

Paper H3

Ministries Committee
Ministries updates

United Reformed Church
2017
Church 2017



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Ministries committee

Ministry issues

Basic Information

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

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To explore the range of questions of current concern with respect to different aspects of the ministry of the church and, in particular, the deployment of Ministers of Word and Sacraments
Main points	This paper explores a range of ministry issues, including call, models of ministry, the deployment formula, the use of the ministry budget, the value of the ministry and mission covenant and the place and development of local leadership
Previous relevant documents	None of direct relevance
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of Impact

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

Ministry Updates

1. Ministries Committee is currently working on a number of key issues that were mentioned at the last, or previous, Mission Councils. It is appropriate to offer some updates.
2. Work is ongoing on the number of ministers, actual, targets and predicted. There was a greater number of unpredictable changes than anticipated during 2016, though not significantly so. However, this has led to an unexpected, though not unexplained, gap between the actual and predicted numbers at the end of 2016. The current work on Certificates of Eligibility and different methods of spending money budgeted for ministry will address this.
3. The working party that has been exploring all aspects of non-stipendiary ministry is about to report to Ministries Committee. It is anticipated that relevant matters, and possibly proposals, will be brought to the next meeting of Mission Council.
4. A complete update of the Movement of Ministers document, including better use of electronic links, is needed and under consideration, but is an extensive piece of work. As an interim measure a reasonable updating of the current document is almost complete, and should replace the current website documentation soon.
5. As requested by General Assembly, a code of conduct for authorised elders has been prepared – Appendix 1. This will benefit from some minor amendments, not least that the document currently only mentions DBS (England and Wales) and not PVG (Scotland). However, the committee believes it is sufficiently robust to be offered without further delay, and so it is now available for use as and when required by synods. Ministries Committee reminds Mission Council that General Assembly instructed that authorised elders be required to subscribe to such a code as a condition of authorisation and suggests that demonstrating such commitment is best achieved by a request to sign the code.
6. In response to the resolution agreed at the October 2016 Mission Council requesting further work on communicating the Ministry and Mission covenant, a brain-storming meeting of appropriate representatives was held. Among the main things noted were the different approaches used by different synods. Work is being done on this issue separately, and will be reported to a subsequent meeting of Mission Council. A second point concerned the difficulty of persuading people to engage in realistic levels of stewardship: generally speaking, poorer communities tend to be significantly more generous. A third, and related, point was about seeing giving as a key element in discipleship. It was agreed that, at this stage, it made sense to continue present practice for 2017, and so an appropriate leaflet and accompanying letter will be produced, though with an emphasis on celebrating what we have achieved. It was further agreed to develop more innovative and varied approaches for subsequent years, potentially using such means as video clips and podcasts, but additionally to ensure clear integration with Walking the Way.

Appendix 1 to Paper H3

Code of Conduct for Authorised Elders

Introduction

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

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

Authorised Elders in this document refers to those appointed by the synod under 2 above, whether elders or lay preachers. Such appointees agree to abide by this code of conduct.

Faithful living

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

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

Authorised Elders will:

- Remember that the worship of the local church is an expression of the worship of the whole people of God.
- Treat honourably the traditions and practices of the United Reformed Church
- Be sensitive to the particular patterns of worship life in the congregation for which they are authorised
- Undertake such training as determined by the synod in line with the requirements of General Assembly
- Engage positively with the review process at the end of the probationary year and at the end of the appointment period.
- Hold a valid Disclosure and Barring Service certificate.
- Be supportive of any changes the church and synod may wish to make at the end of the appointment, recognising that changes within the pastorate may mean there is no ongoing need for an authorised elder or that it is appropriate for someone else to take on the role.