

# Paper H2

Ministries Committee  
Ministers on the Roll

United Church 2015  
Church 2015  
Reformed Church 2015  
Church 2015



# Paper H2

## Ministries Committee

### Ministers on the Roll

#### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Craig Bowman <a href="mailto:ministries@urc.org.uk">ministries@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Mission Council believes that:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) recognised ministry is not only an expression of personal discipleship but a continuation of the work of Christ rooted in his body which is the Church;</li> <li>b) those presenting themselves as ministers of the United Reformed Church need to be anchored within the denomination for reasons both of support and of discipline;</li> <li>c) ministers who have retired from formal positions should be valued not just for their past ministry but for the way in which so many of them continue to model the Christian life for others and make themselves available to serve the church in a variety of ways.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. <b>Mission Council therefore approves the categories set out in the paper Ministers on the Roll as a means of providing more clarity regarding the status of ministers and expectations of them.</b></li> </ol>

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To provide clarity regarding the status of ministers on the roll of United Reformed Church ministers and improve accountability and support.
<b>Main points</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ministers should be recorded as either active, authorised, emeritus or none of these</li> <li>2. Ministers who are either active or authorised will be expected to fulfil the requirements of the denomination with regard to safeguarding checks and mandated training.</li> <li>3. Ministers who are authorised will need to be in regular contact with their synod.</li> </ol>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	General Assembly 2006, Resolution 25, Record p40
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Synod moderators, September 2015

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	No significant financial implication. There may be a slight rise in the number of safeguarding checks required if a number of ministers not currently engaged with a synod wish to be considered as authorised.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	If adopted, this system will provide a clearer indication to sister churches and other organisations regarding the appropriateness of individuals presenting themselves as someone who acts with the support of the United Reformed Church.

## Ministers on the Roll

1. The status of ministers of the United Reformed Church who are not members of a local congregation of the URC has been raised with the Ministries office a number of times over the past few years.
2. A number of these enquiries relate to retired ministers. However the more complicated matter is in regard to the standing of United Reformed Church ministers who are not officially retired but who are not currently in a denominational post or are serving in a role that might be recognised as ministry with a sister church or organisation and, in some cases, do not have on-going contact with the United Reformed Church either through a local church or through the synod in which they reside. This raises concerns in a number of areas including support, commitment and accountability.
3. In 2006 General Assembly sought to address this in part. It is now necessary for the relevant council of the church (the synod) to decide whether or not to grant concurrence when a minister moves away from ministry within the United Reformed Church. If concurrence is withheld it is for the Accreditation sub-committee to confirm that decision or not. If the committee supports the withholding of concurrence the minister is deemed to have resigned from the roll of ministers and is not then eligible to seek a call to a United Reformed Church pastorate or post, or to present her/himself as a minister of the church, without seeking re-admittance to the roll.
4. There remains an uncertain middle-ground where a minister has resigned from a particular post (for example for family reasons, which may be perceived as temporary) but who wishes to make her/himself available to the church as far as is possible without undertaking a formal role, and who would resist any suggestion that key personal convictions have disappeared. However it may reasonably be argued that questions 7 and 8 in Schedule C of the Basis of Union<sup>1</sup> (affirmations made at ordination and induction) point to an expected active participation in the life of the church if one is to be a minister of the United Reformed Church.

### 1. Schedule C

7. Do you promise to fulfil the duties of your charge faithfully, to lead the church in worship, to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight, to take your part in the councils of the Church, and to give leadership to the Church in its mission to the world? **By the grace of God, I do.**
8. Do you promise as a minister of the United Reformed Church to seek its well-being, purity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church? **By the grace of God, I do.**

5. The process established in 2006 provides for the removal from the roll of those who are no longer acting as ministers of the United Reformed Church but it doesn't address the situation of those ministers who left United Reformed Church roles prior to 2006.
6. The Ministries committee believes strongly that:
  - recognised ministry is not only an expression of personal discipleship but a continuation of the work of Christ rooted in his body which is the Church;
  - those presenting themselves as ministers of the United Reformed Church need to be anchored within the denomination for reasons both of support and of discipline;
  - ministers who have retired from formal positions should be valued not just for their past ministry but for the way in which so many of them continue to model the Christian life for others and make themselves available to serve the church in a variety of ways.
- 6.1 Therefore, Ministries proposes that the Roll of United Reformed Church Ministers should be annotated in such a way that the standing of ministers on the roll is more readily understood.
- 6.2 Those who are in formal ministry roles recognised by the synod or General Assembly, whether they have reached retirement age or not, would be considered 'active'.
- 6.3 Where a minister has retired and does not hold any formal ministry role, they remain on the roll of ministers and their name is recorded by the synod in which they live and they would be regarded as 'authorised'.
- 6.4 When a retired minister is no longer willing or is unable due to age or infirmity to offer ministry they would be regarded as 'emeritus'.
- 6.5 Where a minister has not reached retirement age and does not hold any formal ministry role the minister can request that their name be held on the list of authorised ministers residing in the synod. It will be for the synod to decide whether such a person should appear on the authorised list and will take into account such factors as their on-going engagement with the URC and whether they offer any regular service to the URC (and/or its sister churches).
- 6.6 In addition to fulfilling their promises made under Schedule C, all authorised ministers will be expected to fulfil any requirements laid upon them by Assembly. These currently include having a valid DBS/PVG check in place and undertaking Safer Sacred Space training. Should any minister fail to fulfil these requirements, they could no longer be regarded as authorised. It would be for the synod in the first instance to monitor such situations and take any necessary action.
- 6.7 Ministers who are neither active nor authorised should not use the fact that they appear on the roll of URC ministers as a basis for presenting themselves as a minister who has the endorsement the United Reformed Church for any form of ministerial service.
- 6.8 All ministers on the roll, whether active, approved, emeritus or none of these remain under the discipline of the United Reformed Church.