

Mission Council

The Hayes

08-10 May 2015





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on behalf of Mission Council.

Groups – May 2015

The first named person in each group is asked to act as group leader and the second named person in each group as reporter

A	<p>Jacky EMBREY <i>Leader</i> Graham HOSLETT <i>Reporter</i> Jane Baird David Greateorex Joan Grindrod-Helmn David Grosch-Miller Ruth Henriksen Karen Morrison Andrew Prasad John Smith David Thompson</p>	B	<p>Andrew EVANS <i>Leader</i> Morag McLINTOCK <i>Reporter</i> Linda Austin Joan Colwell John Ellis Nicola Furley-Smith Katie Henderson Paul Robinson Edward Sanniez Steve Summers Paul Whittle</p>
C	<p>Tracey LEWIS Robert JONES Elizabeth Caswell Richard Church Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor Ruth Gee Angela Gemmer-Snell Lawrence Moore Augur Pearce David Tatem Mike Walsh Alan Yates</p>	D	<p>Peter MEEK Jenny POULTER Martyn Coe George Faris Rita Griffiths Helen Mee Stephen Orchard Kim Plumpton John Proctor Fiona Thomas Andrew Weston Irene Wren</p>
E	<p>Jenny MILLS Gethin RHYS Stephen Ball Francis Brienen Sue Brown Elizabeth Clark Geoffrey Felton Andrew Grimwade Gwen Jennings Tim Meadows Kevin Watson Irene Wren</p>	F	<p>John HUMPHREYS Tim MEACHIN Linda Harrison Michael Hopkins Frank Liddell Roy Lowes Andrew Middleton David Pickering Carol Rogers Jane Rowell Elizabeth Welch</p>
G	<p>Simon FAIRNINGTON Ruth WHITEHEAD Connie Bonner Melanie Campbell Michael Jagessar Margaret Marshall Romilly Micklem Cliff Patten Chris Reed Marie Trubic Nigel Uden</p>	H	<p>Dick GRAY Clare DOWNING Andy Braunston James Breslin Dougie Burnett Carla Grosch-Miller Helen Lidgett Jim Merrilees Lis Mullen Shelagh Pollard Vic Russell</p>

Agenda and Timetable

21/04/2015

Friday 8 May 2015		
12:00 - 12:45	Induction session for new members – in the Derwent Room, Allan Booth Centre	
From 12:00	Registration in the Main House Reception Area	
13:00	Lunch	
Session 1 14:00 - 15:30	<p>Opening Worship Including the induction of Richard Church as deputy general secretary (discipleship)</p> <p>Welcome & Introductions</p> <p>Housekeeping</p> <p>Notice from the general secretary re election for a new member of Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG)</p> <p>Minutes of Mission Council meeting in November 2014</p> <p>Matters Arising from previous meetings: Review of Consensus Decision Making process (Gen Sec) Future of Medium Term Strategy Group (Gen Sec) Greenbelt festival (Gen Sec) Joint Property Strategy Group: Roadshows (Clifford Patten)</p>	
15:30	Tea Room keys available	
Session 2 16:15 - 18:15	<p>National Synods Task Group</p> <p>Safeguarding historic review</p> <p>Church Membership (introduction & information session)</p>	<p>Z1</p> <p>R2</p> <p>F2</p>
18:45	Evening Meal	
Session 3 20:00 - 21:00	<p>Church Membership, in groups</p> <p>Evening Prayers</p>	F2

Saturday 9 May 2015		
08:30	Breakfast	
Session 4 09:15 - 10:45	<p>Morning Prayers</p> <p>Marriage of same-sex couples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Introduction by convener b) Substance: resolutions to offer to General Assembly 	N1
10:45	Coffee	
Session 5 11:15 - 12:45	Governance Options, including time in groups	S2
13:00	Lunch	
Session 6 14:00 - 16:00	Free time, or remaindered business	
16:00	Tea	
Session 7 16:30 - 18:30	<p>Marriage of same-sex couples (continued)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) Substance: resolutions to offer to General Assembly (continued, if required) c) Process: decision whether to recall GA in 2015 d) Process: advice to give GA about procedure 	N1
18:45	Evening Meal	
Session 8 20:00 - 21:00	<p>Items removed from En Bloc</p> <p>Christian Aid presentation by Andrew Weston</p> <p>Evening Prayers</p>	

Sunday 10 May 2015		
08:30	Breakfast	
Session 9 09:30 - 11:00	<p>Morning Prayers</p> <p>Report from group discussions on membership</p> <p>Result of election for new member of MCAG</p> <p>Remaindered Business</p> <p>Farewells</p> <p>Thanks</p>	F2
11:00	Coffee	
Session 10 11:30 - 12:45	Closing Worship including Holy Communion	
13:00	Lunch and Departures	
13:45	Committee conveners meet, to end no later than 15:00	

Paper C1

Communications and Editorial Committee

Towards a new logo for the
United Reformed Church

Church 2015
United
Church **Reformed**
Church 2015



Paper C1

Communications & Editorial

Towards a new logo for the United Reformed Church

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	John Humphreys jhumphreys@urcscotland.org.uk
Action required	To appoint: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. A short term task group to devise and oversee a competition to produce a new logo for the United Reformed Church and; ii. A panel of six to judge the entries.
Draft resolution(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mission Council agrees to establish a short term task group to create, advocate and run a competition to produce a new logo for the United Reformed Church over the winter of 2015/2016. 2. Mission Council appoints a panel of five people to judge entries, the result to be concluded before, and announced at, General Assembly 2016.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To run a competition across the three nations with the expectation of producing a new logo for the United Reformed Church.
Main points	The present logo is dated and has technical limitations regarding its suitability/adaptability across a range of uses.
Previous relevant documents	None that the communications and editorial committee is aware of.
Consultation has taken place with...	With the communications and editorial committee and the relevant members of the communications staff team.

Summary of Impact

Financial	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Expenses connected to the running of the overseeing group and the panel of judges. ii. A prize for the designer of the winning entry (to be decided) iii. Cost of securing the Trademark of the new logo. iv. Cost of redesigning letterheads and comp slips for staff based at Church House, and in the synod offices (noting that the stationery redesign will be done by a staff member and most stationery is printed 'on demand' – so there will be no throwing away of reams of preprinted letterheads, nor investing in reprinting 1000s of same. <p>Please note:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Existing publications showing the current logo would be replaced on a gradual basis. ii. It is likely that local churches would incur some costs, replacing notice boards etc; but this would be a gradual process, and not centrally funded.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Hopefully only positive; a new logo would give freshness and modernity to our visual presence.

Toward a new logo for the United Reformed Church

- 1.1 Why? Why bother about our denomination's logo? A good logo is memorable, appropriate, versatile, and simple in form, conveying a specific, intended, message in a timeless fashion. Effective logos clearly say something about an organisation's core values and ethos – its place in the world. The communications committee does not feel that our current logo does this. Our logo should communicate with the world around us, conveying something of the life and essence of the denomination. For some this might feel like fiddling with the deck chairs... others may see our logo as an important part of how the United Reformed Church sees itself, and, equally important, how others see it.
- 1.2 Why now? The present logo is outdated, even old fashioned, and, because there are at least two versions in everyday use (with and without the blue square background) it is impossible to create a consistent image based on a strong logo. There are situations where it has been found not to be suitable (e.g. on the cover of the denomination's Yearbook). At a time when the communications department is reviewing the published resources available to the denomination, with a view to updating many of them, it is timely (and cost-effective) to update the logo too.
- 1.3 Why a competition? The committee feels that a competition would engage the United Reformed Church in debate and tap into the creativity within the denomination, helping create ownership of a new logo. And, of course, holding a competition is cost-effective. Using in-house design staff would take them away from their agreed priorities, and the cost of hiring an external design agency would be prohibitively expensive.
- 2.1 There are technical issues – from a designer's point of view – with the current logo. It is often distorted in use and it is not possible to create a vector version of the current square blue logo because of the way it was originally created. (A vector version would allow resizing without losing quality, enabling the creation of high quality door etchings and door signs etc.)
- 3.1 Whilst there are technical issues in designing and producing a new logo, the role of the communication's department would be to advise – not to decide in isolation on the winning entry. It is important that the Mission Council takes ownership of the proposal and process, taking some responsibility for encouraging a wide range of people to think about a new logo/and participate in the competition. It must be noted that the graphics office will need to be involved in the choice of the shortlisted logos because they will need to ensure that the logo is fit for purpose, meets all technical requirements and will work across the vast range of designed and printed material the graphics office produces. The communications department, led by its graphic designers, will also create a comprehensive set of guidelines on how and when the new logo should be used.
- 3.2 The intention is that the conversations (and images!) generated by the logo competition will, in themselves, be good.
- 3.3 The competition is about more than focusing on a logo but focusing on a future. We expect that the younger people in the church will be particularly enthusiastic about creating a logo that represents the future, as well as the history, of the denomination.
- 3.4 There is a variety in the ways in which the logo is displayed: In print, on websites and on church notice boards etc. Whilst variety and diversity are part of the URC's character, having more than one logo in use, both of which are used inconsistently, does not serve us well.

- 4.1 The proposal is in two parts. The first resolution forms a group to set up and oversee the competition. This group should reflect the diversity of the denomination and we suggest a group of around six people, including representation from the communications department with regard to the technical requirement of logo. The task group would write the rules, promote the competition and respond to questions from would-be entrants and others.
- 4.2 The second resolution appoints a judging panel.
- 4.3 The Mission Council commits itself to the final decision of the judges.
- 4.4 The task group to devise and oversee the competition should be made of people from the three Assembly departments, with at least one member from communications, and one member to act as convener.
- 4.5 The six judges should be made up of one graphic designer from out with the URC, one person from communications, in addition to one judge from each of the three Assembly departments and the panel to be convened by a moderator-elect.
- 5.1 The department and committee recognise that, for some in the denomination, moving from the existing logo, which has been in place (in one form or another) since the denomination's inception, will be a sad loss; but it recommends that that this step forward is taken, and is convinced that the benefits of a fresh new denominational logo will outweigh the loss of the current one.

Paper D1

Education and Learning Committee
Appointment of Tutor in
New Testament Language,
Literature and Theology at
Westminster College

United Church 2015
Church 2015
Reformed Church 2015
Church 2015



Paper D1

Education and Learning

Appointment in New Testament Language, Literature and Theology, Westminster College

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Revd Dr John P Bradbury jpb44@cam.ac.uk
Action required	None.
Draft resolution(s)	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To inform Mission Council of an appointment made on behalf of the General Assembly.
Main points	To inform Mission Council of the appointment of the Revd Dr Yak-Hwee Tan to the post of tutor in New Testament Language, Literature and Theology at Westminster College.
Previous relevant documents	
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of Impact

Financial	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Appointment to the post of Tutor in New Testament Language, Literature and Theology at Westminster College

1. The appointment group, Chaired by the Revd Nigel Uden, convener of governors at Westminster College, is delighted to inform Mission Council of the appointment of the Revd Dr Yak-Hwee Tan to the post of tutor in New Testament Language, Literature and Theology at Westminster College, Cambridge. Dr Tan comes to us from the post of programme secretary for reflection and research at the Council for World Mission (CWM), based in Singapore. Prior to her work with CWM, Dr Tan held posts as lecturer and assistant professor at the Taiwan Theological College and Trinity Theological College, Singapore. Her doctoral studies were completed at Vanderbilt University in the USA. She is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church in Singapore. Governors, staff and students at Westminster College look forward to welcoming Dr Tan to her role working in one of the Resource Centres for Learning of the United Reformed Church. She brings a wealth of experience and knowledge in the field of New Testament Studies with a particular specialisms in the Gospel of John and post-colonial Biblical hermeneutics. She also has wide experience of, and passion for, all forms of education within the life of the Church.

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

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

Summary of Content

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

Summary of Impact

Financial	None.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	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.

Paper F2

Faith and Order Committee
Report of the Committee's work

United Church 2015
Church 2015
Reformed Church 2015
Church 2015



Paper F2

Faith and Order Committee Church Membership

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	David Tatem david.tatem@urc.org.uk
Action required	Discussion, and advice to committee.
Draft resolution(s)	None at present.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To report the committee's work on church membership.
Main points	Several; in particular the notion of a non-local URC membership, the 'Wider Fold'.
Previous relevant documents	
Consultation has taken place with...	FURY, through a representative on the working group.

Summary of Impact

Financial	There would be some administrative cost of setting up such a scheme, but we are not yet at the stage of doing this.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	It might help some of our members to connect more readily with other Christians in the places where they live, serve and study.

Church Membership:

A discussion paper

1. The Faith & Order Committee, meeting in November 2014, discussed the first report of the task group on membership issues and found the reflections helpful. In particular it encouraged the group to continue to explore the possibility of a new membership category (hitherto referred to as 'Division 14') which is being offered for discussion at Mission Council.
2. In addition to this the Committee also reports that the group is engaged in other work relating to Church membership as follows:
 - 2.1 No suggestions were made by the Committee to amend the 'Guidelines for Ministers and Churches regarding Membership of the United Reformed Church', but the group was asked to submit it for the Law & Polity Advisory Group to check its accuracy.
 - 2.2 The group is working on the draft of a leaflet for potential members, consistent with the Guidelines.
 - 2.3 The Committee had encouraged the group to work on guidelines for discipline in local churches. This was felt to be a task more suited to the Law & Polity Advisory Group since it would mean explaining and commenting on our existing rules, rather than suggesting anything novel.
3. What follows considers 'Division 14' in further detail. A majority of the Task Group favoured the new provisional title '**The Wider Fold**' (hereafter WF), though all agreed that once constituted it would be sensible for the first members of WF to be invited to suggest a preferred name for confirmation by General Assembly.

After discussion, the suggestions for WF were as follows:

The Principles

4. Membership in the URC is still an important concept. It represents a degree of commitment in exchange for the right to share in decisions for the denomination. WF cannot replace entirely the need for rooting in a local church, though it can provide on a temporary basis for those who find a meaningful link to a local church impractical. We do not believe it is right for people to be treated as URC members or to share in URC decisions if they have no background at all in some local manifestation of the church.
5. In many ways WF could be treated as a non-geographical equivalent of the local church. People could be admitted to it by transfer from a local church, and admitted to a local church by transfer from WF. Only actual local churches, however (so not WF) should be able to admit candidates on profession of faith. This is because, in our longstanding practice, admission to membership involves not only a willingness to commit and a declaration during public worship, but also (for good reason) the decision of a council of the church, made on the recommendation of another council, the Elders' Meeting, which is satisfied of the candidate's preparation and sincerity.

- WF would not have the resources to satisfy itself in this way, but could rely on the judgment of a local church commending candidates for transfer.
6. WF would not be for everyone. It would exist to serve three 'constituencies' of people who have joined the URC in the regular way through the decision of a church meeting, who want to continue to 'belong' and to maintain their commitment; but who are unable, for reasons of distance or mobility, to put down regular roots in an existing local church. The constituencies would be:
 - students and young people resident away from home for part of the year;
 - members of the armed forces and their households who receive the ministry of URC chaplains and;
 - members of the URC, including retired ministers and non-serving elders, who have moved away from any locality where regular attendance at a local church is practical.
 7. Ministers in this last situation, whether retired or in secular employment, may currently be in the anomalous situation of being on the Roll of Ministers but not on any membership roll. We envisage the WF membership roll would be a way to end that anomaly; but the corollary of this is that a certain minimum contact (the same as required for a lay person to stay on the WF roll) would become a condition of remaining on the Roll of Ministers.
 8. We had previously thought those who come to Christianity through 'fresh expressions of church' might also be potential members of WF. But we now feel it is up to each synod to decide whether a 'fresh expressions' group is sufficiently settled to be recognised as a local church and to elect elders. If it is not, then we do not feel its attenders can yet be considered members of the URC.

The Detail

9. Individuals will join the URC by the existing two routes:
 - Baptism in infancy –
 - Preparation for membership –
 - Elders' Meeting recommendation and Church Meeting approval –
 - Affirmations –
 - Admission to full privileges and responsibilities of membership

OR

 - Preparation for membership –
 - Elders' Meeting recommendation and Church Meeting approval –
 - Affirmations and Baptism –
 - Admission to full privileges and responsibilities of membership
10. Having joined the URC, an individual in one of the three constituencies above may ask his/her local church to transfer him/her to WF. The Church Meeting (CM) (or by delegation the Elders Meeting [EM]) of that church, if it considers the member to be in good standing, passes the member's name and contact details to the administrator of WF, who enters these on a WF membership roll. The name is removed from the roll of the local church.
11. The administrator of WF must be an elder, minister of Word and sacrament or a crcw. (There may be several part-time administrators, in which case this requirement will apply at least to the lead administrator.) His/her functions will be those set out in this paper, including maintenance of records, of the website, and linking WF members to

- local URC resources wherever they are. He/she (the lead administrator, if more than one) is appointed by the General Assembly, but is nominated by, and reports, to the deputy general secretary (mission). He/she works on a voluntary (or a part-time employment?) basis (from home? from an office paid for out of the WF budget?). All expenses are covered by the WF budget. He/she is assisted by a consultative council of WF members, which meets at least yearly to reflect on the general running of WF, the website in particular, and to plan any WF events. Representatives of concerned Assembly committees may also sit on the council, and a Moderator of Assembly, a synod moderator or the General Secretary will sit in on each annual meeting.
12. As an indication of continued commitment to the URC and good standing, members on the WF roll will be asked to communicate at least annually with the administrator and supply prescribed information. A member failing to do this may, after reminder, be removed from the roll and thus from URC membership. If a minister is removed from the WF roll, the administrator will notify the synod of which that minister is a member, with a view to his/her removal also from the Roll of Ministers of the URC. A comparable procedure will be adopted if, in future, a central record of elders is kept.
 13. For public worship, opportunities of Christian service or training, or pastoral care (especially in crisis), the administrator will (on request) seek to put a WF member in touch with appropriate contacts or resources in his or her current locality.
 14. An area of the URC website is dedicated to WF and under the control of its administrator. Its function will be to provide resources for WF members, enhance the sense of 'belonging', provide a means of financial contribution to the work of WF and the wider URC, and publicise events relevant to any WF constituency.
 15. A person on the WF roll will be eligible to become a member of a synod under Structure para 2(4)(e),(f), (g), (i) or (j) if he/she is currently resident in the province or nation concerned; or of the General Assembly under Structure para 2(6)(a), (b), (e), (h) or (k); or of any committee of either council. If he/she was previously a retired minister or non-serving elder that status will continue, as will amenability to discipline in respect of that office. Local churches which a person on the WF roll currently attends are encouraged (but not required) to allow him/her to attend and speak (but not vote) at church meetings. But he/she cannot be chosen as a serving elder in any local church whilst on the WF roll, nor elected to a synod as a local church representative. Since people in the three constituencies now have a route to membership of wider councils and committees through WF, all provisions in the Structure for non-members of the church to serve on these bodies will be revoked.
 16. A minister or crw called back to active ministry or to be an interim moderator will be automatically transferred as a member from WF to the church where he/she is to serve. Any other person wishing to rejoin a local church will be commended by the WF administrator to that church. This will be technically an admission by transfer, but the 'receiving' EM and CM may wish to make the same enquiries as they would make for an admission on profession of faith, since the administrator cannot know the candidate as well as a commending church normally would.
 17. A member would be removed from the WF roll in any of the following ways:
 - Death;
 - Transfer to the roll of a local church;
 - Removal at own written request;
 - Removal for failure of contact (as above) and;
 - Disciplinary removal.

18. A minister or elder on the WF roll would not be considered for disciplinary removal from membership until the Ministerial Disciplinary Process, or any procedure currently in use for the discipline of elders, had run its course. Subject to this, there would be a disciplinary procedure for members of the Wider Fold (DPWF) which the administrator could invoke on his/her own initiative, or on reference by any EM, or the moderator of any synod, with which the member had been associated, or by the general secretary. A WF member in respect of which the DPWF had been invoked could elect for a central or local hearing. A local hearing would mean the WF member submitting to the jurisdiction of a local church nominated by the administrator, whose EM and CM would then proceed as though the WF member were a member of that local church. A central hearing would entail a panel convened by (but not including) the administrator hearing allegations against the member and deciding accordingly. (A central panel would, like an Assembly Commission under the Ministerial Disciplinary Process, be considered as acting for the Assembly.) In cases where a local church member would be suspended or removed from the local church's roll, the WF member will be suspended or removed from the WF roll.
19. The WF budget will comprise parts of the budgets of relevant Assembly committees (e.g. Youth, Mission, Ministries). It will be under the administrator's control, advised by the consultative council. WF members will be encouraged to give according to their means as they would in a local church; their payments will be made into the WF budget to relieve its dependency on committee budgets. Any surplus will be paid into the M&M Fund.
20. The question was raised about those who are now in the three constituencies, and therefore the first potential members of WF. The principle of joining a local church first, and then transferring to WF, may be workable in future, but would be more difficult to impose on these potential 'founder members' *en bloc*. It may therefore be necessary to liaise with certain local churches at strategic points round the country and to ask them to act as 'admitting churches' simply to get WF off the ground. Even though such churches might be admitting people with whom they would then have no further contact, this seems preferable to departing from the principle of local church roots.

Paper G1

Finance Committee
Financial Outcome 2014

United Church 2015
Church 2015
Reformed Church 2015
Church 2015



Paper G1

Finance Committee

Financial Outcome 2014

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	John Ellis, Treasurer john.ellis@urc.org.uk or 01732 353914
Action required	For information.
Draft resolution(s)	None.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To report on the financial outcome relative to budget for 2014.
Main points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&M income was above budget but below the previous year • General Assembly costs were held below budget • Overall expenditure was below budget • There was a useful surplus of £441k
Previous relevant documents	Budget Papers G1 and G2 at November 2013 Mission Council.
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of Impact

Financial	Reserves start 2015 higher than previously expected.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	No direct impact.

Financial Outcome 2014

Introduction

1. It is hoped that the URC Trust's formal and audited Report and Financial Statements for 2014 will be available for perusal on the URC website by the time Mission Council meets. Hard copies will be available on request.
2. The attached table summarises the outturn against budget for the items covered by the budget approved in November 2013 by Mission Council.

Income

3. Giving to the Ministry and Mission Fund (M&M) was above budget and it would be good if Mission Council members used every opportunity to pass on the thanks of the whole Church to each congregation that has risen to the M&M challenge.
4. Nonetheless the overall giving to the M&M Fund is 1% below that in the previous year, continuing the steady trend of the recent past. The resolution passed at the 2014 General Assembly encouraging every local church to offer 1% above its M&M target is an attempt to reverse this trend but it is too early for its impact to be assessed via the figures.
5. Overall income was £157k above budget.

Expenditure

6. The average number of stipendiary ministers in 2014 proved slightly below expectations, resulting in spending on direct support for ministers falling £194k below budget.
7. When reviewing the whole budget in 2012, Mission Council proposed that the budget for the Assembly itself should be reduced from £300k to £200k. Although not all the consequential changes were popular, the 2014 meeting of Assembly in Cardiff did come within the new budget at a cost of £178k.
8. With a number of other savings spread through the budget and effective budget discipline, the total expenditure was £279k below budget.

Overall Position

9. With income above budget and expenditure below, the year showed a useful surplus of £441k. This means that the general free reserves of the denomination are higher at the start of 2015 than had previously been planned. This is helpful, given the decision of Mission Council to accept a deficit budget for 2015.
10. The Finance Committee does not expect all the factors that affected the 2014 financial outcome will necessarily recur, but it is aware that there is no mission merit in accumulating reserves beyond what the Church needs and will keep the reserves position under review.

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Income and Expenditure Summary 2014

Department	2013 Actual £	2014 Budget £	2014 Actual £	2015 Budget £
Income				
Ministry and Mission contributions	(19,839,200)	(19,550,000)	(19,642,770)	(19,360,000)
Pensions - additional funding	(659,229)	(300,000)	(302,476)	(300,000)
Investment and other income				
Dividends	(657,903)	(678,000)	(750,557)	(725,000)
Donations	(3,237)	0	(6,162)	(1,000)
Specific legacies	(694)	0	(1,829)	0
Grants/Income - Memorial Hall Trust/Fund	(220,280)	(230,000)	(242,983)	(235,000)
Net interest	(35,780)	(50,000)	(20,886)	(50,000)
Property rentals and other income, net of costs	5,727	(10,000)	(6,893)	(20,000)
	(912,166)	(968,000)	(1,029,310)	(1,031,000)
Total income	(21,410,595)	(20,818,000)	(20,974,555)	(20,691,000)
Expenditure				
A Discipleship				
AI Ministry				
Local and special ministries and CRCW's	15,770,494	15,181,000	14,987,072	15,060,500
Synod Moderators - stipends and expenses	693,766	640,000	653,125	651,400
Ministries department	266,523	260,900	266,792	264,800
Pastoral & welfare	5,699	2,000	3,287	2,000
	16,736,482	16,083,900	15,910,275	15,978,700
A2 Education & Learning				
Initial training for ministry	683,088	657,500	677,561	635,000
Continuing training for ministry	132,137	104,000	104,874	105,000
Resource Centres support	454,909	466,000	443,620	555,000
	1,270,135	1,227,500	1,226,055	1,295,000
Windermere RCL - net support	139,531	112,240	146,998	114,500
Training for Learning & Serving - net support	117,135	99,500	110,811	102,000
Lay preachers support	8,007	10,000	7,094	10,000
Education & Learning department	159,306	172,900	179,277	176,300
	1,694,113	1,622,140	1,670,236	1,697,800
A3 Children's and Youth Work				
Staff costs	207,130	201,600	192,041	202,600
Management, resources and programmes	67,702	100,650	68,534	99,890
	274,832	302,250	260,575	302,490

Department	2013	2014		2014	2015
	Actual £	Budget £	Actual £	Budget £	Budget £
A4 Safeguarding Safeguarding policy and practice	38,773	52,200	57,542		47,600
B Mission Mission dept staff and core costs Mission programmes and memberships National Ecumenical Officers	370,996 221,255 592,251 33,107 625,358	416,500 271,500 688,000 35,000 723,000	431,735 204,553 636,287 33,460 669,748		417,900 266,500 684,400 35,000 719,400
C Administration & Resources Central Secretariat URC House costs IT Services Finance Communications & Editorial	366,524 254,210 148,355 487,163 373,982 1,630,234	421,800 286,500 154,100 516,400 344,800 1,723,600	422,122 274,007 145,348 481,064 352,649 1,675,189		461,300 285,000 152,600 505,500 366,900 1,771,300
D Governance General Assembly Mission Council Professional fees Other	100,000 64,516 100,070 60,044 324,630	100,000 46,000 99,000 60,000 305,000	77,889 56,341 84,984 70,720 289,934		100,000 44,000 103,000 65,000 312,000
Total expenditure	21,324,422	20,812,090	20,533,499		20,829,290
NET (SURPLUS)/DEFICIT	(86,173)	(5,910)	(441,057)		138,290

Note: variances are adverse/(favourable)
G1a Management accounts 2014 for MC.XLSX - Summary

Paper H1

Ministries Committee

Age of application for
non-stipendiary ministry

United Church 2015
Church 2015
Reformed Church 2015
Church 2015



Paper H1

Ministries

Age of application for non-stipendiary ministry

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Gethin Rhys, convenor, Ministries gethin.rhys@ntlworld.com or c/o ministries@urc.org.uk
Action required	None required, unless Mission Council wishes to instruct Ministries on further steps.
Draft resolution(s)	None.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To report back on the referral of this matter to Ministries by Mission Council November 2014.
Main points	Ministries failed to reach consensus on a way forward. Ministries has established a working party on non-stipendiary ministry to look at a range of questions, and has added this matter to the terms of reference of that group.
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council Nov 2014, Paper X1, minute 14/32.
Consultation has taken place with...	Assessment Board Synod Moderators' Meeting Secretary for education and learning Finance department.

Summary of Impact

Financial	None if no action is taken. If this matter is proceeded with: - Additional costs for Assessment Conferences if additional applicants come forward. - Average £10,000 per additional candidate for EM1 training.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Some additional income for RCLs if additional candidates admitted for training.

Age of application for non-stipendiary ministry

1. At Mission Council in November 2014, consensus was not attained with regard to a resolution from West Midlands (WM) Synod that the maximum age for application for candidacy for non-stipendiary ministry should be removed, and the matter was remitted to Ministries, with a request that we consult with Education and Learning and with the synod moderators.
2. The synod moderators sent us notes of a discussion held at their November 2014 meeting. Many of the points raised related to non-stipendiary ministry in general, especially with regard to the process for review and how synods deploy their NSMs. Ministries is grateful for these comments, which will be fed into the committee's working party on non-stipendiary ministry (see para 9 below).
3. On the specific question, the notes report that: "The synod moderators would be inclined to accept the WM resolution, but wonder if, after say 70, there needs to be a more frequent review between synod, person, and area of ministry in order to 'licence' the continuing ministry."
4. The secretary for ministries consulted with Education and Learning and subsequently with Finance, to try to ascertain the cost of training each additional NSM candidate. Although it is difficult to derive a definitive figure from the data available, the best estimate is an average £10,000 per candidate as identified by the West Midlands Synod in para 2.1 of their supporting paper, X1.
5. A conversation on the subject was initiated via the URC Ministers' Forum Facebook group. Only a few ministers participated, and they are unlikely to be a representative sample. Their overwhelming opinion was that the age limit should be removed for applications for both stipendiary and non-stipendiary candidacy, although there were a couple of more cautionary voices.
6. This information was provided to Ministries at its meeting in February 2015. This was the third meeting in succession at which the matter had been discussed. It had also been discussed at the Assessment Board meeting in September 2014. On all three occasions, it was clear that neither the Board nor the committee were keen to proceed with this proposal.
7. The main reasons adduced against the proposal during these discussions are:
 - a) Both Ministries and Education and Learning believe that the additional cost of assessment and training, within a heavily constrained budget, can be justified only if at least ten years' active ministry can be expected after ordination. Figures presented to the committee suggest that 27 NSMs currently on the Roll served for 10 years or less before retirement. (A glance at *Celebrated Lives* will show that this applies to many ministers who have died also), and this number would increase with an increased starting age. Only 12 NSMs currently serving in recognized ministries are over 70 years of age.
 - b) Paper X1 para 2.5 argued for assessing the potential for future service on a case-by-case basis. The Assessment Board felt strongly that it is not equipped, nor could it be, to estimate how long a candidate would be able to

remain in active ministry after ordination. The medical assessment, which happens after recognition as a candidate, can only report on the candidate's current medical condition and any reasonable adjustments necessary to accommodate that; it cannot predict the future. This is true for all candidates, but the older the candidate, the more serious the issue.

- c) The suggestion in Paper X1 (paras 2.2. and 3) that training could be substantially reduced on the basis of prior learning fails to take into account the experience of Resource Centres for Learning (RCLs) and synods that candidates who do not need to engage fully with courses at RCLs and are not therefore an integral part of a cohort of students often find the transition to active ministry difficult and can encounter serious problems later. Ministries Committee strongly supports Assembly policy that the training of non-stipendiary and stipendiary candidates should be equal in terms of rigour and depth, and any move away from this would require an Assembly decision.
 - d) Synod candidating secretaries need to be reminded of the flexibility in the current arrangements, which allow for a candidate to make an application where the maximum candidating age has been reached providing that, following conversation with Education & Learning there is a reasonable expectation that, taking into account prior learning, a shorter than normal training programme may be arranged allowing for ordination by age 60. However, note the cautionary comments in (c) above.
 - e) Anyone accepted for training will need during the period of training to step aside from their existing lay ministries, which may be many (see paper X1, para 3). This means that the Church is deprived of those ministries for four or five years. There is therefore a loss of ministry to be considered as well as possible increased numbers of ordained ministers.
 - f) As ministers serve at older ages, the possibility of capacity issues arising increases. Not every minister recognises their own limitations, and local churches may be reluctant to lose a minister who they know cannot be replaced. To institute proceedings under Section P against an elderly and infirm non-stipendiary minister would seem unduly draconian. Whether or not such action is taken, there is a danger of reputational damage to the Church, and synods can find themselves in a cleft stick.
 - g) A minister might also feel under pressure to fulfil the ten years' 'expectation' of service when no longer fit to do so, thus damaging his/her health further.
 - h) There was a fear that synods might be tempted to recommend applicants for recognition as candidates on the basis of offering a reward for past service rather than discernment of a call to future service.
 - i) There was concern that older candidates were from the wrong demographic group for the needs of the United Reformed Church at the moment.
8. Following a further hour's discussion, the committee was virtually unanimous in rejecting the idea of removing the age-related qualification entirely. A majority of members of the committee were willing (some with great reluctance) to consider increasing the maximum age for application from 55 to 60. However, consensus could not be reached on this alternative proposal.

9. The committee agreed to refer this matter to its working party on non-stipendiary ministry, which will have the following terms of reference:
 - a) To canvas the synods in order to understand current practice with regard to the appointment and review of ministers in non-stipendiary service.
 - b) To canvas the synods with regard to any retirement practice and planning that is currently in place, and to seek contributions from retired ministers who served in a non-stipendiary capacity indicating what was, or what might have been, helpful.
 - c) To reflect on the established three models of non-stipendiary service and advise on their usefulness or otherwise, and to consider whether alternative models might better serve the church and the ministry.
 - d) To identify best practice with regard to the appointment, review and retirement of ministers in non-stipendiary service, in order that the Ministries Committee can encourage the support and use of this ministry.
 - e) To consider whether there should be an age limit for candidating or ordination and if so what that age or ages should be.
 - f) To consider any other matters that affect the support and utilisation of ministers in non-stipendiary service and make recommendations to the Ministries Committee for any improvements.
10. Unless instructed otherwise by Mission Council, Ministries is not planning to address this matter further until the working party has reported.

Paper H2

Ministries Committee
Education and Learning
Priorities Review

Church 2015
United
Church **Reformed**
Church Church 2015



Paper H2

Ministries

Education & Learning Priorities Review

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Gethin Rhys, convenor, Ministries gethin.rhys@ntlworld.com or c/o ministries@urc.org.uk
Action required	Change of Mission Council resolution.
Draft resolution(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mission Council rescinds Resolution 14/52 of November 2014. 2. Mission Council asks the deputy general secretary (discipleship), conferring with the Ministries, Education and Learning, and Finance Committees to bring forward recommendations about priorities for education and learning that will support the well-being and future vitality of the church's recognised ministries.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To propose a revised way of carrying forward Mission Council's intention regarding a review of priorities for Education and Learning.
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council Nov 2014 papers D2 and Y2 Mission Council minutes Nov 2014, items 14/39, 14/40, 14/52.
Consultation has taken place with...	Assembly Committee convenors' meeting, Nov 2014 MCAG, December 2014 Convenors and secretaries of E&L and Ministries General secretary Mission Committee, Feb 2015.

Summary of Impact

Financial	None from this resolution, although the review relates to budgetary matters for the future.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None at this stage.

Education and Learning Priorities Review

1. At its November 2014 meeting, Mission Council discussed two papers relating to budget priorities within Education & Learning. Following the first discussion, a facilitation group was convened which proposed that Ministries, Education & Learning and Finance Committees should confer and produce proposals for revised priorities for the Education & Learning budget in the light of Mission Council's discussion.

When this draft resolution came to the floor of Mission Council, it was proposed from the platform that Ministries should take the lead in this work, and at the time the convenor assented to that suggestion. The resolution as passed read as follows:

Mission Council asks the Ministries Committee, conferring with the Education and Learning, and Finance Committees to bring forward recommendations about priorities for education and learning that will support the well-being and future vitality of the church's recognised ministries.

During subsequent informal discussion, it became clear that this wording created three difficulties in terms of implementation:

- a) Placing one Assembly committee in charge of a review of another Assembly committee's budget appeared to set a worrying precedent, and perhaps suggest a hierarchy amongst committees which have previously worked as equal partners.
 - b) The secretary of education and learning was at the time on sabbatical leave, and all concerned felt that it was most unfortunate for this resolution to have been passed without the opportunity for her to be consulted.
 - c) By the time the review was completed, a new deputy general secretary (discipleship) would be in post, working to a job description which includes taking a strategic overview of the work of the Assembly committees within the Discipleship department.
4. The convenors of Ministries and Education and Learning raised these concerns at the committee convenors' meeting immediately following Mission Council, and permission was given there for all work on this review to be stayed until January 2015 when the secretary for education and learning would be back at work. MCAG confirmed this action in December 2014.
 5. In January 2015, further consultation between the two convenors and two secretaries confirmed a desire for this review to be convened by the DGS(D) rather than by the Ministries Committee, and following consultation with the general secretary, it was agreed by Ministries in February 2015 to bring a resolution to this effect to Mission Council.
 6. Ministries stands ready to take a full part in this review of priorities once the arrangements for convening it have been agreed.

H2

United Reformed Church • Mission Council, May 2015

Paper H3

Ministries Committee

Proposed amendments to
the Structure of the United
Reformed Church

United Church 2015
Church 2015
Reformed Church 2015
Church 2015



Paper H3

Ministries

Proposed amendments to the Structure of the United Reformed Church

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Gethin Rhys, convenor, Ministries gethin.rhys@ntlworld.com or c/o ministries@urc.org.uk
Action required	Approval by Mission Council and referral to synods.
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Mission Council gives first approval to the following changes to the Structure:</p> <p>Functions of synods: 2(4)(A)(xvi) to consider on the recommendation of local churches applications for recognition as candidates for the ministry and to candidates for any form of full-time service in the Church at home and abroad, and, in the case of candidates for the ministry, determine their eligibility for a call. ministries of word and sacraments and church related community work and to transmit them, if approved, to the Assembly for decision, and, in partnership with the relevant Resource Centre for Learning, to give oversight pastoral care to such candidates during their training.</p> <p>Functions of Ecumenical United Areas: 2(5)(A)(vi) to consider on the recommendation of local churches applications for recognition as candidates for the ministries of word and sacraments and church related community work and to transmit them, if approved, to the synod for decision.</p> <p>Functions of General Assembly: New function [numbering to be determined]: to consider on the recommendation of synods applications for recognition as candidates for the ministries of word and sacraments and church related community work to oversee their training and to determine their eligibility for a call.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To make changes to the Structure consequent upon Resolution 40 of General Assembly 2007, and a change consequent upon changes in the process of candidacy for service abroad.
Main points	These changes should have been made in 2007 to implement Resolution 40, but this was overlooked at the time.

Previous relevant documents	General Assembly 2007, Resolution 40 – Record pp 51-54, Reports pp 163-6.
Consultation has taken place with...	Clerk to Assembly All synods notified of proposal; three synods responded Mission Committee (regarding the reference to service abroad).

Summary of Impact

Financial	None.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None.

Proposed amendments to the Structure of the United Reformed Church

1. Assembly 2007 passed a very lengthy resolution (Resolution 40) relating to the process for interviewing and assessing applicants for recognition as candidates for the ministry, and the oversight of candidates in training. The principles agreed by Assembly have been operated successfully since, and we believe that over the past seven years we have developed robust procedures for ensuring that Synods and Assembly work in close partnership in these matters.
2. Unfortunately, nobody noticed in 2007 that the passing of Resolution 40 required amendments to the Structure of the United Reformed Church. Now that this has been drawn to our attention, we are introducing the required changes for first approval by Mission Council, followed by referral to Synods, and ratification by Assembly in 2016.
3. Alongside the ratification of the changes to the Structure, we will also bring a resolution to Assembly noting the refinements to our procedures which have developed since 2007 and formally reporting the appeals procedure which has been operated since 2008. This will give Assembly its first opportunity for nine years to discuss the procedures for recognition of candidates for ministry and their pastoral care, and will ensure continued Assembly approval for our decision-making and oversight arrangements.
4. We wish to emphasise that this will not result in any changes to the procedures which have operated successfully since 2007. This is simply a 'tidying up' exercise, ensuring that the Structure of the URC provides an accurate account of the functions of the various councils of the church.

5. Clause 2(4)(A)(xvi) currently give Synods responsibility for assessing applicants for full-time service abroad. This clause has not been altered since 1972, although the formation of CWM in 1977 in fact changed the situation. Any applicant for full-time service abroad through the URC would now be referred to the application process of CWM, in which Synods play no formal role, so this wording would be removed as it is no longer necessary.
6. In the light of comments received, we would note that the Structure uses one word and one phrase in a technical way, which varies from ordinary usage:
 - i. the word 'decision' refers to the FINAL decision on candidacy, not the intermediate decisions of church meeting whether to refer an applicant to Synod, or of a synod whether or not to refer an applicant to Assessment Board.
 - ii. The phrase 'candidate for ministry' refers to those whose call has been affirmed by the Church as a whole, and at earlier stages applicants are called 'applicants for recognition as candidates'. This is consistent with ecumenical usage.

We do not propose to change these usages, as to do so would require more extensive re-writing of the Structure than we believe is justified.

Paper I1

Mission Committee

Memorandum of Understanding Between the United Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK)

United Church 2015
Church 2015
Reformed Church 2015
Church 2015

Paper I1



Mission Committee

Memorandum of understanding between the United Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK)

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Tracey Lewis tracey.a.lewis@btinternet.com
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission Council affirms the URC's long standing partnership and historical relationship with the PCK and continues to hold the PCK in prayers. • Mission Council receives and endorses the Memorandum of Understanding. • Mission Council authorises the Mission Department in conversation with Discipleship, the synods and local congregations to pursue the practical outworking of the Commitment. • Mission Council requests the Mission Committee to report back after the first review of the Memorandum has taken place.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Memorandum of understanding between the United Reformed Church (URC) and the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK)
Main points	The changing landscapes in which the URC and the PCK find themselves have resulted in a growing and significant partnership. The momentum and the opportunities before both Churches suggest the need to continue to work intentionally to grow and deepen the relationship between our Churches, so that mission and ministry are undertaken in partnership between our Churches (in both South Korea and the UK) for the sake of God's mission in the world.
Previous relevant documents	None
Consultation has taken place with...	Mission Committee Ministries General secretary URC Korean ministers, ministers of Kingston, New Malden and Bristol Korean/Redland Park URC and Bournemouth International Church

Summary of Impact

Financial	Potential sharing of mission partners will have financial implications.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	The memorandum may lead to a new way of sharing resources for cutting edge ministry. As such it could provide a model that could have wider ecumenical implications.

Memorandum of Understanding between the United Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church of Korea

1. As partner Churches, the United Reformed Church (URC) and the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) share in the life of the Council for World Mission (CWM), the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC). Our partnership in God's mission has emerged from the historic missionary movement to current expressions of the sharing of mission personnel and resources, mutual accountability and common witness. The PCK treasures its long relationship with the URC, and especially its antecedent denominations' contributions to Christianity in Korea. The URC values the presence of Koreans, their faith and their contributions to our life together.
2. We have sought over the years, through multilateral and bilateral relationships, to deepen our commitment to new forms and expressions of partnership in the world so that God's people and God's world may be blessed. Both the global and local contexts in which our Churches find themselves mean that our partnership has been growing in creative and inspiring ways. This momentum and the opportunities before both Churches suggest that we need to continue to work intentionally to grow and deepen the relationship between our Churches, so that mission and ministry is undertaken in partnership between our Churches (in both South Korea and the UK) for the sake of God's mission in the world.

The URC and the PCK commit to:

- a) hold the mission and ministry of each other in prayer: praying for a peaceful reunification of the two Koreas, peace and justice for life in the UK and in the Korean Peninsula and North East Asia, for nuclear free societies in the world, for persecuted minorities everywhere, including victims of extreme religious violence, for our damaged environment, and for discerning new and creative ways to respond to new mission and ministry challenges;
- b) work together to map, read, interpret and respond to the changing contextual realities in which we will together partner in mission and ministry;
- c) explore opportunities to share good practices and stories that would help to grow, renew and reignite the ecumenical vocation;
- d) therefore work together for a new global ecumenical movement that seeks unity of Christian witness in the midst of immense historical, cultural and geopolitical changes in order to enrich our life and to promote reconciliation and healing in Korea, in the UK and in the world;
- e) recognise mutually that ministers of both the PCK and URC approved, trained and ordained through their respective processes, and who have demonstrated effective and faithful qualities, character and witness are considered valid ministry partners.

The URC and the PCK envision the outworking of these commitments in the following practical ways:

- f) The URC and the PCK continuously exchange information about events and developments within their churches, to better enable congregations to understand and pray for each other. Representatives of the churches will exchange visits to enable them to become acquainted with all aspects of the life and work of the respective churches.
 - g) Members of the URC and PCK who have moved or migrated to either the UK or Korea will be encouraged to develop active relationship with a congregation of the URC or the PCK. Congregations of both the PCK and URC are encouraged to extend hospitality to each other's membership.
 - h) The URC and the PCK will work intentionally to connect with the growing Korean communities in the UK. The URC in partnership with the PCK will help support and resource these communities pastorally and otherwise as able. Through this work we seek to receive one another's gifts, including the gift of ministry, and become a transformed and transforming Christian presence in the new British reality.
 - i) The PCK wishes to draw on the experience and expertise of the URC to respond to the mission and ministry opportunities provided by a growing English speaking population, an increasing multicultural landscape and a younger generation that communicates more readily in English in South Korea.
 - j) The URC and the PCK will explore ways to respond to the growing number of North Korean migrants in the UK, especially in New Malden and Kingston. The PCK is especially keen to work with the URC on this potential mission opportunity to offer some form of ministry to a specific cultural group of Koreans.
 - k) The URC and the PCK will consider the development of joint PCK/URC congregations in the UK, especially in locations with a high Korean population and not currently served by existing URC congregations and in locations of historical missionary significance to the PCK and the URC.
 - l) Both the URC and the PCK will explore the possibility for supervised ministry internship/placement opportunities for cross-cultural learning for ministerial students and ministers in their early years of ministry.
3. This Memorandum of Understanding will be reviewed 18 months from the date of signing by both Churches and annually thereafter.
 4. In obedience to Christ's prayer and intention for the unity of his Body, we acknowledge that this partnership is the result of the design, power and strength of the Holy Spirit. Trusting that what we seek to encourage in this exciting and developing relationship will be fulfilled through that same Holy Spirit, we pray that our witness to each other, the world and to the whole Church will be strengthened, to the glory of God and the praise of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord.

Paper 12

Mission Committee
Commitment for Life

Church 2015
United
Church **Reformed**
Church Church 2015



Paper I2

Mission Committee Commitment for Life

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Tracey Lewis tracey.a.lewis@btinternet.com
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council accepts the recommendation of the Mission Committee that the percentages for allocating income to Commitment for Life be changed to 75% for Christian Aid, 5% for Global Justice Now (formerly World Development Movement) and 20% for administration, grants and programme expenses, with effect from January 2015.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Commitment for Life: change in allocation of income in order to meet programme core costs
Main points	A drop in church contributions suggests that the programme may not meet its administration budget for 2015. By changing the percentage to Global Justice Now to 5% and raising the admin percentage to 20%, we should release approximately £18,000 for running costs for 2015.
Previous relevant documents	None
Consultation has taken place with...	Mission Committee, February 2015

Summary of Impact

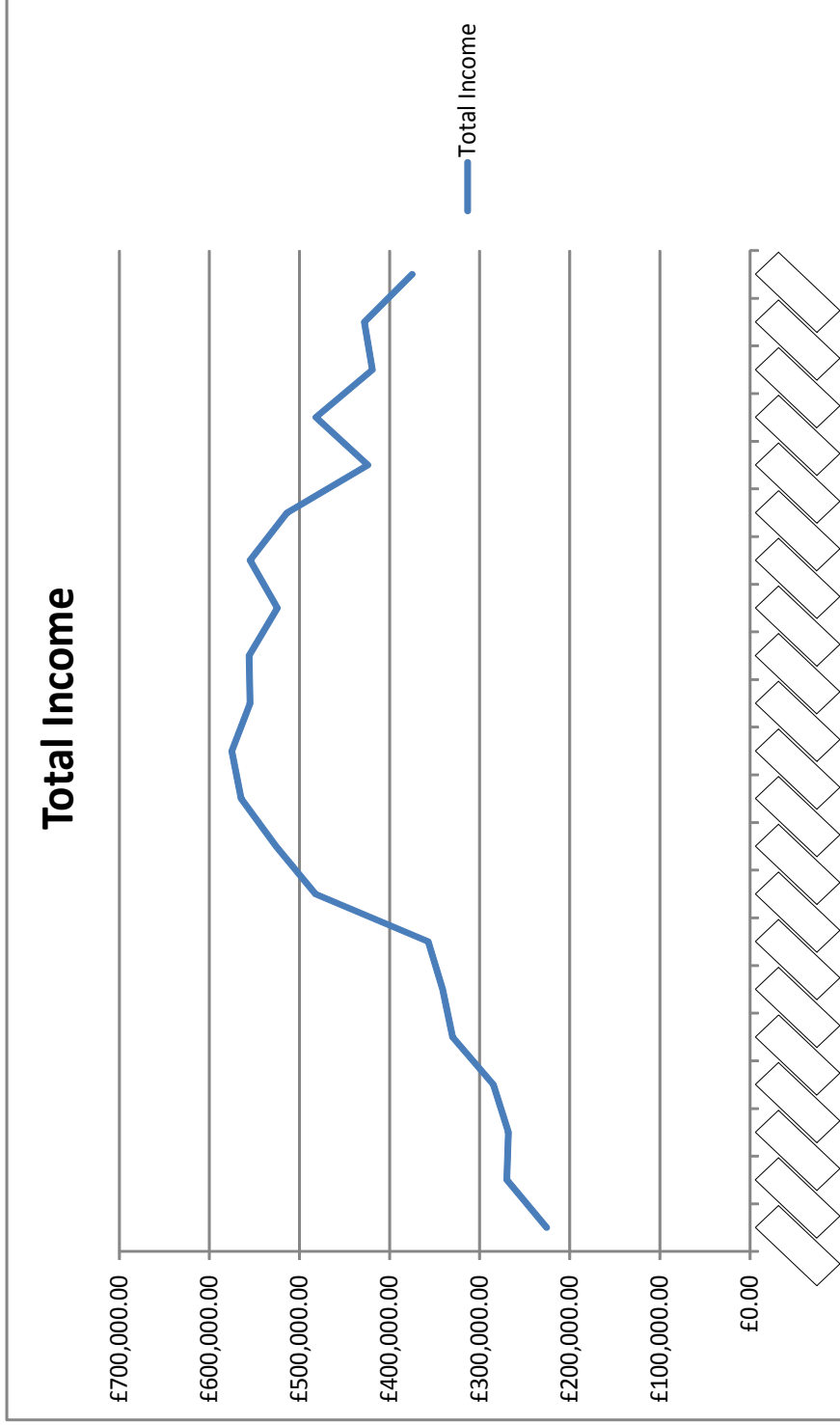
Financial	Releasing in the region of £18,000 for core costs
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Reduction of contribution to Global Justice Now

Commitment for Life

1. Starting life as the 1% appeal Commitment for Life is the United Reformed Church's main programme through which the Church works for justice globally. It has a biblical imperative to help congregations commit to personal giving, acting and praying for poverty eradication, which includes advocating for structural changes.
2. A church becomes a Commitment for Life church following a decision by the Church Meeting. A link person is appointed and a partner country or region chosen (currently Bangladesh, Central America, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory and Zimbabwe). Churches receive three mailings a year with updates on their chosen country as well as campaign information on issues such as tax, debt, Fairtrade and climate change. Resources are also available through the website and the two monthly emails 'Moving Stories' and 'Stories for Change.'
3. In 1992 the percentages for allocating funds raised through Commitment for Life were set as follows: 10% to education and advocacy, 10% to the World Development Movement (WDM) and 80% to Christian Aid for funding overseas partners in India, Zimbabwe and Palestine.
4. By 1998 Commitment for Life had 40 advocates and 485 participating churches. Its annual income was £340,000. In order to employ full and part-time staff the percentages were revised to 75% for Christian Aid for funding overseas partners, 15% for education, grants and administration and 10% to the World Development Movement. This is the current allocation.
5. After over 20 years of Commitment for Life there is much for which to be thankful. There are many church link people who are active and engaged. They access information via the web or directly with the programme administrator or coordinator. The Intern Scheme, which was set up in 2011, has made a real impact and there are great plans to develop this further. There is a growing strategic focus on non-giving congregations and a closer partnership at higher level with Christian Aid.
6. However, there are also concerns. Currently there are nine advocates with 636 churches on the database. Annual income is declining and in 2014 was £375,000. A legacy, given over three years, helped the programme but is not included in the graph below which tracks church contributions.
7. Commitment for Life continually reviews its impact and work. It is being supported in this by the Mission Committee. Christian Aid are preparing terms of reference for a review of the partnership with the URC and specifically Commitment for Life.
8. Following past reviews and continuous reflection, various reasons for the decline in income have been identified. Many of the most loyal and hardworking advocates feel this is the right time to cease being active. The loss of districts has had an adverse effect on their effectiveness in reaching out to local churches and encouraging them to participate in the scheme.
9. Over the years Christian Aid has also expanded its activities into areas that used to be Commitment for Life's unique selling points, such as theological reflections, Christmas, Harvest and Lent appeals.

10. Ageing and smaller congregations with less money, as well as church closures, have also impacted on the programme. The greater number of LEPs that may not want to participate in a denominational programme may also have an impact. In addition to that, several years of recession have led churches to look more closely at their finances and rationalise giving.
11. The 15% share of the annual income of £375,000 means that staff salaries and pensions were covered for 2014, with running expenses coming from funds carried forward from previous years. Grants have not been offered since 2013, except for £5,000 towards the Christian Aid Collective Intern Scheme. Running costs remain tight with little room for cutting back. The projected budget for 2015, agreed by the Commitment for Life Reference Group, means that approximately £18,000 will be needed to break even for 2015. This figure is based on church contributions remaining the same.
12. In light of this, the Commitment for Life Reference Group has recommended that the percentages for allocating income are changed to 75% for Christian Aid, 5% for Global Justice Now (formerly WDM) and 20% for administration, grants and programme expenses from January 2015. This was discussed at the meeting of the Mission Committee in February 2015 and endorsed.

Year	Total Income
1993	£225,786.00
1994	£269,846.00
1995	£267,926.00
1996	£284,965.00
1997	£330,000.00
1998	£341,000.00
1999	£357,000.00
2001	£482,167.00
2002	£526,190.00
2003	£564,970.00
2004	£575,018.00
2005	£555,000.00
2006	£556,000.00
2007	£524,508.00
2008	£554,838.00
2009	£514,000.00
2010	£424,000.00
2011	£482,000.00
2012	£419,000.00
2013	£428,000.00
2014	£375,000.00



Legacy income not recorded in total income graph figures

2010	£150,000
2011	£75,000
2012	£100,000

Paper I3

Mission Committee

Support for a new international
Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty

United Church 2015
Church 2015
Reformed Church 2015
Church 2015

Paper I3



Mission Committee

Support for a new international Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Tracey Lewis: tracey.a.lewis@btinternet.com Andrew Bradstock: andrew.bradstock@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision whether or not to support the call for a Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty.
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council endorses the call for a Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Support for a new international Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty. Churches in the UK are being asked to support the call for a new international Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty. The aim of the campaign is to see introduced, as quickly as possible, a new international treaty to ban the production, deployment, transfer and use of nuclear weapons in accordance with international humanitarian law.
Main points	The paper sets out the context and background to the call for a new Treaty, together with the reasons why the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) takes a different view, and the risks and opportunities that may result for the churches as a consequence of their backing the call.
Previous relevant documents	In 2006 a joint working group of the United Reformed Church and Methodist Church produced a report <i>Peacemaking: A Christian Vocation</i> . This was adopted by Assembly in 2006 and commended "for study by Synods and local congregations, and as a helpful guide for church leaders who may be called upon for comment on the ethical considerations relating to war and peace." Other relevant Assembly resolutions were passed in 1983, 1990, 1994, 1995, 2003 and 2010.
Consultation has taken place with...	Steve Hucklesby, policy officer, The Methodist Church.

Summary of Impact

Financial	Our churches' support would not require additional staff time beyond that already envisaged in this area of the work plan. Media and communications costs associated with this campaign are costs that we would incur anyway in our communication on nuclear weapons. There are time costs involved beyond the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) staff in seeking approval and constructing resolutions for central conferences (if required).
External (e.g. ecumenical)	There are time costs (principally those of the JPIT coordinator) in drawing up a frequently asked questions (FAQ) document or similar resource. JPIT coordination of this work including advising on resolutions (additional to other work on nuclear weapons) would require in total no more than three to four days of staff time over the course of the next year.

Support for a new international Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty

1. For many years the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) has led a global civil society call for a new international treaty to ban nuclear weapons. In the past two years the call for a nuclear weapons ban treaty has suddenly gathered pace and is attracting growing support among governments. This has been largely inspired by the recent international focus on the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. The consequences could be beyond the capacity of any humanitarian response to adequately address. This provides further justification for the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons to be considered illegitimate under international humanitarian law.
2. The campaign seeks to introduce, as quickly as possible, a new international treaty to ban the production, deployment, transfer and use of nuclear weapons in accordance with international humanitarian law (accepting that this will be introduced without the support of the majority of nuclear weapons states).
3. Its broader aims are to:
 - Ultimately strengthen global disarmament efforts by locating them around a principled position in international law.
 - Further stigmatise nuclear weapons increasing the political cost of continuing to invest in their development and maintenance.
 - Strengthen the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in both its disarmament and non-proliferation pillars.
 - Make private sector investment in nuclear weapons more difficult. (This is currently an ethical investment issue for the Methodist Church in Britain who are indirectly invested in companies with substantial exposure to nuclear weapons development.)
4. Introducing a Ban Treaty now is controversial. Supporters propose that this principled step be taken now, if necessary without the consent of the nuclear weapons states.
5. This resolution comes within the context of a call for all member churches of the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) to consider bringing before their central bodies resolutions to support this particular direction in disarmament. The JPIT churches are committed to working for a world free of nuclear weapons and have strong statements in this respect. It could be argued that in principle we already support a ban, as once you have achieved near zero nuclear weapons, a ban treaty becomes the next obvious step. But the call for a Nuclear Ban Treaty has only so far been made explicit by a statement from Methodists at Methodist Conference in 2014. Our churches have been prominent in support for other Treaties to ban indiscriminate weapons including, most recently, the Land Mine Treaty and Cluster Munitions Treaty. The closest Treaties to the proposed Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty are the Chemical Weapons Treaty and the Biological Weapons Treaty.
6. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office's (FCO) objections to a Ban Treaty are (a) that it would distract attention from the NPT that it states should be the cornerstone of disarmament efforts; and (b) that such a treaty is not verifiable at this point in time. However, both of these two arguments can be countered and we have to look a bit deeper to understand the antipathy to this proposal.

7. There are at least three distinct potential paths to achieving complete disarmament (see for example the New Agenda Coalition report to the NPT PrepComm 2014). The FCO advocate the 'step-by-step approach' in which efforts are focused on creating the necessary conditions that might make disarmament achievable (there is no academic consensus on achievability/non-achievability). This approach by its nature eschews the identification of any step other than the *next* step and strongly resists any and all multilateral discussions over milestones or timescales. Consequently, it is argued that the nuclear weapons powers show little sign of negotiating in good faith on nuclear disarmament.
8. The step-by-step approach in the form advocated by the UK government would appear to sit at odds with the UK's obligations under the NPT. This paradoxically weakens the very treaty that the UK asserts should be the cornerstone of intergovernmental non-proliferation and disarmament efforts. This realist perspective on international relations around disarmament places limitations on the role that might be played by civil society in bringing about change. It also determines that developments in international law should be driven by the practice of states and in particular by the practice of those states that have significant influence in international relations, including the five permanent members of the Security Council. Consequently, calls from the UN General Assembly or individual state members of the NPT for developments in international law or for multilateral negotiations on initiatives that obligate the UK, US, Russia, China and France on disarmament are considered by the five recognised nuclear weapons states to be unhelpful (to say the least).
9. The competing perspective is that international law should have wide ownership. The Conference on the Humanitarian Impacts of Nuclear Weapons has demonstrated that a limited nuclear exchange would most likely have global impacts. There are appeals that the framework for international law governing nuclear weapons be constructed not by those that possess nuclear weapons but by those likely to be affected by the impact of their use (either by accident or design). Even without the nuclear weapons states on board, a treaty could become a part of the body of international law quite quickly. A majority of states would sign very early and, following ratifications by state parties, the treaty would enter into force. There is a compelling legal case for proceeding in this direction as the lack of such a treaty is an anomaly within international law given the precedents under international humanitarian law and the entry into force of chemical and biological weapons treaties.
10. Christopher Weeramantry, former vice president of the International Court of Justice, has said: "*Law after all is based on the moral sense of the community and the moral sense of the community draws deeply from the reservoirs of morality that are present in religion. All legal systems at their formative stages of development draw heavily upon religious principles, not in the sense of the dogma, or shall we say the ritual, or the high theology of religion, but upon the basic principles of morality which were contained in that body of religious teaching.*" Religions are united in their view on the morality of weapons of mass destruction. Possibly the most valuable contribution that the church can offer into this contentious global debate is a clear moral stance. Our voice in this regard would be respected.
11. There are risks associated with the introduction of a Nuclear Ban Treaty, not least that it would raise the temperature at NPT Review Conferences. It is possible that a Nuclear Ban Treaty could further increase frustrations with the lack of progress on the part of nuclear weapons states. If some NPT member states chose to withdraw from a NPT Review Conference it would weaken confidence in the NPT process and could in turn increase the risk of nuclear proliferation.

12. But there are mitigating factors to consider here. Firstly, the friction over a Nuclear Ban Treaty is not the most likely cause for states to withdraw from a Review Conference. The forthcoming Review Conference is under a greater threat from the lack of progress on talks around a Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone. Secondly, there is a high degree of complementarity of a Nuclear Ban Treaty with the NPT and the review process. The Nuclear Ban Treaty does not provide an alternative forum. Thirdly, if confidence were lost in the NPT it is possible that a Nuclear Ban Treaty once it entered into force could possibly act as a modest restraining influence on states considering proliferation in nuclear technology/ weapons even if they are not signatories.
13. There are also specific risks for our churches, who may attract criticism and will need to be ready to defend their stance. Not all UK churches will move at the same pace on this issue and we could find ourselves in a different position from that of the established Church. While this might complicate joint working, the reality is that the Church of England's activities in the area of nuclear weapons are subdued.
14. One way to attempt to control these risks would be the production of a briefing or set of FAQs on the Nuclear Ban Treaty. This need only be a brief summary as further reference can be made to excellent resources elsewhere such as this from Article 36: www.article36.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Banning-without.pdf
15. JPIT will continue in dialogue with all partners and take extra care to ensure that opportunities for collaboration on other aspects of nuclear weapons non-proliferation and disarmament are maximised.
16. There are also opportunities arising from the campaign, including:
 - we enable the church in the UK to act early in adding an ethical perspective on an issue that will become increasingly high profile in the coming years;
 - support for the World Council of Churches (WCC): The WCC has a resolution in support of the call for a Nuclear Ban Treaty but few member churches have independently endorsed this call;
 - partner churches: we can encourage partner churches in other parts of the world to join in this call;
 - building ecumenical relationships. There is a strong interest from a wide range of ecumenical partners on work in this area. This brings us into collaboration with partners such as the Church in Wales and the Federation of Lutheran Churches in the UK with whom we have few links in other areas;
 - encouragement of our members. This campaign provides a further means for members to engage with MPs, AMs, MSPs and other elected representatives. There are some MPs who may engage on this topic whereas, due to party positions, they might not on Trident;
 - this is an area in which solidarity across faith groups can be demonstrated, thereby visibly building interfaith cooperation.
17. This resolution supports our churches' ethical investment stance on nuclear weapons. In terms of the United Reformed Church, in 2010 General Assembly passed a resolution recommending that 'trustees and all those with investment responsibilities connected with the United Reformed Church should avoid any investment in companies directly engaged in the manufacture or supply of weapons of destruction'.
18. Impact would be measured by public recognition of the UK churches' role (beyond our three JPIT partners) in bringing about a political demand in the UK for a Nuclear Ban Treaty. This presupposes that we have achieved some public media attention through our support for this call.

19. We should note that this is a regulated activity under the Lobbying Act. While the three 'major' political parties tend not to have stated positions on a Nuclear Ban Treaty, this could change even between now and the General Election. Other political parties do have a stated position.

Paper I4

Mission Committee
Update

Church 2015
United
Church **Reformed**
Church 2015

Paper I4



Mission Committee Update

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Tracey Lewis Francis Brienen	tracey.a.lewis@btinternet.com francis.brienen@urc.org.uk
Action required	For information.	
Draft resolution(s)	None.	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	This paper provides an update on the work of the Mission Committee.
Main points	Mission Committee received an update on the monitoring of Nestlé. Mission Committee agreed that the URC apply for membership in the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME). Mission Committee agreed that the Church of Scotland become a member of the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) on a trial basis. Mission Committee agreed to make a grant of £4,000 to the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine/Israel (EAPPI). Mission Committee decided to set up of an Ecumenical Reference Group and agreed its terms of reference.
Previous relevant documents	Nestlé: papers B4 and B5 to Mission Council November 2011; Mission Council minutes November 2011 and November 2014.
Consultation has taken place with...	Investment Committee on Nestlé; Synod of Scotland on Church of Scotland membership in JPIT; Commitment for Life Reference Group on EAPPI grant.

Summary of Impact

Financial	The membership fee for CCME, the grant to EAPPI and the costs of Ecumenical Reference Group meetings can be met from the current Mission Committee budget.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None.

Mission Committee

1. This paper provides a brief overview of the main discussions and decisions of the Mission Committee at its meeting in February 2015. This overview does not include the Nuclear Ban Treaty, the Memorandum of Understanding with the Presbyterian Church of Korea and Commitment for Life, as these are the subject of other Mission Council papers.
2. Following the Nestlé resolution accepted by Mission Council in November 2011, Mission Council in November 2014 asked the Mission Committee to confirm that the monitoring of Nestlé's response to the issues raised in the Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC) Assessment Report and its compliance with the FTSE's BMS (breast-milk substitutes) criteria in higher risk countries has been ongoing. If so, it requested to know the outcome of that monitoring. Responsibility for monitoring now rests with the Investment Committee and the Mission Committee received a paper addressing the question about monitoring Nestlé. The report noted that to date three inspections covering six countries have been carried out by PWC as independent auditors. The findings showed that Nestlé had sound policies, which were understood by all its employees and enforced to a high degree of satisfaction to PWC. The URC participated in meetings to discuss the audit reports, which are now available on Nestlé's website with comments from FTSE4Good, PWC and the company. Nestlé have actively supported everything so far (since 2010), despite having taken over Wyeth, another BMS manufacturer who had a high level of exposure to China. China has high levels of regulation covering BMS businesses but low levels of enforcement, which means marketing standards are low. Nestlé have shown great commitment to integrate Wyeth into its own culture at the expense of market share in China. Nestlé continues to engage actively with the faith community and at the highest level attaches great value to its inclusion in FTSE4Good. The Investment Committee were encouraged by the open way in which Nestlé is embracing the challenges and noted they were content to hold their equity in the Ministers' Pension Fund portfolio.
3. The Mission Committee agreed to apply for membership in the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME). CCME is an ecumenical organisation that serves the churches in their commitment to promote the vision of an inclusive community through advocating for an adequate policy for migrants, refugees and minority groups at European and national level. The organisation comprises 28 members (churches and ecumenical councils) from 18 European countries and provides a space for churches and Christian agencies to share their experiences in the ministry among migrants, refugees and minority ethnic people. CCME is part of a wider ecumenical network of the World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches. Within its general mandate, CCME focuses its activities on a number of strategic areas, e.g. Europe's role in refugee protection; human dignity in the process of labour migration; countering contemporary forms of slavery (in particular human trafficking); migration as an opportunity and challenge for the unity of the church; churches as witnesses to inclusive communities in Europe; migration and development. The URC will benefit much from CCME in the areas of resources and resourcing, ecumenical collaboration, research and training, visits, advocacy and sharing of good practice. In return we hope to bring a much needed British presence and input, a particular ecclesial approach to our work, the local collaborative work across our churches and an intercultural approach to the way churches can respond to the opportunities and challenges of migration.

4. In February 2014, Commitment for Life requested the Mission Committee to provide the annual grant of £4,000 to the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine/Israel from Mission Committee funds. Until then this grant had been given from Commitment for Life funds. However, due to a decline in income Commitment for Life was no longer able to make grants to other organisations. Mission Committee agreed to make the grant and £4,000 was allocated from the World Church and Mission Fund. The Committee reviewed this at its meeting in February 2015 and in light of the 2004 General Assembly on the Separation Barrier, which includes a pledge “to support the work of peace groups within Israel and the Occupied Territories and UK based advocacy groups, such as Christian Aid and EAPPI” agreed to make a grant of £4,000 again in 2015.
5. The Mission Committee agreed in principle that the Church of Scotland join the Joint Public Issues Team on a trial basis for one year, from 1 March 2015. The Church of Scotland has had a good relationship with JPIT, engaging on several pieces of work in parallel or in partnership – a recent example being the 2013 report, *The lies we tell ourselves*. Staff members from the Church of Scotland and JPIT have also been meeting regularly to share information, discuss current projects and plan future work. While there are differences in the scale of the denominations involved there are similarities on the kind of issues worked on and the theological and policy lines taken. The broadly common approach to issues and working may open up new possibilities for the Church of Scotland, the JPIT churches’ presence in Scotland and the work of JPIT at the UK level. The committee considered the background to the proposal that the Church of Scotland join JPIT, how the new partnership will work in practice, the potential risks, cost implications and expected benefits of the new arrangements. If the trial is successful, a recommendation will be brought to Mission Council that the Church of Scotland become a permanent member of JPIT.
6. Following the review of Ecumenical Relations in 2010 and the postholder review of the secretary for ecumenical relations in 2014 it was recommended that an Ecumenical Reference Group be established to support the secretary for ecumenical relations and the Welsh and Scottish Synod ecumenical officers in their work and to provide advice on ecumenical matters to the Mission Committee and the church. At its February meeting the Mission Committee agreed the membership, remit, accountability structure and budget for the group. The group’s primary remit will be to provide a forum within which current ecumenical issues and trends can be considered by a group with ecumenical experience in both domestic, European and wider international settings. The group will comprise a convener, the secretary for ecumenical and interfaith relations, the national ecumenical officers for Scotland and Wales, a member of the synod ecumenical officers’ network, a member with international ecumenical experience, a member with experience in an LEP and a minute taker. The group will meet twice per year or as necessary in exceptional circumstances. It will report to the Mission Committee in the first instance. Mission Committee agreed that there should be a monitoring period of 12 months and a review will take place in February 2016.

Paper J1

Nominations Committee Report

Church 2015
United
Church **Reformed**
Church 2015

Paper J1



Nominations Report

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Carol Rogers carannrog@aol.com
Action required	Agree resolution.
Draft resolution(s)	See over.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To appoint members of various committees.
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	
Consultation has taken place with...	Convener and members of the Nominations Committee.

Summary of Impact

Financial	None.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None.

Nominations Committee

Resolution

Mission Council appoints:

1. **With immediate effect:**

- 1.1 Miss Judith Haughton BEM as convener of the Disciplinary Process Commission Panel until General Assembly 2020
- 1.2 The Revd Dr Janet Tollington as deputy convener of the Disciplinary Process Commission Panel until General Assembly 2020
- 1.3 The Revd Dr Martin Camroux as a member of the Ministries Committee until General Assembly 2018.

2. **From 1 July 2015**

- 2.1 The Revd Bernie Collins as convener-elect of the Mission Committee for one year and then as Convener until General Assembly 2020
- 2.2 The Revd Alan McGougan as convener-elect of the Commitment for Life Reference Group and then as Convener until General Assembly 2020
- 2.3 The Revd Anne Bedford as convener-elect of the Retired Ministers Housing Society Sub committee for one year and then as Convener until General Assembly 2020.
- 2.4 Mr Simon Loveitt as convener-elect of the CRCW Programme Sub-Committee for one year and then as convener until General Assembly 2020.
- 2.5 Mrs Soo Webster as convener of the Pilots Management Sub-Committee for a further 12 months until General Assembly 2016.

3. **Committee Members until 30 June 2019:**

- 3.1 Accreditation Sub Committee: The Revd Russell Furley-Smith
- 3.2 Communications and Editorial Committee:
Ms Rebecca Gudgeon, Ms Heather Carr and Mr Tim Llewellyn
- 3.3 CRCW Programme Sub Committee: Mr Derek Estill
- 3.4 Finance Committee: Mr Brian Hosier
- 3.5 Methodist/URC Interfaith Reference Group: The Revd Bob Day, The Revd Ann Jack
- 3.6 Ministries Committee: The Revd Sally Thomas
Leadership in Worship Advocate: Mr Andy Buxton
- 3.7 Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee: Mrs Pam Sharp
- 3.8 Retired Ministers Housing Soc Sub-Committee: The Revd Bill Frame, Mr Peter West
- 3.9 Windermere Management Committee: Mr Clifford Patten.

4. **Until General Assembly 2020**

- 4.1 Assessment Board: The Revd Lesley Charlton, Mrs Jill Shelton
- 4.2 Disciplinary Process Commission Panel:
Mr Andy Braunston, The Revd Hilary Collinson, The Revd Martha McInnes,
The Revd Rachel Poolman, Mr Patrick Smyth and The Revd Peter Stevenson.
- 4.3 Panel for General Assembly Appointments: Mrs Sheana Dudley.

and other names as presented in the supplementary report

5. **Also from 1 September 2015**

- 5.1 The Revd Steven Mark Faber as Moderator of West Midlands Synod, for a term of seven years, to 31 August 2022.
- 5.2 The Revd Andrew Christopher Mills as Moderator of North Western Synod for a term of seven years, to 31 August 2022.



Paper L1

The URC Trust

Church House –
plans & prospects

Church 2015
United
Church **Reformed**
Church 2015

Paper L1



The URC Trust

Church House – Plans & Prospects

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Rev Dick Gray, convener of the Trust dickgray643@gmail.com
Action required	Outline approval, according to the resolutions below.
Draft resolution(s)	<p>a) Mission Council accepts the view of the Trust that the URC can make good and efficient use of Church House for the foreseeable future, for the work that we need to do centrally;</p> <p>b) Mission Council therefore asks the Trust to seek estimates for a limited project to remodel Church House, in ways that will improve access, the use of space and potential flexibility for letting;</p> <p>c) Mission Council asks the Trust to report back, with a more precise scheme and clear financial information.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To outline the approach the Trustees propose to take to the development and use of the URC's offices at 86 Tavistock Place.
Main points	The Trustees believe that our present office building can serve us well for the foreseeable future. They would like to explore a modest development plan to make the building more accessible, to make better use of the accommodation, and to allow us to let out part of the space, if the URC ever ceased to need it all.
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council Paper L1, November 2014.
Consultation has taken place with...	Mission Council, last November. There were previous enquiries about sharing space with other churches, which came to naught.

Summary of Impact

Financial	To explore the plan would probably cost £10K-20K in architect's fees; to implement it would cost at least a six-figure sum, for which future Mission Council approval would be sought. Any income that resulted would not be immediate, but might well extend over a very long period.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	We would remain in close proximity to most of our largest ecumenical partners.

Church House – plans & prospects

1. In November 2014 members of the URC's Mission Council were invited to discuss Paper L1, from the URC Trust, which set out some thoughts about the possible development of Church House. Discussion was not decisive, and reasons for this may have included the following:
 - 1.1 Some members had not been party to earlier exploration of the matter, in the previous year or two.
 - 1.2 That earlier discussion had not itself reached any very sharp conclusions.
 - 1.3 A number of members did not know the building at all well.
 - 1.4 The matter was not perceived to be urgent.
 - 1.5 Capital investment would need to be heavy.
 - 1.6 There was clearly risk involved.

2. The Trust meeting in December 2014 accepted that a focused discussion at a central council of the Church would depend on more precise proposals, and also on proper advocacy of those aspects of the matter of which the Trust was persuaded. With that in mind, the Trust recalled that the building presently serves four main purposes:
 - 2.1 **Admin and Resources:** It provides a base for certain services that the Church expects to fulfill centrally: payroll, financial management, budgeting, pensions, retirement housing, planning and preparation for central councils, website, publications, *Reform*, media liaison, records management.
 - 2.2 **Discipleship:** It provides a centre where strategic decisions can be turned into programmes, oversight and action by staff who serve our congregations and synods: education and learning, crcw development, ministries, children's and youth work, safeguarding.
 - 2.3 **Relationships:** It provides a base from which we can relate to other bodies: other churches; international church visitors to the UK; government; various ecumenical groups; and financial bodies (who help us to steward our reserves).
 - 2.4 **Meetings:** It provides a venue for meetings, with good rail links to most of our territory. As a conciliar church, we value talking things over, drawing on expertise and opinion from around the Church and seeking wide ownership of what we do.
Further ...
 - 2.5 A small number of the staff provide services to the building, rather than directly to the wider Church – most obviously cleaning, caretaking, reception and IT staff. Most of the others have a wide remit, and their regular professional work reaches well beyond the building.
 - 2.6 Most of this work is done better because it is all in one place – because, for example, Education and Learning can speak with Finance, HR with *Reform*, and Safeguarding with ecumenical colleagues. When we asked our committee conveners about location, they spoke strongly in favour of staff being close to one another. That helps to nurture a sense of teamwork and of service to the Church. Church House is constantly and deeply engaged with the whole URC. It has to be somewhere.

3. We have explored the idea of sharing space with another denomination, and drawn a blank. We have asked our two London synods about buildings we might move to, if Church House were judged unsuitable. Nothing suitable and accessible comes to their mind. There does not seem much sense in selling and buying on the London market. The purchase cost would be pretty close to the market value of our building, especially if we needed to do any work at all to adapt new premises to our particular needs.

4. We could think of moving to another city. That would involve a hefty transition cost, not least because many staff would not follow us. It would distance us from some relationships that matter to us, and – although it is not central – London still seems to be the most convenient transport hub for meetings. Moving is not unthinkable; but it would be difficult, and there is no clear case or obvious destination in sight.
5. There is a good case for staying in Church House. It is not grossly unsuitable. We could imagine it being made more suitable, but this is not an urgent need. We own it. It doesn't feel smart and fresh, but nor is it tatty. We do not foresee costly or major repairs in the next few years. We use the building fairly fully. It is handy for several major rail links. It is near to some of our closest ecumenical partners. Yet, for all this, there are three reasons why it does not entirely suit us:
 - 5.1 It is not disability-friendly. Three quarters of the building is only accessed by stairs.
 - 5.2 It does not use space very tightly, as it has a lot of small, separate offices and some wide corridors.
 - 5.3 It is not at present easy to partition. If our needs were to reduce, we could not – on the present layout – rent out the portion we did not need. But some quite modest alterations would allow this, by making each floor separate and independent of the others.
6. If we wanted to resolve all three points above, we should need a substantial building project, to reshape a good deal of the interior of Church House. We could probably find the capital to do this, if we built a floor or two of flats on the roof, and marketed these. Committing to that work would not be without trouble and risk, and November's Mission Council did not exhibit much enthusiasm for it.
7. So could we undertake instead a more conservative building project, to put a lift into Church House, and to make it possible to separate the three main floors? Then we could consider letting a floor, if we ever ceased to need it. This would address 5.1 and 5.3, at least. We also could remodel the basement modestly, and make some inert space work better for us. We do not know how much all this would cost, because we have not asked, but it would surely cost far less than extending high above the roof. It would not have, in the short term, an obvious income stream to offset the necessary capital investment, but in the medium and long term it would give us flexibility to let out floor space that we did not need.
8. Church House is not, as an annual budget item, a vast expense. We need to do some work centrally, and we need a place for the people who do it. Certainly we could save some space if we held more of our meetings through audio or video links, although we realise that not every meeting works well in this format. We might also save on record and archive storage, if we moved this out of London or put it on to electronic media. In the context of the House as a whole, while saving on meetings and storage would be worth doing, it would not be a grand solution to anything. But it would free some space, and that in turn might help part of the building to earn money for us.
9. In summary:
 - 9.1 We shall need some central staff and some regular meetings in the decades ahead, even if the present complement and pattern change.
 - 9.2 There is a lot of benefit in staff working together.
 - 9.3 There are many advantages in being where we are, and the Trust cannot see a strong case for another venue.
 - 9.4 We could either improve the building quite radically, and solve all three problems listed in 5 above.
 - 9.5 Or we could seek estimates for a more limited job, that would solve 5.1 and 5.3, but not 5.2, and for which we should need to find the capital ourselves.
 - 9.6 The Trust would like to explore 9.5, and recommends accordingly.

Paper L2

URC Investment Committee
Terms of Reference for the
URC Investment Committee

United Church 2015
Church 2015
Reformed Church 2015
Church 2015



Paper L2

URC Investment Committee (URCIC) URCIC Terms of Reference

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Sandi Hallam-Jones s.hallam-jones@urc.org.uk
Action required	For decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council approves the revised Terms of Reference (ToR) for the URC Investment Committee.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	URC Investment Committee Terms of Reference To approve the updated ToR.
Main points	The URC Investment Committee has re-drafted its Terms of Reference to include responsibility for the Lay Staff Pension Fund and to allow for flexibility in the members of the committee in the event that a particular member could not attend.
Previous relevant documents	Previous URCIC ToR.
Consultation has taken place with...	URC Investment Committee URC Trust URC Ministers' Pensions' Trust.

Summary of Impact

Financial	None.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

United Reformed Church Trust and the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Trust

URC Investment Committee – Terms of Reference

1. The terms of reference of the United Reformed Church Investment Committee (URCIC) shall be as follows:
 - (a) the Committee shall provide guidance to the URC Trust and the URC Ministers' Pension Trust in relation to all matters relating to the investment of the assets held by those Trusts;
 - (b) the Committee shall also interpret the Church's views on investment strategy and ethical investment for input to The Pensions Trust in respect of the Lay Staff Pension Scheme;
 - (c) the Committee shall also act as monitor on the performance of The Pensions Trust Investment Managers in order to make any necessary representations to them;
 - (d) the Committee shall secure advice and support from investment specialists to enable clear recommendations to be made to the Boards of the Trusts in (a) above;
 - (e) the Committee shall take decisions on behalf of the Boards, subject to the authority of the Trust Boards and within guidelines for delegation agreed with the Boards;
 - (f) the Committee shall organise such training for its members as will enable it to carry out its duties in a professional manner;
 - (g) the Committee shall work with ethical investment guidelines agreed by the General Assembly and give advice on ethical investment matters to Mission Council.

2. The composition of the URCIC shall be as follows:
 - a) Ex-officio members:
 - i) the chair of the URC Trust or another director;
 - ii) the chair of the URC Ministers' Pension Trust Board or another director;
 - iii) the treasurer of the United Reformed Church;
 - iv) the treasurer of Westminster College, or their nominated representative;
 - v) the convener of the Pensions Executive, or their nominated representative.
 - b) Five members appointed by the General Assembly for four year terms, renewable once.
 - c) Any additional members co-opted by the Committee.

- d) Staff in attendance:
 - i) the chief finance officer;
 - ii) the secretary to the URC Trust and the URC Ministers' Pension Trust, who shall act as secretary of URCIC¹;
 - e) A convener for the URC Investment Committee, appointed by the General Assembly from amongst those in groups (a) and (b), with the agreement of both Trust Boards and who, if not already a member, will attend each Board as an adviser.
3. A quorum for committee decisions shall be a total of five members drawn from groups (a) and (b) above.

¹ In the event of the unavailability of the Secretary s/he will make arrangements for a substitute to attend in liaison with the Convenor of the Committee.

Paper M1

MIND

Appointment of General
Assembly Representative to
the Disciplinary Process

United Church 2015
Church 2015
Reformed Church 2015
Church 2015



Paper M1

MIND

Appointment of General Assembly Representative to the Disciplinary Process

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 appoints the deputy general secretary (discipleship) as General Assembly Representative to the Ministerial Disciplinary Process from 10 May 2015.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To appoint the deputy general secretary (Discipleship) as General Assembly Representative to the Ministerial Disciplinary Process.
Main points	n/a
Previous relevant documents	Minutes of Mission Council, March 2014 Paper M1 of Mission Council, November 2014.
Consultation has taken place with...	n/a

Summary of Impact

Financial	n/a
External (e.g. ecumenical)	n/a

Paper M2

Officers of Assembly
The Lobbying Act

Church 2015
United
Church **Reformed**
Church Church 2015



Paper M2

Officers of Assembly

The Lobbying Act

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	John Proctor john.proctor@urc.org.uk
Action required	Take note.
Draft resolution(s)	None.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To report that the officers of General Assembly decided not to register the United Reformed Church under the Lobbying Act.
Main points	As above.
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council Paper M2, November 2014.
Consultation has taken place with...	The Methodist Church, the Baptist Union of GB, and the Joint Public Issues Team of our three denominations.

Summary of Impact

Financial	We do not expect there to be any.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	We have sought to keep close contact with JPIT partners as we have addressed this matter, which has surely helped to nurture ecumenical trust.

The Lobbying Act

1. Understanding the implications of this Act has been difficult. It was not originally meant to apply to churches, but its wording seems to cover some things that we do. Lawyers – even those who deal regularly with churches – were not all of one mind about its relevance to our sort of work.
2. This complexity is increased by our involvement in the Joint Public Issues Team. This group of staff from the Baptist Union of GB and the Methodist Church, as well as from the URC, provide an informed, co-ordinated and professional focus for much of our engagement with public issues. We were keen to reach a common view with our JPIT partners, about whether the work of the Team would require registration or not.
3. When Mission Council discussed the matter in November, it could not reach a clear decision, and remitted the matter to the officers of General Assembly (James Breslin, John Ellis, David Grosch-Miller, Michael Hopkins and John Proctor). On the basis of what we learned by the end of January, the officers decided not to register.
4. We were helped by legal advice supplied to the Methodist Church, and by colleagues there who interpreted this. Our own legal adviser has been a model of clarity, and Francis Brienen has done much of the necessary staff work with care and insight.
5. Our primary reason for not registering is that we now think that most of JPIT's work should not be viewed as regulated. Not much of the work of other Assembly staff is regulated, and initiatives taken in synods or local churches do not count against our central Church total. Therefore the overall amount of regulated activity for which we are responsible seems unlikely to reach the threshold that would require registration.
6. A letter we sent to Rachel Lampard, the senior staff member in JPIT, sets out our position with care, and I have copied this below. She assured us that the Team will work within the guidance we have given.
7. I have let synods know what we decided, and we have continued to monitor with care any staff work that might be regarded as regulated.
8. Synod initiatives do not count in the central URC total, and are unlikely on their own account to exceed thresholds. An exception might be where a synod is involved in a JPIT within its own area. Yet even there, much of the work would not be regulated.
9. Local church initiatives do not count in central or in synod totals.
10. It took us a long time to decide to do nothing, and I am sorry for the uncertainty and delay. This decision was taken carefully and conscientiously. It may yet be important to demonstrate that we have been working within the law, and our careful record-keeping should allow us to do this, if we need to.

LETTER FROM JOHN PROCTOR TO RACHEL LAMPARD, February 2, 2015

Dear Rachel,

I write on behalf of the five Officers of the URC General Assembly, who have been tasked with deciding whether our Church should register under the Lobbying Act. We have decided that, on the basis of what we presently know, we should not do so. In this we have been helped by a Methodist paper dated just before Christmas, summarising and interpreting legal advice that the Connexion had received, and are very grateful to Doug for sending this.

We should like, in recording this decision, to give JPIT a steer identical to the Methodist guidance that you reported to us: 'The Methodist Council received advice that JPIT's work would not be regulated, and so has encouraged JPIT not to alter its work or self-censor. ... Having said that, we are being careful not to do or say anything without even more consideration than usual. ... I can reassure you that we are being particularly careful of anything which goes out in the name of our Churches during this period, and that includes blogs on the JPIT site.'

As we have also noted, the careful keeping of lists, records and accounts will be a constant and necessary duty, until we see for sure how this Act is going to work in practice, and how much of our work will fall into the regulated category. I believe that Wendy Cooper is helping to monitor all of this on the URC's behalf.

Despite the difficulty we have had in coming to a clear mind on this matter, the URC would like to affirm with a much surer clarity that JPIT is a project of which we are proud, and that we value very highly indeed the thoughtful and persistent work that it does, to focus so much of our public witness. Thank you indeed.

Yours sincerely,
John

Paper M3

Clerk

Resolution 19 – a way forward

United Church 2015
Church 2015
Reformed Church 2015
Church 2015

Paper M3



Clerk

Resolution 19 – a way forward

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Michael Hopkins clerk@urc.org.uk
Action required	Resolution.
Draft resolution(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Resolution 19(A) is withdrawn and resolution 19(B)(4) is not put. 2. Resolutions 19 (B)(1) and 19(B)(3) and 19(B)(5) are not put. If resolution 2 is passed, resolution 3 will be proposed: 3. Mission Council instructs the Law and Polity Advisory Group, consulting the Children's and Youth Work Committee and the Faith and Order Committee, to bring recommendations about the appropriateness or otherwise of those who are not members of the United Reformed Church being voting members of the Councils of the United Reformed Church; and to report by March 2016. 4. Mission Councils rescinds its decision of November 2014 to extend the consultation on Resolutions 19(B)(2) and 19(E) to 31 March 2016, and revises that that date to 31 December 2015, with a view to making decisions on ratification at its meeting in March 2016. 5. Mission Council instructs the clerk to issue a definitive briefing on the status of this resolution to synod moderators and clerks as soon as possible.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To move forward several matters of impasse on Resolution 19
Main points	Suggested ways the Church may wish to move forward with some governance matters.
Previous relevant documents	Paper M2 of March Mission Council 2014 General Assembly Book of Reports 2014, pages 50-57 General Assembly order paper, Saturday 5 July 2014 General Assembly Record 2014, pages 15-17 Paper M4 of November Mission Council 2014
Consultation has taken place with...	General secretary, Law and Polity Advisory Group (part), synod clerks (slightly earlier in the process), Children's and Youth Committee (part)

Summary of Impact

Financial	n/a
External (e.g. ecumenical)	n/a

Resolution 19 – a way forward

1. Resolution 19 of the 2014 General Assembly began as an administrative tidying up exercise. I suspect most people will agree that trying to understand what was trying to be done has turned into something approaching a nightmare. This was, unavoidably, complicated by the Assembly having three different clerks and two different general secretaries in eight months.
2. The resolution(s) came in several parts, some of which were connected, and some of which were not.
3. Difficulties immediately arose after the 2014 Assembly, because some connected parts were passed, and others were not. Some progress was made at the November 2014 Mission Council, but it is now clear that progress in completing the whole of the resolution is likely to be impossible, and some clarity that was hoped for is not yet there.
4. The parts of resolution 19 are now set out below in straightforward language, and a possible strategy for dealing with them is then outlined. It is open to Mission Council to choose a different strategy.
5. **Resolution 19A** proposed to remove the six additional representatives from the Synod of Scotland. This has not yet been passed by either Mission Council or General Assembly. The National Synods Task Group recommend that this be withdrawn.
6. **Resolution 19B(1)** is the second part of a tidying up exercise, listing the categories of members of General Assembly who need to be members of the United Reformed Church in one list at the beginning, rather than by each category. This has been passed by Mission Council, with the addition of the FURY representatives into the list of those who do not need to be members of the United Reformed Church. However, the Children's and Youth Work Committee's desire is for that to also apply to under-26 synod representatives.
7. **Resolution 19B(2)** will have the effect of only allowing a synod to have an additional representative to substitute for their moderator when their moderator is also an officer of Assembly. This has been passed by General Assembly.
8. **Resolution 19B(3)** was the first part of the tidying up exercise, moving the place where the requirement for representatives of theological colleges to be members of the United Reformed Church was stated. This has been passed by General Assembly.
9. **Resolution 19(B)(4)** was the balancing part of 19A, which proposed to add the former Chairmen of the Congregational Union of Scotland and the former presidents of the Scottish Congregational Church to the 'college' of former moderators. This was proposed to balance 19(A), because the 1987 Proposals for Unification made explicit that there was an element of *quid pro quo*, "the special representation of the Synod is covered by the additional of six persons...to enable the national life of the URC in Scotland to be present in the General Assembly, and in recognition that former Presidents of the Congregational Union are not to be included ex officio in the Assembly" (page 45). This has been passed by General Assembly. If 19A is to be withdrawn, it is not fair for 19(B)(4) to also remain, and it was never the intention for it to do so alone.
10. **Resolution 19(B)(5)** was the first part of the tidying up exercise, moving the place where the requirement for representatives of FURY to be members of the United Reformed Church was stated. This has been passed by General Assembly.

11. **Resolutions 19(C) and 19(D)** appointed the deputy general secretaries and deputy treasurer as members of General Assembly. This has been passed by General Assembly, and is not a constitutional change, so is now effective. It is included here for completeness, not because it impacts what we do.
12. **Resolution 19(E)**, as amended, made Assembly Appointed Ministers and former Moderators of General Assembly members of the synod in which their local church is situated. This was passed by General Assembly.
13. **Resolution 19(F)** defined the membership and attendance of Mission Council. This has been passed by General Assembly, and is not a constitutional change, so is now effective. It is included here for completeness, not because it impacts what we do.
14. In order to move forward, the following resolutions are proposed:
15. **1. Resolution 19(A) is withdrawn and resolution 19(B)(4) is not put.**
The effect of this will be to discontinue the process of making changes in respect of membership of General Assembly from the Synod of Scotland, but leaves open the option of new resolutions in the future without waiting two years.
16. **2. Resolutions 19 (B)(1) and 19(B)(3) and 19(B)(5) are not put.**
The effect of this will be to discontinue the process of administrative tidying up (helpful, but not essential at the moment), and not making permanent changes about church membership while the group concerned is not yet satisfied. By not putting the resolutions it leaves open the option of new resolutions in the future without waiting two years.
17. If resolution 2 is passed, resolution 3 will be proposed:
3. Mission Council instructs the Law and Polity Advisory Group, consulting the Children's and Youth Work Committee and the Faith and Order Committee, to bring recommendations about the appropriateness or otherwise of those who are not members of the United Reformed Church being voting members of the Councils of the United Reformed Church; and to report by March 2016.
Some work and thinking on this has already begun, and it may be possible to report sooner if the work is ready.
18. If resolutions 1 and 2 are passed, this leaves only resolutions 19(B)(2) [only allowing a synod to have an additional representative to substitute for their moderator when their moderator is also an officer of Assembly] and 19(E) [making Assembly Appointed ministers and former moderators of General Assembly members of the synod in which their local church is situated] remaining, which have both been passed by General Assembly in the first instance, and which are thought to be the less contentious parts of the resolution. If synods were able to decide upon these at their autumn meetings in 2015, then they could return to Mission Council in March 2016, and, if ratified, become effective in time for the 2016 General Assembly.
19. **4. Mission Councils rescinds its resolution of November 2014 to extend the consultation on Resolutions 19(B)(2) and 19(E) to 31 March 2016, and now revises that that date to 31 December 2015, with a view to making decisions on ratification or otherwise at its meeting in March 2016.**
20. Whatever is passed by Mission Council, resolution 5 will be moved:
5. Mission Council instructs the clerk to issue a definitive briefing on the status of this resolution to synod moderators and clerks as soon as possible.

Paper M4

Assembly Clerk

Presentation of Standing Orders

United Church 2015
Church 2015
Reformed Church 2015
Church 2015



Paper M4

Assembly Clerk Presentation of Standing Orders

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 instructs the clerk of General Assembly to re-number the Standing Orders and make any consequential changes in presentation, and to re-issue them after their being checked by the Assembly officers.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Tidying up presentation of document to make the contents easier to understand and use.
Main points	No changes will be made to the content.
Previous relevant documents	n/a
Consultation has taken place with...	Mission Council Advisory Group

Summary of Impact

Financial	n/a
External (e.g. ecumenical)	n/a

Presentation of Standing Orders

1. The current Standing Orders result from the amalgamation of several different documents, which means that the numbering system is muddled and over complicated.
2. The clerk currently receives more queries than are necessary because the document is presented in a way which makes it more difficult to understand than it needs to be.
3. Any review of decision-making methods is going to take some time, so it would be worth the effort of tidying the current document in the interim.
4. No changes would be made to the substance, simply to the presentation of the document.
5. It is proposed to move from a mixed systems of a variety of numbers and letters to a 'decimal' style numbering, e.g. 2(b)9a, could become 2.2.9.1. It may be necessary to retain letters when numbering bullet points.
6. The clerk hopes to re-insert a diagram, thanks to work done by the Revd Roy Lowes, but this is not promised in case the technical work involved exceeds what is a reasonable amount of time to spend on this.
7. The document would be checked by the Assembly officers before it is issued.

M4

United Reformed Church • Mission Council, May 2015

Paper N1

Human Sexuality Task Group

The Marriage of Same-Sex Couples

United Church 2015
Church 2015
Reformed Church 2015
Church 2015



Paper N1

Human Sexuality Task Group

The Marriage of Same-Sex Couples

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Elizabeth Caswell ecaswell@btinternet.com
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	<p>1. Mission Council resolves to commend to General Assembly Resolution X as set out within this paper.</p> <p>Then, if Resolution 1 above has been agreed ...</p> <p>2. Mission Council recalls General Assembly, to meet for one day on 27 June 2015 in Birmingham, to consider Resolution X.</p> <p>Resolution 3 has two parallel versions ...</p> <p>EITHER 3A.</p> <p>3A. Mission Council resolves that, should General Assembly support Resolution X, it will advise Assembly that the matter does not involve constitutional change and therefore need not be referred under the procedure in Section 3(1) of the Structure.</p> <p>OR 3B.</p> <p>3B. Mission Council resolves that, should General Assembly support Resolution X, it will advise Assembly to refer the matter under the procedure in Section 3(1) of the Structure, to the synods of the Church.</p> <p>Finally, if Resolution 3B has been preferred to 3A ...</p> <p>4. Mission Council resolves that, should General Assembly support Resolution X, it will advise Assembly to refer the matter under the procedure in Section 3(1) of the Structure, to the congregations of the Church, as well as to the synods.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	The URC and the marriage of same sex couples.
Main points	The task group invites Mission Council (i) to commend a resolution to General Assembly, (ii) to recall Assembly in June, to consider the resolution, and (iii) to ask Assembly to consider whether, if it passes the resolution, it ought to refer it by the process set out in Section 3(1) of the Structure of the URC.
Previous relevant documents	Record of General Assembly, Cardiff, 2014.
Consultation has taken place with...	Most of the congregations and all the synods of the URC.

Summary of Impact

Financial	An extra day's meeting of General Assembly will cost about £30K.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	A number of other churches are actively considering this issue.

The Marriage of Same-Sex Couples

1. In 2014 General Assembly agreed to consult our synods and local churches about same-sex marriage. We asked them whether 'local URC congregations who want to offer and host same-sex marriage services (should) be allowed by the Church to do so'. This question addresses specifically the situation of churches in England and Wales. Scots law does not require the registration of buildings for religious weddings.
2. All thirteen synods replied, as did a majority of the churches (858 out of 1472).
3. Of these congregations who replied, 63% voted in favour of the resolution, 34% voted against, and 3% of the fellowships were evenly divided.
4. Of the members who voted in local churches (roughly eighteen thousand people), about 62% voted in favour and 38% against.
5. All the synods were in favour. Of their 1100 members, 80% voted yes, and 20% no.
6. The FURY Advisory Board and East Midlands Youth were both unanimously in favour, and the majority of a group of Westminster College students were in favour.
7. In reporting on the consultation, the Task Group warmly thanks those who led and hosted training events for facilitators (Elizabeth Gray-King, Michael Jagessar, Neil Thorogood, members of St Paul's, Bayswater and staff of North Western Synod), the Council for World Mission (CWM) (who funded this training with a capacity development grant), and the dozens of synod facilitators who helped very many of our churches to discuss this matter. We are grateful too to staff in Church House who handled all the replies, and to Graham Campling, who undertook the numerical analysis with great clarity and speed.
8. There is, however, more to consultation than numbers, and many replies included thoughtful comment. We need to mention one emphatic objection to a couple of words in the *One plus One* booklet – the words '(particularly) African' on page 6. The Task Group believes it was right to mention that the subject of same-sex relations raises different sorts of responses in different nations and cultures, but apologises for linking this issue to a particular group of countries, in a way that is unfairly specific.
9. Most churches were glad to have been consulted; some would have preferred this to precede any Assembly discussion. Many churches that voted yes were clear that they do not expect to hold same-sex marriages in their buildings, but they do believe that local churches should make their own decisions in this matter. The URC's speed of action on this subject was criticised from both directions: 'Get on with it!' and 'Move more slowly.' Some of our members are very hurt at the thought that the URC might countenance same-sex marriage at all; others are pained that their churches cannot offer same-sex marriage services at the moment. And there were churches that spoke of growth through careful listening to one another, even amid respectful disagreement.
10. There are various fears abroad – that the legal protection in the Act of Parliament might one day be withdrawn from churches that do not wish to register their buildings; or that the URC may split; or, in some places, that local unity will be strained.
11. The largest number of comments concerned marriage. Many churches that voted 'yes' added the rider that they, or a number of their members, did not think a union between

people of the same gender could be marriage. Whatever civil law says, they believe that marriage is the union of a man and a woman. They wish to be welcoming and affirming but cannot understand why Civil Partnership is not enough.

12. Authority in the Church was a concern. If this measure goes through, will the Basis of Union have to be revised on the grounds that we will not be acting under the authority of the word of God or seeking the peace and unity of the Church? Several comments touched on whether or not this subject is an issue of doctrine. Some returns suggested that a General Assembly resolution should not be required; we should 'give churches more freedom within a federal congregational structure. Such a move might allow us to stay together with integrity and some measure of authentic unity.'
13. At least two synod meetings heard proposals along those lines: rather than talking of Assembly authorisation, the URC should simply recognise that local churches are the places for taking decisions on the registration of local buildings. A well-drafted proposal of this kind emerged in Wessex Synod, which also takes careful account of the necessary legal framework. The Task Group believes that such an approach can help the Church to live with integrity within its own diversity of opinion, and that it should be commended by Mission Council to General Assembly.

Resolution X for General Assembly:

- A. In keeping with the 2007 commitment on Human Sexuality, General Assembly does not consider it appropriate to express a single view on behalf of the whole United Reformed Church on the matter of Same Sex Marriage.
- B. General Assembly declares that the Church Meeting of each Local Church of the United Reformed Church in England and Wales is the relevant governing authority for the purpose of giving consent for the trustees of its building to seek the registration of that building for religious marriage ceremonies of same-sex couples, in accordance with the provisions of Section 26A(1) of the Marriage Act 1949 as amended by the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013.
- C. In the case of Local Ecumenical Partnerships, Union Churches, and United Churches, where the constitution makes no provision for a Church or Congregational Meeting (including a Special or Extraordinary General Meeting) the relevant governing authority of the United Reformed Church under Section 26A(1) of the Marriage Act 1949 as amended by the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 is the council which represents the widest gathering of members of that Church or Partnership. In case of doubt the council to act in this matter shall be jointly determined by the moderator and clerk of the synod on which that Church is represented.
- D. Noting that Mission Council has already recognised, on behalf of General Assembly, 'that if a future Assembly were to allow for ministers and members of the United Reformed Church to solemnise same-sex marriages under Scots Law, the Synod of Scotland would be the appropriate council of the URC to approach the Registrar General for Scotland', the General Assembly confirms that it now lies within the competence of the National Synod of Scotland to nominate under section 9(1A) of the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977 as amended by the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014 members of the United Reformed Church who have indicated their willingness in writing to the Synod to be approved celebrants of same sex marriage in Scotland.

- E. The General Assembly recalls that the trusts on which local Church buildings are commonly held empower the Church Meeting to direct in what ways such a building is or is not to be used for public worship and ancillary purposes.
- F. The General Assembly authorises the general secretary, the clerk, or any deputy general secretary to sign and furnish a copy of this resolution (or a relevant extract) in the name of the Assembly, whenever such a copy may be required by law.

14. The task group believes that this six-part resolution is as comprehensive as it can presently be, is coherent (and should therefore not be treated piecemeal), and is compliant with the law. We know of a few gaps, which we do not think we can address quickly. (a) The Channel Islands and the Isle of Man are not referred to. No legislation has yet been proposed, let alone enacted, in these places, and it is better to defer our response until legislation arrives. (b) We make no proposals about armed forces chapels in England and Wales. (c) Nor do we make any proposals about the marriage of people detained, e.g. prisoners, the housebound, and the terminally ill, in England and Wales.
15. The Task Group further believes that, by declining to express a single view on behalf of the whole Church, Assembly would sustain the spirit of the 2007 Commitment, which honours the Christian integrity and intention of members who take a variety of views about same-sex relations. The word 'declares' in part B of the resolution sets out a view on how and where we take decisions; a word like 'authorises' would draw attention to the particular decisions that we take. In this context, 'declares' appears less likely to be deeply divisive.
16. The Task Group therefore invites Mission Council to commend Resolution X to General Assembly, and this is the first of our resolutions at Mission Council:

Resolution 1. Mission Council resolves to commend to General Assembly Resolution X as set out within this paper.

17. Should Mission Council accept Resolution 1, the Task Group believes the Church should carry forward its provisional plans for an extra meeting of the 2014 Assembly. We believe this business is ready for consideration, and it could be properly discussed in the four hours that a day's meeting would allow. The consultation is complete, and Assembly should be invited to reflect on its results without long delay. Our second resolution to Mission Council (which will depend on Mission Council approving the first) is therefore as follows:

Resolution 2. Mission Council recalls General Assembly, to meet for one day on 27th June 2015 in Birmingham, to consider Resolution X.

18. A concern was raised at Cardiff that the marriage of same-sex couples would 'modify ... doctrinal formulations of the United Reformed Church'. Any Assembly resolution which would make this possible under our auspices would thus come within the terms of Clause 2(6)(A)(xi) of the Structure of the URC, and could not be enacted by one Assembly decision. An initial Assembly resolution would need to be referred to the Church under the process for 'Constitutional Amendments' outlined in Section 3(1) of the Structure, and, subject to the Church's response, brought back to Assembly for final ratification.
19. We sought help from the Faith and Order Committee and from the Law and Polity Advisory Group, and are grateful for their advice, which was posted on the Church website in November and December. The key passages from Faith and Order are as follows.

- 20.1 ‘... in the doctrinal formulations of the United Reformed Church, since her coming into being in 1972, there is no reference to marriage. The nearest the United Reformed Church comes to a position is in the service books ... but ... service books are not regarded as holding the doctrine of the church ...
- 20.2 ‘... marriage is an evolving human institution that flows from the church’s doctrine of humanity, but ... marriage is only one way of living in community ... it is not a doctrine as such, but derived from our doctrine. Therefore although permitting same sex marriage is a significant change to the church’s practice of ministry it is not a change to the United Reformed Church’s doctrine.’
21. The majority view of Law and Polity was that, while doctrinal statements in the URC’s predecessor churches do make affirmations about marriage, the statements that have formulated the doctrine of the URC(UK) or of the URC since 1972 have not done so. While marriage services are an important part of the Church’s practice, affirmations on marriage have not been a part of its common doctrinal commitment and witness.
22. If General Assembly accepts these two pieces of advice, and if it approves Resolution X, it may reckon that the matter does not involve a constitutional amendment, and that it need not use the referral procedure of Section 3(1) of the Structure. The Task Group believes, however, that Assembly should consider referring the matter. There are three reasons for this. (a) There are thoughtful and articulate voices in our Church that disagree with the advice set out above. (b) An Assembly discussion on what needs to be referred and why could therefore be complex and lengthy, and this might tangle Assembly unhelpfully. (c) Yet avoiding or curtailing such a discussion might open the Church to subsequent challenge, that we had taken an implicitly constitutional decision without following due process.
23. Further, the trustees of a local church building are expected to ‘permit the premises to be used for’ purposes that include ‘The public worship of God according to the principles and usages for the time being of the United Reformed Church ...’ (Schedule 1 to the URC Act 1972). It could be argued that the marriage of same-sex couples would change the ‘usages ... of the United Reformed Church’, and that this would in itself be a constitutional change. Use of the referral procedure would protect the Church, and perhaps local trustees too, from possible challenge on this ground.
- 24.1 For Assembly, agreeing Resolution X and deciding not to refer it would presume that the constitution [the doctrine and usage] of the URC as a whole is not at stake, and that discernment on this particular issue is properly assigned to local churches. Further, it is obvious that not referring would be quicker than referral.
- 24.2 Referring the matter under Section 3(1) procedure need not imply that it is definitely constitutional. But it would save Assembly discussing whether it is or not, and would protect any decision against challenge from people who think it is.
- 24.3 There is thus something to be said for each of those courses of action – referring and not referring. The Task Group believes that Mission Council should advise Assembly on this issue. Assembly will be free to accept or reject the advice, but it ought to be offered a considered steer. The Group therefore brings two parallel versions of Resolution 3, and if Mission Council supports our Resolution 1, we ask it to adopt one of these. Resolutions 3A and 3B are thus presented as EITHER-OR.

EITHER

Resolution 3A. Mission Council resolves that, should General Assembly support Resolution X, it will advise Assembly that the matter does not involve constitutional change and therefore need not be referred under the procedure in Section 3(1) of the Structure.

OR

Resolution 3B. Mission Council resolves that, should General Assembly support Resolution X, it will advise Assembly to refer the matter under the procedure in Section 3(1) of the Structure to the synods of the Church.

- 24.4 There is also a question of how widely to refer. The referral procedure, when used, always involves referral to synods. The Assembly may 'if it deems appropriate, in exceptional cases' also refer a matter to local churches. The case for excluding local churches from a referral is that church meetings have had enough of this issue for the moment. The case for including them is that this would remove any suggestion of their being by-passed by the procedure. The Task Group therefore offers Resolution 4, to test the mind of Mission Council on this question. This resolution need only be considered if Resolution 3B has been preferred to 3A.

Resolution 4. Mission Council resolves that, should General Assembly support Resolution X, it will advise Assembly to refer the matter under the procedure in Section 3(1) of the Structure to the congregations of the Church, as well as to the synods.

- 24.5 If a matter is referred and more than a third of the synods – five or more – vote 'that the proposal be not proceeded with', then it falls. If it is also referred to local churches, and more than a third of them – about 490 – vote against it, then it falls. In this context, silence from a synod or local church would be equivalent to assent.
25. The Task Group considered a great deal of material that dealt more fully with the issues in paras 20-24 above, and can share this with Mission Council on request.
26. Should Resolution X be passed for implementation by General Assembly (either without or after referral) a number of further matters will require prompt and careful handling:
- 26.1 Local churches may want guidance on how to register their buildings. The general secretary will ask Law and Polity to draft a flow-chart of steps to be taken and some model documentation to use.
- 26.2 Liturgical material will be needed, to ensure that any same-sex marriage services (a) reflect our Reformed traditions appropriately and (b) are legally secure. The general secretary will ask Law and Polity for advice on the second point.
- 26.3 Special support may be needed for any local church that is either acutely disquieted as a body about the Assembly decision, or deeply divided within itself. Because synods exercise care for local churches, they ought to be the first point of contact and advice. The general secretary will talk with the Moderators' meeting about whether additional help should be offered from the Church's central resources.
27. Conversely, should General Assembly not progress this matter along the sort of lines set out in Resolution X, there are likely to be some members and congregations – not the same group as mentioned above – who will be deeply disappointed, and who will need particular attention and support. Again synods will expect to lead on this, and it may also be right for the wider Church to offer help to and through the synods.

Paper O1

Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG)
Report

Church 2015
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Church Church 2015



Paper 01

Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG) Report

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Keith G. Webster kwebsterwms@btinternet.com
Action required	For information.
Draft resolution(s)	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Report providing an update on the recent work of HRAG.
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of Impact

Financial	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG) Report

Current membership of HRAG for information:

Keith Webster (convener),
Alastair Forsyth;
Bridget Fosten
Mike Gould,
Peter Pay,
Revd John Proctor, general secretary
Jane Baird, deputy general secretary (administration & resources)

We were pleased to welcome Bridget to the November 2014 meeting.

These people bring a wide range of skills in diverse aspects of Human Resources (HR).

HRAG was established in October 2012 until July 2015 with a remit to provide a unified reference point on HR matters for Mission Council (General Assembly)/Trust and Church House personnel.

A separate report regarding the future of HRAG is being presented to Mission Council.

Routine work report November 2014 – April 2015

1.1 The following job descriptions and posts have been reviewed:

Assembly Appointments

Crcw development worker – this has been operated as a job share, with two part-time appointments. Following the departure of one of the two ‘job sharers’ this has now become one full-time appointment. The job description was amended to reflect this fact and also take account of other recent changes.

Staff posts:

Senior graphic designer – amended to include web site responsibilities.
Assistant to graphic designer/printer & print estimator
Press and media officer
Data analyst & administrator, ministries
IT manager

1.2 **Policies and Procedures Review**

The review of the current set of HR policies and procedures which apply at Church House continues with a view to enhancing them as appropriate.

To date the following policies and procedures have been or are under review:

- Recruitment Policy
- Contract of Employment
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Flexible Working policy
- Redundancy Policy
- Working Time Guidelines

Appropriate training at Church House with regard to the policies and procedures is also being linked to the reviews.

Paper O2

Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG)
The future of HRAG

Church 2015
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Church Church 2015



Paper 02

Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG)

The future of HRAG

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Keith G. Webster kwebsterwms@btinternet.com
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	See end of paper.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Review of the role of HRAG and a recommendation that the group continue as an advisory group to Mission Council.
Main points	The background to the establishment of HRAG is summarised together with a review of its work since its establishment in 2012, proposals for the means of carrying out specific aspects of its future remit and hence updated Terms of Reference.
Previous relevant documents	The paper from the former Staffing Advisory Group presented to Mission Council in October 2012 recommending the establishment of HRAG.
Consultation has taken place with...	General Assembly Moderators.

Summary of Impact

Financial	None – other than a continuing commitment to committee expenses.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None.

The future of HRAG

Background

1. In November 2011 Mission Council agreed that the Staffing Advisory Group (SAG) would be responsible for proposing interim arrangements to cover the head of Human Resources post during the review of Church House management processes.

This requirement was in the context of the request by Mission Council through MCAG for the establishment of a group to review the overall Church House management processes and procedures with a particular emphasis on the respective roles in the central secretariat department. At that time the role of SAG was to review Assembly posts, noting that support and non-assembly staff were overseen by the Church House Management Group (CHMG).

2. As the review progressed it became clear that it would be good to have one group overseeing all the posts. Therefore SAG proposed that a Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG) be established combining the human resources elements of both SAG and CHMG for the following reasons:
 - Gain consistency of approach for the process of change brought about by the budgetary decisions for 2013 and through the review of the general secretariat
 - Provide a single group for HR staff to relate to
 - Provide one reference point on HR matters for Mission Council (General Assembly)/Trust and Church House personnel
 - Enable all staff to be regarded on a similar basis leading to a single staffing policy.
3. Since the draft terms of reference for HRAG combined aspects of the terms of reference of both SAG and CHMG, it was also proposed that SAG could become this new group with the addition of the HR specialists currently on CHMG.

Accordingly, in October 2012, Mission Council agreed: *“the establishment of a Human Resources Advisory Group until July 2015 and appointed the current Staffing Advisory Group as the interim Human Resources Advisory Group with the addition of those with human resources expertise currently serving on the Church House Management Group”*.

The fixed timescale was to cover the interim period as new structures were being put in place – and in the event the new structure was in place for General Assembly in July 2014.

4. The accountability of HRAG was to be as follows:
 - HRAG was to be accountable to Mission Council as the employer but could be called on to report to the Trust with regard to legal and reputational management issues
 - HRAG was given delegated authority from Mission Council in relation to all operational HR matters including the agreement of HR policies and procedures and will provide regular reports.
5. The membership was to comprise:
 - Convener (appointed by Mission Council or the Nominations Committee)
 - 4-6 members with HR and/or management experience including those with experience of accredited ministries in the church
 - Ex-officio general secretary
 - Member of HR staff.

6. The responsibilities were:
- a) Oversee and sign off all central staff employment policies and procedures; that is all staff employed at Church House (i.e. by or on behalf of the central church), whether based on or off site with the exception of synod moderators.
 - b) Monitor, review and approve staffing strategy – including grading, numbers, expertise, career development, remuneration policy (currently Remuneration Committee reports to Finance and policy is a CHMG matter).
 - c) Agree all central staff posts for appointment and renewal in accordance with the staffing strategy. Review and approve with operational people or with committee convenors as appropriate the job description and person specification for each post.
 - d) Terms and conditions of employment. The Group shall oversee the development of, approval and implementation of the terms and conditions of staff. These shall include taxation and benefits, housing policy and the provision of cars and training. Terms and conditions of Assembly-appointed staff who are ordained ministers shall come within the framework of the Plan for Partnership.
 - e) Review Lay Pensions policy – in conjunction with the Pensions Executive.
 - f) Oversight of training and development in management skills and the evaluation of outcomes
7. The current membership of HRAG, as at May 2015, is:
- Keith Webster (convener)
 Alastair Forsyth
 Bridget Fosten
 Mike Gould
 Peter Pay
 John Proctor (general secretary)
 Jane Baird (deputy general secretary [administration & resources]).

HRAG'S work since October 2012

8. There have been three strands in the work of HRAG:
- a) The **Review of the Church House Management** processes remitted in the first instance to SAG in November 2011 and subsequently taken on by HRAG. The work could not be undertaken in isolation and hence across 2013 and 2014 HRAG held a considerable number of meetings both on its own and with members of staff at Church House. The output from these meetings enabled interim reports to be presented to Mission Council in March 2012 and October 2012, the report setting out the full recommendations being presented to Mission Council in May 2013 with a follow on report in November 2013. The latter report included the job descriptions for the general secretary and the three deputy general secretary (DGS) posts. Subsequently HRAG provided support to the recruitment processes for the DGS posts.
 - b) **Interim Human Resources arrangements**
 From November 2011 SAG kept a 'watching brief' on HR, supporting the HR team as necessary, and this role continued following the establishment of HRAG. One of the objectives was to facilitate the appointment of a new HR manager. In the event

that was not possible and so an alternative approach was adopted in that an interim HR manager was appointed effective from May 2013.

c) **Routine work**

This has been quite varied and did not only comprise the review of Assembly Appointed posts and other staff posts – in fact 26 job descriptions (14 Assembly Appointed posts and 12 other staff posts) have been reviewed during the current life of HRAG.

Other work has included:

- Input to the review of the schedule of Assembly Appointed posts – with particular reference to the issue of religious affiliation and the implications for Genuine Occupational Requirement (GOR) in these posts.
- Working with the then Youth and Childrens Work department in its restructuring and the establishment of the new staff posts.
- Supporting the initiation of the review of the employment policies.
- Reviewing the work undertaken by the deputy general secretary, the Revd Richard Mortimer, and recommending the short term appointment of an interim assistant general secretary to cover some of the work, mainly line management responsibilities, and arranging interim cover for other aspects of the work of the DGS.

Having noted the above, HRAG also recognises that there are areas within its original remit which have not been addressed, in part because the major part of its time and activity was the review of the general secretariat.

Should HRAG continue beyond July 2015?

9. HRAG, as a sub-committee/advisory group of Mission Council, has been able to undertake work that would otherwise have had to go to Mission Council, subsequently presenting its recommendations to Mission Council.
10. The **benefits** of having a group such as HRAG can be summarised as follows:
 - Act on behalf of and report to Mission Council, having the delegated authority from Mission Council, hence contributing to a more efficient use of time at those meetings
 - Can take an overview at the strategic/policy level, including ensuring that the organisation structures are efficient and effective and accord with the requirements of General Assembly and Mission Council
 - Act as a unified reference point for all HR matters at Church House
 - Is not involved in operational issues and so can maintain a level of independence
 - In reviewing posts and associated job descriptions and person specifications, is in a position to question and provide input to organisation structures and the development of job requirements
 - Provide an independent and supportive resource to HR questioning and acting as a 'prompt' as appropriate, and helping to ensure consistency in approach, through having a membership comprising experienced HR people.
11. The **disadvantages** of such a group can be seen as:
 - Diminishing the role of HR or being put in the position of being an alternative source of advice with the opportunity to 'to play both ends against the middle'
 - An extra layer of bureaucracy, possibly slowing down decision making or acting as a block on action
 - Not necessarily being in touch with the work of the departments or of Church House in general
 - Becoming too powerful in terms of the perceived influence it might wield.

Conclusion

12. We believe that in comparing the benefits and disadvantages the balance is in favour of the benefits and hence that HRAG can make a positive contribution to the overall operation of Church House and indirectly to the wider URC through ensuring the provision of a unified approach to HR.

Furthermore, since HRAG has the delegated authority from Mission Council it means that the group can undertake specialised, detailed work with regard to HR matters, with any appropriate recommendations or resolutions being taken to Mission Council for decision. This method of working helps to ensure the optimum use of Mission Council's time when considering such matters.

It is clear also that in the manner in which it carries out its remit, HRAG must work to ensure that any perceived disadvantages are minimised, if not eliminated.

13. We recognise that a major part of the work of HRAG since its establishment in November 2012 has been the review of the general secretariat. At the same time HRAG has been able to provide a significant input into a range of other HR activities as noted above.

In undertaking this work HRAG has also become very aware of the need to distinguish between:

- HR policy/strategy issues – the prime concern of HRAG
- Operational HR – the day to day work of the HR department
- Line management issues – the responsibility of the individual line managers within the framework of advice and guidance as appropriate from HR.

The danger of blurring the boundaries between these three areas became apparent during the period immediately following the departure of the head of HR and prior to the appointment of an interim HR manager when SAG and subsequently HRAG had a more 'hands on' role.

14. We also recognised that if Mission Council agrees to the continuation of HRAG then, in the light of experience since November 2012 and the new structure, new terms of reference will be required and a proposed draft is contained in Appendix A to this report.

There will therefore be some changes in the way of working, in particular with regard to the review of posts and this matter is currently under review as set out below.

15. The relationship of HRAG with the relevant deputy general secretaries (DGSs) is of significance in relation to the review of Assembly Appointed posts. HRAG's role could become secondary with regard to making recommendations for the continuation of posts since the new general secretariat could refer such matters direct to Mission Council and General Assembly within the framework of the departmental plans and the overall strategy. In order to support, as necessary, the role of the DGSs in this area we believe it would be appropriate for the review work to continue to be undertaken by HRAG which would then provide the necessary information and make the appropriate recommendation to the relevant DGS.
16. There is a further issue concerning the review of posts and the associated job descriptions. Historically, dating back to the days of SAG and fixed term appointments for all Assembly Appointed posts, such posts were reviewed every five years to match the duration of the appointment, whether the post holder was ordained or lay. Employment legislation however changed and so for lay staff any appointment for longer than four years automatically is considered to be open ended and the "fixed term" approach has ceased.

17. An additional benefit of the fixed term reviews was that it provided an opportunity, on a regular basis, for posts to be reviewed in the light of the current overall requirements of General Assembly and so confirm the continuing need for that post. It should be added that at no time has a decision been made to discontinue a post as a consequence of the outcome of such a review.
18. The decision to recommend continuation of a post was made based on a proposal from the relevant committee. Whilst HRAG has been able to challenge role content and certain aspects of the documentation, and even to query aspects of the requirement, it has also been very difficult for the group to deny the continuation of a post when the relevant committee has identified an ongoing requirement for the role and there is a budget for it, and in practice continuation has always been recommended.

Hence the future role of HRAG in the '*post review and recommendation/approval process*' can be seen as ambiguous, although clearly there has to be an effective way of balancing the need for a post and its affordability.

In the light of the new structure the role content and responsibilities should be reviewed annually within the particular department as part of the annual appraisal and the question of affordability should be done annually as part of the departmental budget submission.

There is also one further opportunity to review the scope of and the need for a post, and that is when an individual, whether lay or ordained, leaves a post, whether it is permanent or fixed term, but this should be seen as part of an ongoing process rather than a huge exercise.

19. Two alternative approaches to HRAG acting on behalf of Mission Council in the review of job descriptions of Assembly Appointed posts are therefore under consideration in order to determine the optimum approach for the future:
- a) Review in accordance with a fixed timetable, confirming or otherwise the job description and associated person specification based on the assumption that there is a continuing need for that post in that it meets the overall requirements of the department and the denomination.
- or
- b) Review the job description and associated person specification at the request of a particular department or the general secretariat or Mission Council in order to ensure the specific requirements and work programme for that department, within the overall requirements of the denomination, can be met.

Following through the implications of the statement in para 18 above, option b) would be the favoured approach, noting that in adopting either approach HRAG is in effect acting as an internal consultant.

20. The job descriptions for other senior posts that are not Assembly Appointments will also not be subject to 'timed' reviews and so will only be reviewed in accordance with one or more of the following conditions:
- major change(s) to the job
 - potential for grade change
 - re-structuring of the department or section.

21. HRAG also must work closely with the Remuneration Committee and it is noted in this regard that the DGS (admin & resources) is a member of both committees.
22. HRAG can also provide an input to the work of the Pensions Executive in respect of what can be classified as the “terms and conditions” aspects of lay staff pension provision.

Draft Resolutions

1. **Mission Council agrees to the continuation of the HR Advisory Group, effective from July 2015, as an advisory group to Mission Council with the current membership.**
2. **Mission Council agrees that the terms of reference set out in Appendix A of this report shall replace the terms of reference of HR Advisory Group previously agreed by Mission Council in October 2012.**
3. **Mission Council agrees that the HR Advisory Group henceforth consist of:**
 - a) **A Convener appointed by Mission Council or General Assembly, upon the recommendation of the Nominations Committee, for a renewable term of four years; the current convener to serve until 31 July 2017;**
 - b) **4-6 members with HR and/or management experience, including those with experience of accredited ministries in the Church to serve for a term of four years, the current members to continue to serve;**
 - c) **The deputy general secretary (admin & resources);**
 - d) **The general secretary will be an ex-officio member of the Group;**
 - e) **A member of the HR team – to take notes and deputise for the DGS (A&R) if required.**

Appendix A

United Reformed Church Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG) Constitution, Proceedings and Terms of Reference (ToR)

1. Constitution and Quorum

- 1.1 The purpose of the Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG) is to provide a unified reference point on HR matters for Mission Council/General Assembly/URC Trust and Church House personnel.
 - 1.2 The HRAG will be accountable to Mission Council (as the employer) but may be called upon to report to the URC Trust with regard to legal and reputational management issues.
 - 1.3 The HRAG will have delegated authority from Mission Council in relation to all operational HR matters, including the agreement of HR policies and procedures, and will provide regular reports to Mission Council.
 - 1.4 HRAG will consist of:
 - a) a convener (appointed by Mission Council or General Assembly, upon the recommendation of the Nominations Committee);
 - b) 4-6 members with HR and/or management experience, including those with experience of accredited ministries in the Church;
 - c) the deputy general secretary (admin & resources);
 - d) the general secretary will be an ex-officio member of the Group and;
 - e) a member of the HR Team – to take notes and deputise for the DGS (A&R) if required.
 - 1.5 The HRAG may invite other members of staff (e.g. line managers) and committee conveners to attend meetings for specific issues if they feel it appropriate to do so.
 - 1.6 The Nominations Committee will review (but not necessarily revise) Group membership and convenership at least every four years (see also paragraph 5.1).
 - 1.7 The quorum for meetings of the Group shall be four members.
 - 1.8 The HRAG will work closely with the Remuneration Committee to ensure that there is consistency in the work of the two groups. In carrying out its remit, the HRAG will also be mindful of the work and responsibilities of the Church House Management Group.
- ### 2. Chairing
- 2.1 The committee will be chaired by a convener appointed by Mission Council; the committee may choose to appoint a vice-chair from amongst its members.

3. Meetings

- 3.1 The HRAG will meet at least three times per annum and on such other occasions, as they deem necessary.
- 3.2 Outside of meetings, and where urgent need demands it, the HRAG will have authority to make decisions by email circulation of all relevant papers.
- 3.3 The DGS (A&R) will arrange for a member of the HR team to act as clerk to the HRAG (save where their personal terms and conditions of employment are under consideration, in which event the DGS (A&R) will clerk that part of the meeting).
- 3.4 All reports shall be submitted to the HRAG sufficiently in advance of meetings to allow for their proper consideration.

4. Terms of Reference

- 4.1 The role of the HRAG is to:
- a) Oversee, and sign off, all Assembly Appointed and central staff employment policies and procedures – that is all staff employed at Church House (i.e. by, or on behalf of, the central Church), whether based on or off site (with the exception of synod moderators;
 - b) Advise the Mission Council of its responsibilities towards the staff as an employer in the context of legislative requirements;
 - c) Monitor, review and approve staffing strategy – including staffing establishment, grading or re-grading of posts, expertise, career development and succession planning;
 - d) Review and approve the job descriptions and associated person specifications for Assembly Appointed and central staff posts (with the exception of synod moderators) with input from operational staff or committee conveners, as required);
 - e) In conjunction with the Remuneration Committee, review remuneration policy and other aspects of compensation and benefits;
(Note: The terms and conditions of Assembly-appointed staff who are ordained ministers shall come within the framework of the Plan for Partnership.)
 - f) Oversee the development, approval and implementation of any changes to the terms and conditions of staff, including: benefits, housing policy and the provision of cars and training;
(Note: The Terms & Conditions of Assembly-Appointed staff who are ordained ministers shall come within the framework of the Plan for Partnership.)
 - g) In conjunction with the Pensions Executive, monitor and comment on the Lay Staff Pensions Policy;
 - h) Have oversight of the training and development policy for all Church House staff (particularly those in managerial positions) and monitor its effectiveness.
- 4.2 The HRAG will structure their work so as to ensure that they address all of their remit on a timely basis and can, where necessary, advise Mission Council and/or the URC Trust accordingly.
- 4.3 The HRAG shall also have the power to seek other external professional advice if they deem it necessary with reference to the general secretary as budget holder.
- 5. Review of Constitution and Terms of Reference**
- 5.1 These Terms of Reference will be reviewed by both the HRAG and Mission Council at least once every four years.

Paper R1

Safeguarding Advisory Group
Report on current work

Church 2015
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Church 2015



Paper R1

Safeguarding Advisory Group

Report on current work

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Before Mission Council: John Proctor john.proctor@urc.org.uk After Mission Council: Richard Church richard.church@urc.org.uk
Action required	Take note.
Draft resolution(s)	None.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To report on the work of the group.
Main points	<p>a) We expect to publish, during May, an up-to-date resource for the safeguarding of children and young people. This will need to be complemented with other material.</p> <p>b) We plan to use a new agency for the provision of various safeguarding services to the URC.</p> <p>c) Our joint safeguarding officer appointment with the Baptist Union of GB will end later this year.</p>
Previous relevant documents	None.
Consultation has taken place with...	Baptist Union of GB.

Summary of Impact

Financial	<p>a) Publication costs.</p> <p>b) Saving on the cost of safeguarding services.</p> <p>c) Extra staff costs, if we increase the scoping of our own post.</p>
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Our credibility in the current climate of opinion and awareness depends on dealing properly with safeguarding matters.

Safeguarding: current work

1. In 2004 the URC set up a Safeguarding Reference Group (now the Safeguarding Advisory Group [SAG]), to support and anchor the work of Assembly staff in safeguarding, and to promote good and careful practice in this important area. The group, which is chaired by the deputy general secretary (discipleship), includes representatives from ministries, education and learning and children's and youth work. The group reports to Mission Council through the Mission Council advisory group.
2. The group has worked hard in the last year, in an area that is always sensitive and at a time of intense public concern. The report ahead deals with several matters that are moving rapidly forward through a period of development and change.
3. The URC has been working for a long time on the fourth edition of our *Good Practice* resource (GP4), and reporting on this requires to be done in three parts:
 - 3.1 We expect to publish the comprehensive version of our material on children and young people during May, initially on the URC website with print copies to follow.
 - 3.2 We shall then need a condensed version of the above resource for wide use among local church volunteers. A writing group is already actively under way with this.
 - 3.3 A large additional chapter will also be needed to address the concerns and well-being of vulnerable adults, a group on which increasing emphasis is presently being placed. This writing is clearly in view, but not yet in hand.
- 4.1 A good deal of our safeguarding work is serviced on a contract basis by the Churches' Agency for Safeguarding (CAS). They process a large number of Disclosure and Barring Service (England and Wales)/Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) (DBS/PVG) clearances, offer training events, and give telephone advice to local churches. As a founding member of CAS, we also nominate a trustee to its board, currently our safeguarding officer, Amy Slennett. However, our needs have evolved, the SAG has been concerned about whether CAS gives us all the support we require, and a decision was taken in 2014 to seek tenders for our needs in the three years ahead.
 - 4.2 Our contract with CAS requires a year's notice, and we gave this in August 2014. When we then went to tender for the three years ahead, we received five tenders in all, shortlisted four, and worked jointly with the Baptist Union of GB in considering the four potential providers.
 - 4.3 Although CAS was one of the organisations that submitted a tender, members of the panel from both denominations were most favourably impressed with another bidder, with whom we are now entering more detailed conversation, in the hope of moving towards a formal contract. This would begin in September 2015. Firmer news may be available by the time Mission Council meets.
4. Our safeguarding officer, Amy Slennett, has worked for us and the Baptist Union of GB on a 50:50 basis for almost two years. This arrangement has brought some strains, as the two denominations' needs differ in more ways than were apparent at the start. However, the Baptists, who have recently completed the triage stage of their historic review, have now let us know that a 50% post will no longer meet their needs. The sharing arrangement will therefore come to an end in September 2015. With that in mind, and with a possible historic review ahead, we are ourselves actively considering whether we need to expand our present 50% scoping of this work.

Paper R2

Safeguarding Advisory Group
Historic Review

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Paper R2

Safeguarding Advisory Group Historic Review

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	<p>Before Mission Council: John Proctor john.proctor@urc.org.uk</p> <p>After Mission Council: Richard Church richard.church@urc.org.uk</p>
Action required	Outline approval, according to the resolution below.
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council directs the General Secretariat to set in hand a safeguarding review, along the lines described in the report, and to report back to every meeting of Mission Council until further notice.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To outline a way by which the URC can begin to review its historic safeguarding record, and to set this task in hand.
Main points	Review will be necessary, and must be methodical. Both synods and the central URC office hold significant quantities of material. One way to begin this task is by checking ministerial files.
Previous relevant documents	None.
Consultation has taken place with...	Ecumenical partners.

Summary of Impact

Financial	An initial triage will involve much time, but this will mainly come from existing staff and volunteers. Subsequent costs will depend on what we find in the triage.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	A number of other denominations are ahead of us. We are seeking to learn from their experience.

Historic Safeguarding Review

1. In 2004 the URC set up a Safeguarding Reference Group (now the Safeguarding Advisory Group [SAG]), which seeks to support and anchor the work of Assembly staff in safeguarding, and to promote good and careful practice in this important area. The group, which is chaired by the deputy general secretary (discipleship), includes representatives from Ministries, Education and Learning and Children's and Youth Work. The group normally reports to Mission Council through the Mission Council Advisory Group, but on this occasion has asked to bring business forward directly.
2. Standards in safeguarding are getting steadily more rigorous, and many institutions are concerned to review past decisions, to see if they match today's needs. A number of other churches have already embarked on a thorough review of historic files. There are several reasons we might want to do something similar:
 - 2.1 Duty of care. We want to ensure that the people we serve are treated safely, and that our denomination can witness with integrity. It therefore matters that those who serve in our name are known to be fit and proper people.
 - 2.2 Reputation. We wish to make clear to our people and the public that we take this issue seriously and will make responsible efforts to review our record.
 - 2.3 Public Inquiry. The forthcoming independent inquiry into child sexual abuse, initiated by the home secretary and convened by Justice Lowell Goddard, will be concerned with the work of a large number of statutory and non-statutory bodies. Churches are likely to be included, and the inquiry may ask to see evidence of our dealing with safeguarding matters across the years. It would be better to review the records for ourselves, so that we know what we have to discuss and disclose.
 - 2.4 Action. We may have a duty to consider what appropriate steps we ought yet to take in dealing with people who have been involved in difficult past events.
 - 2.5 Learning. We may need to review the procedures and training we offer and expect within our common life as a Church.
3. The work of other denominations shows that there are several ways of reviewing safeguarding work, and that material and issues may appear from several quarters. Our own management of church life, with a wide network of synods and local local churches, is quite diffuse. Much material may be held in synod offices, or local churches, and what is outlined below may be only a first step. Further, we are not yet ready to begin this work.
4. The present paper therefore asks for initial and outline approval, for work that ought not to proceed without the endorsement of a central council of the Church, but that the Church may want to start before Mission Council meets in November.
5. If we are to start promptly and work systematically, and to do so as far as possible within existing resources, the SAG recommends that our review start with the files of the Church's ministers (of Word and Sacraments and CRCWs). Ministerial accreditation reaches across the denomination; it is not narrowly local. A minister's role is intentionally representative, and their public profile is often high.
6. Ministerial files are normally held by synods. When a minister moves, the file follows to the new synod; when a minister dies, it comes to Church House. There are other records in Church House (payroll, pension, discipline, media), but generally the bulk of a minister's pastoral record will be in the office of the synod where the minister serves or lives. There are some loose ends and exceptions; but that is the usual rule.

7. We should like synods to appoint appropriate volunteers to triage these files. Triage means reading through to decide whether there is anything that needs a closer look. That is all. So triage will require people of experience, trust and objectivity, but they need not have a formal safeguarding qualification. It may be important for volunteers to have some detachment from the life of the synod and its ministers – and this might be easier to sustain if help were sought from another denomination or adjacent synod.
8. What criteria are we to use for the triage? At time of writing, detailed criteria are not yet available. But in general we mean to look for concerns that, if they arose now, would be brought to the attention of the LADO (local authority designated officer); anything we would not send to the LADO should not trouble us.
9. Mission Council will wish the detailed criteria to be clear and robust. We therefore propose that these would need to be 'signed off' by the convener of the safeguarding advisory group and the safeguarding officer, by the convener and secretary of the Ministries Committee (which is responsible for the integrity of the Church's ministry), and by our legal adviser. As mentioned above, 'sign off' must depend on appropriate professional endorsement of our plans, and our insurers too may wish to comment on the steps we propose to take. When criteria are ready, we shall supply these to synods, so that they can be followed consistently around the Church as a whole.
10. Staff in Church House will be responsible for the triage of files held there (including those mentioned in para 6 above), following the agreed criteria.
11. Timing. We shall aim to get through the triage of synod-held ministerial files – once we are ready to start – within a few months.
12. Historical horizon. We do not expect to audit files of ministers who died or left the ministry before 1972. It may not be right for us to see files of ministers who served in feeder churches but chose not to enter the URC. But we should monitor the URC's oversight of those who have been on its ministerial roll since 1972. Whether we can go into the ministerial files of those who came into the URC from other churches, we do not yet know; in principle we would wish to look at this material; in practice we may not always be able to get it. We must be as thorough as we reasonably can, and log precisely what we have and have not been able to see.
13. After triage we shall wish to consider with care those files that are picked out, and we shall need qualified staff to do this. Until we see how much there is, we cannot know whether present staff will be able to cover the task. And indeed a high level of pastoral and legal sensitivity will be required, should any of the cases need to be taken further.
14. Our legal adviser reminds us of the need for proper caution around data that was supplied confidentially or privately (see Section 7 of the Data Protection Act, 1998).
15. There will be a cost in doing this work – and it will not all be financial. We may turn up unpleasant truths, which lead to difficult decisions, and our trust in one another may come under strain. Several things will help to keep these difficulties in proportion: (i) proper preparation – not starting until we have clear rubrics, methods and criteria, then following these with care; (ii) due confidentiality, allied to clear lines of report and disclosure; (iii) the conviction that this task matters; (iv) the knowledge that when it is done we shall be breathing cleaner air. Alongside and within all of that, we must surround with prayer the task and the people we ask to do it. Vigilance, accuracy, honesty and wisdom will be vital, as will the grace of God, on which we can depend.

Paper S1

Medium Term Strategy Group
The Role of Synod Clerk

Church 2015
United
Church **Reformed**
Church Church 2015



Paper S1

Medium Term Strategy Group

The Role of Synod Clerk

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	John Ellis john.ellis@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Mission Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) notes the wide range of tasks for which synod clerks are responsible; b) thanks those who fulfil these tasks with dedication within our various synod structures; and c) agrees that the Medium Term Strategy Group does not need to promote any further work on a standard role description for a synod clerk.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To explain the work done by synod clerks and to demonstrate that a standard role description is not necessary.
Main points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The specific tasks undertaken by synod clerks vary enormously from one synod to another. • A checklist of tasks that needs to be done in each synod is provided and is potentially a useful tool. • Given the variety in who in practice undertakes which tasks, attempting to construct a standard role description for a synod clerk is not a worthwhile task.
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council Paper S1 of March 2014 and Minute 14/03(1).
Consultation has taken place with...	Synod clerks.

Summary of Impact

Financial	None.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None.

The Role of Synod Clerk

Background

1. One of the outstanding issues Mission Council remitted in October 2012 to the Medium Term Strategy Group (MTSG) was whether the Church would benefit if a standard or model role description for a synod clerk was produced.
2. The initial review of this by MTSG, in the light of the extensive work the Group had done on the role of synod moderator, was that a role description for synod clerks were best done in the individual synods. This view was reported to the March 2014 meeting of Mission Council.
3. Mission Council was not persuaded and asked for MTSG to oversee a more detailed piece of work on this issue.

What do synod clerks really do?

4. MTSG worked with the existing synod clerks to clarify what tasks in practice the 13 of them currently undertake. The clerks appointed a sub-group led by Melanie Campbell, the Northern Synod clerk, to draw together their thoughts.
5. Initially the clear objective was to respond to Mission Council's request to produce a standard role description. However, the more work was done the more evident it became to both the clerks and MTSG that the very widely different circumstances in which the different clerks work would make this either too broad brush to be useful or massively complicated if it tried to accommodate necessary differences between synods.
6. MTSG therefore agreed with the clerks that they would prepare a summary of what the different clerks do. In the short term this would be useful to Mission Council to see the variety of work involved. In the longer term this could be useful checklist of tasks that need to be done by someone in each synod, even though not necessarily by the clerk. This summary is attached as an Appendix.

The Way Forward

7. MTSG invites Mission Council to note the long and varied list of tasks that are undertaken – sometimes by our synod clerks and sometimes by others – in each synod in their 13 different patterns of working.
8. MTSG invites Mission Council to note that there is no desire amongst the current synod clerks for a standard role description.
9. MTSG invites Mission Council to discharge the MTSG from pursuing this part of its brief further.

Appendix

A description of the tasks undertaken by synod clerks

Introduction

1. Following an analysis of synod clerk job descriptions, and additional information from synod clerks, it can be concluded that the role, scope and level at which each clerk works, varies enormously.
2. A total of 11 synod clerk job descriptions were analysed, of the remaining two, one clerk did not have a job description, and the other was not available.

Findings – general observations, terms and conditions, and scope of role

3. There are substantial differences in terms and conditions, working hours and arrangements; some are salaried, and some are volunteers, some work up to four days a week, and others far less. Given these differences, it follows that there will be variations in the degree, to which the clerk is responsible for the day-to-day life of the synod. The composition of the synod clerk role is influenced by the configuration and capacity within the wider synod team, and not least the way in which moderators prefer to use their time and skills.
4. It is a fact that tasks addressed by clerks in some synods, are not being attended to elsewhere. This can be explained by practicalities such as the support available from other synod staff and the numbers of hours worked. Additionally there are wide variations in the scope of the synod clerk role. Some have a relatively narrow, *administrative* focus, concentrating upon record keeping, maintaining minutes, co-ordinating and consulting with committees and ensuring papers are distributed correctly. Others are weighted towards '*operational*' practical matters. These will include some problem solving, and generally ensuring that people and tasks across the synod are organised. There are some clerks who have a more *strategic* role, which can encompass all aspects of synod life, providing leadership and guidance.
5. These divergent emphases are used below to cluster similar task descriptions found in the job descriptions. The headings *administrative*, *operational* and *strategic* are used to distinguish between the types of tasks, for ease of reference only.

Administrative Tasks

6. All synod clerks are responsible for **synod meetings**:
 - a) Organising synod meetings, planning agendas, Books of Reports/papers, and attending to any practical arrangements required for the meetings. These tasks can involve considerable amounts of consultation with committees.
 - b) Some of these events are residential and therefore will require considerably more time, than those lasting a day.
 - c) Organising the synod includes ensuring that matters referred from General Assembly/Mission Council are considered as needed, and subsequent actions followed up.
 - d) Synod clerks are also responsible for ensuring synod minutes are taken and that news articles are available following the meeting. Some are assisted by office staff in these tasks, whilst others have little or no support.

7. All synod clerks are responsible for synod involvement in **General Assembly/Mission Council**.
 - a) Tasks include making arrangements for synod representatives to attend Mission Council and General Assembly and for any synod resolutions to be considered.
 - b) Twelve synod clerks are required to attend Mission Council and all are required to attend General Assembly.

8. All synod clerks are required to participate in the **synod clerk networks**.

9. All synod clerks are required to attend **synod committee meetings**.
 - a) Involvement ranges from being ex-officio members, to full voting members, in some or all meetings of the synod. Time commitments and levels of responsibility therefore differ.
 - b) Some synod clerks are responsible for secretariat duties for meetings, whilst others will ensure these tasks are undertaken by other office colleagues. See (15) below.

Operational Tasks

10. **Administration and management**
 - a) Most synod clerks have responsibility for the administration of the synod. This varies in extent and depth; some are responsible for providing administrative capacity themselves, whilst others have full **line-management responsibility** for some or all office staff and their activities.
 - b) Some synod clerks have office **budget** responsibilities.
 - c) Some synod clerks have responsibility for undertaking **risk assessments**.
 - d) Some synod clerks are responsible for **planning**.

11. **Synod Business**
 - a) A number of synod clerks are responsible for **planning and organising synod activities**, chairing working parties, facilitating and enabling short term tasks.
 - b) In terms of regular synod business, some clerks job descriptions specify a requirement to ensure that matters referred to synod by wider church councils, are attended to appropriately. However in practice, this falls to all synod clerks, who will co-ordinate or oversee this element of synod work.

- c) One synod clerk is responsible for maintenance of the **procedures book**, ensuring the implementation of synod policies. This includes statutory requirements such as Health and Safety and Equal Opportunities. In practice other Synod clerks are also involved in ensuring statutory duties are complied with, although to varying extents.
- d) Some synod clerks are responsible for the preparation and distribution of the **Synod Year Book**, and that statistical and other information is sent to Church House as needed. This task is also undertaken by other clerks, although it is not specified in their job descriptions, whilst in other synods this may be the responsibility of office staff.

12. Human Resources

- a) Most synod clerks are responsible for the review and **appointment arrangements for synod moderators**.
- b) Most synod clerks are **responsible for recruitment** of office and synod paid staff, and have line management responsibilities including **staff appraisals and reviews**.
- c) Some synod clerks are required to participate in disciplinary processes.

13. Synod Executives

- a) Most synod clerks have responsibility for preparing agendas for Synod Executive meetings in consultation with moderators. Some are responsible for ensuring that actions agreed, are followed up and implemented. Whilst others are responsible for shaping the programme of work which is followed by the Executive (see below).
- b) Some synod clerks are responsible for arranging the secretariat duties for the Executive meetings, whilst others are required to undertake the administration themselves. Some receive office support to do this, whilst others have little support.

14. Communications

- a) Two synod clerks have responsibility for **communications planning**, and one for effective working of **communications systems**.
- b) Others are required to keep **websites** up to date, maintain websites, and edit the content of them.
- c) One synod clerk is required to maintain good links with area committees and their officers, local churches and others to enable **effective communication between committees and the churches**. In practice this task falls to all synod clerks, although it is not clearly specified in all job descriptions.
- d) One synod clerk also holds responsibility for the confidentiality of information. However in practice others are also required to attend to **data protection** issues, although this is not specified in their job descriptions.
- e) One synod clerk is specifically required to offer advice and guidance upon the correct response to incoming mail, particularly where there is no procedure in place.

15. Synod Committees

- a) All synod clerks are required to **chair committees** such as Nominations and to ensure secretariat duties are fulfilled for all committees, if not by them, then by other office staff.

- b) One synod clerk is required to represent the synod in the **annual review** of an RCL and make reports to other stakeholders.

16. Synod Trusts

- a) Most synod clerks are expected to be **appointed trustees**, with two required to be directors of Trusts and others are **authorised signatories**.
- b) Some synod clerks have line management responsibility for the Trust officers.

17. Wider Church Activity

- a) Most synod clerks are required to **represent the synod** in other wider church committees, or special projects.

18. Ecumenical Activity

- a) Some synod clerks are required to **represent the synod/URC at ecumenical events or regional/national ecumenical bodies**.
- b) Others are responsible for **providing advice on ecumenical matters** and being responsible for giving or securing advice on constitutions and any other related matters.

19. Specialist Advice

- a) Most clerks are responsible for **providing specialist advice** upon the constitution, manual, General Assembly decisions and similar guidance for life of the churches including URC charity, policy and governance regulations.
- b) One synod clerk is required to be the person who **secures specialist legal or employment advice**. In practice other synod clerks are also responsible for ensuring specialist advice is obtained as necessary, although it does not feature in their job descriptions.
- c) At least one synod clerk is involved in checking Terms of Settlement.

Strategic Tasks

20. Strategic Oversight

- a) At strategic level, most synod clerks are required to be the **senior lay officer** of the synod, keeping the moderator up to speed with any surfacing issues developing in committees or elsewhere. Synod clerks are also informed and consulted by the moderator when matters of serious concern exist.
- b) Their responsibilities include convening meetings as needed, monitoring the work of the synod, and that the committees, paid staff and other synod organisations, are working collaboratively and coherently towards synod priorities.
- c) One synod clerk is responsible for **devising strategy** in collaboration with synod and the moderator and **advocating** on behalf of the Executive for the work of the synod and its committees.
- d) One synod clerk is tasked with reviewing the synod **structures and processes**, whilst another is required to supervise the **constitutional structure** of the synod.
- e) This element of the role includes assisting the moderator to discharge their duties in **policy development** and problem solving as well as working with the moderator to **shape the executive and synod programme**.

21. Deputising for Moderator

- a) Most synod clerks **deputise for the moderator**, in a full range of circumstances. These include illness, or other absence, and ensuring that the synod is represented as appropriate internally and externally.
- b) Some have a specific brief to deputise for the moderator, particularly in **external relations**.
- c) At a strategic level this aspect of the role also includes **addressing serious concerns** which would normally be taken to the moderator.

Tasks not included in job descriptions which are undertaken by synod clerks.

- a) Some synod clerks are undertaking **safeguarding** responsibilities in the absence of other appropriate individuals.
- b) Some organise training events, synod workshops or other activities, which may be undertaken by a training and development officer elsewhere.
- c) Some synod clerks have very **active roles within synod** and church life including presenting at inductions, **preaching, leading worship**, and supporting individual churches. These tasks are not necessarily included in their job descriptions.

Paper S2

Medium Term Strategy Group
Hearing God More Clearly:
Governance Options

United Church 2015
Church 2015
Reformed Church 2015
Church 2015



Paper S2

Medium Term Strategy Group

Hearing God more clearly: governance options

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	John Ellis john.ellis@urc.org.uk
Action required	Reflection and discussion.
Draft resolution(s)	None at the moment.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	<p><u>Subject</u>: the pattern of meeting of General Assembly, and of those committees and advisory groups (including Mission Council) that support and serve our central decision-making.</p> <p><u>Aim</u>: to invite reflection on what we spend, what we achieve and whether we can improve our practice.</p>
Main points	MTSG was asked to review the meeting pattern of General Assembly. Since the work of Assembly depends closely on the resource that we invest in committee work, MTSG wants to ask Mission Council if we can organise this work more efficiently.
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council, March 2014: papers A and Y1, and minutes 14/06 (1) and 14/06 (2).
Consultation has taken place with...	The general secretariat has had opportunity to comment.

Summary of Impact

Financial	This is discussed with care throughout the paper.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	We do not envisage a direct ecumenical impact.

Hearing God more clearly: governance options

Purpose

1. The March 2014 Mission Council heard concerns about the current pattern of biennial General Assemblies and their links with various other aspects of the life of the Church and passed a resolution asking for a review led by the Medium Term Strategy Group (MTSG) and the Assembly Arrangements Committee (AAC). This paper does not attempt to address all the issues Mission Council identified but aims to promote an informed discussion about a key component: the pattern of Assemblies in the context of other denominational governance structures.

Starting Assumptions

2. The MTSG assumes it is a given that the primary purpose of all our governance structures is to hear and articulate what God is saying to the Church and to do that in ways that command the confidence of the wider United Reformed Church.
3. The MTSG heard the main concerns being expressed at Mission Council as not necessarily about the discernment processes of the governance bodies but about the remoteness of their work from local churches and synods. One consequence of this is that if the governance bodies believed God was saying something unexpected or new to the Church, it was less likely to be persuasive once reiterated outside the governance bodies.
4. Of the existing 'central' structures, it appeared to be the predominant view at Mission Council that the most serious psychological gap was between local churches and the biennial Assembly. The infrequency and smallness of Assembly was straining the glue that held the denomination together.

Recent History

5. Under *Catch the Vision* District Councils were abolished and the Assembly moved from being annual to biennial. These changes reflected both the much smaller size of the Church compared with 1972, when the original structures were promulgated, and a concern at the cost of holding an Assembly meeting, then rising towards £300k. It was also hoped that a two-year governance cycle would improve the quality of work brought to Assembly.
6. In the wide-ranging discussions leading to a necessary reduction in the central budget from 2013, Mission Council recommended, and Assembly decided, that the costs of the biennial Assembly should be reduced from £300k to £200k. The AAC has delivered this as requested, but with a marked reduction in the level of central support for Assembly members' accommodation and travel costs. A number of other savings were unpopular, such as the ending of the small parallel Children's Assembly.
7. Neither of the periods of reform outlined in the previous two paragraphs changed significantly the pattern of Assembly Committees, which complement the work of Assembly and Mission Council in the governance of the Church. The MTSG believes that this part of our structure needs to be considered alongside thoughts on how to reshape the pattern of Assembly and Mission Council meetings.

Our Committee Structure

8. Most areas of work undertaken by Assembly staff are overseen by one of the Assembly committees, several of which have sub-committees. Like Mission Council they may also create Task Groups, which are not necessarily permanent. The Nominations Committee seeks to identify suitable people to serve on all these bodies.
9. The MTSG has done a comprehensive mapping of this structure using Nominations Committee data and notes that the URC currently has over 50 such committees etc. There are over 500 seats to be filled on them. As a number of people serve either ex officio or coincidentally on several different groups, fewer than 500 different individuals are members of central bodies.
10. This structure consumes in a typical year around 25,000 person-hours of members' time, excluding the time devoted to their associated committees by the paid staff. The direct cost of running this structure (i.e. excluding the staff time contributed) is of the order of £120k pa.
11. Few if any of the Committees have any formal system for reviewing their work's effectiveness (i.e. what they achieve) or efficiency (i.e. whether the resources consumed are proportionate to what they achieve). It is clear that many individuals give generously of their time and expertise as part of their commitment to Christ; in some instances this gift saves the Church very large sums in professional fees. It is also clear that the average age of many of the committees is high and that the Nominations Committee finds it impossible to achieve all the diversity they would hope for in every committee.
12. Even if all the committees, sub-committees and task groups are both effective and efficient, there is still the question of whether a Church much smaller than it once was still wishes to invest these sums in this structure. Money and time not used in central committee structures could be released for other work.
13. There is also the perennial tension – sometimes, but not always, positive – between the responsibility of staff members to their committee and their responsibility to their line manager in Church House or elsewhere. It is a particularly pertinent time to be looking afresh at that question as Mission Council has supported the establishment of the new general secretariat, with three deputy general secretaries having line management responsibility between them for all areas of our staff's work. This structure was explicitly set up to, inter alia; bring about a step change in the quality of management of staff. If this is achieved, is the need for committees to oversee and hold accountable staff members also reporting to the deputy general secretaries still the best possible use of resources?

Some Costings

14. All costings given in this paper are approximations based on study of available data but make no claim to be precise. They are orders of magnitude to inform a discussion not figures to slot into a formal budget.
15. In none of the discussions about improving our governance patterns has there been any suggestion that local churches want to contribute more M&M money to increase the total cost of governance structures. Therefore this paper only explores options that could be cost neutral or offer savings relative to the 2014 budget.
16. If we are to respond to the pleas for more resources for Assembly, e.g. so it can meet more frequently, then we need to identify corresponding savings elsewhere in areas where current resources are achieving less than they could do if devoted to Assembly.

17. The March 2014 Mission Council resolutions specifically asked for thinking about the pattern of Mission Council meetings alongside the pattern of Assemblies. The MTSG suggest we should also put alongside that the pattern of our committee structure. Currently a typical meeting of Mission Council costs around £20k and a meeting of Assembly £200k.
18. If Mission Council judges it a priority to make some savings in order to devote more resources to Assemblies, some options in broad brush terms might include the following. The possible savings quoted are over a two-year period unless otherwise specified.
- (i) Streamlining existing committees: with limited specified exceptions, ask all committees etc to reduce their memberships by 50%. It is not always the case that a committee of twelve achieves twice as much as a committee of six. Saving: £80k
 - (ii) Three principal committees: with limited specified exceptions, abolish all committees etc and replace by three committees, one for each deputy general secretary's area of responsibility. These committees would give overall direction and accountability, leaving detailed oversight of staff work to the line management. Major policy questions would come to Mission Council or Assembly as now. Saving: £100k
 - (iii) Abolish programme committees: abolish committees etc not required for legal reasons, leaving oversight and accountability via the general secretariat to Mission Council and Assembly. Staff would be free to set up short term project groups and networks where expertise was required. Saving: £150k
 - (iv) Shorten Mission Council meetings: some Mission Council meetings could be only a day meeting. Saving: £10k per meeting
 - (v) Shorten Assembly meetings: Assembly could meet over two days rather than four. Saving: £60k per meeting.

Alternative Scenarios

19. The MTSG does not at this stage bring any proposal. What follow are hypothetical scenarios to promote discussion of what Mission Council feels would help address the issues behind its March 2014 resolution. Many other scenarios are of course possible. The desired outcome of this discussion is a clear sense of the direction in which Mission Council would like further work to go. Discussion groups will be asked to consider the advantages and disadvantages of the three scenarios offered and indicate one of these or another as their preferred scenario for further exploration.

Scenario A

- Retain four-day biennial Assembly
- Restore the level of financial support to Assembly members re travel and accommodation: cost £50k
- Add a third Mission Council in the non-Assembly year: cost £20k
- Opt for three principal committees: saving £100k
- Overall saving £30k.

Scenario B

- Retain four-day biennial Assembly
- Add a two-day Assembly in intervening year: cost £120k
- Abolish programme committees: saving £150k
- Overall saving £30k.

Scenario C

- Abolish four-day biennial Assembly: saving £200k
- Hold two-day Assembly every year: cost £240k
- Restore the level of financial support to Assembly members re travel and accommodation: cost £60k
- Opt for three principal committees: saving £100k
- Overall cost neutral.

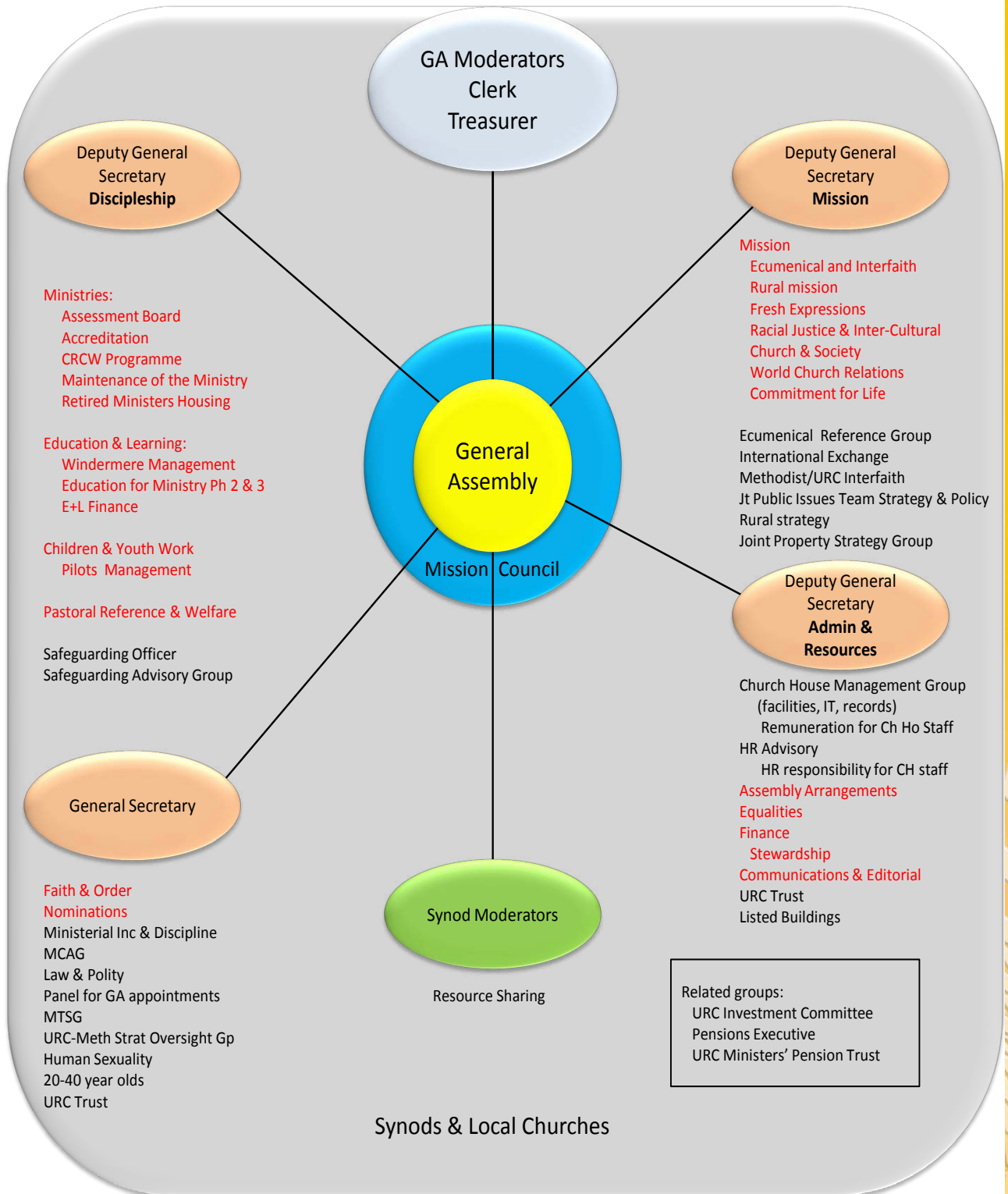
Scenario D

- Your group's much better scenario than any of the above.

Vital Footnote

20. This paper has sought to open up a discussion on some issues Mission Council asked to be explored. It addresses practical questions implicit in the Mission Council resolution. Nevertheless the MTSG is totally clear that hearing what God is saying to the Church does not depend primarily on the pattern of our meetings but on our personal and collective discipleship and how we use the time available in those meetings. The MTSG is glad others are working on questions like the best way to express our conciliar principles in godly decision-making.

United Reformed Church – Group Structure



The above reflects the report of the Nominations Committee to the 2014, and the operational work of the General Secretariat. Excludes: reps on Ecumenical Church bodies; reps on governing bodies of theological colleges; URC associated colleges & school governors. Red text indicates a General Assembly committee and its subcommittees and responsibilities.

Paper T1

MIND Advisory Group
Shared Synod Panels

Church 2015
United
Church **Reformed**
Church 2015



Paper T1

MIND Advisory Group Shared Synod Panels

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Dr Jim Merrilees jmerrilees@urcscotland.org.uk
Action required	Accept paper and resolution.
Draft resolution(s)	On the recommendation of the MIND Advisory Group and on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council approves the changes to the Disciplinary Process shown below (including the Appendix set out at the end) with immediate effect.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Changes to Ministerial Disciplinary Process.
Main points	Detail of necessary changes.
Previous relevant documents	Ministerial Disciplinary Process.
Consultation has taken place with...	Members of MIND Advisory Group at its meeting on 28 January 2015 – Group is representative of all aspects of the Process. The five northerly synods affected.

Summary of Impact

Financial	Any financial implications will be for the five northerly synods which have accepted the changes.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None.

Shared Synod Panels

1. This is a report from the MIND Advisory Group to go before Mission Council at its meeting in May 2015 and it contains a request that Mission Council should consider and, if thought fit, pass the Resolution which appears at the start of this report.
2. Since Mission Council last met the Advisory Group has met once. Also one case has passed through the Disciplinary Process and there is one case currently within the Incapacity Procedure. The Advisory Group keeps both the Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure under constant review and provides regular training and guidance for those involved with those procedures.
3. The five northerly synods have expressed a request to be allowed to operate a Shared Synod Panel. Following detailed discussion both within the Advisory Group and with the moderators involved, the Group considers the request to be a reasonable one and wishes to recommend changes to the Process to allow groups of three to six synods to appoint shared panels. These are contained in the detailed resolution set out below. The five synods involved have expressed their satisfaction with these proposed changes.
4. If Mission Council does approve these proposals, the Advisory Group envisages the setting up of a Shared Synod Panel to be a three-stage process:-
 5.
 - (i) The Sharing Synods will have informal discussions and agree in principle to set up a Shared Synod Panel.
 - (ii) They will each bring forward to a plenary session of their synod a resolution in the form of Appendix 1.
 - (iii) On the assumption that all the Sharing Synods pass their resolutions, they will need to have further discussions as to the appointment of persons onto the Shared Synod Panel and as to the formation date, allowing enough time to have completed the appointments of the panel members and the co-ordinator prior to that date. To avoid confusion, it would be as well if all the Sharing Synods agreed a joint declaration as to the formation date.
6. The individual synods must maintain their separate panels right up to the formation date, but these panels will cease to exist immediately thereafter.
7. No provision is made for the total number of persons to be appointed onto the Shared Synod Panels. There is no current provision for numbers on the separate Synod Panel (see B.2.1.1). Similarly, the Sharing Synods can be relied upon to make sure that their numbers are up to scratch.
8. The Advisory Group felt that the new sharing procedure should apply to three to six synods. Why not two? Because with the flexibility which is already built into the Process, it would be unnecessarily complicated to switch to the sharing procedure just for two synods. Why not more than six? The Group felt that this would be too cumbersome and would involve too wide a geographical area.
9. The Group approved a few other minor changes to the Process and these are also incorporated in the resolution.

10. So, in conclusion, the MIND Advisory Group formally places before Mission Council the resolution set out below for consideration at its May meeting.

11. **On the recommendation of the MIND Advisory Group and on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council approves the changes to the Disciplinary Process shown below (including the Appendix set out at the end) with immediate effect.**

12. **A.5** – Add new definitions as follows:

‘Co-ordinator’ shall mean the person appointed by a group of Sharing Synods to carry out the responsibilities ascribed to him/her under paragraph B.2.2.3.”

‘Shared Synod Panel’ shall mean the Panel constituted by a group of Sharing Synods and referred to in paragraph B.2.2, which shall serve the purposes set out in that paragraph.

‘Sharing Synods’ shall mean a group of three, four, five or six synods which all adopt the procedure set out in paragraph B.2.2 and Appendix 1 to constitute a ‘Shared Synod Panel’. A ‘Sharing Synod’ shall mean a synod which is part of such a group.

‘Synod Panel’ – Add the following sentence to the existing definition:

The expression ‘Synod Panel’ shall also be taken to apply to a Shared Synod Panel constituted under paragraph B.2.2 unless such construction is precluded by the context.

13. **AA.1.5.2** – Replace the existing paragraph with the following:

AA.1.5.2 The moderator of the synod in consultation with such officers of the synod as s/he considers appropriate shall forthwith appoint two persons to act as the synod appointees (and reserves) in any particular case in the following manner: (i) s/he shall appoint the first of the synod appointees from the Joint Panel (with another from the Joint Panel to act as reserve) and, (ii) s/he shall appoint as the second synod appointee one of the following, that is: (a) one person from its own Synod Panel or Shared Synod Panel or (b) one person from the Synod Panel(s) of another synod or the Shared Synod Panel of another group of Sharing Synods or (c) one person who, although not a member of any Synod Panel, is a member of the United Reformed Church with legal, tribunal or other appropriate professional experience. S/he shall also appoint in the same manner one person to act as reserve to the second synod appointee. When making appointments under (ii)(b) above, the moderator of the synod shall, in the case of a single Synod Panel, inform the co-ordinator of that Panel of such appointment and s/he shall in turn inform the moderators of the Sharing Synods in the Group.

14. **AA.2.6** In the final sentence between “not” and “involve” insert the word “normally”.

15. **B.2.1.1** At the beginning of this paragraph add the words:-

“Unless the alternative procedures set out in paragraph B.2.2 shall apply and subject to paragraph B.2.1.2, every Synod ...”

16. **B.2.2 – Insert a new paragraph B.2.2 as follows:-**
- B.2.2.1 It shall be open to three, four, five or six synods (“the Sharing Synods”) To join together to appoint, maintain and share a panel (“the Shared Synod Panel”) of persons who are in current membership of a local church within the province or nation of any of the Sharing Synods and, in considering persons for appointment, regard shall be had for achieving as wide a geographical representation as possible within the provinces or nations of the Sharing Synods. The purposes of the Shared Synod Panel are to enable the following appointments to be made from that Panel when a disciplinary case arises, that is to say, (i) the appointment of two persons in accordance with Paragraph B.3 to act as members of the Mandated Group in that case and (ii) the appointment of one person in accordance with Paragraph AA.1.5.2(ii) to act as one of the synod appointees during the Caution Stage if initiated. The same persons shall not act as synod appointees and members of a Mandated Group in the same case.**
17. **B.2.2.2 In order to adopt the procedure set out in paragraph B.2.2.1, each of the Sharing Synods shall pass an enabling resolution in the form set out in Appendix 1.**
18. **B.2.2.3 Every group of Sharing Synods shall appoint a co-ordinator (who may also be a Panel member) who shall co-ordinate and administer their Shared Synod Panel, keep up-to-date records thereof and carry out the duties ascribed to that person under this Disciplinary Process.**
19. **B.2.2.4 A moderator of a Sharing Synod wishing to appoint a member of the Shared Synod Panel as a synod appointee or a member of a Mandated Group in a particular case shall first consult with its co-ordinator, who shall in turn inform the other Sharing Synods.**
20. **B.2.2.5 It shall be open to the Sharing Synods by resolution of each and every one of them to disband their Shared Synod Panel in which case they must each appoint a separate Synod Panel forthwith so as to enable paragraph B.2.1 to apply.**
21. **B.2.2.6 It shall be open to any Sharing Synod by resolution of that synod to withdraw from involvement in the Shared Synod Panel in which case it must appoint a separate Synod Panel forthwith so as to enable paragraph B.2.1 to apply to that Synod. Panel members from that synod would be eligible to remain as members of the continuing Shared Synod Panel, so long as the provisions of paragraph B.2.1.2 are observed.**
22. **B.2.2.7 Should the withdrawal of a Sharing Synod under the preceding subparagraph reduce the number of Sharing Synods to less than three, the Shared Synod Panel would be automatically disbanded and each of the Sharing Synods would have to appoint a separate Synod Panel forthwith so as to enable paragraph B.2.1 to apply to that synod.**
23. **B.2.2.8 Should any uncertainty or dispute arise regarding the operation of paragraph B.2.2, the default provisions of paragraph B.2.1 shall apply, whereupon, should a moderator of one of the Sharing Synods wish to initiate the Disciplinary Process in respect of a minister, that synod may constitute a separate Synod Panel so as to ensure that there shall be no delay in the appointment of synod appointees or members of a Mandated Group for that case.**

24. **B.2.3** The existing paragraph B.2..2 becomes B.2.3. After the words “**of whom**” remove the words “**one or**”.

Change the paragraph reference in the text from AA.1.5(i) to AA.1.5.2(ii).

Add the following at the end of the paragraph:-

“It shall be open to a group of Sharing Synods to decide among themselves as to the number of persons which each synod within the group shall appoint onto the Joint Panel so long as the total number so appointed from the group is equal to twice the number of Sharing Synods in the group. Synods and Sharing Synods who fail to maintain the required number must use their best endeavours to make up the deficit. As regards a group of Sharing Synods, the co-ordinator is expected to keep a close control over this and, if necessary, to remind the group when the number falls below the stated requirement.”

25. **B.3.1** Replace the words “...**appoint two persons from the Synod Panel for that Synod (or in an emergency one person from the Synod Panel of that synod and one person from the Synod Panel of another synod and one person from the Joint Panel)**” with the words “**appoint one person from the Joint Panel as provided in paragraphs B.2.1.1 and B.2.1.2 and two persons from the Synod Panel or Shared Synod Panel representing that synod (or in an emergency one person from such Synod Panel or Shared Synod Panel and one person from the Synod Panel of another synod).**”
26. **B.10.1** At B.10.1(iii) replace the words “**any other documents which the Mandated Group wishes to lodge with the Referral Notice**” with “**copies of all other information, reports and documents which the Mandated Group intends to produce in support of its case at the Hearing**”.
27. **E.10.1.3** Add a new paragraph E.10.1.3 as follows:-
- “The Assembly Commission may at its discretion depart from the strict application of paragraphs E.10.1.1 and E.10.1.2 but only so long as the accompanying person does not act both as the minister’s spokesperson and as a witness giving evidence or as a person giving or purporting to give expert opinion on the minister’s behalf.”**
28. **H.4** Replace the words “**paragraph B.8.2.1 or F.7**” with “**paragraph B.8.2.1, F.7 or G.16**”.

Appendix 1 – see paragraph B.2.2

Enabling resolution for synods wishing to set up a Shared Synod Panel

The Synod of, meeting in plenary session on the ... day of 201..., resolves as follows:-

- To join with (*here specify the other synods involved*) in constituting a Shared Synod Panel in accordance with paragraph B.2.2 of the Ministerial Disciplinary Process, which said Panel shall come into being when all the Sharing Synods have passed an enabling resolution in the form contained in this Appendix and at a date to be agreed by the Sharing Synods (the formation date), at which date the Shared Synod Panel shall come into existence.**

2. In conjunction with the other Sharing Synods and no later than the formation date, to appoint persons onto the Shared Synod Panel in compliance with paragraph B.2.2.1 and one person (who may be a Panel member) to act as co-ordinator in compliance with paragraph B.2.2.3.
3. To continue to maintain its separate Synod Panel until the formation date, following which it shall cease to meet.



Paper X1

Northerly Synods

Northerly Synods Collaboration

United Church 2015
Church 2015
Reformed Church 2015
Church 2015

Paper X1



Northerly Synods

Northerly Synods Collaboration Update

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Report from Lis Mullen, Kevin Watson, Jacky Embrey, John Humphreys (moderators of Northern, Yorkshire, Mersey, and the National Synod of Scotland), and Andy Braunston (clerk of North Western Synod). Contacts: Simon Walking – moderator of the National Synod of Wales moderator@urcwales.org.uk Melanie Campbell – coordinator Northerly Synods Melanie.campbell@urc-northernsynod.org
Action required	For information, and a decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council resolves to include one new paragraph in the 'Process for the appointment of synod moderators' (the proposed new text is printed at the end of this paper).

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	A progress report on the Northerly Synods collaboration.
Main points	Northerly Synods (Scotland, North Western, Northern, Yorkshire, and Mersey) have commenced discussions, to better understand how collaborative working may assist them to discharge their roles and responsibilities more effectively.
Previous relevant documents	None.
Consultation has taken place with...	Relevant colleagues at Church House as well as across the Northerly synods.

Summary of Impact

Financial	The summary of impact is anticipated to be better practice.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Ecumenical impact is not known at present.

Northerly Synods Collaboration

Introduction

1. The five northerly synods comprising the National Synod of Scotland, North Western, Northern, Yorkshire and Mersey Synods are seeking to understand how collaboration may assist them to fulfil their duties and responsibilities more effectively. Since October 2014 this process has been facilitated by the Moderator of the Synod of Wales. At this time the meeting could see no medium term advantage to changing synod boundaries or numbers of synod moderators.

Background

2. Discussions between the synods initially began in 2011. A further meeting took place in February 2014, attended by synod representatives, nominated by their Executives. This meeting led to resolutions, which were agreed by synod meetings in each of the northerly synods in March 2014, and enabling exploratory discussions to continue.

Developing Ways Forward

3. In October 2014, synod representatives agreed that, whilst collaboration may have potential to improve practice and effectiveness, the benefits remained uncertain. For this reason the Northerly Synods asked for further work to be undertaken and appointed a co-ordinator, to work for one day a week to assist them in the process.
4. The resulting findings arising from site visits, structured interviews, Task Team workshops and written information, assisted the synods to consider possible ways forward.
5. At their meeting in February 2015 the Northerly Synod representatives identified areas that are important and urgent to them, and agreed the remit for work streams to include communications, safeguarding, human resources, and mediation and consultancy. The work streams have some suggested outcomes to work towards, however there are no pre-conceived expectations.
6. Treasurers will also be meeting together with a view to understanding variations in their processes and costs as well as to find ways to offer practical support to address specific pressures.

Next Steps

7. All involved have been challenged with balancing the important task of being Christians in Northern Britain with the technical tasks we wish to address. A dedicated group is meeting to consider this and their emerging thoughts will help shape our next steps.
8. Throughout the process synod moderators have worked closely together, guiding and listening to one another as conversations have developed. Yet three of the five synod moderators will move on within the next year or so, and Northerly Synods are keen to ensure that the new synod moderators engage positively in the next steps forward. For this reason the representatives from Northerly Synods would like some of their present synod moderators to have opportunity to meet with prospective candidates as vacancies for the position of synod moderator arise in North Western, Northern and Scotland. Whilst these synod moderators would have no vote in the nominating

process, their views about their future team colleagues might be helpful to the nominating groups. To that end we offer the following resolution, which would allow nominating groups to make up their own minds about whether and how to respond to this request.

Resolution

Mission Council resolves to include one new paragraph in the 'Process for the appointment of synod moderators': (text as follows)

Where the new moderator will need to engage closely with a synod's partners – in, for example, adjacent synods or other churches – the Nominating Group may, as part of the interview process, arrange for short-listed candidates to meet with a small number of key people from among the partners. Whether and how to arrange this will be a decision for the Nominating Group, which may afterwards seek advice or comment from these key people, but shall not in any way be bound by their views.

Paper Z1

National Synods Task Group
Report to Mission Council

Church 2015
United
Church **Reformed**
Church 2015



Paper Z1

National Synod Task Group (NSTG)

Report to Mission Council

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Michael N. Jagessar michael.jagessar@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mission Council accepts the conclusions reached by the National Synods Task Group (NSTG) in its report and commends them to all synods. 2. Mission Council seeks the leave of the General Assembly to withdraw the draft Resolution 19A moved by it at the Assembly session of July 2014. 3. Mission Council resolves to make the following amendment to the Structure of the URC: <p>Reword paragraph 2(4)A(xxii) to read:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) to seek to expand the range and deepen the nature of the Christian common life and witness in each local community, and b) in Scotland and Wales to speak and act on behalf of the whole United Reformed Church in public affairs or the conduct of ecumenical relationships specific to the nation concerned, in the General Assembly's name but without prejudice to the Assembly's right to speak and act in the same field on behalf of the United Reformed Church either in England or throughout Great Britain.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Report of the work of the National Synod Task Group.
Main points	<p>This report reflects on five key questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How far the Structure of the URC currently reflects the 1998 Proposals for Union; • the implications of the 1998 Proposals for the General Assembly representation of Wales; • What it means for General Assembly to delegate the right to speak in the name of the whole URC in matters of national significance; • Whether it is serious that the URC may sometimes speak with more than one voice, and how the risk of an inappropriately divided witness may be reduced and; • What authority is necessary for a council of the church to act in the name of the URC when given that competence by the law of the territory it serves.
Previous relevant documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposals for Union 1998 (especially Part 5:1) • National Synods Consultation Notes (April 14-15, 2011) • GA Resolution 19 (a).

Consultation has taken place with...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the Joint Negotiating Committee which drafted the 1998 Proposals for Union • Report has been circulated to the National Synods of Scotland and Wales • Clerk of General Assembly • Law and Polity Advisory Group.
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Summary of Impact

Financial	Given the financial vulnerability of both National Synods, the possibility of significant financial impact cannot be ruled out [see para 37]. But the NSTG's working premise is that the United Reformed Church exists under and within the graceful generosity of a God of abundance; and that congregations and synods across the whole United Reformed Church remain committed to practise this generosity in our life together.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	<p>Significant implications and impact: on both renewing the ecumenical vocation of the URC and contributing to the (re)discovery of new and exciting ecumenical and wider partnerships. For instance:</p> <p>Ecumenical – (i) Clarity regarding lines of communication between the URC and ecumenical bodies in Scotland and Wales; (ii) confirmation and clarity regarding previous Assembly decisions re union negotiations in Scotland and Wales; (iii) shorter turnaround times on ecumenical decision-making and participation in Scotland and Wales.</p> <p>External – (i) Confirmation of current Scottish government and Welsh government practice regarding communication with the URC; (ii) clarity regarding responsibility for responding to government consultations and requests in Scotland and Wales; (iii) improved capacity of URC to respond to Scottish and Welsh government requests in good time; (iv) improved capacity and clarity in relating to third sector organisations based in Scotland and Wales; (v) improved capacity and clarity in relating to local government in Scotland and Wales; (vi) improved ability and clarity to relate to Welsh and Scottish government and local government on building matters (e.g. building regulations, listed buildings).</p>

Report of the National Synods Task Group

Executive summary

1. Although the United Reformed Church was from 1972 'one church in two nations' (England and Wales), and then became 'one church in three nations' as a result of the union with the Re-formed Association of Churches of Christ in 1981, awareness of this was sharpened by the union with the Congregational Union of Scotland in 2000. In the fifteen years since then we have grown to appreciate both the rich diversity this brings to our Church, as well as the new challenges brought by developing experience of the political devolution within the United Kingdom enacted in 1999 following referendums in 1997.
2. The Proposals for Union with the Congregational Union of Scotland – in their entirety – were approved by the Annual Assembly of the Congregational Union of Scotland and the URC General Assembly in 1998, although only limited changes to the Structure of the URC were proposed at that point (and approved in 2000). The Proposals provided (in Part 5.1) for BOTH National Synods to speak and act 'in the name of the URC' in their nations' ecclesiastical and public affairs. The term 'ecclesiastical' as used in that context meant ecumenical.
3. Part 5.1 of the Proposals talks of 'speaking for the URC', whereas part 4C(i) speaks of 'acting with the delegated authority of the General Assembly'. The current Structure para 2(4)A(xxii) speaks of responsibility for national ecumenical relationships undertaken 'on behalf of the whole URC' but 'subject to the final authority of the General Assembly'. Each of these expressions potentially means something a little different, which opens the door to confusion or dispute. The main difference we have identified is that councils which speak or act 'subject to the final authority of the Assembly' (the normal situation for local councils and synods) are liable to have their decisions appealed to the Assembly; whereas councils, commissions etc. which act with delegated authority are not. (Such as Mission Council acting for Assembly between sessions, and Assembly Commissions in disciplinary cases.)
4. We felt that the National Synods' responsibility in specifically national questions should not be simply overruled by an English majority in General Assembly. A right of appeal to Assembly, therefore, is not appropriate and the 'deemed delegation' approach expresses this best. The language in our draft resolution is taken from the language already used in Structure para 2(6) in relation to Mission Council.
5. However, we also felt that it could never have been intended that a national synod should, by speaking on some moral or religious issue in the national context, be able to prevent the General Assembly expressing the view of the wider church on that same issue. Nor should the other National Synod be so prevented; nor should Assembly – which at present is the only forum in which the collective view of URC members in England can be expressed – be prevented from expressing an English perspective simply because a Celtic national synod with delegated authority had spoken first. The words in our amendment to the Structure beginning 'but without prejudice' are designed to express this.
6. Spelling this out, of course, raises the possibility that the opinion of church members in one of the three nations, expressed by a synod in the Celtic nations or by the Assembly in right of England, will diverge from the opinion of church members in another nation,

and the URC will be seen by the outside world to be speaking with two or more voices. We do not believe this is always undesirable. It is certainly honest. But there should always be careful thought before the Church takes this course. The main means of 'taking thought' is consultation, between the synod and Assembly levels of the church, usually through their responsible committees. No new provision is required for this in the Structure – para 4 already calls for consultation – but the report spells out some implications, e.g. in relation to funding of the National Synods, and reminding Assembly committees to be alert to the possibility of a distinctive national perspective.

7. When it seems desirable for there to be a single public URC view on a question, the opening words of Structure 2(6) suggest this should be the Assembly view. We have not spelt out in so many words that the synods would then abide by the Assembly or Mission Council decision; but past experience suggests that national synods take seriously what Proposals 5.1 called 'their continued participation in and commitment to the conciliar structures of the URC'.
8. We envisage that, under the Structure as amended and subject to the provisions for consultation, each national synod would:
 - a) Co-operate with churches indigenous to the nation concerned and (so far as those churches' polity allowed) with the Welsh or Scottish organs of Britain-wide or international churches;
 - b) Conduct negotiations for church union within the nation concerned, subject to Structure para 3(2) regulating final approval of any union;
 - c) Speak and act on behalf of the URC on matters relating to Scottish and Welsh public affairs;
 - d) Respond to consultations initiated by the devolved legislatures;
 - e) Play a full and active part in Scottish and Welsh ecumenical and public affairs in relation to organisations, institutions and activities indigenous to Scotland and Wales; and
 - f) Represent the URC to the devolved legislatures on matters of social, political and economic significance to the nation concerned.

Report of the National Synods Task Group to Mission Council

1. The Task Group was created by Mission Council in November 2013 to consider what it means today for the National Synods of Scotland and Wales to 'speak and act in the name of the United Reformed Church.' The background to this task is the growing awareness of the nationhood and distinctiveness of the three larger territories within which the URC exists – England, Scotland and Wales – now given particularly clear expression in two of those nations by political and legislative devolution.¹ The URC is sometimes spoken of as 'one church in three nations and six jurisdictions' (the additional jurisdictions being the Bailiwicks of Jersey and Guernsey and the Isle of Man), recognising how the ways in which the Gospel message is shared and lived out may sometimes need to adapt to the legal and cultural environment.
2. 'To speak and act in the name of the United Reformed Church' is a quotation from the Proposals for Union agreed by the Annual Assembly of the Congregational Union of Scotland and the General Assembly of the URC in 1998. These Proposals, on the basis of which the URC as we now know it came into being, outlined in some detail what it would mean for there to be a National Synod in Scotland – but also in Wales – and contained the further sentence 'The authority of the General Assembly of the URC in the management of the affairs of the whole church is affirmed, but it is recognised that there will be situations in which the General Assembly must acknowledge national distinctions.' Since the unification process was completed in 2000, devolution has become a reality: many religious and belief bodies have learned to relate directly to legislative and executive authorities in Cardiff and Edinburgh, and to appreciate that, on some topics, Westminster politicians make decisions not for the United Kingdom but for England. The outworking of the 1998 agreement in good faith, whilst at the same time preserving a unified witness in fundamentals, is the goal behind this report and the associated proposals.
3. We present our report accordingly, which considers five questions:
 - How far the Structure of the URC currently reflects the 1998 Proposals for Union;
 - The implications of the 1998 Proposals for the General Assembly representation of Wales;
 - What it means for General Assembly to delegate the right to speak in the name of the whole URC in matters of national significance;
 - Whether it is serious that the URC may sometimes speak with more than one voice, and how the risk of an inappropriately divided witness may be reduced; and
 - What authority is necessary for a council of the church to act in the name of the URC when given that competence by the law of the territory it serves.

A. Reflection of the 1998 Proposals for Union in the Structure of the URC

4. The URC in its present form was brought into being by the Unifying Declaration made by the Unifying Assembly on 1 April 2000. This Declaration, and its effects, were provided for in Proposals for Union approved in 1998 ('the Proposals').

¹ The Task Group was created arising out of points made on behalf of the Law and Polity Advisory Group at Mission Council, in connection with the different ways in which marriage formation takes place and how proposed reforms to marriage law would affect the church, in Scotland on the one hand and in England and Wales on the other.

5. Under Part 3 para 2 of the Proposals, the Declaration was (a) to bring into effect certain changes to the Structure of the URC and (b) to effect the consequences set out in Part 4 of the Proposals.
6. These goals, however, could never have been fully distinct. For the Structure to continue giving a true indication of the constitution of the unified URC, it was important that the changes made in it in 2000 – (a) above – should themselves effect the consequences in Part 4 – (b) above. We have therefore compared the consequences in Part 4 of the Proposals with the changes actually made in the Structure in 2000.
7. The relevant changes in the Structure were four:
 - Paras 1(2)(a) and 1(3)(c) of the Structure of the URC were amended to refer to Wales and Scotland as ‘nations’ and their synods as ‘national synods’. Corresponding changes of terminology were made elsewhere.
 - Para 2(4)(xii), which then declared it a synod function ‘to foster ecumenical relationships and action’ was expanded by adding the words ‘and in Scotland and Wales to undertake responsibility for national ecumenical relationships on behalf of the whole URC, subject to the final authority of the General Assembly’.²
 - The note to para 2(5)(f), which then indicated that Assembly had added to its membership, inter alia, three representatives from each synod, was altered to refer to ‘nine representatives from the Synod of Scotland and three from each other synod’.³
 - Para 3(2), which set out the special procedure required to approve any termination of the separate existence of the URC or of a province within it by union with other churches, was expanded by adding the words ‘In the case of a proposed union affecting only Scotland or Wales no action will be taken by the General Assembly until a decision in favour of union has been taken by the relevant synod’.
8. The constitutional consequences envisaged in Part 4 of the Proposals included the following:
 - ‘The Synod ... will be referred to as a national synod. (para C(i))
 - It will address political, educational and cultural matters of particular national significance and on such occasions will act with the delegated authority of the General Assembly.’ (para C(i))
 - ‘The special representation of the Synod of Scotland is covered by the addition of six persons to the usual three. These nine persons will be appointed by the Synod. This increased representation is to enable the national life of the URC in Scotland to be reflected in the General Assembly.’ (para E)
 - ‘Scottish ecumenical bodies – It will be for the Synod of Scotland to negotiate the number of representatives appropriate to each body. The Synod will inform the Assembly Nominations Committee of its nominations of those representing the URC as a whole on bodies in Scotland.’ (para F(iii))

² This paragraph is now 2(4)A(xxii). It was altered again (ratifying resolution 2007) to its current wording: ‘To seek to expand the range and deepen the nature of the Christian common life and witness in each local community, and in Scotland and Wales to undertake responsibility for national ecumenical relationships on behalf of the whole United Reformed Church, subject to the final authority of the General Assembly.’

³ This paragraph is now 2(6)(h). In 2000 the main representative membership of Assembly was still chosen by district councils; these were supplemented by the three synod appointees from each province. When synods took over the appointing role of district councils, the three extra ‘synod’ members from each province disappeared but the ‘Scottish differential’ remained; hence the note now refers to six representatives of the Synod of Scotland.

9. The first of these goals – terminology – was clearly achieved by the changes made in 2000 to Structure paragraph 1 and elsewhere.
10. The second goal – the Synod’s competence to act ‘with the delegated authority of the General Assembly’ in ‘political, educational and cultural matters of particular national significance’ – was not reflected in any change to the Structure, though both the General Assembly and any synod continued to be entitled to ‘take such actions as it deems conducive to ... the well-being of the community in which the church is placed’.⁴ From 2007 it became a function of all synods ‘to seek to expand the range and deepen the nature of the Christian common life and witness in each local community’.⁵ But no special role for National Synods was spelt out. This issue is given further consideration in a later section of our report.
11. The third goal – enhanced General Assembly representation – was achieved by the amended note to Structure para 2(5)(f). The Task Group has considered the declared motivation ‘to enable the national life of the URC in Scotland to be reflected in the General Assembly’, and is persuaded that this was primarily because the diversity of church life and its context in Scotland could not adequately be represented by a delegation strictly proportionate to the number of Scottish local churches or members. That rationale remains unchanged today.⁶
12. The fourth goal – a particular way of sharing responsibilities in the ecumenical field – did not necessarily require a constitutional change. In 1998 it was a General Assembly function ‘to conduct and foster the ecumenical relationships of the URC’ and a synod function ‘to foster ecumenical relationships and action’. Although the URC’s established practice, whereby Assembly assisted by its Nominations Committee appointed all the denomination’s representatives, was maintained, the Proposals gave the National Synod a specific role when it came to representation on purely Scottish bodies. More generally, the ecumenical role of both National Synods was enshrined in the amendments to Structure paragraphs 2(4) (xxii) and 3(2).
13. There is, though, a contrast between the approach of Part 4, para C(i) of the Proposals, which speaks of a National Synod acting in ‘ecclesiastical’ affairs ‘with the delegated authority of the Assembly’, and that of Structure para 2(4)A(xxii) which speaks of a National Synod acting in ecumenical matters ‘subject to the final authority of the Assembly’. The latter wording does not exclude the possibility of the Assembly entertaining an appeal against a synod decision, whereas the former wording (we believe) does. So, currently, if the Synod of Wales were to approve a building sharing agreement with the Roman Catholic Church, a local church might seek to appeal to Assembly against

⁴ Structure 2(4)(ii) and 2(6)(ii). The wording for synods has since been simplified: Structure 2(4)A(ii) now begins ‘To take action which supports ...’.

⁵ Structure 2(4)A(xxii), amended wording

⁶ During discussion of draft resolution 19A at the Assembly of 2014, it was suggested that the motivation was more to do with the decision not to assign former presidents of the CUS the *ex officio* membership of Assembly then enjoyed by other predecessor denominations’ former chairmen and moderators. The Task Group is persuaded that that was not the case. The Task Group also noted that an argument, similar to that accepted in 1998, can be made about the URC in the Isle of Man and the Bailiwicks of Jersey and Guernsey. Mere numerical representation can never make the unique characteristics of these territories felt within the General Assembly, and the Group believes there is a clear moral duty on the synods of the Mersey and Wessex provinces to ensure, by whatever means seems most appropriate, that insular voices are heard at Assembly level. The notion of ‘voices being heard’ is not a simple matter of voting strength: the Structure’s provisions for youth membership of Assembly and synods already recognise this, and it would be rare for either council to be so evenly divided that youth or Scottish votes could swing the majority.

that synod decision, which Assembly would have to review. We think it more consistent with Part 5.1 of the Proposals, considered below, that such a decision should not be subject to appeal.

B. Implications of the 1998 Proposals for the General Assembly representation of Wales

14. The Task Group noted that the 1998 Proposals, although their observations in relation to nationhood were not confined to Scotland, contained no structural provision 'to enable the national life of the URC in Wales to be reflected in the General Assembly'. There must however be a question whether the diversity of church life and its context in Wales, any more than in Scotland, can be represented by a delegation strictly proportionate to the number of Welsh local churches or members. We did not reach agreement on any proposal in this context, but draw it nevertheless to the wider church's attention.

C. 'Political, educational and cultural matters of particular national significance'

Potential inconsistencies in the 1998 Proposals

15. The 1998 Proposals (part 4, section C) states that 'It (the Synod of Scotland) will address political, education and cultural matters of particular national significance and on such occasions will act with the delegated authority of the General Assembly'. However, part 5.1 on 'National Synods in the United Reformed Church' (i.e. including Wales) reads as follows:

'In matters relating to Scottish and Welsh ecclesiastical and public affairs the national synods will speak and act in the name of the United Reformed Church. They will play a full and active part in Scottish and Welsh ecclesiastical and public affairs in relation to organisations, institutions and activities which are indigenous to Scotland and Wales. It is through their continued participation in and commitment to the conciliar structures of the United Reformed Church that the national synods will honour the trust which has been placed in them'. The phrase 'delegated authority' is not used; and it is unclear whether 'delegated authority' was intended to apply to Wales. It should be remembered that the new devolved Assemblies had scarcely begun to operate. Crucially, no amendments were made to The Structure to recognise what was agreed by the acceptance of the Proposals by the United Reformed Church. Fifteen years later it is time to clarify this matter.

The implications of delegated authority

16. A first issue is what it means for a synod to act 'with the delegated authority of the General Assembly'. Normally synods do not act with delegated authority. Their authority is original, deriving directly from the Structure, which ascribes to every council of the church, at whatever level, 'such authority, under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, as shall enable it to exercise its functions and thereby to minister in that sphere of the life of the United Reformed Church with which it is concerned'.⁷ However, each of the church's wider councils have authority to consider and decide upon appeals duly submitted from more local councils' decisions; so certain of a synod's decisions are normally appealable to the General Assembly.⁸

⁷ Structure 1(3)

⁸ Structure 2(6)(xv) and 5

17. Delegated authority is different. When a council of the church delegates its authority to another body, that body's usual functions are expanded to take in the relevant function of the delegating council, *and it speaks with the delegating council's voice*. The best-known example is Mission Council, which has power to act in the General Assembly's name between its meetings 'and to discharge such other functions as the General Assembly may from time to time direct'.⁹ If tasked with a specific function, Mission Council acts as itself, a subordinate organ of the Assembly similar to a standing Committee. It acts *ultra vires* if it disregards any directions laid down by Assembly resolution, and the next Assembly can repudiate or reverse any action with which it disagrees (though this is not an appeal, since Mission Council is not covered by paragraph 5 of the Structure which deals with appeals between councils of the church). But if Mission Council expressly acts in the Assembly's name under the general delegation in the Structure, then Assembly itself has spoken. The next Assembly cannot immediately repudiate its actions so long as the Standing Order remains in force which restricts motions to amend or reverse its own recent decisions.¹⁰ So if a National Synod acts 'with the delegated authority of the General Assembly' in some 'matter of national significance', the appeal procedure of paragraph 5 will not apply. It will not be easy for the next Assembly to reverse the action and it will not be competent for Mission Council or any Assembly Committee to do so.

18. The Proposals envisaged that National Synods would:

- Co-operate with churches indigenous to the nation concerned and (so far as those churches' polity allowed) with the Welsh or Scottish organs of Britain-wide or international churches;
- Conduct negotiations for church union within the nation concerned, subject to Structure para 3(2) regulating final approval of any union;
- Speak and act on behalf of the URC on matters relating to Scottish and Welsh public affairs;
- Respond to consultations initiated by the devolved legislatures;
- Play a full and active part in Scottish and Welsh ecumenical and public affairs in relation to organisations, institutions and activities indigenous to Scotland and Wales and;
- Represent the URC to the devolved legislatures on matters of social, political and economic significance to the nation concerned.

19. Some of these may well be covered already by the function of any synod to 'expand the range and deepen the nature of the Christian common life and witness' in the territory whose churches it represents. But delegation of *General Assembly* authority to do these things, as in the Task Group's proposed change to the Structure, would make the national synod the URC's primary voice within the nation concerned. The principle was arguably conceded by the Assembly resolution of 12 July 1998 giving 'first approval' to the Proposals for Union as a whole. But greater clarity would be helpful, especially in the situation brought about by legislative devolution, and also about the position of the Synod of Wales, to which Part 4 of the Proposals did not refer.

The rationale of National Synods

20. Although General Assembly function (ii) speaks of 'the well-being of the community in which the church is placed', the URC is in fact placed within many communities, defined by geography, demography, culture, language, and economics. Synod functions (ii), and now also (xxii), reflect this, recognising that sometimes a synod may be better placed than Assembly to relate and witness to the community of the territory whose churches it represents. This applies to Wales no less than to Scotland. And although Part 3 para 2(b) and Part 4 of the Proposals for Union referred only to Scotland, Part 5 of the Proposals

⁹ Structure 2(6)(officers and committees)

¹⁰ Assembly Standing Order 3(f)(iv)

expounded further on the concept of National Synods with equal reference to Wales. The emphasis here was on the tasks peculiar to a National Synod and not, therefore, proper to the synod of an English province.¹¹ (We take this opportunity to note that in the cases of the Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey, it may be the church meeting rather than either Synod or Assembly which is best placed to relate, and offer a distinctive United Reformed witness, to the insular community in which it finds itself.)

21. 'Unlike synods in England', Part 5 said of the synods envisaged for Scotland and Wales, 'they comprehend a whole nation within their borders'. This was deliberate. The difficulties of North-South travel in Wales might, for example, have militated in favour of two Welsh provinces, North and South: but 'Certain considerations of size and ease of communication which are taken into account in the arrangements for English synods are set aside in order to reflect national identity and the constitutional arrangements of the United Kingdom'. The Synod of Wales remained a single body so that it could constitute a Welsh voice in the URC, reflecting within the church factors common to the whole of Wales, and also able to relate to the National Assembly for which that year's Government of Wales Act provided.
22. This thinking was also influential a few years later, when the decision was taken to remove one level of the church's four-tier conciliar structure. Had synods been abolished, it was argued, a group of Welsh districts or Scottish areas could not have carried the same weight in representations to the Welsh Assembly or Scottish Parliament, nor (unless services were pooled) have maintained staff with expertise in the social, political, educational and cultural questions for which the new temporal legislatures were responsible.
23. Consequently the Proposals envisaged that 'In matters relating to Scottish and Welsh ecclesiastical and public affairs the national synods will speak and act in the name of the URC. They will play a full and active part in Scottish and Welsh ecclesiastical and public affairs in relation to organisations, institutions and activities which are indigenous and/or devolved to Scotland and Wales. ... So far as the present union is concerned, the National Synod of Scotland will maintain, as far as possible, the existing commitments to ecclesiastical and public bodies in Scotland. It will also enter into any new relationships or commitments to such distinctively Scottish bodies on behalf of the URC in connection with these relationships or commitments.' An illustrative list of organisations and institutions specific to each territory followed.
24. From discussion within the Task Group, it is clear that the word 'ecclesiastical' here referred not to the internal affairs of the URC, but to inter-church relations and perhaps to any wider relations between the URC in Scotland or Wales and Scottish or Welsh faith or belief groups. Broadly speaking, the ecumenical provisions at Structure paras 2(4)A(xxii) and 3(2), and actual current practice, cover this. But we believe the 'delegation' approach of Proposals Part 4 para C(i) gives effect to what was proposed and agreed in 1998 better than the current wording of synod function (xxii).

¹¹ Though, pursuing the point made earlier, some of these comments may be applicable to the church meetings in the Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey.

D. 'Speaking for the URC'

A hypothetical example

25. It is also clear that 'speaking in the name of the URC' did not, and could not, mean voicing the *only* URC view. The Welsh Assembly government recently consulted religious groups in Wales on proposals (now enacted) to change the legal basis for organ transplantation, and the Scottish government conducted a similar consultation on its marriage and civil partnership reforms. The Synod of Scotland, through its Church and Society Committee, responded to the consultation in Scotland; the Synod of Wales did not respond to the consultation in Wales (one factor being that it has no Church and Society Committee). But even had both synods responded, they could not have claimed to express the view of the entire denomination.
26. It might be – purely hypothetically – that a majority of the church's Welsh members might favour an 'opt-out' transplantation régime, whilst a majority of members in England and Scotland did not. England, of course, is also a nation, united by law and language, culture and cuisine and by its political and religious history, whether or not the Structure acknowledges this. No synod can speak for the URC in England as a whole, so the General Assembly remains the only body competent to do so.¹²
27. In that hypothetical situation the Proposals suggest that the Synod of Wales would be entitled to voice the view in favour of 'opt-out' organ transplantation to the Welsh Assembly Government; but could not prevent the General Assembly making public the majority view of church members throughout Great Britain that transplantation without express donor consent was wrong. In so doing, the General Assembly would not be adding to the information the Welsh Assembly government was seeking – the views of its own electorate – but it would be indicating that the synod's response did not reflect a broad consensus within the URC. Although it might be contended that the membership of the URC outside Wales was not entitled to take a view *per se* on what the law of Wales (in a devolved field) should be, all church members must surely still be entitled to take a view on moral questions generally, and to reason that such morality knows no political borders.
28. To imagine a further fictitious case – that the Department of Health in Whitehall conducted its own consultation on organ transplantation within England at roughly the same time as the Welsh exercise – it seems logical that the General Assembly, or a competent body under its authority such as Mission Council or a Committee, should be able to tender a response reflecting an ascertained consensus amongst English church members or the representatives of English synods. If this response directly contradicted the response given by the National Synod in the Welsh consultation, the only possible conclusion would be that, whilst no broad denominational consensus existed, the URC in England rejected transplantation without express donor consent.
29. There might also be a situation raising not so much a clear moral question as a judgment on issues affecting the population of one territory in one way, and the URC as a whole in another. The Task Group considered the example of the abolition of Gift Aid by one of the devolved administrations (at present only the Scottish Parliament would have this power). Hypothetically, church members in Scotland, and hence the national synod, might feel this would benefit all Scots by improving the public revenue, and that charities should be prepared to make this sacrifice for the greater good. Other church members, and hence the General Assembly, might reach the opposite conclusion. Again, both the synod and the Assembly should be free to express their opinions to the Scottish Parliament as those of the URC.

¹² In the sphere of temporal government, the implications of devolution for the specifically English functions of the Parliament at Westminster are under ongoing debate, but so far no 'West Lothian question' has arisen in the URC.

30. In some denominations, a divided voice on moral issues would be unthinkable. There are churches in which national and local office-bearers can express a ‘view of the church’ only if it repeats or is consistent with teaching emanating from the church’s supreme authority. But the Congregational and Churches of Christ strands in the heritage of the URC remind us of the work of the Holy Spirit in *each* gathered congregation, and the united church’s commitment to the rights of personal conviction¹³ affirms that on some questions even individual church members can differ whilst all remain in good standing. The URC already holds together admitted differences of conviction on infant baptism¹⁴ and the morals of human sexuality.¹⁵

Factors encouraging consistency or justifying diverse responses

31. Yet there must be limits. The ‘unity of the fellowship’ is also important to the Basis of Union, and indeed the URC confesses division which makes it impossible for Christians fully to communicate to be an example of ‘failure and weakness’.¹⁶ It seems to the Task Group that four factors should counteract the tendency to a divided witness on national lines, or sometimes provide an acceptable ground for it.
32. First, even in the URC, all councils of the church remain committed to the unqualified tenets of the Basis of Union. Though individuals may sometimes dissent, it is not for any council – including a National Synod – to speak in the name of the URC inconsistently with the document according to which the whole URC ‘testifies to its faith, and orders its life’.¹⁷ So neither National Synod could publicly support, for example, government action which constrained rights of conscience and of religious belief,¹⁸ even if the majority of church members in that nation supported the government. The Basis of Union can be changed, but only by the General Assembly through a defined procedure. Thus the Synod of Wales was at liberty¹⁹ to participate in Welsh ecumenical negotiations which could have led to a régime of personal oversight by an individual admitted to a separate order of bishops,²⁰ but could not have finally adopted the régime without the General Assembly approving either Wales’s separation from the URC²¹ or a change to the Basis of Union applicable throughout the denomination.²²
33. Secondly, all councils of the church remain committed to consultation. Structure paragraph 4 requires that ‘decisions on the part of any council shall be reached only after the fullest attempt has been made to discover the mind of the other councils or of local churches likely to be affected by the decision’. Of course, this has to be interpreted in good faith by the deciding council. Not all decisions do affect other councils; and the ‘fullest attempt’ must mean the fullest practical attempt proportionate to the decision’s importance. Timing, and even sometimes expense, may be factors.²³ Yet Part 5.1 of the Proposals for Union

¹³ Basis of Union 10

¹⁴ Basis of Union 14

¹⁵ Commitment on Human Sexuality 2007

¹⁶ Basis of Union 7 and 10

¹⁷ Basis of Union 9

¹⁸ Basis of Union Schedule D, version 1, para 8

¹⁹ Under what is now Structure 2(4)(xxii)

²⁰ Such a separate order being arguably inconsistent with the attribution of oversight to ‘elders and ministers’ in Basis of Union 20; certainly, when this was last proposed in 2000 on the basis that the bishop must be male, it was inconsistent with the declaration ‘that all ministries within the life of the [URC] shall be open to both men and women’.

²¹ Under Structure 3(2)

²² Under Structure 3(1)

²³ For example, the General Assembly is currently consulting local churches regarding possible decisions in relation to same sex marriage. Facilitators are providing a valuable service to church meetings in their discussions; but facilitators’ travel, and central staff time in processing local responses, are not without cost.

recognised this would be an important corollary to the distinctive national synod role. 'It is through their continued participation in and commitment to the conciliar structures of the URC that the national synods will honour the trust which has been placed in them.'

34. The General Assembly meets less frequently than the National Synods. Consultation of the Assembly by a synod therefore often has to take place in ways other than by scheduling a discussion as part of Assembly business. The Standing Committees 'subject to the General Assembly ... have charge of the continuing interests of the church' and Mission Council has power to act in Assembly's name between meetings.²⁴ Liaison between National Synod and corresponding Assembly committees should therefore be normal practice (and indeed probably is). The Synod of Scotland was, in effect, acting on behalf of its local churches and consulting the General Assembly (in whose name Mission Council replied) when it sought clarification recently of those churches' ability to extend ecumenical marriage hospitality.²⁵
35. But consultation works both ways. The General Assembly is equally obliged by paragraph 4 to consult affected synods before taking a decision, and sometimes decisions may affect National Synods in a different way from those of the English provinces. The Assembly's obligation is no less binding on those who act for it, and there are times when Assembly Committees, advisory groups and task groups should consider seeking a distinctive Welsh or Scottish input into their work.²⁶ The officers and committees of National Synods should respond promptly and willingly to such requests.
36. Thirdly, cross-representation is already a possibility. The principle of a denominational voice in appointments, even to discharge a role purely within Scotland, was recognised in Proposals Part 4 para F(iii) (considered above), and Part 5.1 envisages that 'In some instances a representative of the URC outwith the National Synods may be included among their representatives, if it is judged necessary in order to ensure that the wider interests of the denomination are represented. In such cases the synod officers will refer the question to the Assembly Nominations Committee of the URC'.
37. There are resource implications here. It is not only that travel expenses, especially between Scotland and London, can be substantial; it is also that a National Synod's resources may make it difficult to fund a committee, task group or staff member with a remit corresponding to that of an Assembly body; so even if a synod were content to make written input into denominational decisions it might have nobody capable of producing that input. The lack of any Church and Society Committee in Wales, and one of its consequences, has already been mentioned. The Task Group refers this issue to those who consider synod funding from a denominational perspective.
38. Fourthly, contradictory responses are not always inconsistent with a single Gospel. The Gospel has to be applied in particular geographical situations, just as it is applied to particular times. One territory may be characterised by large cities, another by remote or island communities; one by bilingual education, another by a need to integrate widely diverse migrant cultures. The URC does not sit in judgment on its members' party political allegiances, which are often informed by Christian conviction, yet vary widely across the church.

²⁴ Structure 2(6)(officers and committees)

²⁵ Mission Council minute 14/60 of November 2014

²⁶ For example, the Human Sexuality Task Group currently sitting recognised in 2014 that it had no Scottish member although the differences in Scots marriage law from English have serious implications for the church, and co-opted a Scottish member accordingly.

E. 'Acting for the URC' in different legal systems

39. Lastly, the question arises how far a national Synod, taking its own view on some question of faith or morals either when other parts of the URC take a different view or when no view has been ascertained in those other parts – is entitled to act upon its view when the law of the land appears to give it that right. By 'act' here we mean something more than expressing a collective opinion or responding to a consultation. We mean something that will have legal effect because the law specifically gives church organs the power to produce that effect. A topical example is the power for a religious body (defined as 'an organised group of people meeting regularly for common religious worship') to nominate approved celebrants of same sex marriage in Scotland.²⁷ The logic of what we say here applies equally to the insular church meetings, although our terms of reference do not cover them.
40. It seems to us, given the insistence in the Basis of Union of separate church and civil governments,²⁸ that the authority of any council of the church to act should not, in any context and certainly not 'in things spiritual', flow *merely* from a temporal legislature or some other temporal source such as a declaration of trust. Of course there is scope for argument how far marriage – for example – is a 'thing spiritual', and it may be argued that by approving the Proposals for Union including Part 5.1, the URC has already given the National Synods authority to act for it in public affairs. But we suggest that this be put beyond doubt by an amended wording in paragraph 2(4)A(xxii) of the Structure.
41. It should be understood, however, that the power to act for the church is subject to the same constraints as the power to speak for the church. It cannot be exercised by the National Synod alone in a way that contradicts a principle or tenet expressly stated in the Basis of Union. And it should be exercised in consultation with other affected councils, usually by liaison between the competent committees or officers of the synod and the General Assembly.

Draft Resolutions

1. **Mission Council accepts the conclusions reached by the National Synods Task Group (NSTG) in its report and commends them to all synods.**
2. **Mission Council seeks the leave of the General Assembly to withdraw the draft Resolution 19A moved by it at the Assembly session of July 2014.**
3. **Mission Council resolves to make the following amendment to the Structure of the URC:**

Reword paragraph 2(4)A(xxii) to read:

- a) **to seek to expand the range and deepen the nature of the Christian common life and witness in each local community, and**
- b) **in Scotland and Wales to speak and act on behalf of the whole United Reformed Church in public affairs or the conduct of ecumenical relationships specific to the nation concerned, in the General Assembly's name but without prejudice to the Assembly's right to speak and act in the same field on behalf of the United Reformed Church either in England or throughout Great Britain.**

²⁷ Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977 ss. 9(1A) and 26(2)

²⁸ Basis of Union, Schedule D, version 1, para 8

