

# Paper F1

Faith and Order Committee  
Report of the Committee's work

United Church 2015  
Church 2015  
Reformed Church 2015  
Church 2015



# Paper F1

## Faith and Order Committee

### Report on the Committee's work

#### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	David Tatem david.tatem@urc.org.uk
<b>Action required</b>	Take note.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To report the committee's work on various matters.
<b>Main points</b>	Follow-up work from General Assembly; Some responses to ecumenical events and concerns; A few comments and papers on particular topics.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	

#### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	None.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Several of these items have important ecumenical aspects, which are mentioned in the report.

# The Faith and Order Committee

## Report on the Committee's work

### 1. Membership of the Committee

Current membership of the committee is: Elizabeth Welch (Convener), David Tatem (secretary), Catherine Ball, Anna Briggs, Sarah Hall, Michael Jagessar, Tim Meadows, Malachi Munyaneza, Stephen Orchard, Augur Pearce, Alan Spence, Jeremy Worthen (secretary for ecumenical relations and theology of the Church of England).

Comments: Augur Pearce will leave the committee in the summer. Jeremy Worthen has just joined the committee from the Church of England. An invitation to the Methodist Church to provide a member has not resulted in a response at this time. Augur has served on the Methodist Faith and Order Committee and a replacement will be sought.

### 2. Follow up work from General Assembly

#### a) The Future of the Church discussion

This ongoing discussion has clearly been the main focus of the committee's work for some time up to and since the last General Assembly. The discussion booklets have been sent out across the churches. A large number of additional hard copies have been purchased through the online store, indicating that the discussion is being taken up actively across the church. There is now also a dedicated webpage within the Resources section of the URC website. Following the deadline of 31 July, responses will be collated, then any further responses from autumn synod discussions incorporated as they arrive. An additional meeting of the committee has been scheduled for mid-October to consider the responses and prepare input to the November Mission Council.

#### b) Celebrant Eldership

A task group has been exploring the issue under the remit from General Assembly. This group is considering the matter from a wide range of approaches, including the nature of ordination of elders, the accountability of elders, the need for local leadership in congregations, and the role of lay preachers and non-stipendiary ministers. It intends to bring a report on its work to the November Mission Council following consideration by the Faith and Order Committee at its July meeting.

Task Group: David Thompson (convener), Susan Bush, Sarah Hall, Lesley Richmond

#### c) Church Membership

This is the subject of a separate report (Paper F2) to Mission Council. Task Group: Stephen Orchard (convener), Catherine Ball, Augur Pearce.

### 3. Other current areas of work of the committee

#### a) 500th Anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation

The committee has been conscious of the fact that this is of less significance for us than for some of our continental partners. Nevertheless there are obvious links. A sub-group is preparing resources, including a booklet looking at the Lutheran influence on Reformed thinking and how this still affects the URC today, in order to help the URC in its response to this landmark anniversary.

**b) Together Towards a Common Vision**

This is the convergence document from the World Council of Churches on the nature of the church to which responses have been requested by the end of December this year. The committee has been looking at the report and the study guides that have been produced, both in the UK and internationally, and is now preparing a response to the document and looking at how other forums may be involved. Copies of the CTBI study guide have been sent to synod training officers with the invitation to use it in whatever forum is available. A proposed response will be brought to the November Mission Council.

**c) Ecumenical conversations**

The committee regularly monitors the bilateral and other ecumenical conversations in which the URC is involved both within the UK and internationally. In the UK these are the dialogues between the URC and the Church of England and the URC and the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales of the Roman Catholic Church. Internationally these are between the Anglican Churches in Europe and the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) (represented by Julian Templeton) and soon to begin, a conversation between the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and the Anglican Communion, chaired by Elizabeth Welch.

**d) Responding to specific questions**

The committee has responded to *two* particular questions:

- i. Concerning the situations where it is appropriate to consider services of induction into local and wider URC posts, and has produced a statement on this matter.
- ii. The appropriateness of attempting to write an ecclesiology for the Free Churches' Group.

It has also been asked to consider how material and issues from the various bodies of the World Church might be best disseminated through the denomination and engagement encouraged.

**4. Upcoming work****Sola Scriptura**

Arising from the discussions on the marriage of same-sex couples, the committee has identified as a significant theme the question of how the church interprets scripture across the range of areas that affect the church's life and faith and the priority given to this shared interpretation.