

Paper H1

Updates on current work

Ministries committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Paul Whittle moderator@urceastern.org.uk The Revd Craig Bowman ministries@urc.org.uk
Action required	For information.
Draft resolution(s)	None.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	This paper is an update on work the ministries committee has undertaken since the last Mission Council.
Main points	Progress on identifying active ministers as defined at General Assembly 2018; review of the guidelines on conduct and behaviour for lay preachers; implementation of Model 4 non-stipendiary service.
Previous relevant documents	General Assembly 2018, Book of Reports, resolution 27, p.133; Mission Council November 2018, paper H2; Ministries committee guidelines for the conduct and behaviour of lay preachers available on the website: https://urc.org.uk/images/images/Guidelines_-_Lay_Preachers_Sep_2012.pdf
Consultation has taken place with...	Synod moderators; the secretary for education and learning, and through the secretary the RCLs.

Summary of impact

Financial	No new impact.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	No direct impact.

Active ministers

1. Following General Assembly's acceptance of a definition of an active minister in 2018, we have been in communication with the synods to confirm the status of those ministers resident in each synod, particularly those who will now be covered by those categories in the definition which do not relate to a specific role. This is mainly, but not exclusively, retired ministers.

2. All ministers who are deemed to be active under the new definition will be subject to the same requirements as those in recognised posts. That is, to have a valid criminal record check (either DBS or PVG) and undertake mandatory training (e.g. safer sacred space).
3. We are grateful for the support of the synods, particularly the synod moderators, in completing this piece of work.

Guidelines on conduct and behaviour for accredited and recognised lay preachers

4. After reviewing the guidelines at its meeting in February 2019 the ministries committee did not feel there was a need to alter or add to the general content of the document previously published in 2012. However it was noticed that the introduction erroneously refers to lay preachers not being mentioned in the Basis of Union. They are, so this sentence has been corrected.
5. It was agreed that the title should be changed to include the term 'recognised' as well as 'accredited' so that it might be relevant to all those who have a lay preaching role acknowledged by the United Reformed Church, both assembly accredited and locally recognised by synods. We invite synods to share the guidelines with lay preachers whom they have recognised and hope this will prove to be a useful tool in encouraging healthy habits in this vital ministry.
6. The revised document is found in the appendix.

Ministry of Word and Sacraments: non-stipendiary service model four

7. The ministries committee and the education and learning committee have been working together to identify what more needs to be in place to assist in the assessment and formation of those candidating for the new model four of non-stipendiary service. Education for Ministry Phase one standards for model four will be agreed at a joint meeting of the committees in June, a minor change to the application form has been agreed, the necessity for an additional document within a candidate's papers has been recognised and the guidelines for those involved in the process are being updated, not least those for synod candidating officers. Additionally a consultation with candidating officers is planned for the early summer. This all means that it will be possible to consider candidates for model four at the November 2019 assessment conference, whilst recognising that the need to test that call using the normal process already makes deadlines tight.

Appendix to paper H1

Guidelines on conduct and behaviour for accredited and recognised lay preachers

1. Introduction

This paper sets down expectations of accredited lay preachers in relation to Ministers of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs) and elders within the United Reformed Church. Parallel papers about the expectations of ministers, CRCWs and elders are to be read alongside this document.

Lay preachers exercise an essential and valued role in leading worship in United Reformed Churches. Accredited lay preachers are trained, accredited and commissioned by the United Reformed Church, or recognised by synods. Lay preachers share with Ministers of Word and Sacraments in the leadership of worship in local churches. In their role of leading worship there may be times when a lay preacher is called upon to exercise a pastoral role when a Minister of Word and Sacraments is not available and they need to adopt similar standards of integrity in their lives and relationships. Lay preachers, in addition to their promises as members of a United Reformed Church, at their commissioning service reaffirm their faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and undertake to exercise their ministry in accordance with the Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church.

2. Standards of Christian Behaviour

2a Personal integrity and health

- To live a Christian life as persons of prayer and integrity.
- To be committed to growing in faith and discipleship and developing the gifts each has been given.
- To be aware of the need of ministers, lay preachers, elders and members to have appropriate boundaries that safeguard personal and spiritual health and welfare, to promote healthy relationships with others and not to do anything to undermine the spiritual health of another.
- To recognise the need for ministers, lay preachers, elders and members to have a healthy lifestyle and to balance demands on ministers/CRCWs' availability and accessibility with respect for ministers'/CRCWs' time for family and friends, personal renewal and rest and spiritual growth.
- To maintain strict confidentiality of all matters shared in confidence, except when required by law to do otherwise, e.g. with regard to the safety of children, and to respect ministers' and elders' needs to maintain that same confidentiality.
- To exercise care and sensitivity when seeking counsel from others and in discussion about pastoral concerns, in order that the identity of any person shall not be revealed unless permission has been granted.
- To refrain from using privilege or power for personal advantage or gain, whether financial, emotional, sexual or material.

2b Relationships with ministers

- To work collaboratively with ministers/CRCWs, elders, members and other lay preachers where appropriate.
- To regard all persons with equal respect and concern and not discriminate against anyone on the basis of gender, race, age, disability or sexual orientation, including ministers/CRCWs.
- To honour the ministers/CRCWs currently called to serve and not invite or encourage other ministers to be involved in the life of the church or to offer pastoral care without the ministers'/CRCWs' consent.
- To refrain from raising pastoral issues with a previous minister/CRCW.
- To respect the work of previous ministers/CRCWs and deal honourably with their record.
- To welcome retired ministers/CRCWs as members and worshippers in the pastorate.

2c Relationship with elders, members and others

- To regard all persons with equal love and concern.
- To uphold values of faithfulness, trust and respect.
- To share leadership and pastoral care with others called to these purposes where appropriate.
- To seek advice from others if in doubt about one's competence to deal with any issue or situation.
- To consider very carefully taking any position of responsibility, particularly in any church where the lay preacher is not a member, and to support the direction of church life initiated through the ministers/CRCWs, elders and church meetings.
- Not to enter a sexual relationship with anyone in their care.
- Not to be alone with a child or children or young people in a place quite separate from others.

2d Relationship with councils of the Church

- To recognise that local URC churches are part of the wider United Reformed Church and that the ministers/CRCWs are committed to play their part in the wider councils of the Church and in ecumenical relationships.
- To engage positively with all the councils of the church.
- To participate in synod's consultation and review of a pastorate if appropriate.

Ministries committee, February 2019