

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.