC congregation alone, or an LEP?
3. Roughly how many people attend the main weekly worship in an average week?
4. Do your people generally look at a screen to sing, or hold books in their hands?
5. What is the main hymnbook that you use as a source of your material?
6. Do you use other hymnbooks as major sources? Which ones?
7. How satisfied do you think your people are with your present source(s) of material?

very satisfied	satisfied	dissatisfied	very dissatisfied
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8. If this church wanted a new source of hymns, would it be likely to prefer one that was labelled URC?
9. If this church wanted a new source of hymns would it be more likely to purchase an electronic resource or buy a set of books?
10. Have you any other comment about local usage, habit, preference or need?

M2

United Reformed Church · Mission Council, March 2018

Paper N1

Task group on the future of General Assembly

Report to Mission Council

United Church 2017
Church 2018
Reformed Church 2018
Church

Paper N1

Task group on the future of General Assembly

Report to Mission Council

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Val Morrison valmorrison7@btinternet.com
Action required	The task group would welcome advice from Mission Council about the content and clarity of this draft report.
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Updated draft report to General Assembly, in the light of feedback received at and since the last meeting of Mission Council
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	AAC supplementary report to GA 2016. Mission Council Paper U1 of May 2017, and Paper N1 of November 2017.
Consultation has taken place with...	Mission Council. URC Youth.

Summary of Impact

Financial	Possible modest increases in required funds what we do.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Improvements in the efficiency of our governance processes will reduce the risk of reputational damage.

Task group on the future of General Assembly: report to Mission Council

March 2018

Note to Mission Council

Mission Council has already discussed much of the content of this report. The task group now asks for advice on presenting the material to Assembly. Many people in the Assembly at Nottingham will not have been at Southport in 2016, when the task group was set to work, nor in recent meetings of Mission Council, where various important issues have been aired. Is this a paper these people will be able to understand and engage with? Will it enable them to take responsible decisions?

If you have questions about points of detail, please let the convenor know of these before we come to High Leigh. If you have broader concerns, it will be possible to discuss these within our Mission Council meeting.

Part one – how we reached our recommendations

1. The task group's Remit

- 1.1 In July 2016 General Assembly resolved to appoint a task group “to consider the documentation already available, to consult widely, particularly with synods and Assembly committees, and to bring to the General Assembly of 2018 proposals for the form, size, duration, location and funding of the Assembly in subsequent years from 2020 to 2030.”
- 1.2 The report also stated that:
“The task group of five people, including a former Moderator of General Assembly, a current or recent Synod Clerk, and the Clerk of the General Assembly, nominated by the nominations committee, and appointed by the Assembly Officers, to begin work immediately, and report to each meeting of Mission Council. A report to the autumn 2017 meeting of Mission Council should enable that meeting to make decisions that enable a venue to be firmly booked for the 2020 meeting of General Assembly.”
- 1.3 In the event, the Nominations process proved slower than the drafters of the Assembly resolution hoped, and the task group was not able to meet until late December 2016. The members of the group are Val Morrison (convenor) (former Assembly Moderator and a former Synod Clerk), Adrian Bulley (Synod Clerk), Dick Gray (former Deputy Treasurer and a current Synod Treasurer), Margaret Marshall (Synod Clerk), along with Michael Hopkins (Assembly Clerk), supported by John Proctor (General Secretary).
- 1.4 The task group notes that the current pattern of governance is a two-year cycle, which consists of one meeting of General Assembly and four meetings of Mission Council. The task group also noted that these meetings are costed at £200,000 and £20,000 each respectively, making a total budget of £280,000 over the two years of a cycle. [N.B. Although the Assembly budget for 2017 and 2018 was increased to

£230,000, this was not intended as a permanent change, and we expect the budget to revert to £200,000 for 2019 and 2020.]

- 1.5 Although Mission Council was not part of the remit, the task group are convinced that any serious changes considered to General Assembly cannot be considered in isolation from Mission Council.

2. Consideration of documentation already available

- 2.1 The task group considered a significant amount of documentation from discussions at Mission Councils over the last few years, including extensive notes from a session led by the General Secretary in March 2016, and the discussions at the 2016 General Assembly based upon the supplementary report of the Assembly arrangements committee.

3. Consultation

- 3.1 The task group members had good and wide connections across the synods, and we made extensive use of these contacts.
- 3.2 Early contact was made with Convenors of Assembly committees, in advance of the more general consultation.
- 3.3 Reflections from recent Moderators and their chaplains on their visits to the Assemblies of other churches were sought.
- 3.4 An open survey was undertaken in which there were 547 responses, from individuals, committees, synods, and other groups. We believe that this is a very high response rate for United Reformed Church surveys.
- 3.5 The results of all these consultations underpin all our recommendations. At every stage, we have consciously tried to make recommendations based upon evidence and theology, while having due regard to financial considerations.

4. Background

- 4.1 The current discussions result from General Assembly in 2012 resolving to make a significant reduction to the budget for Assembly, but failing to agree any ways to implement that cut. Mission Council did agree ways to implement that decision, but there has been a general dissatisfaction with aspects of the Assembly, voiced by members of the Assembly and by synods, since 2012.
- 4.2 The task group also noted that a freezing of the budget since 2012 amounted to a gradual cut in real terms because of inflation. Conference centres, railways, hotels, caterers, and technical services suppliers have all increased their charges each year. Nonetheless, the fall in URC membership over this period has meant that the cost of Assembly per member has actually increased, in cash terms, as well as in real terms.

5. Comparison with other denominations

5.1 As well as the observations from former Moderators and their chaplains, the task group considered how churches with similar sizes organised their equivalents to the General Assembly. This is what we discovered:

Church	No. of members	Mem. of GA equiv. and frq. of meeting
Church in Wales	84,000	143, two days twice a year
Presbyterian Ch of Wales	24,000	150, three days once a year
Methodist Ch in Ireland	50,000	260, five days once a year
Scottish Episcopal Church	54,000	150, three days once a year
United Reformed Church	48,000	315, four days every two years

5.2 The task group also considered larger churches, including the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and the Methodist Church in Great Britain. However, we discovered that these churches spend money and staff time on their equivalents to General Assembly at levels which would rapidly bankrupt the United Reformed Church.

6. Theology and ecclesiology of General Assembly

6.1 The Structure of the United Reformed Church [paragraph 2(6)] states that the General Assembly:
 “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”.

6.2 The task group believes that there are theological ideas that shape the way that Reformed churches have historically made our decisions and ordered our structures, and wishes to highlight these:

6.2.1 A key principle for our tradition is conciliarity, that is, that we reach our decisions as representatives meeting together in council, guided by the Holy Spirit. Congregationalists and the Churches of Christ held the Church Meeting to be the central place of authority, while Presbyterians recognise the authority of the wider councils of Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly. Together these traditions, which are held in common with other Reformed churches, represent a view of the church that understands its authority under Christ to lie in a body of representatives acting in council, rather than in an appointed person or persons. We believe this is fundamental to the ecclesiology of the United Reformed Church.

6.2.2 Mission Council in March 2016 was asked to consider several ways that an Assembly’s effectiveness could be viewed. What matters most – the quality of its decisions, the sense of ownership and wide participation it engenders, or the inspiration it offers to those who attend? Clearly these aims need not be at odds with one another, but if one is more important to us than the others, this preference will tend to shape how we plan and deliver Assembly.

6.2.3 In this discussion members of Mission Council placed most stress on wide participation, ahead but not to the exclusion of the other two aims. The value of a broad membership, including many people whose primary church involvement is local, the opportunity to hear a balance of different voices, and the sense that the whole Church is overseeing the whole Church, were all attractive aspects of this way of viewing Assembly.

6.2.4 However, a problem with a broadly-based way of decision-making is that sometimes urgent administrative decisions are needed while the appropriate council is not in session. In such situations a smaller group is sometimes given executive power to act on behalf of the council. Where this practice is infrequent, or when the issues are of no great consequence, the principle of conciliarity is still upheld. However, when the 'executive' group becomes a regular and significant feature of the decision-making process, our historical understanding of conciliarity is significantly altered, particularly when the Assembly itself does not make the major decisions.

6.2.5 At least since 2006, there is evidence that the United Reformed Church, both at the level of synods and the General Assembly, has given significant and ongoing responsibility to various executive bodies. In the case of the General Assembly this body is the Mission Council.

6.3 The remit of Mission Council is:

"a co-ordinating committee...the purpose of the Mission Council is to enable the Church, in its General Assembly, to take a more comprehensive view of the activity and policy of the Church to decide more carefully about priorities and to encourage the outreach of the Church to the community. Its service is directly towards the Assembly, but its concern is with the whole Church and all its members, so it will seek to be aware of the pains and joys, the adventures and hopes of the whole body."¹

6.4 The Structure gives as one of the functions of the General Assembly that it:

"shall also appoint a Mission Council with power to act in its name between meetings of the General Assembly and to discharge such other functions as the General Assembly may from time to time direct"²

On this basis, many decisions of Mission Council carry the words "Acting on behalf of the General Assembly..." to indicate that the Mission Council does not carry such authority in its own right but only by delegation from the General Assembly. In practice, however, Mission Council looks very much like a council of the church rather than a committee.

6.5 The functions of General Assembly also include:

- (i) to oversee the total work of the church;
- (ii) to make decisions on reports and recommendations from its own committees, issue such directions and take such actions as it deems conducive to the propagation of the gospel, the welfare of the United Reformed Church, the interests of the Church of Christ as a whole and the well-being of the community in which the Church is placed;
- (iii) to conduct and foster the ecumenical relationships of the United Reformed Church;
- (iv) to support and share in the missionary work of the Church at home and abroad;
- (ix) to remit questions concerning the witness and judgement of the church for general discussion in Church Meetings, elders' meetings, and synods, and to call for reports from these councils;
- (x) to interpret all forms and expressions of the polity practice and doctrinal formulations of the United Reformed Church including the Basis and the Structure and to determine when rights of personal conviction are asserted to the injury of the unity and peace of the United Reformed Church;

¹ The Manual, section G

² Structure, paragraph 2(6)(o)

- (xi) to alter, add to, modify or supersede the Basis, Structure and any other form or expression of the polity and doctrinal formulations of the United Reformed Church;
- (xii) to make, alter or rescind rules for the conduct of its own proceedings and of those of other councils and commissions of the United Reformed Church and such other rules, bye-laws and standing orders as the General Assembly may from time to time think desirable for the performance of its functions and the carrying into effect of any of the provisions contained in the Basis and the Structure and for the conduct of the business and affairs of the General Assembly and of the other councils and commissions of the United Reformed Church;
- (xix) to provide for the raising of funds for the work of the United Reformed Church and to determine arrangements for payment of stipends and expenses to Ministers, Church Related Community Workers and officers of the United Reformed Church and for such other financial matters as the General Assembly may from time to time think desirable;
- (xx) to consider and decide upon issues and representations duly transmitted by other councils of the United Reformed Church;
- (xxix) to do such other things as may be necessary in pursuance of its responsibility for the common life of the church.

The task group believes that General Assembly can only do these things if it meets often enough to do so.

- 6.6 Moving further towards executive government may, of course, be a direction in which the United Reformed Church wishes to proceed, but this would be at the cost of our conciliar heritage, and a step away from how we have hitherto understood Reformed theology.
- 6.7 The task group has not therefore explored a way forward that would enlarge the role of Mission Council and shrink that of Assembly. If this were a path the Church wished to take, the group would ask for new briefing to that effect. Nonetheless, we note as a general point that the role of General Assembly is closely linked to that of Mission Council: any decrease of the responsibilities of the one would always increase those of the other, and vice versa.
- 6.8 By contrast, those who believe it is appropriate to recall and refresh our conciliar commitment might want the Church to consider:
 - 6.8.1 An annual meeting of General Assembly.
 - 6.8.2 A corresponding reduction in the meetings and powers of the Mission Council.
 - 6.8.3 Revising the membership of the General Assembly in a manner that attempts to return to the original egalitarian intent of Reformed conciliar structures. Everyone in the synod who desires to attend Assembly gets their fair turn.

7. Strategic and other questions

- 7.1 The questions raised by our explorations lead the task group to ask the Church to make some strategic choices:
 - 7.1.1 Should we return to an annual Assembly?
 - 7.1.2 Should the frequency and/or powers of Mission Council be reduced?

- 7.2 Less strategic – but nonetheless important – questions raised are:
- 7.2.1 Should there be one or two Moderators of General Assembly? Does the answer to this question change if the frequency of Assembly changes?
 - 7.2.2 Should Moderators be inducted at the end of General Assembly, and then chair the General Assembly at the end of their period of office?

8. Criteria for making decisions

- 8.1 The task group believe that the United Reformed Church should make decisions on the basis of good theology, good governance, and good strategy.
- 8.2 However, we are aware that the funds are limited, and so decisions the Church makes based upon the grounds in paragraph 8.1 have to be affordable and workable. Because of this we have sought to make recommendations broadly in line with the current budget.

Part two – Recommendations

9. General recommendations

Having consulted extensively, the task group proposes a number of general recommendations, which we wish to make regardless of decisions to be made about the size and frequency:

- 9.1 Time of year: the General Assembly should continue to meet in late June or early July, preferably not clashing with the Methodist Conference, the Church of England General Synod, or the Presbyterian Church of Wales General Assembly. No evidence has been found to suggest that a different time of year would bring any practical, financial, theological, or governance advantages.
- 9.2 Meeting at tables can be helpful, but a preference for tables should not rule out an otherwise suitable and affordable venue. The task group also notes that a significant number of suitably sized breakout rooms can enable the small group conversation aspect of Consensus Decision making at least as well as meeting around tables. Indeed, this can be more effective because it allows those with impaired hearing to participate without background noise, and allows people to move closer than the width of a large circular table (which is what venues often provide, despite assurances to the contrary).
- 9.3 Whatever the number of synod representatives is, that number should be divided equally among the synods, and unfilled places (apart from youth reps) may not be transferred. Smaller synods have found it difficult to ensure fair representation from the breadth (theological, ecclesiological, demographic and geographical) of their synods on the current formula, while some larger synods have difficulty filling the places allocated to them. The task group observed that no-one thought an equal division of places among the synods at Mission Council, despite widely differing sizes of synods, was unfair. Therefore, the task group proposes that it would be simpler and fairer to divide the places at General Assembly equally among the synods.
- 9.4 Rather than a strict 50:50 division between Ministers of Word and Sacraments and CRCWs on the one hand, and “lay” members on the other, we recommend that a measure of flexibility be introduced, while retaining enough provision to prevent either

- group dominating. Therefore, we propose that at least one third of each synod's reps should be "lay", and at least one third "ministers", with the remaining third open to either category. Equality of representation between ministerial and "lay" has always been an important ecclesiological belief in the United Reformed Church. The task Group, however, notes that an exact division may not take into account the fact that some synods now have very few ministers. Nor does it take into account that a number of local churches are led by various forms of "lay" leaders. The task group propose that the most helpful way to address this situation is to introduce a measure of flexibility, while retaining safeguards for both ministerial and "lay" representation.
- 9.5 The task group propose that Synod Moderators should be included within the number of each synod's reps, rather than as a separate category. While the task group expect that most synods will wish their Moderator to represent them, this also adds a measure of flexibility because a synod whose Moderator was on sabbatical or close to retirement or on long term sick leave, for instance, might decide that this place was better used by another representative.
- 9.6 The survey made it clear that the only way of paying for Assembly that will be acceptable to the Church is from the Ministry and Mission Fund. Expecting payment from individuals or from synods would not find support. However, the task group recommend that those attending Assembly should be given a fuller explanation of its costs and a clearer invitation to donate than we presently offer. This possibility should be mentioned on the expenses form.
- 9.7 The results of the 2017 survey showed clear enthusiasm for wide participation, within the context of a strongly held view that General Assembly is first and foremost a business meeting. In our tradition a business meeting is always held within the context of worship. The task group also notes that General Assembly being primarily a business meeting does not preclude there being other events and activities, but business is the primary purpose.
- 9.8 The task group noted from past accounts that some General Assembly Moderators had not been given guidance on discretionary spending, and recommend that the current practice that Moderators should be guided that discretionary spending is limited, and budget figures must be adhered to, is maintained.
- 9.9 The task group noted that many people now use electronic devices as their primary means of receiving documents, and prefer this to paper copies. Therefore, the task group recommend that, as a default, papers will be supplied electronically. The requirements form will allow people to opt into receiving paper copies, as well or instead, at the expense of the Assembly, if they wish.
- 9.10 Evidence from several Moderators of General Assembly, serving and former, showed a widespread desire among Moderators that they chair the General Assembly at the end of their term of office, when they had built up practice in chairing Mission Council and gained a greater familiarity with the business of the Assembly. The task group also noted that the Presbyterian Church of Wales successfully followed this practice. The task group therefore recommend that Moderators should be inducted at the end of the General Assembly at which they take up office, rather than the beginning, and then chair the meeting at the end of their term of office. Were this proposal adopted, then on a one-off basis the Moderators of the 2018 Assembly, Derek Estill and Nigel Uden, would also chair the 2020 Assembly, and their successors would chair the Assembly at the end of their term of office.
- 9.11 Experience at Assembly is that some members speak more than others, and by the end of a three-day meeting some faces and voices have become very familiar indeed at the microphone. A response made very strongly in the survey was that a significant

majority of the 547 respondents respectfully suggested that this does not always help Assembly to do its business as well as it might. General Assembly works best when a wide range of voices are heard. The task group considered how to respond to this, and decided to recommend that:

- a) Members be reminded by the Moderator at the start of the first piece of business that Assembly works best when a wide range of voices is heard. So those members who feel led to speak frequently should also consider leaving space for others;
- b) The Moderators be reminded that they are not required to invite people to speak in the order in which interest is expressed, so it is in order to choose speakers in any order, encourage particular people to speak, and to invite speeches from those who have not yet spoken etc.
- c) “Maiden speech” cards are issued to everyone attending General Assembly for the first time, and that such speakers will be given priority in being called to speak - at least on the first occasion that they approach the microphone.

Draft Resolution 1

General Assembly resolves that:

- a) it prefers to meet in a venue either around tables or with significant breakout rooms if possible;
- b) General Assembly should primarily be funded from the Ministry and Mission Fund, rather than by synods or individuals;
- c) members of General Assembly be given fuller information on the costs of General Assembly, and a clearer invitation to consider making a donation, including the option of donating by Gift Aid;
- d) all papers shall be issued electronically as the primary means of dissemination, but those who wish may choose to receive paper copies at the expense of the Assembly budget;
- e) from the close of General Assembly 2018, Moderators should be inducted at the close of the Assembly which begins their term of office, and should therefore chair the General Assembly at the end of their term of office.
- f) every effort be made to encourage a variety of voices to speak, including those who have not spoken before.

Draft Resolution 2

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

- 2(6) (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);~~
- 2(6) (c) – delete the words “and of the synods”
- 2(6) (d) – delete this clause completely, and re-number succeeding clauses

If this resolution is passed, the General Secretary will move that it be referred to synods under paragraph 3(1) of the Structure, with responses to be made to him by 29 March 2019.

10. Options the Task Group is not recommending

Before we present options for the location, size and frequency of General Assembly, we need to lay out some options which we are not offering:

- 10.1 Despite requests from some sections of the Church, the task group does not find any evidence that it is realistically possible for the Assembly to meet more often than it currently does yet with the same or a greater number of people attending. Both income to the M&M fund and total church membership numbers have been gradually falling. We simply cannot afford the current or a larger Assembly more often, nor does this seem appropriate in a Church of our size.

- 10.2 Indeed, if the budget goes back from 230k to 200k after Nottingham, then we cannot afford a biennial Assembly of the same size and length as Nottingham on a regular basis. We should have to consider at least a modest reduction in numbers, if we were to stay with the biennial pattern.
- 10.3 Despite possible cost savings, the task group does not recommend that the Assembly meets less frequently than now. The evidence we gathered showed that both the sense of detachment from decision-making that currently exists, and the departure from the ecclesiology of conciliarity, would both be exacerbated by this.

11. Location

- 11.1 The task group recommend abandoning the current pattern of rotation of venue around the UK. This pattern was agreed some years ago between the Assembly and the synods, and involves meeting in the nations of the UK in the sequence Wales, England, England, Scotland, England, England, Wales...
- 11.2 The current pattern of rotation has been largely successful in ensuring that General Assembly visits all locations, however the task group question the extent to which the Assembly reflects the flavour of the place where it is meeting. The task group also received evidence that some synods view hosting the Assembly as a burden rather than a pleasure.
- 11.3 The evidence the task group saw showed that the pattern of rotating venues is expensive in both finance and staff time. More site visits are needed to a new venue than to one where we return regularly. Venue hire is also more expensive, because suitable venues in some locations are limited. Travel expenses for Assemblies further from the centre of the UK are higher than more central ones.
- 11.4 The task group therefore proposes to General Assembly that the current pattern of rotation be abandoned, and that instead the Church seeks a venue in the central part of the UK (which we define as being roughly Yorkshire and Lancashire, down to the southern edge of the English Midlands). The task group further propose that if a good enough venue can be found in this central part of the UK, then Assembly should return to it regularly. Even if we met consistently in one place, other synods could be involved in hosting and in shaping the ethos and flavour of the event, if they so wished.

Draft Resolution 3

General Assembly resolves to cease the current pattern of rotation of venue, previously informally agreed, and to meet regularly in the centre of the UK, as outlined in pages XX of the Book of Reports 2018, with immediate effect.

12. Reverting to an annual Assembly

- 12.1 One motivation for Assembly's setting up the task group was a desire to explore the possibility of reverting to an annual Assembly. This might appear to be a step backwards. However, the task group believes that no Church need fear to admit that something hasn't worked as well as was hoped, and if that is the case, we should look to make changes.

12.2 The task group has seen some evidence that an increase in the number of decisions made by Mission Council has created difficulties in their acceptance, because the authority of Mission Council is challenged. (The termination of the ZI campaign, and the closure of the Windermere Centre would be two examples.) The group believes that reversing the current trend, and making more decisions at General Assembly, would increase confidence in and support of such decisions, and reduce challenge, thereby improving the unity and peace of the United Reformed Church. We cite as additional evidence that the 2014 Assembly came close to calling for the special meeting of Assembly that was eventually held in 2015 because it believed that the registration of buildings (in Scotland of celebrants) for the marriage of same sex couples needed to be based on decisions of the General Assembly itself.

12.3 The task group therefore believes that the Church should consider seriously the chance to revert to an annual pattern, and that this would have a variety of benefits for our common life. We put four options before Assembly, one of these corresponding roughly to our present practice, and the other three exploring an annual pattern.

13. The frequency and size of General Assembly

The four options we put before Assembly are these:

- 13.1 Option A: roughly what we do at the moment. A biennial Assembly, about 20% smaller in size than at present, in the sort of conference centre we have used in recent years, plus four meetings of Mission Council in a two-year cycle. This option is costed at £204,000, with £20,000 for each Mission Council, i.e. **a total of £284,000** over a two-year cycle (the current budget over a two-year cycle is £280,000).
- 13.2 Option B: an annual meeting, again in the sort of venue we have used in recent years. As para 10.1 above indicates, this would have to be smaller or shorter than at present, if it is not to cost more. This option shrinks the size of Assembly by about 20% and shortens it by a day, from 72 hours to 48. There would be one meeting of Mission Council per year. This would cost at £136,000 for the General Assembly, with £20,000 for each Mission Council, i.e. **a total cost of £312,000** over a two-year cycle (the current budget being £280,000).
- 13.3 Option C: an annual meeting, as in B above, but we keep the length of Assembly at 72 hours, and shrink its membership by close to 50%. Again there would be one meeting of Mission Council per year. Assembly would cost £134,000, with £20,000 for Mission Council, i.e. **a total of £308,000** over a two-year cycle (the current budget being £280,000).
- 13.4 Option D: we would go The Hayes, Swanwick, Derbyshire, and would be the sole users of their site for the period of Assembly. This would allow us to combine the membership numbers from B above (20% shrinkage), with a 72-hour Assembly as in C above. Again there would be one meeting of Mission Council per year. The cost would be £103,000 for the Assembly, with £20,000 for Mission Council, i.e. **a total of £246,000** over a two-year cycle (the current budget being £280,000).

14. A recommended option

Option D is our preference. Here are the reasons.

- 14.1 It would enable General Assembly to continue to meet for 72 hours, without reducing the number of representatives very much. This is because the charges at The Hayes, which include use of the full facilities, all catering, and AV equipment, are close to the costs for accommodation alone in other centres. The accommodation at The Hayes has improved in recent years so that it now compares with the kinds of hotels used for recent Assemblies, far ahead of university accommodation. The food quality has also improved significantly in recent times, to a level comparable with any other facility that we could afford. Should the bedroom numbers at The Hayes prove insufficient (there are just enough rooms if no-one at all shares), there is a Travelodge one and half miles away, which could accommodate a few members of GA who travelled by car, with all meals taken at The Hayes.
- 14.2 The AV equipment does not allow for live streaming. However, we understand that there are URC members with the skills and equipment to provide basic live streaming at a very low cost.
- 14.3 It may be necessary to arrange a coach to/from Derby station, which will be cheaper than a large number of taxis, as the local train service to Alfreton station and associated taxis may not cope with the peak volume of traffic. The cost of this is low within the overall costs.
- 14.4 Even the largest hall at The Hayes may not be big enough for us to meet around tables. However, there are many breakout rooms, and as noted in paragraph 9.2, we believe that these do have some advantages over table top conversations.
- 14.5 The task group feels that what we could get for our money at The Hayes is significantly more than at any other venue, and it is our considered view that the disadvantages are considerably outweighed by the many advantages.

15. Numbers and costs

All of the schemes above have been worked through in detail. The proposed membership numbers and the estimated costs are given in tables at the end of this paper. To illustrate within the body of the report some of the detailed work tabulated there, these figures are outlined now for the preferred Option D.

- 15.1 The detailed and underlying assumptions:
- A Duration 72 hours (three nights)
 - B Representatives reduced to 16 per synod including Moderators (reducing the total from 269 to 208)
 - C Other members of Assembly total 39 (currently 46)
 - D Cost is £60,000 for accommodation; catering is included.
 - E Travel costs average £80
 - F Venue and audio-visual: included.
 - G. Transportation (of equipment and materials, from London) £1,500
 - H Additional programme costs: £2,500 for Moderators' specials
 - I £3,300 for *What do you think?* (URC Youth event, linked to GA)
 - J Set-up costs:
 - Printing £3,000 (based on papers requested) remainder by internet
 - Staff £5,000 (contribution to other Church House budgets for use of staff)
 - Committee costs £1,250 (no site visits needed)
 - K Contingency £5,000
- 15.2 While the task group has confidence that these figures are as realistic and achievable as any figures could be this far in advance, they are offered to demonstrate that the

task group has undertaken proper research, not to provide a firm budget against which account can be held with suppliers that have not yet been identified, let alone negotiations begun.

- 15.3 Work of similar detail has been done for the other Options, where catering, audio-visual costs and venue costs also needed to be counted as lines of their own, as we could not expect them to be included as part of accommodation costs.

Draft Resolution 4

General Assembly wishes its future of meeting to be that set out in Option A/B/C/D as amended.

Draft Resolution 5

The number of synod representatives shall be 208/130, who shall be divided between the synods equally. Within each synod, at least one third of its representatives shall be either Ministers of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Workers, and at least one third shall be lay.

Draft Resolution 6

The number of representatives of churches outside Britain and Ireland, and of partner churches within Britain and Ireland shall each be *four/five*.

Draft Resolution 7

The number of representatives of URC Youth, in addition to the twenty-six youth places available for appointment by synods, shall be *two/three*.

Draft Resolution 8

Noting that all synods now have equal representation in the General Assembly, the General Assembly rescinds its decision to grant six additional representatives to the synod of Scotland.

16. Number of Moderators

- 16.1 The task group's consultations have revealed that in general terms an Assembly Moderatorship which requires a six year commitment places a very significant limitation upon the number of people who can offer themselves for this service.
- 16.2 The task group has also observed that the pool of such people available for this role is not great, and is shrinking, so it is reasonable to suppose that, while there have been no difficulties hitherto, there might be difficulties in finding the right person in the future.

- 16.3 How many Moderators should there then be? One Moderator provides greater clarity for governance, and avoids the issue of what the Church would do if two Moderators disagreed upon a question that required a Moderatorial decision.
- 16.4 Two Moderators offer the advantages of sharing the work, covering more things than one Moderator could do, being able to consult one another about difficult decisions, and increasing the profile of our Church through greater exposure.
- 16.5 While there might be some small financial savings in only having one Moderator at a time, these are not significant enough to be a driving factor.
- 16.6 The task group recommends that if the Assembly returns to being annual, it should revert to one Moderator who could be a Minister of Word and Sacrament, a CRCW, or an Elder. If the Assembly remains biennial, then the case for two Moderators remains.
- 16.7 Resolutions 9. 10 and 11 will only be moved if appropriate in the light of a form of Resolution 4 being passed.

Draft Resolution 9

General Assembly resolves to amend the Structure of the United Reformed Church such that all references to serving or elect Moderators of the General Assembly shall be converted from the plural to the singular.

If this resolution is passed, the General Secretary will move that it be referred to synods under paragraph 3(1) of the Structure, with responses to be made to him by 29 March 2019

Draft Resolution 10

Those elected as Moderator of General Assembly at the 2018 General Assembly shall serve from 2020-2022, chairing the Assemblies of 2021 and 2022 in whatever manner they shall determine.

The General Assembly of 2021 shall be asked to elect a Moderator (either a Minister of Word and Sacraments, a Church Related Community Worker, or an Elder), who shall serve from 2022-2023, chairing the 2023 General Assembly. This pattern shall then be repeated each year. Synods shall continue to be allowed to make two nominations, one of a Minister of Word and Sacraments or a Church Related Community Worker, and one of an Elder, so as to maximize the pool of people available, and maximize opportunities for Elders to serve as Moderator, while retaining maximum flexibility.

Draft Resolution 11

General Assembly instructs the Mission Council to make detailed alterations to sections 1, 2, and 3 of the Rules of Procedure, upon the advice of the Clerk, to bring into effect the decisions of principle that it has made.

17. Mission Council

- 17.1 If the Assembly were to opt for Options B, C or D, the Task Group’s response to the evidence and theology is to suggest that there would be less need for Mission Council to act as it does now, which would mean that Mission Council had a smaller and more focused task, which would then merit a smaller and more focused membership.
- 17.2 Therefore, the task group propose that if Assembly were annual, Mission Council would only need to meet either for one residential meeting, or for two one-day meetings. The group’s view is that more is achieved in one residential meeting at smaller travel costs, although two one-day meetings may be better for disposing of minor business more expeditiously.
- 17.3 At the moment it is possible for members of Mission Council not to be members of the General Assembly. It is unusual, if not unique, for people to be members of an executive body without being members of the body of which they are an executive. This could be resolved if synods were asked to nominate which of their reps to General Assembly were to be members of Mission Council in the forthcoming year.
- 17.4 Unintended consequences of reducing Mission Council’s work might be a weakening of the relationships within that body that help it to handle controversial and complex matters, and a weakening of the support given to the small number of Advisory Groups (for example, Law and Polity, or Safeguarding) that report to Mission Council. Whether we think that Mission Council undermines our conciliar theology, or expresses it in a manner that complements the work of Assembly, there do seem to be a few things that a body of under 100 people does better than an Assembly of 300. These factors do not suggest that change cannot be considered, but that the implications of change ought to be considered too, and remind us that any change we make may still have unexpected consequences.
- 17.5 If one of Options B, C or D is chosen, more work needs to be done on the consequent changes to Mission Council, and therefore draft resolution 12 will be moved:

Draft Resolution 12

General Assembly extends the remit of the task group on the future of General Assembly to consider changes to Mission Council in the light of decisions made by the General Assembly, instructs the task group to report to each meeting of Mission Council, and instructs Mission Council to make appropriate changes to its size, composition, and meeting pattern if these are ready to be made before the next meeting of General Assembly.

18. Staffing

- 18.1 The bulk of the organisation of Assembly is currently handled by staff at Church House, with assistance from volunteers. In the future this could be handled either by URC staff, or by using an events management company. There would be an inevitable trade-off between in-house management of Assembly and a professional company. It is likely that professionals would manage the task more efficiently, and perhaps more cheaply. Whereas if we took some of the task away from Church House staff, the event would lose something of its family feel; members would place

their bookings with strangers rather than with URC people, and some may feel that they are not as well understood as they would like to be. We have gathered some data on the potential costs of using an events management company, to assist those in Church House who are charged with making operational decisions. If General Assembly chooses Option D, the task group's preferred option, it is likely that Assembly could be largely organised from within existing staff resources. If General Assembly chooses Option A, B or C, this might strengthen the case for considering the use of external professional help.

Appendix one

Comparison of the numbers of members of General Assembly in different categories under the various options.

Category	The current position	Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D
Synods representatives and Moderators	269	208	208	130	208
Serving Assembly Moderator(s)	2	2	1	1	1
Clerk	1	1	1	1	1
General Secretary	1	1	1	1	1
Deputy General Secretaries	3	3	3	3	3
Committee Convenors	11	9	9	9	9
URC Trust Convenor	1	1	1	1	1
Immediate Past Moderators	2	2	1	1	1
Former Moderators (elected from all former Moderators)	2	2	2	2	2
Resource Cen for Learning	6	6	6	6	6
URC Youth	3	3	2	2	2
Forces Chaplain	1	1	1	1	1
Ecumenical and CWM reps	13	11	11	8	11
TOTAL	315	250	247	166	247

Appendix two

Summary Budget for General Assembly 2018

	Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D
Accommodation				
Nights	3	2	3	3
Synods	208	208	130	208
Others	42	39	36	39
Non members	21	21	21	21
Avg cost	80	80	80	
Total accom	65,040	42,880	44,880	60,000
Catering				
Lunches	9	9	9	
dinners	15	15	15	
Snacks	2	2	2	
Misc	600	250	250	
Total	21,738	14,186	14,836	Included
Travel costs				
Avg cost	80	80	80	80
Venue costs	21,680	21,440	14,960	21,440

Hall hire	20,000	22,000	12,500	15,000	Included
AV	36,000	25,000	15,000	15,000	Free
Transport	6,000	4,000	3,000	3,000	1,500
Program costs	62,000	51,000	30,500	33,000	1,500
Main What do you think	6,000	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500
	3,000	3,300	2,000	2,000	3,300
Set up costs	9,000	5,800	4,500	4,500	5,800
Printing	12,000	5,000	3,000	2,000	3,000
Staff	12,000	20,000	12,000	12,000	5,000
Committee	5,000	2,500	1,250	1,250	1,250 not needed
Site visits	5,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	
contingency	10,000	10,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Donations	10,000	10,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Grand total	242,608	203,758	135,756	133,426	102,990

Paper P1

Law and polity advisory group

Complaints Policy

United Church 2017
Church 2018
Reformed Church 2018
Church 2018

Paper P1

Law and polity advisory group

Complaints Policy

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Michael Hopkins clerk@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council adopts the Complaints Policy for the United Reformed Church, as set out in paper P1 of Mission Council March 2018, directs that it be published in The Manual, and encourages all Trust bodies to consider a complaints policy using the principles set out in this policy.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	A consistent denomination-wide policy for dealing with complaints.
Main points	Formal agreement of the policy, after the textual editing requested at the last Mission Council, and consultation with all who wished for changes to the previous draft.
Previous relevant documents	Paper P1 of November 2017 Mission Council.
Consultation has taken place with...	Legal Advisor, synods, General Secretary.

Summary of Impact

Financial	May reduce staff time by having a clear process.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	A clear and consistent process is the best way to be fair to everyone.

The United Reformed Church Draft Complaints Procedure

Part one: Preamble

Why a Complaints Procedure?

The United Reformed Church needs a complaints process because humans are imperfect. The Church is made up of people, and so is a fallible community, and its members on occasion behave in ways which are damaging to themselves and others, and which undermine the credibility of the Church's witness. A complaints process is one of the means by which the Church recognises that all humans are made in the image of God, and are entitled to be treated as such, and by which it maintains its witness to the new life in which we are called through Christ.

In the absence of a policy directing otherwise, people or councils of the Church may find themselves expected to investigate and decide upon complaints about themselves, which is unfair to all concerned. Further, the horrific history of child sexual abuses in churches and other organisations is littered with cases where a complaint was made, but not properly investigated. No doubt in many cases it was thought better not to "stir things up", or that we could assume because the complainant had not repeated the complaint it had been dropped. This seems to go against all best practice in all kinds of ways. This is why a Complaints Procedure is essential.

Through the Complaints Procedure members of the United Reformed Church are accountable to the Church in matters of faith and behaviour. The Church seeks to enable healing and reconciliation to take place through that accountability whenever possible. The Church also responds to the call through Christ for justice, openness, and honesty, and to the need for each of us to accept responsibility for our own acts.

The Complaints Procedure therefore seeks to embody the following principles:

- the initiation of complaints should not be limited to members of the Church;
- there should be no difference in principle between ordained and lay people in the way in which complaints against them are dealt with;
- help and support should be offered both to the person making the complaint and to the person complained against at every stage during the process;
- the process should be fair, and seen to be fair;
- the person or body making the decision at each stage should be competent to do so;
- there should be a means of correcting any errors which may be made;
- there should be a means of ensuring compliance with any decision;
- there should be appropriate requirements relating to confidentiality and record-keeping;
- the possibility of reconciliation should be explored carefully in every case in which that is appropriate.

As the Body of Christ the Church seeks to embody justice, and to challenge injustice. The Complaints Procedure is one means of searching for truth. Justice involves loving, honouring, and respecting others, and ensuring that processes and procedures are

accessible, consistent, fair, and transparent. Justice is also dynamic, implying an active concern for those who are vulnerable, marginalised, or oppressed.

Information about making complaints

The United Reformed Church seeks to ensure that the Church is a safe, responsible, and caring environment for all. To achieve that, rules and procedures have been put in place to enable the Church to deal with any acts of inappropriate or unethical behaviour by any Church minister, elder, or office bearer.

These rules differentiate between serious issues of conduct, and other acts of inappropriate behaviour. For serious issues, the Church has internal disciplinary procedure for Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to refer the matter to the police, if the complainant has not already done so.

For less serious matters, the Church has a Complaints Procedure. The aim of this Procedure is neither to trivialise serious matters, nor on the other hand to treat minor matters with undue weight. In this Procedure, the Church wishes to prioritise the use of mediation and conciliation, as experience suggests that this is the best way to ensure an outcome where everyone involved feels that their concerns have been appropriately heard and dealt with.

In framing its Complaints Procedure, the Church is strongly of the belief that a person with a legitimate grievance must be listened to, and that their complaint should be properly and fairly addressed.

If you have a complaint to make against a Minister of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Worker, elder, or other member of the United Reformed Church, then there are various ways in which the Church may determine that should be addressed:

- a) If the allegation is a serious one about a Minister, it will immediately be referred to Ministerial Disciplinary or Incapacity Procedures. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate also to refer the matter to the police, if the complainant has not already done so. This will be where criminal behaviour is alleged, in particular where there are allegations of a serious sexual nature, where vulnerable groups are involved, or where allegedly there has been financial impropriety. Anyone who becomes aware of offending of this nature is urged to contact the police immediately, as well as also informing the church.
- b) In some cases it might be determined at an early stage that the allegations do not require further consideration or investigation. A conversation with the appropriate officer, may well have been enough to allay your concerns or to establish that the matter does not require further investigation. However, normally the matter will be referred to the Church's Complaints Procedure.
- c) A matter which does not justify being referred to disciplinary procedures, nor to the police, and which has not been resolved at an early stage, will be referred to the Church's Complaints Procedure.
- d) If you have a complaint about an employee, this will be dealt with by their line manager.

What is and what is not a complaint?

Examples of complaints

A complaint might be:

- An allegation about the conduct of a Minister of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Worker, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the United Reformed Church or about the way in which they have performed their duties.
- An expression of dissatisfaction about the way in which you have been treated by a Minister of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Worker, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the United Reformed Church or about their attitude to you.
- An allegation that a Minister of Word and Sacraments, church related community worker, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the United Reformed Church failed to do something in the way that should reasonably be expected.
- An allegation that there has been unreasonable delay by a Minister of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Worker, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the United Reformed Church in responding to an enquiry or request.
- A breach of confidentiality by a Minister of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Worker, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the United Reformed Church.

What is not a complaint?

A complaint is not:

- a routine request for information, or for an explanation of the way in which something is done
- an allegation that a council of the Church has acted beyond its powers (that is a Constitutional Review), or made a decision that you cannot accept (that is an Appeal)
- an objection to an individual, or a group of people, implementing decisions that have been correctly reached
- a whistle blowing event, for which the Church has a whistle blowing policy.

What doesn't the Church's Complaints Procedure deal with?

The Church's Complaints Procedure is generally for allegations made against either situations or individual persons within the Church. Some things which the Church's Complaints Procedure doesn't cover are:

- An issue about selection or training of a Minister: this goes to the ministries committee
- An issue about synod decisions on scoping or deployment: this would be an Appeal or a Constitutional Review
- An issue about insurance, sale, or purchase of property: this would be dealt with by the trustees of the building or the relevant officers of the synod
- An issue about buildings maintenance: this would be dealt with by the trustees of the building or the relevant Officers of the Synod
- Insurance claims: these go to the insurance company
- An attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint, or to have a complaint reconsidered where a final outcome has already been reached
- An issue which involves vulnerable people: this will go straight to Safeguarding procedures
- Matters relating to an employee: this would be dealt with by a line manager, and/or the church's Human Resources advisors

- Also, while you can complain about a matter which is already being dealt with in the civil or criminal courts, such a matter will not normally be dealt with by the Church until the civil or criminal process has been concluded
- Decisions of Trustee bodies, which are not subject to the councils of the Church.

Where the complaint should be dealt with under a different process, e.g. those mentioned above, your Synod Clerk or the General Secretary will be able to supply you with the appropriate information about who to contact.

Making a complaint

Step 1: Who to contact about a complaint – informal notification

For complaints relating to a local church, you should contact the Church Secretary. If the complaint is about the Church Secretary, you should contact the minister or Interim Moderator. Where a local church cannot find a suitable person independent of the complaint, or feels it requires greater scrutiny, they may immediately pass the complaint to the synod. Normally complaints about ministers should be referred to the synod, as ministers serve under the oversight of the synod not the local church.

For complaints relating to a synod, you should contact the Synod Clerk. If the complaint is about the Synod Clerk, you should contact the Synod Moderator. Where a synod cannot find a suitable person independent of the complaint, or feels it requires greater scrutiny, they may immediately pass the complaint to the General Assembly.

For complaints relating to a Synod Moderator, you should contact the General Secretary.

For complaints relating to the General Assembly, you should contact the General Secretary. If the complaint is about the General Secretary, you should contact the Clerk of the General Assembly. The General Secretary and Clerk are empowered to consult with any other officer of the Assembly, or staff member, that they deem appropriate.

The Church hopes that wherever possible, initial discussion with the appropriate Church official may well have been enough to allay your concerns or to establish that the matter does not require further investigation.

Step 2: Progressing a complaint – formal notification

If the matter is to be taken further, then the appropriate Church official named in step one must have some details from you in order for a complaint to be properly investigated. This means that you need to write to them or email them, setting out:

- who you are, plus your contact details
- whether you are a Church member, and any office you hold
- exactly what the nature of your complaint is
- exactly which persons - Minister of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Worker, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the United Reformed Church – or situations you are complaining about, and
- specific details of the circumstances (including, where possible, names of individuals, places, dates etc.)

Details need to be given as quickly as possible and as fully as possible. The United Reformed Church cannot accept complaints where there is unreasonable delay in giving details after a complaint is made, or where details are withheld and an attempt made to add further matters as the complaint progresses.

The appropriate Church official named in step one can assist you with this. Upon receipt of your written complaint, the appropriate Church official named in step one will acknowledge this in writing within twenty days. All information which you supply in connection with your complaint will be treated sensitively. So far as is possible while still enabling your complaint to be properly dealt with, the information which you give will be treated confidentially.

Step 3: Dealing with a complaint

On receipt of your written complaint, the appropriate Church official named in step one will ask an independent person or persons to consider the complaint.

The independent investigator(s) will contact you to discuss your complaint and if appropriate, to arrange to meet with you. They will also forward a copy of the complaint to the respondent (the subject of the complaint).

They may similarly meet with the respondent. They shall make such enquiries as they consider appropriate and may hold more than one meeting separately with you, the complainant, and with the respondent. If they consider this to be appropriate and both parties consent, they may facilitate a mediated meeting between you and the respondent. Such mediation may remain confidential, subject a report of an outcome such as those suggested in step four.

On any occasion where the independent investigator(s) meets with you, you are entitled to have present another person, who may speak by invitation; where there is more than one meeting, it is helpful if this is the same person.

On any occasion when the independent investigator(s) meets with the respondent, the respondent shall be entitled to have present another person, who may speak by invitation; again where there is more than one meeting, it is helpful if this is the same person.

Summary notes will be kept of all meetings throughout the process, which shall be drafted by, and remain the property of, the United Reformed Church.

The independent investigator(s) will endeavour to provide you with an initial response on your complaint within a period of thirty working days from when they first considered the complaint, however some complaints may require longer.

Step 4: The outcome

Upon completion of their enquiries, the independent investigator(s) will hope to have achieved one of the following possible outcomes (although this list is not exhaustive):

- You as complainant are satisfied that the matters raised in the complaint have been resolved
- You as complainant and the respondent have reached a mutual agreement that the matter need go no further
- The independent investigator(s) will offer advice to the respondent(s) as to their future conduct
- The complaint has been withdrawn,
- The complaint has been dismissed, or
- The complaint having been dealt with, the matter is, despite no agreement having been reached, nonetheless concluded.

A local church complaint about which there remains dissatisfaction at the conclusion of step four may be referred to the synod for investigation using the steps above. A synod complaint about which there remains dissatisfaction at the conclusion of step four may be referred to the General Assembly for investigation using the steps above.

Paper R1

Safeguarding advisory group

Safeguarding Update



Paper R1

Safeguarding advisory group

Safeguarding Update

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Ioannis Athanasiou – URC Safeguarding Officer ioannis.athanasiou@urc.org.uk
Action required	No specific action is requested or required by the information in this paper.
Draft resolution(s)	N/A

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Safeguarding
Main points	Update on safeguarding practice within the URC.
Previous relevant documents	N/A
Consultation has taken place with...	Richard Church, Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship) Elizabeth Gray-King, PCR Project Manager.

Summary of Impact

Financial	N/A
External (e.g. ecumenical)	N/A

Safeguarding Update

1. **New Safeguarding Officer**

The URC's new Safeguarding Officer was appointed in December 2017. Special thanks and appreciation to Richard Church, Craig Bowman, Elizabeth Gray-King, Carole Sired and all safeguarding designated professionals at the synod level (SSOs and CYDOs) whose on-going support in this sensitive area of the Church's life has been very important over the interim period since Cassi Wright left post in June 2017.

2. **Policy Developments**

Several developments in reviewing and establishing safeguarding policies and procedures have either commenced or been progressed this year. The Past Case Review has utilised support from experts, and a Learning Group of specialists has studied the process of the last two years, in order to analyse the findings and inform our safeguarding policies and practices in future. In the light of the new legislation and recent guidance by Charity Commission, safeguarding is also one of the priority areas for the working group focused on the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) that come into force in May 2018.

3. **External agencies and partnerships**

Partnership work with external agencies (Due Diligence Checking/DDC and CCPAS) and close collaboration with other departments and denominations (Christian Forum for Safeguarding, Church of Scotland) continue to help update internal policies and practices and formalize standards in strategic areas of safeguarding operations, such as safer recruitment and recording and sharing data and information. All of these developments and policy updates will be incorporated in relevant sections in the current Good Practice Guide and will be shared through briefings, reports and on-line resources to assist local churches, Assembly and synod staff and contribute to a safer church environment across the URC.

4. **Safeguarding advisory group (SAG)**

The overall structure of safeguarding has been standardised in the life of our Church throughout 2017. The safeguarding advisory group (SAG) met three times to review the development of safeguarding policies and processes within the URC. The SAG agreed on a strategic plan (2017 to 2022) which will be further developed and put into operation, with specific goals and actions that reflect new laws and requirements and protect both children and adults at risk.

5. **Synod Safeguarding Officers (SSO's)**

All thirteen synods have made their own arrangements to organise safeguarding matters and/or employ appropriate staff to act as safeguarding designated professionals at synod level. It is a positive point that twelve synods each have a single point of contact to respond to and act upon any safeguarding concerns and provide guidance and training to local churches. The Synod of Scotland has not placed safeguarding responsibility upon a single individual but within an on-going service agreed with the Church of Scotland and compliant with their safeguarding standards.

6. **Team collaboration**

Safeguarding team meetings with all synod safeguarding designated professionals will continue to provide an opportunity for peer-to-peer learning, knowledge exchange

and development of good practice and appropriate training resources across the denomination. Synod Safeguarding Officers will also complete and send their safeguarding returns and reports to Church House by the end of February 2018. Responses from the synods will integrate frontline and synod experience in the process of reviewing and finalising the strategic plan and consolidating our safeguarding practices and operations, including safer recruitment, training development, data protection, risk assessment and safeguarding adults at risk.

Paper R2

Safeguarding advisory group

Past Case Review Update



Paper R2

Safeguarding advisory group

Past Case Review Update

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Richard Church richard.church@urc.org.uk
Action required	For information
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Update on phases 1 and 2 of the Past Case Review
Main points	Closure of open advertising, case progress, learning
Previous relevant documents	Paper R2, Mission Council, March 2016 Paper R2, Mission Council, May 2017 Paper R1, Mission Council, November 2017
Consultation has taken place with...	Elizabeth Gray-King, PCR Project Manager Ioannis Athanasiou, URC Safeguarding Officer Julie Ashby Ellis, external Safeguarding Consultant Safeguarding Advisory Group

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Past Case Review Update

This is the last update to Mission Council for the Past Case Review. A final and significant report will go to General Assembly 2018.

Phase 1 Update

1. Phase 1 is closed. Some cases may still come to light after Safeguarding Officer scrutiny, but there are no unread files.

Phase 2 Update

2. Cases

All cases are now either closed, or with synods in active case handling. Two cases required the attention of statutory authorities, and one required legal attention. It is not yet appropriate to share details.

3. Learning

- 3.1 The commissioned Internal Learning Review's analysis will form part of the final report to General Assembly 2018. Additionally, the independent external Safeguarding Consultant's interim and final findings will contribute to that report.

3.2 Learning group

This group, comprised of a church historian, a Bible scholar, a colleague denomination's safeguarding lead with a background in social work and a professor of abuse studies, continues its work.

- 3.3 We expected a draft report from the learning group at this Mission Council. However, the group commissioned an interim piece of work to archive and link files which had hitherto not been linked. Proper linking would enable us to trace the narrative of individuals across various office records which held files on the same person. Once this important piece of archiving and associating is completed, the learning group will continue its analysis. Their findings will be both a stand-alone document, and will contribute to the General Assembly 2018 Report.

4. Comments

- 4.1 We continue to be deeply thankful to the support from synods and their officers and to the many volunteers who made up the PCR teams of listeners, allegations panels and the allegations reference group. The URC is profoundly indebted to this commitment and understands the toll it may have taken on some.

- 4.2 It is worth asking if all the time, energy and expense were needed to conduct this Past Case review. The simple answer is yes. The cases which did come forward may not have appeared otherwise. The URC decided to conduct the review with a commitment to ensuring that every aspect of the URC is as safe as possible and honours everyone who is a part of it. We already know that positive changes have been made in local churches, in synods, and within Assembly committees and staff. Records are being improved, with plans for further development. We have a clear and robust process to handle such complaints in the future. We anticipate that those systemic improvements that can be identified will be made, as part of our attempts to prevent further distress or abuse.

Paper T1

MIND advisory group

Ministerial Disciplinary Process:
Statement from MIND advisory group
to Mission Council

United Church 2017
Church 2018
Reformed Church 2018
Church 2018

Paper T1

MIND

Ministerial Disciplinary Process

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Dr Jim Merrilees, Secretary, MIND advisory group jmerrilees@urcscotland.org.uk
Action required	Mission Council is asked simply to note the statement.
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Statement from MIND advisory group to update Mission Council regarding current review of Disciplinary Process.
Main points	Intention of MIND advisory group to review Disciplinary Process Update of Guidelines and Forms under Disciplinary Process.
Previous relevant documents	Ministerial Disciplinary Process.
Consultation has taken place with...	Members of the MIND advisory group at its meeting on 5 January 2018 – group is representative of all aspects of the process.

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None

Ministerial Disciplinary Process: Statement from MIND advisory group to Mission Council

1. This is a statement from the MIND advisory group to go before the Mission Council meeting in March 2018, simply to be noted by that body.
2. The advisory group has met twice – on 5 September 2017 and 5 January 2018 – for the major purpose of reviewing the Disciplinary Process in the light of concerns expressed by the Synod Moderators regarding their role within the Process and the experience of themselves and others involved in recent disciplinary cases.
3. Following in-depth discussion of concerns at the 5 September 2017 meeting, a sub-group was asked to research the disciplinary practices of other Churches and professions and consult the ACAS code and principles with a view to providing an analytical paper, establishing underlying principles for our Disciplinary Process and offering possible revisions to the Process in light of the research undertaken.
4. The sub-group reported to the meeting of 5 January 2018 and a full discussion took place regarding its observations and recommendations. The advisory group will continue this review at its next meeting on 11 September 2018. Any proposed changes to the Disciplinary Process in the light of this review will be presented to a future meeting of Mission Council.
5. The advisory group is likely to consult further with persons who have had direct input to and involvement in disciplinary cases in recent times.
6. The advisory group would wish to assure Mission Council that the current Disciplinary Process is robust and rigorous and continues to serve the denomination adequately.
7. The advisory group would also wish to inform Mission Council that necessary updates to the Guidelines under the Disciplinary Process have been agreed and will be on the website by the time Mission Council meets, while updates to the various forms under the Process have also been completed.

.....



Paper V1

Resource sharing task group

Raising the ministry and mission fund

United Church 2017
Church 2018
Reformed Church 2018
Church 2018

Paper V1

Resource sharing task group

Raising the ministry and mission fund

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Paul Whittle moderator@urceastern.org.uk
Action required	None
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To respond to a Mission Council request to explore and compare the different ways in which the synods approach raising the Ministry and Mission fund.
Main points	This paper compares approaches to raising the Ministry and Mission Fund across the synods and offers the conclusion that the majority of synods would not favour a common approach at this stage as they each have good, if different, systems in place.
Previous relevant documents	None of direct relevance.
Consultation has taken place with...	Synod Treasurers and Finance Officers.

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	No direct immediate impact.

Raising the ministry and mission fund

1. The October 2016 meeting of Mission Council passed the following resolution “recognising that synods are raising M&M contributions and assessing need and local church resources in different ways, Mission Council asks the resource sharing task group to identify the formulae used in each synod and report to Mission Council regarding the commonalities and differences” (Minute 16/54).
2. In response to this the resource sharing task group, in combination with the Synod Treasurers, engaged in an extensive piece of research. This concluded that the principle of covenant remains important and that there is a clear commitment to sustain the giving to the Ministry and Mission Fund. It further concluded that changing circumstances, especially church closures and reduced membership, may take us to the point where this becomes increasingly difficult. Almost inevitably, the synods have their own ways of responding to the challenge. Indeed, it would not be easy to present a comparison of formulae to Mission Council as there are many relevant elements.
3. However, we happily share the main points identified in the research. A tabulated summary of the results can be obtained from Paul Whittle, Convenor of the resource sharing task group on request.
4. In most instances the previous year’s figure provides the starting point for identifying an initial offer, in some cases treating that as a flat figure, in others seeking an increase. On the whole, synods set requests centrally, but then are ready to negotiate with individual churches.
5. The synod ‘offer’ needs to be made, in the first instance, before the response from the churches has been received. The majority of synods can generally stay close to their original offer, though some report that there can be variance.
6. Most synods do not take account of the actual provision of ministry, following the principle of ‘ability to pay’ as the determining factor. However, ecumenical changes can provide an unexpected challenge. Most, though not all, synods include a small buffer in order to cope with unanticipated changes.
7. A number of synods use membership as a basis for the calculation, and a majority include it in part. However, there is no commonality on this. Other main factors used in the calculation are ability to pay and turnover.
8. Synods use a range of formulae to calculate appropriate targets. We have not received detailed data on these, but note three common threads: firstly, it is usual to take account of individual circumstances; secondly, it is usual to place some limit on the increase or decrease from one year to the next; thirdly, Local Ecumenical Partnerships frequently cause complicating variations.
9. Most synods allow for negotiation and most experience some appeals against the level that is suggested but, on the whole, most churches seem to be realistic about costs. Some, though not all, synods raise an additional levy as a contribution to running the synod.

10. The majority of synods did not favour a centralised system of giving to replace the current situation where each synod places its own interpretation on how best to address this issue. Some agreed it could be possible, but none were advocating such a change.
11. The feeling was that each synod knows its churches and is best placed to enable them to respond well. Some could see that their system might benefit from minor tweaks, but none wanted a wholesale change. There was a feeling that it is working, and is best left to continue working.
12. The general feeling was that things can continue as they are for the foreseeable future, but some expressed concern as to how quickly we might turn an unknown corner and find the current system unsustainable.
13. It was appreciated that there are regular attempts to communicate how the Ministry and Mission Fund works and how the money is spent. However, there was concern that many seem not to really understand and the need for continuing advocacy and education was stressed.
14. In short, we have not exactly answered the question, but hope we have provided some insight as to how the synods respond to the challenge and opportunity of the covenant that produces the Ministry and Mission Fund.

Paper Y1

Private Members' resolution: Mr Dan Morrell and Ms Hannah Jones

Changes to the Rules of Procedure
for the conduct of the United
Reformed Church

United Church 2017
Church 2018
Reformed Church 2018
Church 2018

Paper Y1

Private Members' resolution: Mr Dan Morrell and Ms Hannah Jones

Changes to the Rules of Procedure for the conduct of the United Reformed Church

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Dan Morrell dmorrell96@gmail.com
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, adopts the changes proposed to the rules of procedure in: a) 3.5 to 3.8 inclusive b) 3.9 and 3.15.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To bring clarity to the current process for the election of the Moderators of General Assembly. • To provide greater fairness amongst all nominees for the role. • To mirror closely the procedure for electing the Moderator of Youth Assembly, as this has been proven to be fair and useful in determining, with prayer and guidance from the Holy Spirit, the most suitable Moderator.
Main points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current procedure is flawed: it shows bias towards nominees who are incumbent members of Assembly; it does little to help voting members of Assembly discern who may be best suited for the role; it near-guarantees election for anyone who is a sole nominee. • All nominees will be invited, and expected, to attend the Assembly at which they will be voted on, they will read their biography (or have it read) to the Assembly, and will be asked a question by the Moderator in the chair and have the opportunity to respond. • The introduction of a 'Re-Open Nominations' option to ensure that the Assembly's voice is truly heard. • Other, minor, amendments to bring the remaining rules in line with the proposed amendments.
Previous relevant documents	Rules of Procedure, Youth Assembly Standing Orders, Mission Council November 2017 Paper Y1.
Consultation has taken place with...	Assembly Clerk, General Secretary, children's and youth work committee, URC Youth Executive, Mission Council (November 2017).

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Invariably any change to Rules of Procedure brings us closer to some ecumenical partners and further away from others.

Changes to the Rules of Procedure for the conduct of the United Reformed Church

Note from the paper author:

“Following the feedback received from Mission Council during and after the meeting in November 2017, the changes proposed to the Rules of Procedure, as outlined in Paper Y1 from that meeting, have been split into two resolutions. Minor spelling and clarity errors have also been rectified. URC Youth still feels that the inclusion of a RON (Re-Open Nominations) option is appropriate, but are aware that this was not the mind of all Mission Council members. So in order not to lose the remainder of the changes, which gained more significant support, the resolution has been split into two parts, which can be decided on separately. Paper Y1 as it was presented in November 2017, read as follows.”

1. URC Youth Executive felt that the current procedure for the election of the Moderators of General Assembly is unfair and not in line with what we, as the URC, believe.
2. The procedure at URC Youth Assembly for the election of the Moderator gives those standing an opportunity to read out their ‘pen portrait’ and answer a question posed to them by the current Moderator. This question is not aimed to encourage the candidate to produce a manifesto of what they intend to do, but rather to ascertain what skills they possess and how they feel called to the role of Moderator. This question is normally written by the Moderator-Elect (who is inducted at the end of Youth Assembly). In the case of General Assembly, it would be put by the serving and chairing Moderator; it would therefore be for the Moderator to arrange for the drafting of the question (or to draft it personally) and to be satisfied as to its suitability.
3. The option to ‘Re-Open Nominations’ has also been found important, to represent the voices of those who may not feel there is yet a suitable candidate.
4. Ensuring the candidates are invited to General Assembly gives an equal opportunity for them.
5. These concerns would be reflected by changing the relevant section of the Rules of Procedure, as follows.

Proposed wording for part 3 of the Rules of Procedure

3. Moderators of the General Assembly

- 3.1 The Moderators of the General Assembly shall be elected by ballot in accordance with these Rules. Each Moderator shall serve for two years commencing at the Assembly following the Meeting at which the report of the election is received in accordance with Rule 3.40~~11~~. The period of office shall be deemed to begin with the induction of each Moderator and shall continue until that Moderator's successor is inducted into office. A Moderator will continue as immediate past Moderator until their successor ceases to be Moderator and therefore replaces them as immediate past Moderator.

- 3.2 The Moderators of the General Assembly shall be two in number, a minister or a Church Related Community Worker and an elder. The elder may be serving or non-serving but in all cases the names of those persons nominated to serve as Moderator must be included on the membership roll of a local church for that person to be eligible for nomination.
- 3.3 A nomination for election as Moderator of the General Assembly shall be made by a synod, the consent of the nominee not being required. The nomination shall be in writing under the hand of the Clerk of the Synod and received by the General Secretary not later than the 31 March immediately preceding the Annual Meeting of the Assembly.
- 3.4 The General Secretary shall forthwith send to each person nominated a list of the nominations. Any nominee may, within ten days of the receipt of this list, withdraw from nomination by notice in writing to the General Secretary.
- 3.5 If after 31 March or after the period for withdrawal there shall be no nominations, in either or both categories, the General Secretary shall forthwith notify the Clerks of the Synods and invite them to request nominations from the executive committees or equivalent of their synods. Such nominations, accompanied in each case by a note of the consent of the person nominated, **and a brief biography, and brief indications of the reason for nomination by the Synod,** must be in the hands of the General Secretary by 15 May. **Those who have accepted nomination shall be invited to attend the Assembly if they are not already doing so.**
- 3.6 In either category if after the period for withdrawal there is only one nomination, this nomination shall be placed before the Assembly and voted upon by secret ballot.
- 3.7 If the number of those who have been nominated in either category and have not withdrawn is or exceeds two, the election shall be by a secret ballot according to the principle of the single transferable vote. All members of the Assembly shall be entitled to vote. They shall vote by indicating their preference by figures 1, 2, 3 and so forth, but no voting paper shall be invalidated by the absence of alternative choices. If the tellers find that no **name option** has an absolute majority of first choices, the second choices of those who gave as their first choice the **name option** securing the smallest number of such choices shall be added to the first choices for other names. If necessary this process shall continue until one of the **names options** has an absolute majority of votes cast. If the process continues until only two **names options** remain, the **person who option that** then has the larger number of votes shall be elected.
- 3.8 **At a point in the Assembly prior to the commencement of the vote, each nominee will be given a fair and equal opportunity to present their biography and to answer a question put to them by the Moderator (who shall be responsible for its content and wording). The response to this question shall not exceed three minutes. No nominees shall be in the room in which Assembly is meeting during this process, save the nominee presenting at the time. Each nominee will be asked the same question.**
- 3.9 Members of the Assembly shall vote by means of a voting paper containing the name, the usual designation and the church of membership, of each of those accepting nomination which shall be sent by the General Secretary by ordinary post to each such member before the commencement of the Ordinary Meeting of the Assembly. **The voting paper shall include an option to 'Re-Open Nominations' (RON), which is a vote to seek another candidate in preference to anyone currently on the ballot paper.** Brief indication of the reasons for the nomination, as supplied by the synod, **along with the candidates' biography, will** be circulated with the ballot paper.

- The General Assembly may, in any case, authorise further means of informing the members about those accepting nomination.
- 3.10 Normally, the General Assembly shall vote to elect the Moderators of the Assembly by secret ballot as an item of business following prayer during the meeting of the Assembly. The ballot boxes shall be delivered to the tellers by whom alone they shall be opened. They shall report the result of the ballot to the Assembly at a later session.
- 3.11 As soon as the voting papers have been examined and the result of the poll ascertained, the voting papers shall be closed up under the seal of the tellers or any two of them, and shall be retained by the General Secretary for one month after the election, and shall then be destroyed.
- 3.12 At each Ordinary Meeting the Assembly shall appoint, upon the nomination of the nominations committee, three tellers to be responsible for the ballot for that year. The counting of the votes cast shall take place in secret under their supervision and control and they shall:
- 3.12.1 inform the General Secretary of the names of the persons elected and the General Secretary shall thereupon individually inform those nominated whether or not they have been elected.
- 3.12.2 report to the Assembly the names of the persons elected, the number of papers received and the number of papers which were invalid.
- 3.13 If any of the tellers appointed by the Assembly shall become incapable of acting the Moderator shall fill any such vacancy or vacancies and report that action to the Assembly.
- 3.14 Upon receipt of the report of the tellers by the Assembly the persons elected shall thereupon become the duly elected Moderators for the two years commencing at the next Ordinary Meeting of the Assembly.
- 3.15 Where the previous General Assembly at its ordinary meeting has failed to elect¹, or in the event of either or both of the persons elected to serve as Moderator becoming unable to serve more than 120 days before the first day of the meeting of the General Assembly at which they were to have been inducted, then the General Secretary shall seek nominations from synods in the manner prescribed in clauses 3.3 to 3.5 for persons available to serve as Moderator for the coming Assembly. On receipt of those names, the General Secretary will inform all those whose names appeared on the roll of the previous Assembly of the nominations and send them a ballot paper. Those ballot papers shall be returned by post within five working days of receipt. Thereafter, the General Secretary shall deliver these ballot papers unopened to the tellers for the election of the Moderator who shall open and count the votes cast and report the result of this election to the General Secretary in the same form as would have been reported to the General Assembly had this election been held during the Assembly.
- 3.16 If a Moderator is unable to take office fewer than 120 days and more than 60 days before the first day of the meeting of the General Assembly at which they were to have been inducted, then the Moderator currently in office shall continue in office until a successor is inducted. The General Secretary shall seek nominations from synods

¹ For the avoidance of doubt, if the Assembly votes to re-open nominations, this is a failure to elect, and the procedure in this paragraph shall be followed.

in the manner prescribed in clauses 3.3 to 3.5, and an election shall be held at the General Assembly in the manner prescribed in clauses 3.7 and 3.9, and the Moderator so elected shall be inducted during that meeting of Assembly.

- 3.18 If a Moderator is unable to take office fewer than 60 days before the first day of the meeting of the General Assembly, or resigns from office after induction, or is removed from office after induction, then the General Secretary shall forthwith initiate a postal ballot as described in clause 3.15, and the person so elected shall be inducted at the next meeting of the Mission Council, save that if this clause comes into effect less than nine months before the planned meeting of General Assembly, then the remaining Moderator shall serve alone until the next meeting of General Assembly.
- 3.19 During the temporary absence of a Moderator, the other Moderator may serve alone. In the event of a conflict of interest with the business under discussion, the most recent former Moderator without such conflict of interest, who is present and willing to serve, shall serve. If neither Moderator is present, the most recent former Moderator present and willing to serve shall serve.

Paper Z1

Synod Moderators

Where is God calling the URC?
A growing conversation: criteria for
doing things well

United Church 2017
Church 2018
Reformed Church 2018
Church

Paper Z1

Synod Moderators

Where is God calling the URC? A growing conversation: criteria for doing things well

Basic Information

Contact name	The Revd Nicola Furley-Smith moderator@urcsouthern.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council receives Paper Z1 regarding criteria for doing things well and resolves that
Proposer: Simon Walking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) All councils of the Church are encouraged to examine their existing work to discern whether resources of time, effort, and money are currently being expended on work that should now be brought to a conclusion, thus releasing them to do fewer things and to do them well. (ii) Synods be asked to consider the paper in relation to their work. (iii) All papers coming to future meetings of Mission Council and General Assembly shall address the purpose, relevance and necessity of any new work to the local church in furtherance of our part in God's mission and to grow the kingdom of God.
Second: Nicola Furley-Smith	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To continue the conversation with members of Mission Council on where God is calling the URC and to offer some criteria for pruning the activities we do.
Main points	As draft resolution.
Previous documents	Mission Council Paper Z1 May 2017.
Consultation has taken place with...	Mission Council previously and the General Secretary.

Summary of Impact

Financial	No immediate impact.
External	No immediate impact.

Where is God calling the URC?

A growing conversation: criteria for doing things well

1. Healthy churches regularly examine their work to reduce ministry clutter. And the healthiest ones start reducing clutter, not *after* they find a great new idea, but *before*. It seems to us that three things have come together to help us feel something should be done across the denomination:
 - 1.1 *Walking the Way* and its focus on discipleship
 - 1.2 The reality of the situation of local churches, and indeed the synods that we belong to, who have experienced a decline in numbers and capacity – and can identify with the need to declutter
 - 1.3 The mark of a healthy church ‘that we should do a few things and do them well’.
2. The discussion at Mission Council in May 2017 seemed to agree that ‘Something’ should be done, but did not have time to produce practical agreement as to what we might need to give up.

Time to prune

3. The concept of pruning is clear in John 15:1-17. God calls us to prune that which does not bear fruit. The cutting out of unproductive trees that drain resources can also be found in Jesus’ parable in Luke 13: 6-9. Trees that do not bear fruit are not only wasteful in themselves, they also take away from what still has potential to bear good fruit. Pruning is often neglected when things are going badly; *as we try to cling to what we had* – you can get away with it for a while – but not forever. We need to understand the effectiveness of our programmes both in hard numbers and spiritual impact and then be willing to prune thoughtfully so *that* we can focus our resources on what matters most to God.
4. Any pruning is about producing more fruit, not for our own benefit, but to be a blessing to those around us, by being part of God’s work in the world. When fruit trees and vines are pruned it is the energetic new growth that follows which will produce the blossom and then the fruit. In our meetings, we have often been reminded of Frederick Beuchner’s comment that, ‘The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.’ (Wishful Thinking: A Seekers ABC)

5. This suggests that we should be able to answer the following questions for our present and future work:
- What need is this work meeting?
 - Whose need is being met?
 - What were the outcomes from this work in the past?
 - What outcomes are expected from this work in the future?
 - Who else is doing this?
 - Are there other ways of achieving the same outcome?

These assume *that* our criteria are based on needs and outcomes, related to fruitfulness. Where the outcomes are beyond our control, it may be worth talking about our behaviour which is within our control.

Discerning God's gardening

6. In John's image of the vine (John 15:1-8), God is the gardener – the expert vine-dresser. God sees both potential and wasted resources more clearly than we see them. The challenge is therefore how to discern how God sees the potential for fruitfulness, not simply fruit per se but **good** fruit. So there is a discernment to be done about what will bear fruit in our work as a church as well as further discernment about what kind of fruit. This is about embodying our prayer 'thy Kingdom come, thy will be done': in seeking to do God's will and in our vision of God's rule.
7. Praying for the Spirit's guidance and gifts helps us to work from first principles to address our current context, but we also already have provisional sign posts to God's reign, which have been worked out through prayer, study and debate.
8. Bearing both in mind, the kind of questions we see as helpful in discerning God's way forward are:
- Will the work help people to be more loving, faithful and hopeful?
 - Does the work have an impact on local communities or national life?
 - How does the work fulfil the Vision2020 statements, the functions in the Structure of the URC, and the aspirations of the Basis of Union to build up the body of Christ for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4vv.12)?
9. We acknowledge that these questions are about moving us towards perceived goals. Fruitfulness also means building on what has given us energy in the past. The difficulty is creating questions that are broad enough to carry different theological perspectives but focused enough to help us make choices.

Criteria for developing fruitfulness

10. Discernment includes understanding who we are, our gifts and skills, but involves moving beyond self-centred perspectives. Councils of the church are good at keeping things steady, but find it difficult to innovate and respond quickly. The decline in

church membership suggests that our neighbours do not see the relevance of being part of the Church.

11. We see the need for imagination and experimentation, so do not want to spend so long on discussing how we decide what we will do that we do not begin anything significant, however we do want to use available resources effectively.
12. We continue to look for opportunities to share the good things that are happening in local churches and 'spread the pollen' to other places. Part of being adaptable will be to develop an understanding of where decisions need to be taken to direct resources to branches that can grow.
13. The metaphor of pruning helps us to focus on **what** we need to cut and to work towards **how** we decide what cuts to make. We need to think about how we make our decisions, as a small denomination which recognises that we cannot do everything we once did or might wish to do. Accepting that we cannot do everything, what criteria might help us to decide – not between a good thing to do and a bad thing to do, but between various options, any one of which may be 'good', but not the **best** use of our limited resources of energy, people and time (and money - but we have deliberately put this last)?
14. We offer three criteria to help our fruitfulness: purpose, relevance and necessity.
 - 14.1 **Purpose.** Be clear on why something is a **priority** for local church mission. When reports come to Mission Council or General Assembly, as well as considering actions, financial impact etc. we should also ask *why* this is necessary, or a priority for now. This question could be added to the introductory sheet. Indeed, in the consideration of all pieces of work our denomination is involved in we suggest the words 'so that' are used: we should undertake X initiative so that... is achieved. And if the 'so that' rationale isn't the core of what we are about, or prayerfully considered as a current priority, then we will know that this is not for us at the present time.
 - 14.2 **Relevance.** Be clear that any decision should depend on whether there is an evident and genuine need among local churches, and on whether there has been demonstrable support from synod representatives in the meeting i.e. the meeting of Assembly or Mission Council.
 - 14.3 **Necessity.** Be clear that we only start new pieces of work if that work is needed because it is not being done by someone else.
15. Although these three criteria may seem to some to apply to new priorities and initiatives, they are just as applicable to those things we are doing regularly. We need to remember to look at existing things also with equal thoroughness. Further, we need to consider where the resources to do the piece of work will come from, and weigh this against the perceived benefits and the potential loss of not using the resource elsewhere.

16. Our aim is to get maximum kingdom benefit:
 - 16.1 We need to celebrate things that we decide have reached a conclusion or lack the relevance they once had. It may be that there are some things that we cannot do now but might do at some point in the future.
 - 16.2 We may also need to mourn the things that we find we cannot do or should cease to do, enabling us to release them and freeing us to turn wholeheartedly to the things we agree to do now.
 - 16.3 We need to understand the intent of everything we do, measure it and keep discarding what doesn't work to strengthen our calling as the Body of Christ. We need to remember to allow God to guide us to serve the purpose of the Kingdom. How do we measure our effectiveness?

Perhaps that's the next part of the conversation.



