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Equal Opportunities Committee Membership

Like other committees of the United Reformed Church the Equal Opportunities committee has 8 members. However unlike most other committees it has no staff but depends on the committee members to do the work of the committee and also needs a variety of members to meet the work of the equal opportunities policy - gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, colour, ethnic or national origin, age, marital status and disability.

The Equal Opportunities committee has two staff members who attend meetings and who support and help the work - Michelle Marcano (Head of Human Resources) and Michael Jagessar (Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry). But they are not expected to do all the work, that is the responsibility of the committee members.

All the members of the committee (apart from the convener and secretary), are responsible for connecting to another Assembly committee, either attending the committee meetings, or receiving their papers and reflecting on them from an equal opportunities perspective. This is an important part of our work and on some committees e.g. Assembly Arrangements, it is a major piece of work. However there are more than 6 committees to connect to, so we are not able to connect to them all. Other pieces of work need to be done by the committee members together. For example writing the papers to support the equal opportunities policy and responding to emails, particularly between meetings when new issues are raised. Equal Opportunities is a busy committee. Recently we have been responding on issues concerning Sharia Law which has now been taken up by the Mission Team and the Inter-Faith Reference Group and we hope will result in a paper for the next Mission Council. We have also been helping with the United Reformed Church's policy on Bullying and Harassment.

The Equal Opportunities committee has recently agreed with Nominations committee that both the convener and secretary should serve for a year before taking up responsibility for their role. This is helpful so that for 2 out of every 4 years the membership of the committee is 9 rather than 8. However these additional members already have their responsibility laid out for them and are unlikely to have time for other work.

The Equal Opportunities committee would like to request an increase in its membership from 8 to 10 members in order to have more people to work on equal opportunities issues for the United Reformed Church and also to give greater space for Nominations to fulfill the breadth of equal opportunities policy membership on the committee. The committee is of the opinion that we want full members of the committee rather than co-options because we want them to have the same commitment and expectations as the other committee members and because we need equality between us all. The increase in cost is limited to the cost of traveling to London 3 times a year for meetings and can be held comfortably within our current budget.

Elizabeth Nash
Convener, Equal Opportunities Committee