



# The United Reformed Church

86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT, United Kingdom  
**General Secretary:** The Revd John Proctor

To: Members of Mission Council,  
staff in attendance and observers

October 2015

Dear Colleagues,

**Mission Council**  
**Friday to Sunday 13 - 15 November 2015**  
**The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire**

I look forward warmly to seeing you at Mission Council, and write now to mention several practical matters as we prepare for the meeting.

1. There will be an introduction session at 12 noon on the first day for new Mission Council members. I will outline processes and procedures, introduce the Assembly officers, and explain some items of business. Old timers who would like to attend are welcome too. A full version of our rules for procedure is in the 'Standing Orders' (which are also used at General Assembly), and these can be found on the URC website at: [http://www.urc.org.uk/images/Mission%20Council/May-2015/Standing-Orders-May\\_2015-w.pdf](http://www.urc.org.uk/images/Mission%20Council/May-2015/Standing-Orders-May_2015-w.pdf)

2. In recent Mission Council meetings we have taken certain business *En Bloc*. Feedback has been very positive. The fact that an item is taken in the *En Bloc* section does not mean that it is less important than timetabled items. Rather, the *En Bloc* list contains those items where decisions can be reached responsibly without further discussion. You will see that the agenda includes a slot when these items will be voted on.

I suggest you read the *En Bloc* papers first. This will give you time to contact the author of a paper if you have questions. Authors' names and email addresses are noted on the cover sheets. If you think any of these papers need discussion at Mission Council, particularly if you disagree with a proposed course of action, you may ask that a piece of business be removed from *En Bloc*. A sign-up sheet will be available at the meeting, where you can list the paper you wish withdrawn. If an item gets three signatures by close of business on the first day, it will be withdrawn from *En Bloc* and added to our agenda, with time allotted for discussion.

I need to remind you too that we really rely on every Mission Council member to read all the papers and take note of information which should be relayed back to their synods. In using the *En Bloc* method of decision-making there is no wish to bury information or to avoid discussions which Mission Council ought to have. We must all ensure the appropriate flow of information from Mission Council to the synods.

3. You should already have a number of papers from the first mailing: a cover letter, an expenses form, directions to The Hayes, a list of members, and (for new members) 'What we are about in Mission Council.' If you are missing any of these, please contact Krystyna Pullen, 020 7916 8646, [krystyna.pullen@urc.org.uk](mailto:krystyna.pullen@urc.org.uk)

4. Observers and URC staff who are not members of Mission Council should not participate in decision-making. Staff members are welcome to speak but, like observers, they should not use orange and blue cards.

5. I remind you that we are not expected to post on social media sites during business sessions. This restriction is only in place when Council is in session; those attending are free to join in online debates during breaks and after the close of business. As ever, everything written and shared on these sites is the responsibility of the author and subject to the same defamation laws as any other written communication.

6. All bedrooms are en-suite. To comply with the venue's health and safety regulations, please do not bring food from outside into the Centre, nor take food from the dining room to your room.

7. Below are the papers enclosed in this mailing listed according to the ways we mean to address them:

**Category A: En Bloc**

<i>B1</i>	<i>Youth Structures and Guidelines</i>
<i>B2</i>	<i>CYDO Assembly Level Work</i>
<i>C1</i>	<i>Review of Communications Department</i>
<i>I2</i>	<i>World Church staffing</i>
<i>I3</i>	<i>LEP Review</i>
<i>J1</i>	<i>Nominations Names 1</i>
<i>J2</i>	<i>Nominations Names 2</i>
<i>M3</i>	<i>Hearing God more clearly</i>
<i>M4</i>	<i>Postal Voting</i>
<i>M5</i>	<i>Church House Refurbishment</i>
<i>O1</i>	<i>HRAG Report</i>
<i>R1</i>	<i>Safeguarding General Report</i>
<i>U2</i>	<i>Church House Management Group Terms of Reference</i>
<i>Y1</i>	<i>Immigration Health Surcharge</i>

**Category C: Consensus decision making**

<i>A1</i>	<i>Assembly Finance and Future Planning</i>
<i>D1</i>	<i>Windermere Centre Support</i>
<i>D2</i>	<i>Spending Priorities within Education &amp; Learning</i>
<i>F2</i>	<i>Authorised (formerly "Celebrant") Elders</i>
<i>G1</i>	<i>2016 Budget</i>
<i>G2</i>	<i>Ethical Investment Guidelines</i>
<i>H1</i>	<i>NSM Age of Application</i>
<i>H2</i>	<i>Ministers on the Roll</i>
<i>I1</i>	<i>Environmental Policy</i>
<i>M1</i>	<i>Missional Discipleship 1</i>
<i>M2</i>	<i>Missional Discipleship 2</i>
<i>Q1</i>	<i>Joint Property Strategy Group Report</i>
<i>R2</i>	<i>Safeguarding Historic Cases Review</i>
<i>U1</i>	<i>20-40s Task Group Progress Report</i>
<i>V1</i>	<i>Inter-Synod Resource Sharing Methods</i>

**For advice rather than immediate decision**

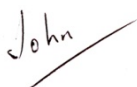
<i>F1</i>	<i>Faith &amp; Order Wider Issues</i>
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8. Papers B1a, b and c, which are support papers for B1, will be available to consult online rather than in hard copy. Further, F1 will appear online on 2nd Nov, and M2 on 6th Nov. F1 and M2 will also be available for you in hard copy at Swanwick, as will J2, listing the most recent work of the Nominations Committee.

9. An offering during the closing worship service will help Reformed Christians in Lebanon to set up a school for Syrian refugee children. There will be more information about this later.

As always, please come to share, listen, reflect and discern together, and to support each other in fellowship outside the formal timetable. Let us treat one another with grace as together we seek the guidance of God.

With best wishes,  
Yours sincerely,



The Revd John Proctor, General Secretary

# Mission Council

The Hayes

13-15 November 2015





[www.urc.org.uk](http://www.urc.org.uk)

Set and published by communications graphics office, Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT  
on behalf of Mission Council.

# Groups – November 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

<p><b>A</b></p>	<p><b>JIM MERRILEES</b>  <b>DICK GRAY</b>            Rita <b>Griffiths</b>            Graham <b>Hoslett</b>            Barbara <b>Jones</b>            Rachel <b>Lampard</b>            Andrew <b>Mills</b>            Lawrence <b>Moore</b>            Lis <b>Mullen</b>            John <b>Proctor</b>            Sue <b>Russell</b></p> <p><i>Leader</i> <i>Reporter</i></p>	<p><b>B</b></p>	<p><b>ANDY BRAUNSTON</b>  <b>BOB JONES</b>            Dougie <b>Burnett</b>            Elizabeth <b>Clark</b>            Andrew <b>Evans</b>            Nicola <b>Furley-Smith</b>            Rosie <b>Martin</b>            Paul <b>Robinson</b>            David <b>Tatem</b>            Irene <b>Wren</b>            Alan <b>Yates</b></p> <p><i>Leader</i> <i>Reporter</i></p>
<p><b>C</b></p>	<p><b>SIMON WALKLING</b>  <b>HELEN LIDGETT</b>            Melanie <b>Campbell</b>            Joan <b>Colwell</b>            Steve <b>Faber</b>            Simon <b>Fairnington</b>            George <b>Faris</b>            David <b>Grosch-Miller</b>            Helen <b>Mee</b>            Chris <b>Reed</b>            Fiona <b>Thomas</b></p>	<p><b>D</b></p>	<p><b>GEOFF FELTON</b>  <b>KEVIN WATSON</b>            Jane <b>Baird</b>            Susan <b>Brown</b>            Adrian <b>Bulley</b>            David <b>Greatorex</b>            Tim <b>Meadows</b>            Kim <b>Plumpton</b>            Vic <b>Russell</b>            Ruth <b>Whitehead</b></p>
<p><b>E</b></p>	<p><b>DAVID PICKERING</b>  <b>RICHARD CHURCH</b>            Stephen <b>Ball</b>            Clare <b>Downing</b>            Andrew <b>Grimwade</b>            Michael <b>Hopkins</b>            Tracey <b>Lewis</b>            Karen <b>Morrison</b>            Victoria <b>Paulding</b>            Carol <b>Rogers</b>            Nigel <b>Uden</b></p>	<p><b>F</b></p>	<p><b>JENNY POULTER</b>  <b>JOHN HUMPHREYS</b>            Derrick <b>Dzandu-Hedidor</b>            John <b>Ellis</b>            Carla <b>Grosch-Miller</b>            Margaret <b>Marshall</b>            Neil <b>Messer</b>            Steve <b>Summers</b>            Elizabeth <b>Welch</b>            Andrew <b>Weston</b>            Paul <b>Whittle</b></p>
<p><b>G</b></p>	<p><b>FRANK LIDDELL</b>  <b>JACKY EMBREY</b>            Francis <b>Brienen</b>            James <b>Breslin</b>            Linda <b>Harrison</b>            Trevor <b>Jamison</b>            Gwen <b>Jennings</b>            Andrew <b>Middleton</b>            Andrew <b>Prasad</b>            Michael <b>Walsh</b></p>	<p><b>H</b></p>	<p><b>JENNY MILLS</b>  <b>TIM MEACHIN</b>            Craig <b>Bowman</b>            Pam <b>Dent</b>            Joan <b>Grindrod-Helmn</b>            Michael <b>Jagessar</b>            Peter <b>Knowles</b>            Morag <b>McLintock</b>            Peter <b>Meek</b>            Sandy <b>Nunn</b>            Cliff <b>Patten</b></p>

# Mission Council Agenda

13-15 November 2015

18/10/2015

<b>Friday 13th November</b>		
12:00 – 12:45	Introduction session for new MC members (Derwent Room, Alan Booth Centre)	
<b>12:00 – 12:45</b>	<b>Registration in the Main House reception area</b>	
<b>1:00</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	
<b>Session One in Butterley Hall</b>		
2:00 – 3:30	Opening Worship Introductions & Administration Minutes from May 2015 Matters Arising Missional Discipleship Papers	<b>M1 &amp; M2</b>
<b>3:30</b>	<b>Tea Break</b> <b>Room keys available</b>	
<b>Session Two</b>		
4:15 – 6:15	NSM Age of Application Ministers on the Roll Spending Priorities within Education & Learning Windermere Centre Support 2016 Budget Inter-Synod Resource Sharing Methods	<b>H1 H2 D2 D1 G1 V1</b>
<b>6:45 – 8:00</b>	<b>Dinner</b>	
<b>Session Three</b>		
8:00 – 9:15	Historic Cases Review Assembly Finance & Future Planning Joint Property Strategy Group Report 20-40s Task Group Progress Report Closing Devotions	<b>R2 A1 Q1 U1</b>
<b>Saturday 14th November</b>		
<b>8:30</b>	<b>Breakfast</b>	
<b>Session Four</b>		
9:15 – 10:45	Devotions Environmental Policy Ethical Investment Guidelines	<b>I1 G2</b>
<b>10:45</b>	<b>Coffee</b>	

<b>Session Five</b> 11:15	Authorised (formerly 'Celebrant') Elders Faith & Order Wider Issues		<b>F2 F1</b>
<b>1:00 – 2:00</b>	<b>Lunch</b>		
<b>Session Six</b> 2:00 – 4:00	Free time or remaindered business		
<b>Session Seven</b> 4:30 – 6:30	Items removed from En Bloc En Bloc Business Remaindered Business		<b>En Bloc</b>
<b>6:45 – 8:00</b>	<b>Dinner</b>		
<b>Session Eight</b> 8:00 – 9:00	Moderator's Reflection from Papua New Guinea and Korea Closing Devotions		
<b>Sunday 15th November</b>			
<b>8:30</b>	<b>Breakfast</b>		
<b>Session Nine</b> 9:30 – 11:00	Opening Prayer  Remaindered business Faith and Order reflection on earlier discussion Farewells and thanks		
<b>11:00 – 11:30</b>	<b>Coffee</b>		
<b>Session Ten</b>  11:30 – 12:45	  Communion Service		
<b>1:00</b>	<b>Lunch and departures</b>		
1:45 – 3:00 (max)	Meeting of committee conveners (Derwent Room, Alan Booth Centre)		





# Paper A1

Assembly Arrangements Committee  
Finance and Future Planning

United Church 2015  
Church 2015  
Reformed Church 2015  
Church 2015



# Paper A1

## Assembly Arrangements Committee Finance and Future Planning

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd James Breslin <a href="mailto:breslin@newcastleurc.freeserve.co.uk">breslin@newcastleurc.freeserve.co.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision on the financing of Assembly
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, resolves to instruct the Assembly Arrangements Committee to book all accommodation for future Assemblies.</b></li> <li><b>Mission Council requests synods to pay to the central funds of the Church the difference in the cost of accommodation for their representatives between the £50 <i>per diem</i> grant already agreed and the true cost incurred for the 2016 Assembly</b></li> <li><b>Mission Council requests synods to meet the cost of travel for their representatives attending the 2016 Assembly.</b></li> </ol>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Finance of the recalled Assembly in June 2015. Finance of Assembly 2016 Reports and future planning.
<b>Main points</b>	As resolutions.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Mission Council, March 2014, Paper A
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The synods regarding finance and the Assembly committee convenors regarding reporting.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	Increased cost to the synods.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None.

# General Assemblies 2014-15-16

1. Having now completed the accounts for the recalled Assembly, which met in Carrs Lane Church, Birmingham, the committee is pleased to report that, contrary to our initial expectations, the cost of the Assembly was slightly under the budget of £35,000. This is in considerable part due to the diligence and generosity of the team of volunteer helpers and the ministers and congregation of Carrs Lane Church.
2. The committee has given some thought to how best to manage the costs of future Assemblies, noting that the one third reduction of the budget previously agreed has created a number of problems both for the committee and for the synods. At Cardiff, the committee, other than through a *per diem* grant of £50 *per capita*, ceased to be responsible for accommodation or evening meals except for staff and members of Assembly appointed directly by the Assembly. It also set up and managed a fares pool intended to equalise costs for travel across the whole Church. This was not entirely successful. It created considerable problems in its administration and led to a considerable increase in the costs to the synods. While we do not have a complete total of the grants made by synods to those whom they appointed to membership of the Assembly we are aware that at least two synods paid out over £5,000 and that the total cost to the synods was probably close to £30,000.
3. The committee is also aware that while the decision to leave the finding of suitable accommodation in Cardiff to individual members was practicable, although in fact it was mostly arranged by synods, this would not be the case in Southport. In this smaller community the provision of accommodation for a large conference has had to be managed centrally and we are able to report that we have booked a sufficient number of rooms to accommodate the whole of the Assembly and the 'What do you think?' pre-Assembly youth meeting. This will however cost more than the accommodation grant previously agreed.
4. Enquiries were made to the synods as to their willingness to find from their resources the £100,000 reduced from the Assembly budget and, while the responses varied considerably, two elements were clear. The first was that the synods did not wish to subsidise the cost of the Assembly to that extent. The second was that they were as one in agreeing that the cost of attending the Assembly should not fall on its individual members.
5. Therefore the Assembly Arrangements committee proposes to abandon the fares pool but to return to the central booking and allocation of accommodation. It will continue to pay the £50 *per diem* grant from its budget but the difference in cost will be charged to the synods. In 2016, the difference in accommodation costs referred to above will involve an overall sum of £18,000 spread amongst the 13 synods. The committee has been careful not to use the most expensive hotels in Southport. The committee will make no contribution towards the cost of travel but expect that to be arranged and/or paid for by the synods. In most cases breakfast will be provided in the hotel and lunch will be provided in the conference centre. A coffee bar will be available throughout the day and evening meals will be the responsibility of individual members and will not be provided in the conference centre.

6. The committee reminds Mission Council that it is primarily a service committee charged with providing the Church with what it wants from its General Assembly. Although on several occasions attempts have been made to clarify the wishes of the Church with regard to the Assembly it has proved difficult to obtain clear guidance. The desire of the Church to live within our means and to avoid unnecessary extravagance conflicts with the entirely understandable desire that the Assembly should be an inspirational event which can serve as a showpiece for the whole of the United Reformed Church, whilst, at the same time functioning as a business and legislative body. In order that we might seek greater clarity in planning for the future we have agreed that Dr Graham Campling will analyse the response forms from the 2016 Assembly.
7. An approach was made from a committee concerning the expectation that committees should present their report to the Assembly in two parts, one dealing with work completed and the other with work planned. Although no other committee complained directly, it was reported that other committees had raised concerns. The Assembly Arrangements committee, having consulted with the Head of Communications, is pleased to advise convenors that two-part reports are not required. A single report is required, and this to be submitted no later than 4 April 2016. Where it can be submitted earlier this will be much appreciated.
8. The Head of Communications has let convenors know her expectations about the length of their reports. If convenors find that they have more to say than this, they should consult the Head of Communications with care and in good time.

# Paper B1

Children's and Youth Work Committee  
URC Youth Structures  
and Guidelines

United Church 2015  
Church 2015  
Reformed Church 2015  
Church 2015



# Paper B1

## Children's and Youth Work Committee URC Youth Structures and Guidelines

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Andrew Weston <a href="mailto:furymoderator@gmail.com">furymoderator@gmail.com</a> Tim Meachin <a href="mailto:revd.tim.meachin@gmail.com">revd.tim.meachin@gmail.com</a> Karen Morrison <a href="mailto:karen.morrison@urc.org.uk">karen.morrison@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council agrees that all references to FURY in the Structure, and any other constitutional documents, shall henceforth be deemed to refer to 'URC Youth', and authorises that the name be formally updated in the documents next time they are changed.</b>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	New structures and guidelines for the URC's work among young people.
<b>Main points</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) New structures and guidelines for the United Reformed Church Youth have been adopted by FURY Advisory Board (acting on behalf of the URC Youth Assembly) and accepted by the Children's and Youth Work committee.</li> <li>2) The name 'FURY' is now superseded by 'United Reformed Church Youth' (or URC Youth) at an Assembly and synod level.</li> <li>3) The FURY Advisory Board is re-formed as the URC Youth Executive, made up of members elected at Youth Assembly, members appointed by each synod, and co-opted members.</li> <li>4) The Children's and Youth Work committee has accepted the URC Youth framework, which sets out topline information on the structures and guidelines, including the context behind the name change. The FURY Advisory Board has adopted the URC Youth Handbook, which sets out in much greater detail the operational structures and guidelines for the URC Youth, including the Youth Assembly and Youth Executive.</li> </ol>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Mission Council October 2012 Papers F & F1.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Youth Assembly 2015 FURY Advisory Board Children's and Youth Work committee Consultation via URC and URC Youth social media channels.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	None.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None.

# URC Youth Structures and Guidelines

1. The youth of The United Reformed Church, formerly termed 'FURY' (Fellowship of the United Reformed Youth), has a long and precious history. Following the restructuring of the Children's and Youth department (from 2012 to 2013), the opportunity to review the FURY structures arose. The Children's and Youth Work committee set up a task group in order to complete this work. It consisted of four committee members: Matthew Barkley (FURY Moderator 2014-15), Andrew Weston (FURY Moderator 2015-16), Stewart Cutler (Children's and Youth Development Officer) and Karen Morrison (Head of Children's and Youth Work Development). Philip Ray (Children's and Youth Work Development Officer) later joined this task group.
2. The task group began by researching the existing and historical structures and guidelines of FURY. Since the 2005 restructuring, however, there was little written policy to be found. An over reliance on an assumed knowledge of 'how things are always done' had been a major factor in the committee's decision to undertake a restructuring of FURY. It became apparent that the time was ripe for an intentional consideration of the FURY structures.
3. The term 'FURY' was used for around forty years, and it is no wonder that in time it has gained many positive associations – community, fellowship, the collective term for the young people of the URC. However, notwithstanding the emotional tie to the term felt by many of those historically involved, the consensus among those working at a Synod or Assembly level was that this term has become increasingly less well known among the young people currently aged 11-25 who are associated with the URC. It has also become associated with a small group of individuals, and has not included all young people connected to our churches (e.g. Pilots, Brigades, Guides, Scouts, youth groups etc.). Sadly, this has meant that the term 'FURY' has ceased to fulfil its purpose.
4. It is because of this exclusivity, perceived or otherwise, that the committee has decided that 'URC Youth' shall be used instead of 'FURY' as the collective term for young people connected to the URC and for the Assembly and synod level programmes for young people aged 11-25. This is not to undermine the very many positive things that have come from FURY at an Assembly and synod level over so many years, but to pave the way for future generations to develop meaningful relationships with Jesus Christ, one another, and the United Reformed Church.
5. The committee has been aware of the need for this name change for some time. It was first announced in our report to Mission Council in October 2012. For instance, since the renaming of FURY Assembly to Youth Assembly in the same year, the attendance of young people has grown considerably, both in numerical terms and in the diversity of backgrounds from around the denomination.
6. The first draft of these new structures and guidelines, which had been worked on by the committee and FURY Advisory Board, was presented to Youth Assembly 2015. It was subject to close scrutiny, and these proposals were subsequently shared widely via the URC Youth and URC social media channels/FURY website. Responses were invited. The task group continued its work, working closely with both FURY Advisory Board and the full committee, and drawing on the professional expertise of others.

7. The URC Youth Structures and Guidelines are now contained in three documents, which are available online as Mission Council papers and should be read together. The Committee has accepted the framework, and FURY Advisory Board have adopted the Handbook.
8. **Document 1: The URC Youth Framework**  
This is the top line document which will act as a guide to the Youth Assembly and Youth Executive as to what is within their remit and authority. It will be owned by the Children's and Youth Work committee, to whom the Youth Assembly and Youth Executive are accountable. It's also this committee which is tasked by the General Assembly to be responsible for all things Children's and Youth in the URC, hence the fact the framework will be owned by them.
9. **Document 2: The URC Youth Handbook**  
This is where the structures and guidelines are contained – the meat of what the URC Youth is and how it operates – which will be owned by the URC Youth Assembly. FURY Advisory Board scrutinised the Handbook and, acting on behalf of the Youth Assembly, unanimously agreed to adopt it in its entirety at its September 2015 meeting. It was agreed on the understanding that the November Mission Council and Youth Assembly 2016 will be informed of the newly adopted structures and guidelines, and it will be up to Youth Assembly from 2017 onwards to propose or agree any subsequent changes to the Handbook.
10. **Document 3: The URC Youth Assembly Standing Orders**  
The Youth Assembly Standing Orders had been included in the Handbook, but it is now clear that they will serve us better in a separate document. They will be adopted at the beginning of each Youth Assembly.
11. The committee recognises there is still some important work to be done:
  - To formulate the new visual identity and website of URC Youth
  - To work with all synods in appointing and supporting new or current synod youth representatives to serve from Youth Assembly 2016 on the new Youth Executive
  - To communicate these changes with the wider church.
12. Although the pace of change has felt too slow for some, any process of change will involve some element of loss. The committee is confident in the benefits of these changes, and the potential which they seek to unlock but recognise that for some, this change will not be easy. Nonetheless, these changes:
  - Acknowledge that the common identity of URC Youth can be stronger, wider, and more inclusive
  - Acknowledge the privilege of experiencing community together as the URC Youth, and how incredibly important it is
  - Acknowledge that URC Youth recognises that it needs structures that enable and release, rather than disabling some and restricting others
  - Acknowledge that the URC youth are serious about being a powerful, passionate, prophetic part of the wider URC for many years to come: 'we are not the church of tomorrow - we are a crucial part of the body of Christ today'.



# Paper B2

Children's and Youth Work Committee  
CYDO Assembly Level Work

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



# Paper B2

## Children's and Youth Work Committee CYDO Assembly Level Work

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Tim Meachin <a href="mailto:revd.tim.meachin@gmail.com">revd.tim.meachin@gmail.com</a> Karen Morrison <a href="mailto:karen.morrison@urc.org.uk">karen.morrison@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Take note
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	None

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	CYDO Assembly Level Work. Report from the Children's and Youth Work committee regarding actions taken in response to Mission Council's May 2013 decision which transferred the employment of CYDOs to synods.
<b>Main points</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) In response to the Mission Council decision to transfer the employment of CYDOs to synods the C&amp;YWC invited synods to enter into an agreement regarding the Assembly Children's and Youth Work programme.</li> <li>2) The C&amp;YWC convenor wrote to every synod enclosing a Covenant Document.</li> <li>3) Responses have been received from most synods.</li> <li>4) Synods have declined to enter into a written agreement but have indicated their support for and willingness to contribute to the Assembly Children's and Youth Work programme</li> </ol>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Mission Council Paper G1 and Minute 13/10 from May 2013
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The General Secretary The Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship)

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	N/A.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	N/A.

## CYDO Assembly Level Work

1. In response to the Mission Council resolution of 2013 regarding the employment of CYDOs, the Children's and Youth Work committee considered how to explore ways of working together across all the synods as requested by point (d) of the Mission Council Resolution. Significant committee time was given to this resulting in a decision to invite synods to enter into a written agreement regarding the Assembly Children's and Youth Work programme.
2. The C&YWC convenor wrote to every synod in this regard. A careful covering letter set out the reasoning behind the invitation. The C&YWC had drafted the proposed agreement in the form of a covenant, in response to point (c) of the Mission Council resolution.
3. Responses have been received from 11 synods at the time of drafting this report. While no synods felt that it was appropriate for them to enter into the written agreement, all clearly indicated support for the Assembly Children's and Youth Work programme, and they were willing for their CYDOs' time to be made available to support this work. The C&YWC is grateful for this and looks forward to a continuation of the valuable work that is made possible by this support.
4. The C&YWC therefore welcomes the support that synods have indicated for the Assembly's programme, and thanks synods for this, but does not intend to pursue further the idea of a written covenant for this involvement.



# Paper C1

Communications and Editorial Committee  
The review of the communications  
department  
October 2013 – July 2015

United Church 2015  
Church 2015  
Reformed Church 2015  
Church 2015



# Paper C1

## Communications & Editorial Committee

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Peter Knowles <a href="mailto:peterwknowles@gmail.com">peterwknowles@gmail.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	None. Information only.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	The report on the review of the communications department at Church House – looking to identify the services provided by and resources available to the department, considering the extent to which they meet the current and future needs of the denomination in order to recommend and implement appropriate change.
<b>Main points</b>	An overview of the recently completed review of the communications department – looking at the department's seven discrete work areas.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The communications and editorial committee; departments staff; the deputy general secretary (administration and resources).

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	The department has requested a small increase in its budget to fund the work the denomination requires of its communications department.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None.

# The review of the communications department

## October 2013 – July 2015

### Introduction – setting the scene for the review:

1. Having been asked to step in as convenor of the communications and editorial (c&e) committee when the person initially appointed withdrew, I (John Humphreys) reported that there were concerns to be addressed in the communications department. The issues were not only internal to the department, but the department was significantly affected by issues from beyond its bounds. When the Revd Martin Hazell was called by a pastorate, the convenor encouraged the committee to develop its understanding of the department's work and professionalism of its staff, to meet and become proactive. When Martin left, at the end of September 2013, Gill Nichol agreed to be the interim director of communications.
2. The committee was delighted when Gill Nichol was appointed to the permanent post of Head of Communications. Throughout the 10 months that Gill was interim director the department and committee improved in morale with a clearer understanding of the staffing and the work they do.
3. In October 2013, right at the start of Gill's time as interim director, the committee decided to take the opportunity presented by the interim appointment to embark on a review of the department, initially looking at each area of work individually.
4. Gill Nichol had been a member of the department since October 2009 and her transparent and open style of management, her commitment to the department staff and their work and her strong desire to improve both the working life of her staff team, and the quality of the work output, resulted in improvements in relationships and reputation.

*John Humphreys*

*Former convenor of the communications & editorial committee (until July 2015)*

### The purpose of the review:

5. The purpose of the review was to identify both the services provided by, and the resources available to, the department and to consider the extent to which they meet the current and future needs of the URC in order to recommend and implement appropriate change.

### Our mission statement

6. The process started with the creation of a statement to describe the purpose and priorities of the department. In early 2014 the committee started drafting a mission statement and at the November 2014 meeting of Mission Council the following was presented and formally ratified:

*The communications department exists to promote effective communication and celebration of the Gospel in and beyond the URC by:*

- *Giving voice to good news*
- *Facilitating regional/national communications*
- *Supporting the communications of Church House departments and General Assembly*
- *Resourcing the local churches.*

7. There are seven discrete areas of activity covered by this review:

8. **One: The press and media office**

8.1 **Overview:** The office is staffed by one full-time press & media officer (PMO) and a 0.4 support role in the form of a PA to the press & media office. The current head of communications also plays a role in the delivery of the press & media work, most specifically in the department's 'reputation management' work and as holiday cover for the PMO.

8.2 **Findings/outcome of review:** The office is responsible for a very wide range of communications activity, both internal and external. It includes the writing of news releases, web reflections and the *News Update* (NU) and the delivery of communications training to local churches. In the past two years we have worked hard to be more proactive in our media work e.g. our work as a communications partner in Christian Aid's 2014 and 2015 Christmas campaigns. This has added significantly to the workload of the office.

8.3 There is an ever increasing demand for press and media services. The office plays an active role in the communications work of the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT), is increasingly called upon to provide media and communications support for other Church House departments and is committed to the best possible use of the denomination's social media channels.

8.4 The vital 'reputation management' work is shared with the Head of Communications. There are times when the demands of this work can put a strain on the rest of the activities of the PMO and of the Head of Communications. There has been an increase in the number of 'historic' cases of alleged abuse which have come to light. The challenge becomes particularly severe when the office is juggling more than one reputation management case at the same time.

8.5 **Changes made in the press & media office:**

8.5.1 **Technology:** Aware of the need to make best possible use of the available technology we have, in the past 18 months, invested in software to help improve our service – namely hootsuite (a dashboard for social media activity) and dotmailer (a bulk email marketing package).

8.5.2 **Staffing changes:** In order to provide more flexible admin support to the department without increasing cost, the part-time PA to the press office post will be combined with the PA to the head of comms post.



## 9. **Two: *Reform* magazine**

- 9.1 **Process:** The work of *Reform* has been thoroughly reviewed by the committee and its financial position ratified by Mission Council.
- 9.2 **Overview:** The magazine is enjoyed and appreciated by many who regard it as the ‘flagship’ of the denomination but it has been criticised by some who see it as an expensive luxury. And let us not forget how *Reform* is viewed by many outside the United Reformed Church. The theologian Robert Beckford has said: ‘*Reform* is a prophetic voice’ and Christina Rees of the Church of England’s General Synod called it: ‘One of the most intelligent, relevant and helpful Christian publications around’.
- 9.3 In 2011 Mission Council agreed to support *Reform* (from central denominational funds) for a total of £90K a year, to be reviewed after three years. It has been hoped that, during those three years the reliance on the subsidy would lessen – but this has not happened and by 2013 the subsidy was still an essential part of *Reform*’s budget.
- 9.4 In autumn 2013 the need to increase subscriptions and boost *Reform*’s marketing was at the top of the agenda of the head of department, the *Reform* staff team and the committee. Time and energy were put into the planning and execution of a marketing drive and the committee started discussing the sustainability – or otherwise – of the magazine; this culminated in the committee paper submitted to Mission Council in November 2014.
- 9.5 During this time the *Reform* editorial board, which had not met for several years, was reinstated (the first meeting took place in January 2015 and it will continue to meet twice a year) and a small, mainly internal, group, was formed to discuss and develop marketing initiatives.
- 9.6 ***Reform* and Mission Council**  
Paper C3: The future for *Reform* was on the agenda at the November 2014 meeting of Mission Council. During the debate, *Reform* (and the wider department) received widespread support from the members of Mission Council. Mission Council passed the following resolution:
- 9.7 *Mission Council notes that the communications and editorial committee and staff team are focussed on increasing the number of subscriptions to the magazine, and committed to developing, and monitoring the use of, Reform within the United Reformed Church over the three-year period from January 2015 to December 2017. Mission Council therefore resolves to support Reform by continuing with the current annual subsidy – not to exceed £90,000 in any one budget year – for the next three budget years; and asks the communications and editorial committee to present up-to-date subscription numbers to Mission Council in March 2016.*
- 9.8 **Post-Mission Council**  
Clearly Mission Council’s support for *Reform* gave a boost to the staff team, and the head of department, but it also crystallised the need for all parts of the magazine’s operation to be reviewed alongside the continuation of the increase in marketing activity. From this came two specific changes: In March 2015 *Reform* moved its outsourced subscription processing to a new provider to enable a more versatile and sophisticated service and in April 2015 the digital edition of the magazine was launched. Alongside these changes there have been several focused marketing initiatives including: a half-price digital

subscription offer for students, an introductory three-issues-for-£1 direct debit offer as well as tailored subscription offers put together for synod and other URC meetings. It is early days, and whilst the decline in subscriptions is slowing down, we have not yet turned it round. *Reform* is on a firmer footing than it was 18 months ago, the implemented changes have been positive and provide the foundation for the increase in subscriptions that we need to achieve to secure the magazine's future. We are next due to report to Mission Council in March 2016.

## 10. **Three: The URC website**

10.1 **Overview:** Up until December 2013 the website was staffed by a succession of temporary staff working either full-time or on a 0.8 contract. The staff were from a specialist agency and were very expensive. We also used VTS, a provider of web support services. In December 2013 the last of these 'temps' was given notice and in January 2014 the senior graphic designer took on responsibility for the management of the URC website on an interim basis. This, with the ongoing support of VTS, was a cost-effective solution to an immediate challenge.

10.2 **Findings/outcome of review:** The website is not at the standard expected and needed by the United Reformed Church, and is not, in the view of both committee and department, adequately resourced. The committee and the department acknowledge the growing expectations around – and need for – high quality and easily accessible resources for the local United Reformed churches (both on and offline). It is committed to providing what the Church needs and is scheduling this into its work plan for 2016.

10.3 The staffing solution outlined in the overview section works well much of the time but occasionally runs into problems when the current (and urgent) demands of the design role do not allow the necessary focus on web work. That said, urgent work on the website, even when 'out-of-hours', is *always* done.

10.4 **Future plans:** In spring 2015 we asked VTS to move the URC website onto a more stable platform and to examine restructuring key sections of the website. This has taken longer than expected but is ongoing and the move to a stable platform completed by October 2015. The current Head of Communications and PMO have the skills and expertise needed to produce the written content for website and, when VTS have completed the work to move the URC website onto a more stable platform, attention will be given to improving/rewriting website copy.

10.5 In the light of the above, the department has asked for a small increase in the website budget of £5,000 in 2016.

## 11. **Four: The publications office**

11.1 **Overview:** In October 2013 the publications office was facing an uncertain future. The publications office had been allowed to run down and since the closure of the bookshop and the resultant redundancies of bookshop staff it had been staffed by a succession of temporary staff.

11.2 **Findings/outcome of review:** During the review process it became clear that the committee and departmental staff were confident that the publications office *did* have a future and that time and effort should be invested in to it. The committee began work on a publications strategy and spent much time considering the future resourcing of, and possibilities for, URC publications. The committee carefully considered the type of books the department would

publish and took the decision to re-establish the publications board. The job description for the part-time post was also substantially changed, widening the brief of the role to include administering the production schedule of manuscripts being prepared for publication and involvement in the marketing of URC publications and merchandise as well as increasing the authority delegated to it. HRAG have agreed to this becoming a three-day a week post with a new job title of publications co-ordinator. Recruitment to this post is scheduled for autumn/winter 2015. This is an exciting development in the life of the department, and one which the committee and head of department feel very positive about.

## 12. **Five: The graphics office and print room**

- 12.1 **Overview:** The graphics office and print room are both exceedingly busy. In graphics the volume of work has grown significantly and design effort is 'booked in' several months in advance. As a result some design work has to be sent to external designers – the graphics office is currently compiling a costed list of the work that has been outsourced in the past 12 months. During the last twelve months the graphics office has developed a house style for a series of URC information booklets (for example this department's training booklets) and, as more booklets are produced this style will be rolled out further. A house font is also under consideration. There are two full-time members of staff: a graphic designer and a printer & print estimator.
- 12.2 **Findings/outcome of review:** It is clear that to meet current service demands more design resource is needed, although there is currently no budget to employ another designer. We are seeking solutions to this challenge in two ways – looking at ways to control the demand for design and print as well as possibilities for increasing the resource.
- 12.3 We are investigating the recruitment of a graphic intern – a paid internship (dependent on Mission Council approval of the draft budget for 2016).
- 12.4 The Head of Communications is actively seeking invitations to work with committees and Church House departments to talk through their communications needs. We are absolutely committed to providing a high-quality service that will help the committees, and the wider denomination, to communicate effectively with their audiences. We also know that managing demand is key and that we are not able to service every demand that is made of us – this applies equally to the graphics and print, website, press & media and copywriting requests. The Head of Communications is also looking to establish a fair, acceptable and accepted, process for prioritising requests for communications input.
- 12.5 **Changes made in the graphics office:** In July 2014 *Reform's* graphic designer started working for two days a month in the graphics office; he has undertaken a variety of jobs and boosted his skill base. An increase in his days in the graphics office is currently being considered.
- 12.6 The job descriptions of both staff members have been reviewed and significantly amended to reflect the current scope of their roles.

13. **Six: The database**  
This post has not been formally reviewed, but its work is being considered alongside the requirement to replace the database. It is probable that in the future this role will not be part of the communications department.
14. **Seven: The despatch office**  
14.1 The role and function of the despatch clerk were reviewed at the retirement of the long-term post holder in December 2013. The appointment of his successor in January 2014 provided the opportunity to computerise the office and modernise the despatch processes. This has been successful: despatch work is carried out efficiently and economically with the current post holder working on a 0.4 contract.
15. **Management and Support:**  
15.1 **The general office (PA to the Head of Communications)**  
The general office is staffed by the PA to the Head of Communications, working 21 hours a week. General admin work, most noticeably the processing of financial paperwork, the support of the C&E committee and the handling of all copyright queries, take up the bulk of the time available. The three-day a week post is adequate for the defined needs but it gives no scope to develop this role, or to increase the work undertaken.
16. **Conclusion:** I (*Peter*) have been on the C&E committee since July 2014 and, in that time have seen a changing department. The department we have now is better run, more efficient and more effective, than it was two years ago.
17. I believe this review has been realistic and optimistic. There are no limits to the resources that can be expended in this field but the committee understands very clearly that there are limits to the resources available! The department continues to fine-tune its activities and its deployments to make the best use of those resources in pursuit of its agreed aims and the staff at Church House work hard, often beyond their contracted hours, to deliver.
18. I look forward to working with the staff team and committee in developing new and neglected areas of work. The website clearly needs further work to make it fit for purpose and there are great opportunities to be pursued in supporting the profile of the denomination at national level and in resourcing the public life of local churches.
19. I'm proud, as the incoming convenor, of the work done by this department and pleased to note the great goodwill on the part of staff and the active support of an enthusiastic and knowledgeable committee.

*Gill Nichol, Head of Communications*

*Peter Knowles, Convenor of the communications & editorial committee*

*Peter Knowles, Convenor of the Communications & Editorial committee*

*August 2015*

# Paper D1

Education and Learning Committee  
Windermere Centre Support

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



# Paper D1

## Education & Learning committee Windermere Centre Support

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Dr Neil Messer <a href="mailto:neil.messer@winchester.ac.uk">neil.messer@winchester.ac.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Mission Council, recognising the diversity of gifts represented by the Resource Centres for Learning within the wider landscape of Christian development and growth, endorses the principle informing the Education &amp; Learning budget for 2016 of maintaining support for the existing Resource Centres for Learning within the context of ongoing deliberations about the best way of supporting the learning of the whole people of God.</b></li> <li><b>Mission Council congratulates the Windermere Centre and its management committee on the work they have done to ensure the Centre's financial viability, and expresses its support for the Centre's work over the period of 2015-18, subject to the financial support from the Assembly budget being under £150k in each year and normally under £125k.</b></li> </ol>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	The paper comments on the improved financial health of the Windermere Centre, and seeks to place this within the context of the United Reformed Church's continued support for Resource Centres for Learning over the medium-term.
<b>Main points</b>	As the United Reformed Church explores <i>Missional Discipleship</i> it is important to maintain existing resources in order to prepare for strategic decisions to be taken by General Assembly in 2016.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Minutes of Mission Council November 2014 Record of General Assembly 2012 accepting budget for 2013.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Windermere management committee, Education & Learning Finance sub-committee, URC Finance committee.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	The committee budget has been accepted by the Finance committee.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	All the Resource Centres for Learning are engaged in active ecumenical relationships in diverse ways according to their contexts.

# Windermere Centre Support

1. In agreeing a temporarily increased budget for the Education & Learning committee for 2015-17, Mission Council of November 2014 asked that recommendations should be brought about priorities for education and learning that will support the well being and future vitality of the Church's recognised ministries.
2. The work done on this is reported on elsewhere to this Mission Council meeting by the Revd Richard Church Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship).
3. In preparing a budget for 2016 the Education & Learning committee has been particularly aware of the work that is being done on Missional Discipleship and which, if Mission Council accepts the outline proposal, will begin to come to fruition over the next 18 months.
4. *Missional Discipleship* seeks to draw together the four Resource Centres for Learning more closely with the synods, in line with the intentions of the 2006 training review and to ensure that the whole people of God are supported in their discipleship and equipped for mission. What shape this will take is yet to be determined, and the Education & Learning committee is convinced that it is important at this time to continue to support all four Resource Centres for Learning . This is in anticipation of proposals coming to General Assembly in 2016 concerning *Missional Discipleship*, intended to shape the future resources available for this endeavour through the United Reformed Church.
5. In 2015 the Education & Learning committee was able to restore funding levels to the Resource Centres for Learning, which had been cut temporarily in January 2013, when the three Colleges were asked to draw from their reserves, and financial targets for the Windermere Centre were set at 2012 levels.
6. The Education & Learning committee have been impressed by the work done by the Windermere management committee to develop new pricing policies and ways of working. The result is a Business Plan for 2015-18 and financial outcomes for recent months which show a significant improvement in the financial health of the Windermere Centre. The Business Plan has been scrutinised and accepted by the URC Finance committee, who agree with the Education & Learning committee that the Centre has made good use of the additional marketing support that it was given. Current projections suggest that the investment needed by the Centre from the Assembly budget will reduce from £146k in 2014 to £120k in 2018.





# Paper D2

DGS (Discipleship)

Spending priorities within  
Education & Learning

United Church 2015  
Church 2015  
Reformed Church 2015  
Church 2015



# Paper D2

## DGS (Discipleship)

### Spending priorities within Education & Learning

#### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Rev Richard Church <a href="mailto:richard.church@urc.org.uk">richard.church@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	For information
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To report adjustments to the E&L budget with reference to longer-term considerations.
<b>Main points</b>	Steps towards a flat budget in 2016 Budgeting for education for discipleship in future years
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Challenge to the Church (Assembly 2008) Equipping the Saints (Assembly 2004)
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Secretary to Education & Learning Secretary for Ministries

#### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	No increase to budget
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None

# Spending Priorities within Education & Learning

1. Mission Council in November 2014 decided that the Education & Learning budget should be increased by up to £130,000 from 2015 to 2018 in order to maintain full time students at current levels and restore full funding to RCLs. The Treasurer reminded the Council that to effectively ring-fence part of the budget in the context of dropping income would lead to cuts having to be made elsewhere.
2. The moderator of Southern Synod then proposed that recommendations should be brought about priorities for education and learning that will *support the well being and future vitality of the Church's recognised ministries*.

## Education & Learning Budget 2013: Consequences

3. This saw a reduction of £200,000 in order to comply with the Assembly decision of 2012 *Reshaping the 2013 Budget*.
4. This was achieved by a package of measures involving
  - 1) The temporary reduction of funding to RCLs
  - 2) Restructuring of TLS
  - 3) Cutting EM2/3 funding
5. This last saving was effected by halving the EM3 allowance and moving Refresher courses into EM3 funding.
6. In addition, an attempt has been made to tailor the financial support to EM1 students to their family income, in order to more fairly distribute the Church's resources to those in greater need.
7. Staff time has also been cut at Church House in an attempt to cut costs.
8. The chart illustrates how the EM3 take-up has evolved over the years 2011 – 2014.
9. The only mandatory training at the moment is Sacred Safer Space, which is not funded from ministers' EM3 allowances.

## Education & Learning Budget 2016:

10. The Finance Committee has asked that the total budget for 2016 be £1,697,800
11. Currently, by staffing Ministries and Education & Learning differently, and by reducing the frequency with which the committee meets from three to two per year the planned expenditure is within £7300 of budget.

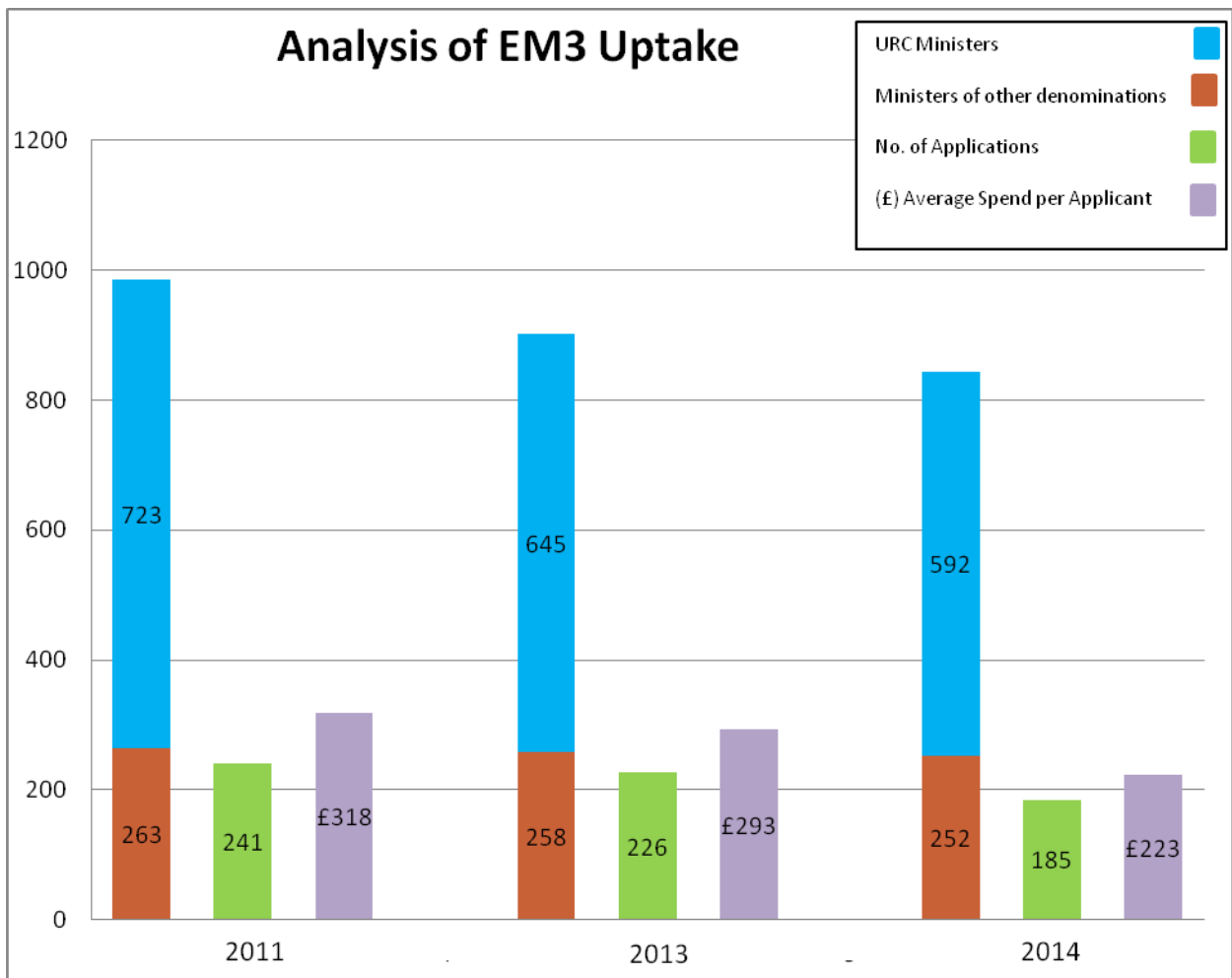
## Setting priorities

12. This committee's budget represents the Church's commitment to the provision of properly prepared women and men for the recognised ministries of the Church. The task of setting priorities that will support the well-being and future vitality of the church's ministries clearly involves more than trimming the budget in the coming financial year.

## Longer Term Considerations

13. General Assembly has repeatedly received and approved reports which encourage more collaborative approaches towards leadership within the United Reformed Church.
14. However, the expectations placed on many ministers of Word & Sacraments have changed little from the days when the Church was many times bigger than it is today, and when the number of single church pastorates was greater. If the number of available ministers to deploy reduced further, the pressure to look for fresh models of ministry would grow.
15. Our recognised ministries have a distinctive nature, yet they need to be fully integrated within Christ's overall call to serve and witness to the world. These ministries of the Church consist of: Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers, Church Related Community Workers, Elders, and Ministers of Word & Sacraments, who are all nourished and supported in a number of ways.
16. For the Church to be, in all its various local contexts, a hospitable community of faith will require some culture shifts. Principal among these would seem to be the shift of understanding from a community with a person who ministers to a ministering community.
17. Following on from this, the recognition of the role of a minister of Word and Sacraments may have to be slightly more focussed than the current understanding of minister as a general practitioner. As synod moderators visit pastorates in a time of ministerial transition, they often ask the question, 'What do you want a minister for?' The response is usually that churches expect to receive a pastor-teacher.
18. Patterns of ordination preparation suggest that the Church prepares people to serve as community theologians: to conduct public worship and to build up the faith of the community and to help their fellow disciples wrestle with the implications of faith in the place they find themselves. It is a skilled role which requires rigorous spiritual and intellectual preparation.
19. However, if the United Reformed Church is to accept an emphasis on missional discipleship there will have to be a reconsideration of current patterns of expenditure to ensure that education for discipleship is properly resourced. Assembly Reports have repeatedly emphasised the vital role of lay people in the future vitality and mission of the Church.
20. The amount of funding devoted exclusively to the development of lay people is very small. The rest is dedicated to the support of ministerial education. That part of the work of RCLs is devoted to lay education is without question, but it remains that the overwhelming majority of the Church's budget is devoted to the Church's recognised ministries.

21. Provision by Synods of skilled training teams who resource congregations, elders, lay preachers and ministers' continuing education ought not to be overlooked in addressing the question of how the well-being and vitality of the church's recognised ministries can be supported.
22. The Church is engaging in some deep consideration of issues of our patterns of service to Christ. The Faith and Order Committee in their report to Assembly 2014, and to the present meeting of Mission Council have appealed for thought to be given to the practice of authorised elders.
23. In addition there is a task group working on non-stipendiary ministry, reviewing how this important ministry can be developed in ways that complement other ministries within the Church.
24. Under the influence of the Training Review of 2006, there have been two Big Picture meetings to draw together all those involved in Christian formation and development to consider how that work may benefit from greater co-ordination across the three nations.
25. In the light of all these parallel initiatives, it will be apparent that the simple question of spending priorities within Education & Learning immediately provokes consideration of how the wider landscape of Christian development and growth is changing within the United Reformed Church. The need to balance our budgets in 2016 should not obscure our thinking about the most appropriate ways for us to resource our ministry and witness in the years to come.



A negligible number of ministers from other denominations apply for EM3 funding

% of eligible URC ministers who applied for EM3 funding (including sabbaticals):

2011	33%
2013	35%
2014	31%

# Paper F2

Faith and Order Committee  
Authorised Elders

United Church 2015  
Church 2015  
Reformed Church 2015  
Church 2015



# Paper F2

## Faith and Order Committee Authorised Elders

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Elizabeth Welch <a href="mailto:welchea@talk21.com">welchea@talk21.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Advice
<b>Questions for Mission Council</b>	<p><b>Because this work was mandated by Assembly and will be reported to Assembly, the committee would like to hear ...</b></p> <p>a) <b>Whether this paper is heading in the right direction. And;</b></p> <p>b) <b>If yes, are there areas where Mission Council would welcome further clarification and development?</b></p> <p>c) <b>If no, are there alternate directions that Mission Council would feel are more helpful?</b></p>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	<p>Subject: The authorisation of certain appointed Elders to preside at Holy Communion</p> <p>Aim: To respond to the expressed need for local leadership able to celebrate Communion in the absence of an ordained minister.</p>
<b>Main points</b>	<p>That synods should arrange for the appointment of certain elders within local churches as elders authorised to celebrate communion in the absence of an ordained minister.</p> <p>That there should be proper preparation for such a role and that it should be agreed for a fixed period of five years.</p>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Faith and Order committee paper on Ordained Local Ministry to General Assembly 2014 (page 120 of <i>Book of Reports</i> )
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The Faith and Order committee

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	None
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Implications within Local Ecumenical Partnerships.



# Authorised Elders

## Summary of the issue

- 1 The Wessex Resolution to General Assembly 2012 suggesting a new form of Ordained Local Ministry was the latest initiative in a twenty-year long process to address the issues of continuity of ministerial service within local congregations, as multi-church pastorates become more common and more use is made of the provision in the Basis of Union to authorise elders or lay preachers to preside at Holy Communion. A version of this was adopted by a majority of the Faith and Order Advisory Committee and brought to General Assembly in 2014, which approved it by agreement. A small Task Group was then set up to address the issues. The Task Group here summarises its work on the specific issues set by the Assembly 2014 resolution. A distinction is drawn between actions that can be taken immediately by Assembly and those that might require more time, either because of additional work, or changes to the Basis of Union, or otherwise. The Group does not favour using the term 'Celebrant Elder', because distinctive categories have previously been criticised strongly as 'dividing the eldership'; but it does suggest revising the current guidance on Presidency (*Manual*, section F), by amending the 1995 Assembly resolution, and in particular by extending the normal period for authorisation to preside for elders (or lay preachers) from one to five years.

## The background

- 2 When the United Reformed Church was initially formed in 1972, its Basis of Union contained a bold commitment. In §25 it stated:
 

'The worship of the local church is an expression of the worship of the whole people of God. In order that this may be clearly seen, the United Reformed Church shall (a) take steps to ensure that so far as possible ordained ministers of the Word and Sacraments are readily available to every local church...'

Throughout its history since then it has never proved possible to deliver that commitment in the way that was hoped. Furthermore, had there been any widespread adoption of the former Churches of Christ custom of weekly communion after 1981, its impossibility would have become apparent long since. Even without any change in communion practice, the commitment to ready availability of ministers of Word and Sacraments for every local church would have been difficult for the majority of former Congregationalist local churches making up the new Church to achieve. The section provided also for the training and accreditation of lay preachers (an office not otherwise defined in the Basis), and for the recognition of certain members of the United Reformed Church 'normally deaconesses, elders or accredited lay preachers' to preside at the sacraments 'where pastoral necessity so requires'. The last term has been the subject of successive interpretations by Assembly. The most recent one, incorporated as a footnote to paragraph 25 of the Basis in 1998, states that the provisions of the paragraph 'are intended to establish the principle that worship should be led by representative persons recognised by the wider church as well as by the local church'.

3 So this is not a new issue. Two reports to Assembly in the last twenty years have aroused intense debate. The first was *Patterns of Ministry*, the recommendations of which were mainly rejected by Assembly in 1995; and the second, *Equipping the Saints* (2005), which was less overtly radical, received more support. In particular, resolution 30 of 2005 on deployment accepted 'that not every congregation has or will have a Minister directly providing their day-to-day leadership' (and an amendment that would have weakened the force of that statement was defeated).

4 In 1998 the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness committee brought a resolution to Assembly (29), encouraging synods and district councils in consultation with local churches 'to identify forms of local church leadership', which might be explored within the context of agreed guidelines; and this has been tried in some synods, with mixed success. Some of the questions raised in paragraph 1.2 of their Report (*Reports to Assembly, 1998*, p 66) show how the same issues continue to vex us:

- How would they differ from elders?
- How would they relate to ordained ministers
- Doesn't 'local leadership' describe precisely what we expect of non-stipendiary ministry?
- Is this a 'back-door' into ministry for people who would otherwise not be accepted?
- Will this lead to a change in role for ordained ministers?
- Isn't the church secretary usually regarded as the lay leader in the local congregation?
- Would we be thinking about this at all if there were not a shortage of 'real' ministers?
- What are the implications for ecumenical situations?

Moreover, although the guidelines then approved stated explicitly that such local leaders would be appointed for an agreed period of service according to a clearly defined agreement and job description, approved by all parties, and that they would be accountable to the local eldership, the Synod Moderators have reported to us that this has been more difficult to deliver in practice than was intended.

5 Nevertheless in 2012 a synod resolution from Wessex asking for some form of local ordained ministry was referred to the Faith and Order committee, and despite divided views within that committee it brought a report to Assembly 2014 asking for further exploration of the eldership. Accordingly Assembly 2014 passed Resolution 13 by agreement:

- 1 General Assembly, affirming the existing gift of elders and the diversity of gifts within each elders meeting as part of the United Reformed Church's distinctive contribution to the Church universal, wishes to reinvigorate the role of elders and welcomes current work to that end.
- 2 General Assembly directs the Faith and Order Committee to set up a task group incorporating expertise from other committees of the United Reformed Church to explore the possibility of authorising 'celebrant elders' to preside at the sacraments. To that end, General Assembly asks for work to be done in the following areas:
  - a) the nature of ordination within the United Reformed Church, both of Ministers of Word and Sacrament and of elders;
  - b) how within the understandings of the various traditions which make up our Church the sacrament of communion is linked to ordination;
  - c) the suggested future relationships of 'celebrant elders' to local church leaders, lay preachers, Ministers of Word and Sacraments, synods and General Assembly;
  - d) the nature and financing of the requisite training to support such elders in their calling;

- e) the accountability of such elders and the question of who would be responsible for discerning, authorising and supporting their vocation;
  - f) the place of such elders in local ecumenical partnerships' (*Assembly Record 2014*, p 6; *Book of Reports 2014*, pp 120-27).
- 6 The Task Group consisted of the Revd Professor David Thompson, Eastern Synod (Convenor), the Revd Dr Sarah Hall, Wessex Synod, (Secretary), Mrs Susan Bush, Northern Synod and Mrs Lesley Richmond, Synod of Scotland.

## Process

- 7 The Task Group has met six times. A large part of one meeting was given over to a meeting with the Revds Fiona Thomas (Secretary for Education and Learning) and Craig Bowman (Secretary for Ministries). Synod Moderators were also invited to consult their Lay Preaching Commissioners to secure some sense of who actually conducts worship in our churches week by week, taking note of those served by Ministers of Word and Sacraments, accredited lay preachers (Assembly or synod), those occupying similar positions in other churches, and others. Three synods (Wessex, Eastern and East Midlands) submitted detailed reports, and some other Synod Moderators responded personally. The Task Group is grateful to all those who have assisted its work. It is aware that its information base is weak: but suspects that this is because it is no-one's job to keep it.
- 8 We began our work by sharing our own stories: two ministers (one non-stipendiary) with very different experiences, and two church secretaries, one of whom had found it necessary to take a lead role in welding together a group of five previously disparate congregations to form a Joint Pastorate (out of a previous Mission Partnership) during a long ministerial vacancy. We also examined the material submitted from synods. From these we identified some common issues and questions, which we then related to the specific tasks set us by General Assembly. An interim report was made to the Faith and Order committee in March (originally suggested as the target date for completion); a further report was made in June, of which this is a revision.
- 9 The initial conclusion was obvious. There is a shortage of ordained leadership not only in the United Reformed Church, but also in many of the traditional Churches. We noted that proposed solutions have varied. The Church of England intends to increase numbers of ordinands by 50% in the next ten years; the Methodists' *Fruitful Field* initiative two years ago aims to train ministers 'on the ground' before they spend a shorter length of time than before in one of two colleges; the Church of Scotland is merging local parishes, as is the Roman Catholic Church (though not without significant local opposition). The grouping of parishes and congregations has become more widespread in all Churches; the number of Catholic parishes with a weekly mass is diminishing in France, and some may have mass only once every three months or even once a year. (Ordinations in the French Catholic Church are less than 100 per year.) In Africa, Asia and Latin America the traditional European size of parish has rarely become the norm; nonetheless some of these areas are those where the Church is growing most rapidly – not because of the number of ministers, but because of active and recognised groups of non-ordained members.

- 10 Thus it seems unlikely that more stipendiary ministry as such is the answer to the United Reformed Church's problems, not least because we have as many ministers as congregations are currently willing to pay for, irrespective of the level of future vocations. Furthermore, the original Wessex resolution to General Assembly asked for the exploration of 'some form of locally ordained ministry', which inevitably involves local church leadership in a broader sense than presidency at Communion. With current levels of ministry there need to be those alongside Ministers of Word and Sacraments to whom local congregations can look for leadership in mission and worship. Such people need to be accountable so that if there are problems, for whatever reason, their service may be terminated with the minimum disruption to the peace and unity of the congregation. In considering whether 'Celebrant Elders' are the answer to this need, the Task Group has inevitably found itself reflecting on broader issues of local church leadership.
- 11 At the outset the Task Group wishes to emphasise one point. The term 'celebrant elder' is inconsistent with a Reformed (and truly catholic) understanding of the Eucharist. The congregation celebrates the Lord's Supper, and the one(s) presiding leads the saying of the narrative of institution and the thanksgiving and related prayers at the heart of the service. Thus in the rest of this report, we shall refer to authorised elders (meaning those authorised by synods under the provisions of section 25 of the *Basis*) – a term already in use in some synods.<sup>1</sup>

### The mandate (see §5)

- 12 We now turn to the six specific questions we were asked to investigate, before offering some conclusions.
- 13 The nature of ordination

For the equipment of his people for this total ministry the Lord Jesus Christ gives particular gifts for particular ministries and calls *some of his servants* to exercise them in offices duly recognised within his Church... Those who enter on such ministries commit themselves to them for so long as God wills: the United Reformed Church having solemnly acknowledged their vocation and accepted their commitment shall appoint them *to their particular ministry and give them authority* to exercise it within the Church, *setting them apart with prayer that that they shall be given all needful gifts and graces for its fulfilment*, which solemn setting apart shall in the case of ministers and elders be termed ordination (*Basis of Union §20*) [italics added].

Some are called to the ministry of Word and Sacraments. ... *They are commissioned to conduct public worship, to preach the Word and to administer the Sacraments...* Their service may be stipendiary or non-stipendiary... *Basis of Union §21* [italics added].

- 14 The general understanding of 'ordination' in biblical and Christian theology is the setting apart of someone by prayer, fasting and the laying-on of hands. Fasting has tended to be overlooked in our traditions in the last century or more. The key question is, 'What office is a person ordained to?' since that determines the nature and meaning of ordination in a particular case. In other words, the primary

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<sup>1</sup> We note in passing that §25 of the *Basis* refers to presidency at the sacraments, i.e. Baptism as well as Communion; but since we were not asked to consider baptism, we have not done so.

significance that any ordination has relates to the definition of the office to which someone is ordained. This view is shared by Catholics and Protestants alike. Thus in the catholic tradition of a threefold ministry a person may be ordained to the office of deacon, priest or bishop: bishops and priests can preside at the Lord's Table; deacons cannot. This difference in function does not make the service for the ordination of a deacon any less of an ordination. There is nothing contradictory, in other words, in ordaining to some offices that carry the privilege of presidency at the sacraments and others that do not.

- 15 The *Basis of Union* also states that 'Elders share with the minister in the pastoral oversight and leadership of the local churches, taking counsel together in the elders' meeting for the whole church and having severally groups of members particularly entrusted to their pastoral care' (§22). Neither the Basis, nor the service in *Worship from the United Reformed Church* (2004), which provides a longer statement of duties, makes any reference to presiding at the sacraments. (The reference to the possibility of presidency by elders comes later 'where pastoral necessity so requires', and requires specific authorisation.) The fact that elders are ordained is therefore irrelevant to the general question of presidency at the sacraments.
- 16 Working within this historical understanding of ordination, the task group discerned two options. One, which we have been mandated by General Assembly to explore, is to create a new category of persons who can preside at Communion: 'Celebrant Elders'. We recall, however, that a similar proposal to create two categories within the Eldership provoked fierce opposition at General Assembly in 1995, with many arguing that it would destroy the integrity of the eldership. Obvious ecumenical difficulties would also attend this suggestion: it is most unlikely, for example, that either the Methodists or the Church of England would recognise it in Local Ecumenical Partnerships in which they and we were involved. A second option would be to consider some expansion of non-stipendiary ministry (see §§39-40).

17 *How communion is linked to ordination*

The United Reformed Church celebrates the gospel sacrament of the Lord's Supper. When in obedience to the Lord's command his people show forth his sacrifice on the cross by the bread broken and the wine outpoured for them to eat and drink, he himself, risen and ascended, is present and gives himself to them for their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. United with him and with the whole Church on earth and in heaven, his people gathered at his table present their sacrifice of thanksgiving and renew the offering of themselves, and rejoice in the promise of his coming in glory (*Basis of Union* §15).

The worship of the local church is an expression of the worship of the whole people of God. In order that this may be clearly seen, the United Reformed Church shall (a) take steps to ensure that *so far as possible* ordained Ministers of the Word and Sacraments are *readily* available to every local church; (b) provide for the training of suitable men and women, members of the United Reformed Church, to be accredited by synods as lay preachers; (c) make provision through synods, in full consultation with the local churches concerned, for the *recognition of certain members of the United Reformed Church, normally deaconesses, elders or accredited lay preachers, who may be invited by local churches to preside at baptismal and communion services, where pastoral necessity so requires*. Apart from ordained Ministers of the United Reformed Church and of other churches, only such recognised persons may be invited *Basis of Union* §25 [italics added].

- 18 These provisions, which already go beyond what Methodism or the Church of England would find easily acceptable, suggest that, if it were intended to enable 'authorised elders' to regularly preside at Communion, an alteration of the Basis of Union would be required. An illustration of the kind of change that we have discussed would be either to specify an additional duty for Elders to preside within the local congregation, or to remove the phrase 'where pastoral necessity so requires', or both. Such an alteration would be justified on the basis that (as resolution 30b of 2005 concerning deployment in the light of the report *Equipping the Saints* implied) it is no longer in practice the case in the United Reformed Church that 'ordained Ministers of the Word and Sacraments are readily available to every local church'. However, the inclusion of such a duty might also put off others who would be quite prepared to become elders on the current basis. Thus the amendment might have to be more complicated, e.g. by inserting a phrase after 'the local churches' in §22 such as: 'presiding (if they are willing) at the sacraments when required'. The Task Group felt it necessary to go into such detail in order to clarify its own mind as to whether there was a simple amendment: it does not believe that there is.
- 19 The interpretation of the phrase 'pastoral necessity' as the current criterion for authorisation of Elders to preside at communion exemplifies the tension between different understandings of 'normal' practice within our churches. A senior minister in the Church has written that, 'In some parts of the United Reformed Church [often from the formerly Presbyterian parts of the church] the necessary pastoral dimension in presidency has been interpreted more in terms of the pastoral need (which has made it an exception) and in other parts of the Church [often from the formerly Congregational side] more in terms of the pastoral relationship (which has made it more commonplace)'. That tension has never been resolved, and experience suggests that 'pastoral necessity' sometimes lasts for much longer than was originally envisaged in the 1960s. To recognise this we propose extending the normal period for such authorisations from one to five years. (To expect someone to spend a year or more preparing for an authorisation that might only last for a year is unreasonable.) In the *Patterns of Ministry Report*, there is a Statement on Presidency at the Sacraments in §5.1 that was accepted (with one amendment) by Assembly 1995 as an expression of the mind of the church 'at this present time' (Resolution 45, *Record* 1995, p 45; *Reports to Assembly* 1995, pp 124-25). An alternative to an amendment of the Basis of Union would be to update that Statement (which was published in Section F of *The Manual*, and is on the URC website). This would have the added advantages of involving Scotland in the decision, since it was agreed before the union of 2000; and taking account of the disappearance of District Councils in their original form. **In order that some speedy action on this report is taken, we recommend that this guidance be amended to read:**

**We suggest the following pattern of presidency –**

- (a) **a Minister of Word and Sacraments (including a retired minister who has expressed willingness to do so) should preside when available;**
- (b) **in situations of pastoral necessity, the synod should make provision for presidency by another person, included in the provisions of §25 of the *Basis of Union*: elders of the local congregation and accredited lay preachers should be considered first;**
- (c) **authorisation for such presidency by the synod, normally of members from within the congregation concerned, should be for an initial period of five years. Before renewal there should be consultation with, and a review of, the needs of the congregation.**

**We believe that such a process will remain true to the spirit of the Basis of Union. It will enable us to be ourselves, and it will be sensitive to our ecumenical context.**

- 20 The different interpretations of 'pastoral necessity' arise from the various strands within the historical antecedents of our Church. Scottish Presbyterians found it difficult to agree on whether Elders should be ordained in the late sixteenth century. The *Form of Presbyterian Church Government* annexed to the *Westminster Confession* (1646/7) is silent about the ordination of any other Ministers than Ministers of Word and Sacraments, although it does recognise the offices of elder and deacon as ministries in the Church (as well as teachers or doctors, who are ordained to the ministry of word and sacraments like pastors). The *Form of Presbyterian Church Government* also declares all ordinations to be an act of a presbytery, rather than a particular local congregation.
- 21 On the other hand, *The Institution of Churches and the Order Appointed in them by Jesus Christ*, annexed to the *Savoy Declaration* of 1658, accepted the same fourfold ministry but placed the emphasis on the calling of persons to each office – that is 'that he be chosen thereunto by the common suffrage of the church itself, and solemnly set apart by fasting and prayer, with imposition of hands of the eldership of that church' (§11). Furthermore 'those who are so chosen, though not set apart by imposition of hands, are rightly constituted ministers of Jesus Christ' (§12). In addition, the work of preaching the Word was not confined to pastors and teachers, but could be undertaken by others, approved and called by the congregation (§13), i.e. lay preachers; and for good measure, the *Declaration* added that 'ordination alone without the election or precedent consent of the church' did not make any person a church-officer (§15). Thus for Congregationalists election by the local congregation was fundamental.
- 22 The Churches of Christ developed a different understanding of church order again, by routinely expecting elders to preside at the Lord's Table. The mandate at the ordination of elders read (in part) as follows:
- 'You are appointed to minister in sacred things, and to take your place at the Table of your blessed Lord. It will be your privilege and your duty to break the Bread of Life to this congregation, and for the due and adequate discharge of this Office you will answer to the great Head of the Church. It will fall to your lot, with your brother Elders, to rule over the House of God as the steward of God, to maintain the services of the Church, and to celebrate the sacraments with faithfulness, dignity and grace'* (Report of the Commission on Ordination, adopted by Annual Conference, Year Book 1942, p 148 [bold added]).
- This was why they were recognised as auxiliary ministers in 1981.
- 23 Churches of Christ Elders did not operate individually as sole church leaders but as a team supported and resourced by their ministers, especially since single-congregation pastorates were very rare. The development of the auxiliary ministry into today's non-stipendiary ministry, differing from their stipendiary colleagues only in the lack of stipend rather than the nature and length of training, is understandable as a wish to express parity between the two ministries, yet a certain flexibility and accessibility of leadership has been lost to the local church (except perhaps in Scotland) in this development from the original Churches of Christ understanding of eldership.

- 24 The Task Group also notes that the original age restrictions of 50 (now 55) on training for ministry of Word and Sacrament within the United Reformed Church precluded a significant proportion of accredited lay preachers (who had already undergone some theological training) from offering themselves for this office in the Church. Although accredited (which, at the time the Basis of Union was written, meant exclusively Assembly accreditation, synod accreditation being a later development) lay preachers are among the categories of person who may be authorised in case of pastoral necessity (see *Basis of Union* §25, cited above) to preside at Communion, they were deliberately placed after elders in the list of categories because elders have a local pastoral link with their church. In practice, since lay preachers are often also elders, they have frequently taken this role, and also perform other functions of local-church leadership. Moreover, while the proportion of congregations to ministers has increased considerably since the beginning of the URC, the proportion of congregations to lay preachers has stayed remarkably constant, suggesting that the supply is being replenished. It would make sense, therefore, for any recommendation that presidency by elders should become more frequent to apply particularly to lay preachers as an already qualified subset of elders.
- 25 Our enquiries have revealed a gap in our detailed understanding of congregational life. Complete statistics are lacking of the extent to which our lay preachers are also elders, and even of the numbers (and qualifications) of preachers leading worship in our churches. Of the congregations making a return in Wessex 44% were served by 'local arrangements' and 64% of those authorised to preside at communion in Eastern Synod were neither Assembly- or synod-accredited lay preachers. Research by the Lay Preaching committee twenty years ago suggested that one-third of Sunday services were taken by lay preachers. It seems unlikely that this proportion will have increased. So although there has been a fairly constant plea by lay preachers to be authorised to preside as a matter of routine, that clearly would not resolve the current questions. In any case, given the significance attached by our churches to preaching, this must be a matter of concern for the Church, and a stimulus to further research. Meanwhile, **we recommend that any lay preachers, who are not elders and are nominated by a local congregation to preside at communion, should test a call to eldership within their local congregation.**
- 26 *The position of Authorised Elders within the church*
- Relationships of authorised elders with every council of the church – elderships, church meetings, synods and General Assembly – must be characterised by both support and accountability. The former Churches of Christ model of team leadership can be helpful here, allowing as it does for a differentiation within worship between presiding and preaching, and for a close working relationship between ministers of Word and Sacrament and authorised elders.
- 27 We suggest that, to be true to the Church's understanding of call, the call of authorised elders should be recognised within the eldership and church meeting of their own church; and also within the eldership and church meeting of that church or group of churches which they are to invited to serve in this way, should this be other than their home congregation (in the case of small churches which can find no authorised elder within their own fellowship). The Task Group notes that such a process of discernment can be hindered by the absence of stipendiary ministry in the local church or pastorate concerned. For this reason **at synod level we recommend that there should be a designated local stipendiary Minister of Word and Sacrament for each church without an authorised elder within it, who could provide guidance, even if that minister does not have formal pastoral responsibility for the congregation.**



- 28 Since the *Basis of Union* (§21 and §25) emphasises that those who preside must also be recognised more widely than by the congregation alone, and since, so far as we are aware (though its content and style varies), in every synod training is currently a prerequisite for those elders or lay preachers applying for permission to preside at Communion, the synod should also be involved from the candidating process onwards, possibly through its Development/Training Officer. If a candidate has unsuccessfully offered for ministry of Word and Sacraments, this information should be available as part of the decision process, though it should not in itself be a reason for rejection. **At General Assembly level, we recommend that a roll of accredited authorised elders and lay preachers be maintained, to avoid the possibility of any individual exercising this ministry unhelpfully in one place and then moving elsewhere to try again.** It will also be necessary to address the relationship between authorised elders and Local Church Leaders where they exist, because of the overlaps in function (see the *Guidelines*, approved and amended by Assembly, *Reports to Assembly* 1998, pp 66-67). This should be a task for the synod that appoints them.
- 29 It has been suggested to us that there are some churches which currently propose names on a 'just in case' basis, and some synods that approve them. We strongly urge all concerned that this practice is in no-one's best interest; indeed we have been told that some persons already authorised have had so little experience that they would be nervous at being called upon. This is not what ministry is about. If people are nominated and approved, then they should be used – for their own sake as well as that of the churches. There are various ways in which such people can be involved in sharing the presidency with an ordained minister. From time to time at General Assembly others have been involved with the principal presider in saying parts of the prayer of Thanksgiving; and simply to involve such a person at the front of the church alongside the minister can boost confidence. To preside at the Lord's Table is no light matter: it requires careful personal preparation and prayer; and it is a ministry to and for other Christians. The value of such a ministry in 'an emergency' is directly proportionate to that person's previous preparation and experience.
- 30 The Church needs to recognise that there are different kinds of 'pastoral necessity', which require different kinds of solution. There is a fundamental difference between the situation of larger (usually urban) and smaller (usually rural) churches, which runs through most of our approach to Church life beyond the local congregation: typically the voices of the smaller churches are rarely heard or listened to. The Group has identified at least three different scenarios that currently exist, which require rather different solutions:
- a) emergencies, when the appointed minister either fails to arrive or gives very late notice (i.e. less than 24 hours) of inability to come. Here, unless there is another member of the congregation who can be approached and is willing, the procedure envisaged in the final paragraph of §25 of the *Basis* will have to be used.
  - b) churches (e.g. in a multi-church pastorate) with no minister regularly assigned or obtainable, where some kind of continuity from week to week or month to month is desirable. This would justify the authorisation of a designated elder or lay preacher along the lines envisaged in §25 of the *Basis*.
  - c) churches like those in (b), but where it would be more effective in terms of sharing the burden of preparation to have a team of designated elders or lay preachers authorised.

It should also be remembered that some multi-church pastorates may contain quite large areas, or geographical obstacles to speedy communication, such as mountains or rivers with few bridges.

31 *Training for Authorised Elders*

Unfortunately, the very word 'training' is often experienced by potential candidates as a pejorative judgment on their current ability rather than as a supportive resource for improvement. We note that the word is not now generally used in relation to education for ministry. Those who have years of experience in presiding at Communion may not see any need for further training. On the other hand, lay preaching courses are oversubscribed (more so than when they were described as training courses), and the idea of lifelong learning is increasingly accepted within society generally. We need both to motivate those currently serving to see the benefits available, and to persuade others that adopting such a position of leadership would be good for them and their congregation. **We therefore recommend that for authorised elders (depending upon consultation with the Ministries and Education & Learning committees) the word 'training' be replaced by 'further preparation'.**

32 Preparation for local-church leadership needs to be tailored to individual needs and gifts, but also be of a sufficiently high standard. The model of apprenticeship, whether in the last year of initial ministerial education or integrated into the whole course, is already recognised in formation for ministry of Word and Sacraments and sometimes in placements before initial ministerial education begins. It also happens through Training for Learning and Serving local tutor groups and placements (in *Gateways into Worship*). Apprenticeship used also to be the training method for lay preachers as the 'student' followed the 'expert' preacher around the churches. Candidates for authorised eldership might similarly be linked to ministers of Word and Sacrament and learn 'on the job' by sharing in presidency in appropriate ways (see §29 above). The members of the Task Group, who are all well-acquainted with what professional qualifications in themselves tell anyone about adequate preparation, believe that there is scope for greater flexibility in the criteria used for authorisation for presidency at Communion, in particular the recognition of the significance of previous experience and the recommendations (as well as the requests) of local congregations. This is why we have recommended that the normal period of authorisation for presidency be extended to five years, rather than the existing one year (see §19 above).

33 While the practice of presidency at Communion in itself is already covered (see §28 above on what currently happens in the Synods), preparation for authorised elders might helpfully be offered through an adapted version of TLS, for example in an expanded module on the conduct of worship. Could there be levels of certification other than TLS to encourage those who start off in a smaller way, so that, for example, there would be a series of short courses, the completion of each one would be marked with a certificate? (In the secular world such methods are used for one-day First Aid or Safeguarding courses.) Alternatively, material already used by the Resource Centres for Learning in preparation packages for elders and lay preachers could relatively easily be assembled into a course, preferably developed by all four RCLs in collaboration and then delivered from all four centres. Could the RCLs and TLS work together on this? A preliminary view from the Education and Learning Committee was that, using material currently available, and paralleling authorised elders with Assembly/Synod accredited lay preachers, the minimum requirement would be satisfactory completion both of the relevant Synod 'Presiding at communion' course and of the whole of TLS Lite (which can be done intensively in a year or less so in two) to give a theological basis for local-church leadership, whether or not

candidates felt called to preach. The Task Group feels that this may be setting the starting barrier too high, given the existing pressures in the churches – see the number of people authorised in Eastern or Wessex Synods, who appear to be neither elders or accredited lay preachers. In our view a system that allows further preparation after a provisional authorisation is preferable to one in which authorisation follows the completion of all course requirements. We have in mind what might be called a probationary period of service before commissioning, during which presidency would be permitted. **In any case, we recommend that greater publicity be given to the existing material for preparation.**

- 34 We felt that increasingly there was potential for the provision of on-line learning which could be accessed from anywhere, given that most people in their 50s or younger were now experienced in working online, though care would need to be taken not to exclude those for whom this was not the case (e.g. because of slower broadband speeds or poor connections in some parts of the country). But some elements of preparation necessarily involve a face-to-face approach.
- 35 These two modes of learning, the more academic and the more practical, could helpfully be integrated. Mentoring for a year before final recognition would be good, as would fixed terms of service with built-in assessment. When the synod adjudges preparation to be complete, we suggest a service of commissioning to mark the transition. We feel that congregations should also be prepared for this new situation, both to support authorised elders and also to avoid misunderstandings or unrealistic expectations of their new role.
- 36 How much would this cost? The Task Group has not attempted to answer this question, because it does not know in detail about how what is currently offered is accounted for at present. In large part it depends on the number of candidates per year. But much of the initial work in dealing with preparatory material is a one-off exercise, which may be something that is part of the programme of a synod or the RCLs anyway. We are aware that some worry about the implications of any change for Ministry and Mission payments; but we regard that as a separate question, not directly related to our remit, and there is no obvious way of reflecting on it until a decision has been taken on the main principle.
- 37 *The accountability of Authorised Elders*

Discipline can and should be exercised by the eldership of the church in which this ministry is to be exercised. Where there is a weak eldership, problems of maverick leadership may arise, so elders need to be equipped to hold local leadership of any kind accountable. The Synod Moderators have been concerned about the accountability of Local Church Leaders; but the Guidelines approved by Assembly in 1998 are quite clear that such leaders are accountable to the local eldership. That would suggest that some elders meetings may be reluctant to tackle hard questions. There are also potential problems if authorised elders move from one synod to another where they are not known – though in principle they are no different from those faced in relation to any elder who moves to a different church and synod. Where, for pastoral reasons, discipline becomes problematic – for example, in the case of conflict between an authorised elder and a Local Church Leader or lay preacher – the Synod Pastoral committee should be called upon for help. However, we advise that the Synod Moderator should not engage directly with any disciplinary process, so as to be available for pastoral support to any parties as necessary. Either the URC Elders Code of Conduct or the disciplinary and incapacity codes for ministers could be resources. **We recommend that a specific code of conduct for**

**authorised elders be developed and that those concerned sign up to it before embarking on their ministry.**

38 Like other groups in this area before us, we have looked at immediate and longer-term questions. The Faith and Order Committee believes strongly that it is important to make a clear distinction between what might be done now, i.e. at Assembly 2016, and what requires further work in order to be implemented at a later date. In the light of the foregoing, it proposes the following resolutions for General Assembly 2016:

**1 that the existing guidance on Presidency at the Sacraments be amended to read:**

**The pattern of presidency at the sacraments should be as follows –**

- (a) a Minister of Word and Sacraments (including a retired minister who has expressed willingness to do so) should preside when available;**
- (b) in situations of pastoral necessity, the Synod should make provision for presidency by another person, included in the provisions of §25 of the *Basis of Union*: elders of the local congregation and accredited lay preachers should be considered first;**
- (c) authorisation for such presidency by the Synod, normally of members from within the congregation concerned, should be for an initial period of five years. Before renewal there should be consultation with, and a review of, the needs of the congregation.**

**We believe that such a process will remain true to the spirit of the Basis of Union. It will enable us to be ourselves, and it will be sensitive to our ecumenical context (§19).**

- 2 that any lay preachers, who are not elders and are nominated by a local congregation to preside at communion, should test a call to eldership within their local congregation (§25).**
- 3 that within each Synod should be a designated local stipendiary minister of Word and Sacrament for each church without an authorised elder within it, who could provide guidance, even if that minister does not have formal pastoral responsibility for the congregation (§27).**
- 4 that a roll of accredited authorised elders and lay preachers be maintained by the General Assembly, to avoid the possibility of any individual exercising this ministry unhelpfully in one place and then moving elsewhere to try again (§28).**
- 5 that greater publicity be given to the existing material for preparation (§33).**
- 6 that for authorised elders (depending upon consultation with the Ministries and Education & Learning Committees) the word ‘training’ be replaced by ‘further preparation’ (§31).**
- 7 that a specific code of conduct for authorised elders be developed and that those concerned sign up to it before embarking on their ministry (§37).**

39 *Ecumenical Implications*

The ecumenical implications of these recommendations are significant, both for Local Ecumenical Partnerships and our wider ecumenical relations. Other than in Baptist/URC congregations, this whole idea is problematic for LEPs, because other traditions work with less flexibility over who can preside at the Sacraments. Even the Presbyterian Church in Wales, our major ecumenical partner in Wales, which does permit Elders to administer the sacraments in specified situations, only licenses them (for renewable periods of three years) after three years' training. Given the United Reformed Church's commitment to seek wider unity in the Church, we therefore venture to suggest another possibility of answering the same need: reviving a model of team non-stipendiary ministry, arising from the former Churches of Christ understanding of eldership. This is not a substitute for the earlier recommendations, but one that might be more ecumenically fruitful among our partners who face similar problems.

40 *Team non-stipendiary ministry*

There would be several advantages in using once more a pattern that the Church recognised as early as 1979 (see *Reports to Assembly 1979*, pp 46-49, section II of which still reads as freshly today as when it was written – included in Appendix):

## a) Discipline

A key element of this discussion (particularly in the minds of Synod Moderators) is the question of the discipline under which elders serve. At present, as discussion of safeguarding has demonstrated, elders count as 'volunteers'; and as such there is no obvious disciplinary process for them, unless the Church devises one. A Code of Conduct was approved by Assembly 2010, but it has received little publicity, and does not deal with the questions of accountability, term of office or circumstances in which a period of office can be terminated early. Non-stipendiary ministers, on the other hand, are subject to the Ministerial Disciplinary and Incapacity process, because of their office.

## b) Creativity

Increasingly our pastorates for stipendiary ministers include several congregations. This means that those ministers are more stretched so that they have enough to do simply maintaining what exists, rather than stepping back and reflecting on what new initiatives might be taken. Moreover, much more of the life of the church is unhelpfully compressed into Sunday mornings than in earlier years, though larger churches offer midweek opportunities. The more activities that are initiated, however, the more a team is required to lead them. The responsibilities of team non-stipendiary ministers could (depending upon their gifts) involve some administration, the conduct of worship (including the sacraments), and the time to reflect upon and assist in the leadership of new methods of evangelism, working as a team with the stipendiary minister for the pastorate.

## c) Flexibility

This is in no sense a second-best solution. Such a pattern of team leadership allows for flexibility, with the gifts of various people being used in leadership as the local situation requires, rather than one person being expected to be

good at everything. Rather than falling into the trap of ‘steady as she goes’ and spreading ministry too thinly between different congregations – as may also be the case for those lay preachers, who rarely offer or receive ministry within their own congregations – a local gift-oriented leadership team has the potential for growth.

d) Ecumenical contexts including LEPs

Team non-stipendiary ministry raises no additional difficulties to relationships between the traditional denominations (though newer charismatic and community churches are less likely to have difficulties with the idea of authorised elders).

e) This solution would require no amendments to the *Basis of Union* (other than the updating of the guidance on Presidency referred to in §18, which is not an amendment to the *Basis*).

41 There would be some disadvantages:

a) Level of preparation

Currently the Church offers no form of preparation between TLS accreditation and full NSM ministerial education. The concept of ‘graduate attributes’ used in higher education to produce a well-rounded tertiary education could be considered.<sup>2</sup> The point mentioned in §§31-32 above, however, concerning the tension between qualifications and discernment, should be considered here too.

b) Teamwork

While EM1 now uses a teamwork approach, many ministers are still not experienced at working in teams. Teamwork is harder than doing everything oneself, because it means telling others what one is planning or doing in good time, as well as trust and the loss of ministerial control. This may be a sign that busy people are trying to do more than they can manage at the expense of consultation. Some members of congregations may also be unwilling to let go of reliance on ‘their’ Minister of Word and Sacraments as the one to solve all problems.

c) Potential devaluation of the existing ministry of elders

The United Reformed Church rightly values its eldership. It has been suggested that instead of meeting the need for presidency at the sacraments and local leadership in our churches by using the ministry of elders, the creation of more ministers might appear to devalue the elders we have. But this is illogical; the need for elders’ ministry remains. We usually rejoice if an elder feels the call to stipendiary ministry: why should this be different? In any case the task of ‘giving an account of the faith that is in us’ is one for all Christians – church members and elders – not simply ministers. Where that is done most effectively, churches grow.

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<sup>2</sup> The concept of ‘graduate attributes’ as a way of defining the outcomes of higher education has been developed in this country, particularly (but not exclusively) in the Scottish universities, and includes such qualities as enquiry and lifelong learning, personal development, ability in public speaking and communicating ideas, working within a team, critical thinking and research skills, and leadership.

42 Taking all this into account, **we recommend that further attention be given to expanding the concept of non-stipendiary ministry to include once more the original pattern of team non-stipendiary ministry.** This does require further consultation with the Ministries Committee, which already has a working party on non-stipendiary ministry, and the Education and Learning Committee, which has spent much time in the last few years in adjusting to new requirements in the Common Awards for stipendiary ministry candidates.

43 **Concluding reflections**

a) *Teamwork*

Regardless of whether our suggestion for further work on team non-stipendiary ministers is pursued, we believe that there should be a fresh look at the opportunities for teamwork, and in particular that this suggestion should be referred to the Ministries and Education & Learning committees, and to Synod Moderators and Pastoral committees, in consultation with the local churches concerned.

b) *Local Church Leaders*

If there is serious concern about the accountability of Local Church Leaders, then these situations should be investigated to discover whether, when set up, they conformed to the 1998 Guidelines, and, if not, why not. All Christian leadership should be servant-leadership.

c) *Information*

We are concerned at the apparent lack of information about who leads worship in our congregations week by week, and believe that intelligent decisions on these matters require more information than is currently available.

d) *'Clericalisation?'*

At the General Assembly in 1995 and to a lesser extent in 2005 some members expressed concern that the addition of further responsibilities to even two or three elders might distract them from their Christian witness in the wider world – what other traditions might call 'the clericalisation of the laity'. The Task Group rejects that argument. An elder's office in the United Reformed Church is one of governance and pastoral care; it carries authority and responsibility, dependent on the grace of God. There is no reason why another responsibility for some should impede the task of every Christian 'to give an account of the faith that is in us' in encountering an increasingly secularised world. To buy into the popular distinction between clerical and lay is to deny the biblical view that the *laos* is the whole people of God, not only the unordained. It does not accord with the Reformed tradition. Nor is the difference one between 'amateurs' and 'professionals': this seriously undervalues the work of our elders in leading worship and preaching. Sadly, anecdotal evidence suggests that few elders' meetings spend a long time considering the mission of their local church, rather than details of administration. One member of the Group remarked that it was only when preparing devotions, prayer with members who were sick, or presiding at the Lord's Supper that she was reminded of our concern for witness and service to the community and evangelism at home and abroad. The Group is therefore confident that nothing in these proposals will reduce the missionary potential of our elders.

e) *Differences of opinion*

We are struck by the fact that attempts to resolve some of these issues have divided opinion in the Church for over twenty years. The Faith and Order Committee was not unanimous in bringing their recommendation to Assembly in 2014, and Assembly approved the resolution by agreement. Therefore, although the Task Group has found unanimity in its thinking, it recognises that further decisions on this matter will not be easy, and will require an appropriate combination of prayer and realism, alongside theological discernment.

Susan Bush, Sarah Hall, Lesley Richmond and David Thompson.  
21 July 2015

## Appendix

### **Extract from the Statement on ‘Auxiliary Ministry’ resulting from a national consultation in Rossendale, Lancashire, 6-8 November 1978, as included in the *Reports to Assembly 1979 (46-52)*.**

Among the reasons which lead us to recommend the confirmation of the Assembly’s decision to authorise auxiliary or non-stipendiary ministry are the following:-

- 1 The New Testament evidence shows that the ministry of the apostolic church was not tied to a stipendiary system. While Paul asserted the right of the preacher of the Gospel to the support of the Church, he refused to exercise this right in his own case. The early expansion of the Church depended upon a non-professional ministry.
- 2 At many times and places, and notably in our own time, we have witnessed the rapid missionary expansion of churches which rely upon a non-stipendiary ministry.
- 3 The United Reformed Church includes a very large number of small churches, many of which are potential centres of growth. We ought to see that all are furnished with a ministry of Word, Sacrament and pastoral care of the highest possible standard, acknowledged and authorised by the whole Church. This cannot be achieved solely by a full-time stipendiary ministry.
- 4 There are ‘unevangelised areas’ in the life of contemporary Britain – sectors of society where there is little or no relevant Christian witness. A ministry of those already working in these areas could open the way for the birth and growth of Christian congregations within them, developing a style of life, worship, teaching and ministry appropriate to their needs.
- 5 There are members of the Church whose talents for various aspects of ministry have in the past lain dormant because there has been no recognised place for them in accustomed pattern of the Church. Their talents could be awakened and brought into use by the challenge of such leadership near at hand, and of suitable training available without having to leave present commitments to work and family.
- 6 Some of our sister churches, notably the Church of England, have already some years of fruitful experience in the development of a non-stipendiary ministry, and this encourages us to believe that the Spirit may be leading the Church in this way.



# Paper G1

Finance Committee  
2016 Budget

United Church 2015  
Church 2015  
Reformed Church 2015  
Church 2015



# Paper G1

## Finance Committee

### 2016 Budget

#### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	John Ellis, treasurer: <a href="mailto:john.ellis@urc.org.uk">john.ellis@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution</b>	<b>Mission Council adopts the budget for 2016 set out in the Appendix.</b>

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	The paper presents a budget for 2016 for decision and financial projections for 2017-18 for information.
<b>Main points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M&amp;M giving in 2016 is likely to be similar to the budget in 2015.</li> <li>• The 2016 budget shows a small deficit of 0.5%.</li> <li>• Projections suggest broadly balanced budgets for 2017-18.</li> </ul>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Budget holders in Church House; the Windermere Management committee; the URC Trust.

#### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None

# 2016 Budget

1. Attached in the Appendix column 3 is the draft budget for 2016 which the Finance committee presents to Mission Council. The budget has been reviewed by the URC Trustees and has their support.

## Income

2. Ministry and Mission Fund (M&M) giving from local churches via the synods is the principal source of income for the central budget. This has been falling at a rate of 1% per year for an extended period. The budget number for 2015 assumed this trend continued. In fact it seems likely that 2015 M&M giving will be above budget by at least £100k (0.5%). This may be partly a response to the encouragement given by the 2014 General Assembly to congregations to consider increasing their M&M giving by 1% above their previous plan.
3. For 2016 the latest information from synods suggests that total M&M giving will fall from 2015 levels, but again by less than the traditional 1%. This is immensely helpful for constructing the 2016 budget and provides a stronger financial base than would otherwise be the case for the medium term. More congregations responding to the Assembly's resolution would increase our options in the future.

## Stipends, Pensions and Ministry

4. The largest part of the expenditure side of the budget is the funding for stipends of ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church-related Community Workers.
5. The current stipend is £24,996. Mission Council has delegated the task of setting the stipend to the Finance committee in conjunction with the URC trustees. The Finance committee recommended a rise of 1% for 2016 which the trustees agreed. As usual the principal factors behind this figure were the rate of price inflation, currently very low, and the rate at which average earnings are rising in the economy, which has increased since a year ago. A 1% rise takes the stipend to £25,248 and adds around £150k to the overall budget expenditure.
6. During 2015 the work on the triennial valuation of the URC Ministers' Pensions Fund has been completed. This involves creating estimates of the likely eventual liabilities of the Pension Fund into the distant future and comparing them with the assets in the Fund now and the flow of new contributions going into the Fund. These contributions are partly from serving ministers but mostly from the Church as 'employer'. Not all the developments in the wider economy since the previous valuation have worked in our favour. Nevertheless with the change of the pension scheme benefits agreed to take effect from 2013, the current and expected assets of the Fund were calculated on the most plausible set of assumptions to cover 96% of its likely liabilities.
7. The good news from that calculation is that there is no pressure for a further review of benefits and neither will it be necessary to put markedly more Church money into the Pension Fund over the next three years than has been the pattern over the past three years. The budget allowed for £2.46m to be invested in the Pension Fund in 2015 and provides for £2.50m to be invested in 2016.

8. The number of stipendiary ministers retiring in 2015 was below trend and is expected to be so again in 2016. However the high number of ordinations (16) in 2015 will not be matched in 2016 so the total number of ministers will fall again.
9. Taking the reduction in the number of ministers, the stipend increase and the pension obligations into account, the budget provides for £15.35m for stipends and related payments. As in recent other years, this means that three-quarters of the total budget is directly supporting ministers.

## The Windermere Centre

10. The Windermere Centre has been a particular focus of discussion in the preparation of this year's budget in conjunction with the Education & Learning committee and representatives of the Windermere Management committee.
11. The background is that the Centre has been periodically affirmed as one of the four Resource Centres for Learning (RCL) supported by the United Reformed Church. However, whatever its other strengths, it has struggled to stay within its agreed budget, with its income regularly below target. Over the five years 2010-4, total income was just over £1.1m, 15% short of the agreed target of almost £1.3m. Support from the central budget in 2010-14 totalled £0.7m.
12. By the beginning of 2014, the Windermere Management committee detected signs that the financial position was in danger of deteriorating further and rapidly. In discussion with the Finance committee it was agreed to fund, outside the regular budget, a full-time marketing post for two years. The hope was that with this extra resource and several new initiatives some financial stability could be achieved. A condition of the funding was that a report on progress should be made to the Finance committee in September 2015.
13. This report showed that the initiatives had made a positive impact, notably the move to a 'Pay What You Can' charging policy and the emphasis on 'It's Your Space' as a way of encouraging activities tailored to the specific needs of user groups.
14. Everyone agrees that an RCL is always more than just a business. Nonetheless it was helpful that the report to the Finance committee included a thoroughly researched and detailed Business Plan for the period 2015-18. While the future is always unpredictable, this showed that the recent changes in direction at Windermere did hold out a good prospect of one result being a much more secure financial footing.
15. It is for the Education and Learning committee to advise Mission Council on the long term for each RCL, but the Finance committee is glad to report that in its view the number in the Business Plan for the level of net support Windermere will need from central funds in 2016 of £134k is plausible. This has been put in the budget attached. If the Church wishes the Windermere Centre to continue, it is the view of the Finance committee that there is now no reason to suppose that its finances will deteriorate sharply in the medium term.

## Other Expenditure

16. Expenditure on other programmes and infrastructure increases in aggregate by just over 2% in the 2016 budget relative to the 2015 one. This can be accommodated this year because of the stronger income from M&M but the Finance committee welcomes the commitment of the new General Secretariat to ensure that these costs do not start to creep up habitually.
17. In accord with recent practice, the costs of the biennial General Assembly have been placed equally in the Assembly and non-Assembly years so the £100k in the 2015 budget is 50% of the budget for the 2016 Assembly. The costs of the recalled Assembly meeting in June 2015 are outside the 2015 budget but were around £30k, less than the estimate given to Mission Council when it approved that meeting taking place.

## Overall 2016 Position

18. The 2016 budget shows a likely deficit of £110k, or the equivalent of just 0.5% of total expenditure. The Finance committee believes that this is acceptable.

## Resolution

19. **Mission Council adopts the budget for 2016 set out in the Appendix.**

## Projections for 2017-18

20. The final two columns in the Appendix table show projections for 2017 and 2018. These are not based on detailed discussions with every budget holder but incorporate estimates of major items and known changes elsewhere. As projections the figures need to be treated as highly approximate.
21. On the income side, these projections have been deliberately cautious. Anecdotal evidence does not necessarily imply that the slower reduction in M&M aggregate giving seen in 2015 will become a new trend. Pending more robust evidence, the projections allow for the possibility that the historic 1% fall each year returns.
22. On the expenditure side, the amount allowed for stipends and related costs falls significantly from £15.7m in 2015 to £14.7m in 2018 due to the continuing expected reduction in the number of serving ministers.
23. Overall the best projections currently possible suggest the budget should remain broadly in balance for 2017 and 2018.

## THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

## SUMMARY BUDGET ESTIMATES 2016-2018

Item 5(b)

Department/ Project	2014 Actual £	2015 Budget £	2016 Draft Budget £	2017 Projection £	2018 Projection £	Comments
<b>Income</b>						
34 Ministry and Mission contributions	(19,642,770)	(19,360,000)	(19,340,000)	(19,150,000)	(18,960,000)	2015 est. £19,490k
35 Pensions - additional funding	(302,476)	(300,000)	0	0	0	
31 Investment and other income						
Dividends	(750,557)	(725,000)	(827,000)	(842,000)	(860,000)	
Donations	(6,162)	(1,000)	0	0	0	
Specific legacies	(1,829)	0	0	0	0	
Grants/Income - Memorial Hall Trust/Fund	(242,983)	(235,000)	(250,000)	(255,000)	(260,000)	
Net other interest	(20,886)	(50,000)	(40,000)	(40,000)	(40,000)	
Other income, including property rentals	(6,893)	(20,000)	(20,000)	(20,000)	(20,000)	
	(1,029,310)	(1,031,000)	(1,137,000)	(1,157,000)	(1,180,000)	
<b>Total income</b>	<b>(20,974,555)</b>	<b>(20,691,000)</b>	<b>(20,477,000)</b>	<b>(20,307,000)</b>	<b>(20,140,000)</b>	
<b>Expenditure</b>			Stipends +1% Salaries +1.5%	Stipends +1.5% Salaries +1.5%	Stipends +1.5% Salaries +1.5%	Programmes flat unless known otherwise
<b>A Discipleship Dept.</b>						
<b>A1 Ministry</b>						
01 Local and special ministries and CRCWs	14,987,072	15,060,500	14,688,200	14,292,800	14,020,800	2015 est £14,808k
02 Synod Moderators - stipends and expenses	653,125	651,400	663,500	660,000	667,000	
03 Ministries department	266,792	264,800	277,800	280,700	283,700	
03P Pastoral & welfare	3,287	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	
	15,910,275	15,978,700	15,631,500	15,235,500	14,973,500	
<b>A2 Education &amp; Learning</b>						
04 Initial training for ministry	677,561	635,000	641,500	641,500	621,500	
04 Continuing training for ministry	104,874	105,000	107,500	107,500	107,500	
04 Resource Centres support	443,620	555,000	571,000	580,000	588,000	
	1,226,055	1,295,000	1,320,000	1,329,000	1,317,000	
W Windermere RCL - net support	146,998	114,500	133,900	128,500	121,000	
04L Training for Learning & Serving - net support	110,811	102,000	92,900	92,900	92,900	
04P Lay preachers support	7,094	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	
04T Education & Learning department	179,277	176,300	148,300	150,100	152,000	
	1,670,236	1,697,800	1,705,100	1,710,500	1,692,900	
<b>A3 Children's and Youth Work</b>						
06 Staff costs	192,041	202,600	206,600	209,500	212,500	
06 Management, resources and programmes	68,534	99,890	86,130	86,130	86,130	
	260,575	302,490	292,730	295,630	298,630	
<b>A4 Safeguarding</b>						
07 Safeguarding policy and practice	57,542	47,600	78,800	90,000	100,000	
<b>B Mission Dept.</b>						
10A-B Mission dept staff and core costs	431,735	417,900	457,800	463,900	485,150	
10C-E Mission programmes and memberships	213,982	281,500	261,500	261,500	261,500	
	645,717	699,400	719,300	725,400	746,650	
11 National Ecumenical Officers	33,460	35,000	35,000	35,500	36,000	
	679,177	734,400	754,300	760,900	782,650	
<b>C Administration &amp; Resources Dept.</b>						
20 Central Secretariat	273,657	305,300	309,800	314,200	318,100	
24 Church House costs	337,232	340,600	336,000	338,300	340,500	
24A Human Resources	75,810	85,400	78,800	78,800	78,800	
23 IT Services	145,348	152,600	165,100	165,100	165,100	
21 Finance	481,064	505,500	523,900	515,500	530,500	
22 Communications & Editorial	352,649	366,900	404,800	409,500	415,700	
	1,665,760	1,756,300	1,818,400	1,821,400	1,848,700	
<b>D Governance</b>						
29 General Assembly	77,889	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	
27 Mission Council	56,341	44,000	44,000	44,000	44,000	
28 Professional fees	84,984	103,000	103,000	103,000	103,000	
25 Other	70,720	65,000	59,000	59,000	59,000	
	289,934	312,000	306,000	306,000	306,000	
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>20,533,499</b>	<b>20,829,290</b>	<b>20,586,830</b>	<b>20,219,930</b>	<b>20,002,380</b>	
<b>NET (SURPLUS)/DEFICIT</b>	<b>(441,057)</b>	<b>138,290</b>	<b>109,830</b>	<b>(87,070)</b>	<b>(137,620)</b>	

# Paper G2

Mission and Finance Committees  
Ethical Investment Guidelines on  
Climate Change Issues

United Church 2015  
Church 2015  
Reformed Church 2015  
Church 2015



# Paper G2

## Mission and Finance Committees

### Ethical Investment Guidelines on Climate Change Issues

#### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	David Martin, Chair of Investment committee: <a href="mailto:david.b.martin@ntlworld.com">david.b.martin@ntlworld.com</a> John Ellis, Treasurer: <a href="mailto:john.ellis@urc.org.uk">john.ellis@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>See end of paper</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	N/A

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To establish an ethical investment policy in relation to fossil fuels
<b>Main points</b>	See Executive Summary
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	<i>Environmental URC policy update</i> Mission Council Paper 12 of November 2014; see also Bibliography at end of paper
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Mission, Finance and Investment committees

#### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	No necessary impact on investment income long term
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	A clear policy will help guide URC input to the ecumenical Church Investors Group



# Ethical Investment Guidelines on Climate Change Issues

## Executive Summary

- S1. The United Reformed Church has a set of Ethical Investment Principles agreed at General Assembly in 2010 and 2013 used by the central bodies of the Church and also commended for use by synods and local churches. They prescribe avoidance of investment in a number of areas but currently do not include environmental issues.
- S2. Following growing concerns regarding climate change and the widely understood contribution by the extractors and users of fossil fuel, there is a growing movement among some investors, including religious groups and Christian denominations world-wide, to develop ethical investment guidelines in this area. This paper sets out the background and proposes a set of such URC guidelines.
- S3. Christians have a divinely mandated responsibility for the world, its creatures and one another - especially the weakest and least. This requires us to mitigate whatever is damaging creation. The broad scientific consensus is that greenhouse gas emissions from human activities are the most significant contributor to world climate change. Urgent action is needed to avert the worst consequences of climate change on ecosystems, and on present and future generations. Limiting concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub> is critical. **The conclusions** from this paper's analysis are:
- Cutting greenhouse gas emissions medium and long term and decarbonising energy are essential
  - Reducing such emissions from energy production is needed. Characteristics of each fossil fuel need to be considered, and priority given to reducing use of those with the worst impacts.
  - Addressing poverty and access to energy in low income countries may mean that fossil fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions there increase for at least a period of time.
  - Reducing greenhouse gas emissions requires a holistic approach
  - From an investment perspective, climate change is best seen as a challenge of transition.
- S4. **Thermal coal** is principally used to generate electricity and heat and is the most emissions intensive, while **Oil**, widely used for transport (with few alternatives), for the chemicals industry and as a lubricant is next. Oil recovered from tar sands involves emissions intensity 20-25% greater than that of conventional oil. **Natural gas**, used to generate electricity and heat has lower emissions. There is a wide variety of **Biofuels** - typically carbon-based. Carbon is first absorbed from the atmosphere before combustion so net greenhouse gas emissions are significantly lower. **Nuclear** and **Renewable Energy Sources** have very low carbon emissions, though they have practical disadvantages.
- S5. Widespread concern about the contribution of fossil fuels to climate change has led to a call for immediate divestment from extraction companies. There is, however, strong evidence that investor engagement with companies has made a significant contribution to improving their practices.

- S6. The URC Investment committee, with the full support of the Mission committee and the Finance committee, believe URC trustees need to engage collectively with other church investors. Taking the action proposed in the policy summarised below is not inconsistent with Trustees' fiduciary duties:
- a) **engage intensively with companies in which our assets are invested that make a significant contribution to greenhouse gas emissions to encourage them in the transition to a low carbon economy;**
  - b) **conduct corporate and public policy engagement in collaboration with other investors, including through the Church Investors Group, the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change and the Carbon Disclosure Project;**
  - c) **do not invest in any company where more than 10% of its revenues are derived from the extraction of thermal coal or the production of oil from tar sands;**
  - d) **disinvest, after appropriate engagement, from companies making significant contributions to greenhouse gas emissions considered not to be taking seriously their responsibilities;**
  - e) **where practicable increase investments in areas such as climate change adaptation, sustainable energy, energy efficiency, carbon capture and storage, to the extent that such investments meet investment risk/return criteria;**
  - f) **continue to encourage those organisations that invest money on our behalf to build climate change into their investment practices and processes, in line with the goals and objectives set out in this climate change policy;**
  - g) **monitor and report periodically on their implementation of this policy.**

## Section 1: Introduction

- 1.1 The United Reformed Church has a set of Ethical Investment Principles agreed at General Assembly in 2010. These cover the general approach to investment taking account of Ethical Principles and are used by the central bodies of the Church; they are also commended for use by synods and local churches. They prescribe avoidance of investment in manufacture or supply of weapons or in companies a significant part of whose business is in the manufacture or supply of alcoholic drinks, or tobacco products, or military equipment (other than weapons); or the provision of gambling facilities, or the publication or distribution of pornography. In 2013, a further document was agreed on behalf of Assembly, restricting investment in high interest rate lending including home credit (also known as home-collected credit) or doorstep lending, payday loans, money lending, fringe lending, pawn broking and rent-to-own activities.
- 1.2 Following growing concerns regarding climate change and the widely understood contribution to it by the activities of extractors and users of fossil fuel, there has been a movement among a growing band of investors, including religious groups and Christian denominations in UK and world-wide, to develop ethical investment guidelines in this area. This paper sets out the background and proposes a set of ethical investment guidelines for the URC related to the extraction and use of fossil fuels. The Assembly has urged the URC to work ecumenically in this area and so this paper draws very extensively on the work of other Christian denominations<sup>1</sup>. Their publications are listed in the Bibliography at the end of this paper.

## Section 2: Biblical Background

- 2.1 As Christians, we have a divinely mandated responsibility for the physical world, for its creatures and for one another, especially the weakest and least (Gen 1. 26, 31, Gen. 2.15, 20). This requires us to do all we can to mitigate whatever is damaging creation and God's creatures, and to promote all that is good and brings the kingdom nearer. In relation to climate change, the broad scientific consensus is that greenhouse gas emissions from human activities are the most significant contributor to changes in the world's climate. Urgent action is needed if we are to avert the worst consequences of climate change on ecosystems, and on present and future generations. Climate change is a present day reality and already leading to significant impacts on the poorest and most marginalised in the world.
- 2.2 God calls into being a people to serve him in caring for his world (Gen. 8.21-9.17). This carries through to the New Testament (Col. 1.15-20). There is an inevitable judgement whereby those who 'sow the wind shall reap the whirlwind' (Hosea 8.7).
- 2.3 This implies we must do all we can to mitigate whatever is damaging creation and God's creatures, and to promote all that is good and brings the kingdom nearer (Rom. 13.11-14).
- 2.4 The Covenant made after the flood *was with all creatures in every generation* and so we should not view the interests of those in future generations as being any less important than our own. God's care is for all creation rather than just humanity;

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1 Content from the Methodist church and Church of England Reports have been particularly helpful.

the injunction to 'have dominion' over all other creatures is an injunction to be wise stewards of creation, not an indulgence to exploit the rest of creation for our own ends.

### Section 3: Scientific Background

- 3.1 In its **Fifth Assessment Report (AR5)** (2014), the **Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change** (IPCC) states that "Limiting peak atmospheric concentrations over the course of the century - not only reaching long-term concentration levels - is critical for limiting temperature change". The IPCC acknowledges that there is no single pathway to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations at any level but notes that reaching atmospheric concentrations levels of 430-480 ppm CO<sub>2</sub> by 2100 (levels that are likely to keep temperature change below 2°C over the course of the century relative to pre-industrial levels) are associated with global greenhouse gas emissions reductions of 40%-70% by 2050 compared to 2010.
- 3.2 The market for energy is a mix of global and local markets with some fuels being widely traded internationally and others not. The resource companies with headquarters in the UK have the majority of their operations overseas; it is therefore impossible to consider the UK in isolation. AR5 estimates that c.65% of global greenhouse gas emissions in 2010 were CO<sub>2</sub> released by burning fossil fuels. The UK Government estimates that 85% of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions arise from the production of energy from fossil fuels. It should be noted that the amount of carbon that can be burnt to keep atmospheric concentrations below 450ppm is absolute, and that further increases in population mean lower per-capita levels of acceptable emissions and greater per capita emissions reductions globally.
- 3.3 Given the level of fossil fuel reserves, a substantial proportion will need to remain unexploited in the coming decades to meet the target of limiting global warming to 2°C.
- 3.4 Even though the IPCC does not offer a view on the greenhouse gas emission reductions that should be achieved by individual countries, the need for economic growth and increased access to energy in low income countries is likely to result in increased greenhouse gas emissions from these countries in the near term. This, in turn, suggests that high income countries may need to bear a greater burden of the emissions reduction effort. For example, the UK Climate Change Act established a target for the UK to reduce its emissions by at least 80% from 1990 levels by 2050. The **UK's Committee on Climate Change** (CCC) has stated that "This target represents an appropriate UK contribution to global emission reductions consistent with limiting global temperature rise to as little as possible above 2°C."
- 3.5 The CCC estimate that from 1990 to 2013, the UK's carbon emissions fell 25%, implying that emissions need to fall a further 73% to meet the 80% target by 2050. This would imply that emissions would need to fall 3.5% p.a. over the thirty seven year period. The policy recommendations of the CCC and the IPCC are in line with the need for sustained long term incremental cuts in carbon emissions rather than a dramatic cessation of emissions.
- 3.6 The high proportion of greenhouse gas emissions that comes from fossil fuel combustion for energy, combined with the need to reduce overall emissions, would suggest that over time fossil fuel use must reduce and also become less carbon intensive for the 80% target to be met. This would suggest that those fossil fuels that are most carbon intensive i.e. thermal coal and tar sands would be most likely to see their combustion for energy reduced early in scenarios consistent with the 80%

target. Given the increasingly onerous nature of the target, and of the CCC's carbon budgets, it is very likely that in the course of time, other fossil fuels will fall into the same category for many of their current uses. If emissions decreased less rapidly than envisaged at first, then this would imply that more rapid emissions targets would need to be made in later years.

- 3.7 The IPCC states that delaying mitigation until 2030 will increase the challenges of, and reduce the options for, bringing atmospheric concentration levels to 530 ppm CO<sub>2</sub> or lower by the end of the century. The IPCC suggests that delaying action until 2030 would mean that the rate of greenhouse gas emissions reductions from 2030 to 2050 would need to be 6% per annum compared to just over 3% per annum if early action is taken. Achieving greenhouse gas emission reduction rates of this magnitude would also require a much more rapid scale-up of low-carbon energy over this period and higher transitional and long term economic impacts.
- 3.8 The evidence from the various emission reduction scenarios analysed by the IPCC suggests that the decarbonisation of energy supply by 2100 is essential to enable the emissions reductions set out above to be achieved.
- 3.9 **Implications for other industries.** It is impossible to separate the production of energy from its use, especially as the vast majority of greenhouse gas emissions emanating from fossil fuels relate to their use rather than their extraction. Many industries are currently reliant on fossil fuels as an energy source (e.g. transport, cement, building products, glass and steelmaking). The need to decarbonise the energy sector has considerable implications for these industries, as they adapt to other fuel sources where currently possible and develop and utilise new fuel sources when needed. The practicability of substitution will be one of the factors which determines the order in which fossil fuel use is curtailed.
- 3.10 Any ethical judgment made on the extraction of fossil fuels, would need also to apply to these industries, given that it is the combustion of the fossil fuels which causes carbon emissions. The overwhelming majority of current economic activity, including economic development in developing countries, is dependent on the combustion of fossil fuels for energy.
- 3.11 **The conclusions** from this analysis are:
- Significant cuts in global greenhouse gas emissions in both the medium and long term and decarbonising energy supply are essential to keep temperature change below 2°C over the course of the century relative to pre-industrial levels.
  - Within the longer-term goal of decarbonising energy supply, the shorter term goal is one of reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with energy production. This requires the characteristics of individual fossil fuels to be explicitly considered, and priority to be given to reducing the use of those fuels with the worst impacts on climate change.
  - The need to address poverty and access to energy in low income countries may mean that fossil fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions in these countries increase for at least a period of time.
  - Reducing greenhouse gas emissions requires that a holistic approach is adopted, and that attention is paid to, amongst others, energy supply, energy demand, wider fossil fuel use, patterns of consumption and land use.
  - From an investment perspective, climate change is best seen as a challenge of transition. That is, investors need to take actions now that enable or support the early reductions in greenhouse gas emissions (i.e. between now and 2030) that then enable atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations to be stabilised at a level

likely to keep temperature change below 2°C over the course of the century relative to pre-industrial levels .

## Analysis of Fuel types

3.12 The following table shows the primary energy mix both globally and in UK in 2013:

	World 2013 (BP Statistical Review of World Energy)	UK 2013 (Digest of UK Energy Statistics)
Oil	32.9%	34.1%
Coal	30.1%	18.3%
Natural gas	23.7%	34.2%
Nuclear	4.4%	5.3%
Renewables	8.9% (Hydro 6.7%)	8.1% (Bioenergy 4.1%)

- 3.13 Until 2014 the proportion of global energy derived from oil had been falling in response to high oil prices. The proportion derived from coal had been increasing following high demand in Asia Pacific and that derived from other renewables had been increasing from a very low base following significant investment globally. The International Energy Agency estimates that despite only accounting for 30% of primary energy, coal accounts for 44% of energy related emissions. The emissions from oil (35%) are similar to its energy share. The emissions from natural gas (20%) are lower than its energy share, while those from nuclear and renewables (1% in total) are, unsurprisingly, much lower.
- 3.14 The primary energy mix in the UK in 2013 was markedly different with a greater reliance on natural gas and a lesser reliance on coal.
- 3.15 **Thermal coal** is principally used to generate electricity and heat. It is the most emissions intensive of the major fossil fuels. The greater carbon intensity relates to a larger proportion of carbon within the chemical composition of coal compared with other fossil fuels, with an average emissions intensity per unit of energy being 94kg CO<sub>2</sub>/GJ. This is then compounded by the lower thermal efficiency typically exhibited by coal-fired plant resulting in much higher emissions than for other fossil fuels. Lignite has an emissions intensity which is c. 7% higher than that of other coal, and also typically has higher emissions of other pollutants associated with its use.
- 3.16 **Oil** is widely used as a transport fuel, a feedstock for the chemicals industry and a lubricant. Historically, it was used to generate electricity, though following the oil price shocks of the 1970s this no longer occurs on a large scale. There are currently few practicable alternatives for oil for some forms of transport (e.g. aviation or shipping). Oil has an emissions intensity per unit of energy of 78kg CO<sub>2</sub>/GJ. The emissions

embedded in the extraction of oil should be considered as well as just that involved in its combustion. Oil recovered from tar sands (sometimes also called oil sands) involves much greater use of energy in the extraction process than conventional oil. As a result of this the IEA estimates that it has an emissions intensity 20-25% greater than that of conventional oil.

- 3.17 **Natural gas** is principally used to generate electricity and heat, though is also used as a feedstock for the chemicals industry. There has been some progress towards using it as a fuel for the transport industry following the large increases in the oil price relative to the gas price, though this is of minor importance. Natural gas has an emissions intensity per unit of energy of 56kg CO<sub>2</sub>/GJ.
- 3.18 **Biofuels** encompass a wide variety of fuels. These are typically carbon-based, though they differ from fossil fuels in that the carbon is first absorbed from the current atmosphere before combustion. Some biofuels are crops specifically designed to be burnt (e.g. sugar based ethanol or willow crops) while others involve the burning of by-products (e.g. straw or wood offcuts). The term is also often used for natural gas (methane) obtained from landfill sites or the anaerobic digestion of organic waste, the burning of which dramatically reduces its global warming impact. Biofuels typically are less energy intensive than fossil fuels, and can involve higher gross greenhouse gas emissions per unit of energy. The arguments in favour of biofuels assert that, with the carbon released having been absorbed from the atmosphere in the very recent past or in the present, the net greenhouse gas emissions from biofuels are significantly lower than those for fossil fuels. The arguments against biofuels note that the land from which biofuels are harvested would probably have been covered with vegetation and absorbed a similar amount of carbon irrespective of whether that vegetation was subsequently burnt for energy. There are further ethical concerns regarding implications for food security from large-scale biofuels production in some developing countries.
- 3.19 **Nuclear** has the advantage of very low carbon emissions per unit of energy, though it has some practical disadvantages. It is very difficult to vary the amount of energy produced, and it is difficult to deliver nuclear energy in forms other than electricity. Pumped storage plants are often developed alongside nuclear plants for this reason. There are also significant ethical concerns relating to issues other than climate change. These are dealt with in a later section. Nuclear energy has high capital costs though relatively low ongoing running costs. During various periods it has been viewed as being either expensive or cheap compared to fossil fuels, though the projected costs of new-build nuclear plants in developed markets are towards the high end of the spectrum of energy costs.
- 3.20 **Renewable Energy Sources** tend to have very low emissions per unit of energy, with the emissions being primarily those embedded in the construction process. Similar to nuclear, it is difficult to deliver renewable energy in forms other than electricity. Some sources of energy have the disadvantage of being intermittent (e.g. wind or solar) while others have levels of availability similar to other sources of energy (e.g. hydro or geothermal). The intermittency of wind and solar energy involve extra costs to the overall system through the need for back-up electricity generation plants and/or energy storage, though the direct costs of many renewable sources of energy have fallen significantly and are now comparable with other forms of energy. There are concerns regarding the local environmental and human rights impacts for renewable sources of energy. These are dealt with in a later section.

## Implications other than climate change issues

- 3.21 There are many **social issues** which arise from any reduction in use of fossil fuels. For example mining communities can be supported by fossil fuel extraction but devastated by the closure of their principal *raison d'être*. Some third world economies are dependent on coal. For example in Southern Africa developing economies depend extensively on energy derived from coal and a removal or reduction in that supply would likely have devastating effects on many in those communities – particularly the poor.
- 3.22 It is clear from a section above that **nuclear power** has certain environmental advantages. There are also, however, significant ethical concerns relating to issues other than climate change. The possibility of catastrophic incidents such as Chernobyl or Fukushima Daiichi and the safety management systems of nuclear power plants are a cause for concern, as are the systems in place for the processing and storage of radioactive waste, and these must be subject to the most stringent safety requirements. However this is the only type of electricity generation which recycles the fuel and fully costs the environmental impact of its activities.
- 3.23 While **natural gas** has advantages over other fossil fuels, over recent years technological developments that have enabled the commercial extraction of shale gas (**fracking**) have become controversial. These concerns typically relate to the impact on the local environment and human rights concerns regarding local communities rather than to the emissions intensity of shale gas. Such concerns would be a matter for the policy on extractive industries rather than for a policy on climate change. It is possible for companies engaged in the extraction of shale gas to operate in such a manner that it involves significant fugitive methane emissions, but it is not inherent in the process. It may be argued that exploration and related activities to determine the size of potential reserves do not create any presumption that any such reserves should or will be exploited. The ethical questions around exploration and any later extraction and exploitation are different and may need to be treated separately.
- 3.24 There are concerns regarding the local environmental and human rights impacts for **renewable** sources of energy. There are aesthetic environmental issues surrounding both wind and solar power, and their effect on wildlife. These need to be evaluated as they are for extractive industries.
- 3.25 **Other uses of fossil fuels.** Fossil fuels are not solely used for energy. The two principal industrial uses are for metallurgical coal in the steel making process and oil and natural gas as feedstocks in the chemicals industry. In addition the manufacture of plastics use petroleum products. There are not currently commercial-scale alternative means of replicating these processes without fossil fuels, which would suggest that the use of these should be viewed differently from the combustion of fossil fuels for energy. Metallurgical coal has a different chemical composition from thermal coal, and tends to trade at a premium to thermal coal. As a result of this, metallurgical coal is very rarely used for other purposes, and the two types of coal can be considered as functionally different.
- 3.26 **Methane** (CH<sub>4</sub>) is the second most prevalent greenhouse gas emitted in developed countries from human activities. In 2013, CH<sub>4</sub> accounted for about 10% of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions from human activities. Methane is emitted by natural sources such as wetlands, as well as human activities such as leakage from natural gas systems and the raising of livestock. Natural processes in soil and chemical reactions in the atmosphere help remove CH<sub>4</sub> from the atmosphere. Methane's lifetime in the atmosphere is much shorter than carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), but CH<sub>4</sub> is more efficient at trapping radiation than CO<sub>2</sub>. The comparative impact of CH<sub>4</sub> on



climate change is 25 times greater than CO<sub>2</sub> over a 100-year period. Natural gas and petroleum systems are the largest source of CH<sub>4</sub> emissions from industry in the United States. Methane is the primary component of natural gas. Some CH<sub>4</sub> is emitted to the atmosphere during the production, processing, storage, transmission, and distribution of natural gas. Because gas is often found alongside petroleum, the production, refinement, transportation, and storage of crude oil is also a source of CH<sub>4</sub> emissions. Domestic livestock such as cattle, buffalo, sheep, goats, and camels produce large amounts of CH<sub>4</sub> as part of their normal digestive process. Also, when animals' manure is stored or managed in lagoons or holding tanks, CH<sub>4</sub> is produced. Because humans raise these animals for food, the emissions are considered human-related. Globally, the Agriculture sector is the primary source of CH<sub>4</sub> emissions. Methane is generated in landfills as waste decomposes and in the treatment of wastewater. Methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) emissions have generally decreased in the last 25 years. Emissions increased from sources associated with agricultural activities, while emissions decreased from sources associated with the exploration and production of natural gas and petroleum products.

- 3.27 **Natural Disasters.** Human activity is not the sole influence on the carbonation of the atmosphere. The Earth is amazingly resilient and is also prone to occasional incidents of a geological or astronomical nature which can have a much greater impact upon climate issues. Dramatic events such as meteorite impacts, massive floods and sudden releases of carbon have led to past changes in climate over timescales ranging from thousands of years to just decades. Short-lived volcanic eruptions and variations in the Sun's output have led to less dramatic climate changes over timescales from a few years to a few decades. Human beings alone do not control the Earth, but need to take responsibility for their own contributions to climate change.
- 3.28 **All fuels have advantages and disadvantages** with respect to practicability, cost and to their implications for climate change and other ethical issues. This involves the local environmental (including on water resources) and human rights impacts around the extraction of fossil fuels and renewable energy production sites, as well as additional safety and long term environmental concerns around nuclear energy.
- 3.29 The harnessing of energy (from whichever source) lies at the **centre of the economic system** and our current standard of living is dependent on it. Scenarios which involve considerable increases in the cost of energy are likely to have adverse impacts on standards of living and increases in the incidence of poverty compared with those which have lower costs of energy. This is both an issue within developed countries (e.g. fuel poverty in Britain) and for developing countries aspiring to the standards of living prevalent elsewhere. The issues around the extraction of fossil fuels in developing countries are further complicated by the international trade in coal and oil (and to a lesser extent in natural gas). The fossil fuels extracted might provide both direct economic benefits to the country concerned as well as providing energy. However, they are mostly exported to developed markets and so it is difficult to view the extraction of fossil fuels in developing countries independently from that in developed countries.

## Carbon capture and storage

- 3.30 Carbon capture and storage (CCS) has long been one of the main hopes of those seeking to limit and reduce carbon emissions. The first commercial-scale electricity generation plant equipped with CCS started operations in Canada in October 2014, building on technology previously used to inject CO<sub>2</sub> into depleted oil fields to enhance recovery rates. The technology has yet to be widely deployed, and

significant challenges remain for this to occur. Should the technology progress to the point where it is widely deployed, then much of the analysis regarding the emissions intensity of fuels will need to be amended, and concerns expressed regarding the high emissions intensity of coal and oil-sands will need to be re-examined. CCS technology is currently only operable on large-scale plants, such as electricity generation units, while much of the combustion of fossil fuels is widely dispersed and small-scale.

## **Section 4: Investment Options**

### **Climate change as a fiduciary issue**

- 4.1 In its 2014 report on the fiduciary duties of investment intermediaries, including pension fund trustees, the UK Law Commission confirmed that it was unhelpful to suggest that trustees should only maximise risk adjusted financial returns. Instead, it said that trustees should use their investment power for the purpose for which it was given and secure the best realistic return over the long term, given the need to control for risks. The report went on to say that trustees should, in doing so, take into account financially material factors, including ethical, environmental, social and governance factors that were financially material, having regard to the particular circumstances of their fund, and acknowledging that some factors may be more financially material for some funds than for others. Taking the action proposed in this policy is not inconsistent with Trustees' fiduciary duties.

### **The Scope of the URC Investment Guidelines**

- 4.2 The current Assembly guidelines refer principally to investment of monies in the care of Trustees of The URC Trust and Pension Funds. They do not necessarily cover other assets invested by synods or churches of the URC. They do not cover the general public policy of the URC on climate change issues. Nor they do attempt to cover related issues such as, on this topic, the monitoring of carbon footprints of churches and manses, installation of solar panels on church and manse roofs, energy performance certificates for churches and manses, appropriate fuels for manse and church heating, and guidance relating to appropriate fuels for church vehicles. Neither do they cover recommendations to members that they avoid the use of particular fuels in their lives. Mission Council will recall that some other aspects of the effect of fossil fuels and climate change are covered in the Environmental Policy being prepared by the Mission committee.

### **The Record of Investor Engagement**

- 4.3 The widespread concern about the contribution of fossil fuels to climate change have led some to call for immediate divestment from companies engaged in their extraction. This form of prophetic action has an honourable history but has not been the main thrust of ethical investment work in the United Reformed Church and its partner denominations. In the Reformed tradition it has usually been felt that Christians need to engage with worldly forces in order for yeast and salt to have their maximum impact rather than withdraw from engagement to maintain our purity.
- 4.4 Even if the principle of engagement is clear, it is nonetheless reasonable to ask whether this approach actually does have any impact in practice. Particularly since the strong encouragement of the 2002 General Assembly to put energy into this area and to do so ecumenically, there are good stories to be told. Much of the URC's contribution today is achieved through our support for the ecumenical Church

Investors Group, which has had a healthily disproportionate input from URC Elders since its inception.

- 4.5 There is strong evidence that investor engagement - individually and collectively - with companies has made a significant contribution to companies improving their social and environmental practices, processes and performance, strengthening their governance processes, better managing their social and environmental risks, and making better strategy and capital investment decisions. These all contribute to long-term financial performance.
- 4.6 Climate change has been a particular engagement focus for a number of years. Church investors have successfully engaged with companies to encourage them to improve their climate change-related disclosures, to set greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and to invest in projects that deliver both greenhouse gas emission reductions and provide positive returns on investment. An important recent focus has been on a wide range of current and emerging risks that could result in 'stranded assets'. These are environmentally unsustainable assets suffering from unanticipated or premature falls in value or even becoming liabilities rather than assets. Examples would be investments in mines or wells which are suddenly uneconomic to exploit due to a change in policy or legislation, or a change in relative costs or prices of other fuels or physical changes like flood, drought or transport problems. Church and other investors have encouraged fossil fuel companies to explain how they take account of the risks presented by climate change policy in their capital investment and portfolio decisions.

## Collaboration

- 4.7 The URC Investment committee, with the full support of the Mission committee and the Finance committee, believe URC trustees need to engage collectively with other church investors to encourage the development and implementation of comprehensive climate change policies that are ambitious (in terms of their goals), robust (in terms of the incentives provided) and sufficiently dependable to enable appropriate levels of investment in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions.
- 4.8 Much of the most effective engagement has been conducted through collaborative initiatives, ie where various Church investors find common cause with other like-minded investors. Church investors and their professional fund managers, have:
- encouraged companies to produce a comprehensive account of their approach to climate change, their emissions, their objectives and targets, amongst others;
  - asked the world's highest emitting companies to make emissions reductions year-on-year, to publish their greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and to invest in projects that provide positive returns on investment. The Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) began in 2003;
  - collaborated in the "Aiming for A" Coalition. The coalition has engaged with the largest emitter companies listed in the UK with the aim of reducing their carbon emissions and improving their disclosure. As a result of this, in 2015 various church denominations have co-filed resolutions at both BP and Royal Dutch Shell's AGMs pressing the companies to make further efforts around reporting their resilience in a carbon constrained world. Other companies subsequently saw these resolutions as setting a new standard for the industry;
  - engaged, through the Church Investors Group, with laggard companies in the FTSE350 (ie the largest 350 companies on the London Stock Exchange) to encourage these companies to take action to disclose and manage their greenhouse gas emissions.

- 4.9 Church investors need to build common ground with other investors to maximise the effectiveness of their engagement with companies and with policymakers.

### Suggested policy criteria

- 4.10 **The objective** in relation to climate change is assisting transition to a low carbon economy. The proposed primary focus for the delivery of this commitment is engagement with companies and with policy makers.
- 4.11 **Disinvestment.** The threat of disinvestment is a useful weapon in the armoury of ethical investment and in the current URC guidelines some industries where the product is both unnecessary and harmful are simply excluded from investment. In the area of climate change it is proposed to avoid investment in those energy forms that are most harmful and which the world could, in due course, manage without. It is hard to see how engagement with those companies specialising in activities associated with the highest carbon emissions could produce a business model that was acceptable. Such companies are unlikely ever to be in a position to make a meaningful contribution towards transition to a low carbon economy. Therefore where thermal coal mining or the production of oil from oil sands (or the use of their products) represents a significant proportion of a company's business it is proposed not to invest in them at all.
- 4.12 However, **engagement** to encourage diversified fossil fuel companies to reduce their extraction of particular fossil fuels or to divert capital to lower carbon fossil fuels has, subject to wider economic and regulatory conditions, a greater likelihood of success.
- 4.13 The **investment criteria** should relate to the investment plans and future trajectory of a company's emissions and those of its products rather than on its current operations. This does not override the need to have portfolios with relatively low and measurably declining carbon emissions. In addition, companies should be expected to reduce emissions arising from their supply chains and the use of their products, where possible.
- 4.14 Companies which are dedicated to the exploration of new fossil fuel reserves should be viewed more seriously than companies dedicated to the exploitation of existing reserves. Companies whose activities are the facilitation of exploration or extraction should not be viewed less seriously than those companies engaged in exploration and extraction. Any adverse lobbying actions of companies should also be evaluated.
- 4.15 Investment decisions in the fossil fuel sector need to take account of likely changes in climate change policy, of likely changes in energy prices, and of how companies are likely to respond to the stranding (or potential stranding) of their assets.
- 4.16 Our approach to climate change - mitigation and adaptation - needs to take explicit account of the development needs of low income countries and of the needs of those living in poverty in middle and high income countries.
- 4.17 Trustees should encourage those organisations that invest money on their behalf to build climate change into their investment practices and processes, in line with the goals and objectives of this climate change policy.

## Resolution

Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, agrees to add the following text as an Appendix to the 2010 statement of principles for the use of the United Reformed Church in making investment decisions:

### Application of the Guidelines in relation to Climate Change

Those responsible for investment decisions on behalf of the URC and its Trust bodies should:

- a) engage intensively with those companies in which they are invested that make a significant contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions (such as fossil fuel producers, electricity generation utilities, large energy users, and producers of energy intensive products) to encourage them to assist in the transition to a low carbon economy;
- b) conduct corporate and public policy engagement wherever possible in collaboration with other investors, including through the Church Investors Group (CIG), the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change (IIGCC) and the Carbon Disclosure project (CDP);
- c) not invest in any company where more than 10% of its revenues are derived from the extraction of thermal coal or the production of oil from oil sands;
- d) disinvest, after appropriate engagement, from companies that make a significant contribution to emissions of greenhouse gasses and that are considered not to be taking seriously their responsibilities to assist with the transition to a low carbon economy;
- e) where practicable increase their investments in climate change adaptation, and in sectors and activities such as sustainable energy, energy efficiency, carbon capture and storage that may make a significant contribution to reducing global greenhouse gas emissions or facilitating the transition to low carbon economy, to the extent that such investments meet their investment risk/return criteria;
- f) continue to encourage those organisations that invest money on their behalf to build climate change into their investment practices and processes, in line with the goals and objectives set out in this climate change policy, including through integrating climate change into relevant requests for proposals and due diligence processes, making climate change an explicit part of their asset management appointment processes, integrating climate change into their investment principles, and monitoring their asset managers' approach to climate change;
- g) monitor and report periodically on their implementation of this policy.

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IPCC Climate Change 2014 Synthesis Report Summary for Policymakers

[https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/AR5\\_SYR\\_FINAL\\_SPM.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/AR5_SYR_FINAL_SPM.pdf)

Climate Change - Implications for Different Fuels – Position Paper by the Methodist Church (UK)

<http://www.cfbmethodistchurch.org.uk/ethics/position-papers/cfb-climate-change-ethical-implications-for-different-fuels.html>

Climate Change - Implications for Different Fuels - Policy Statement by the Methodist Church (UK)

<http://www.cfbmethodistchurch.org.uk/ethics/policy-statements/cfb-climate-change-implications-for-different-fuels-policy-statement.html>

Climate Change the Policy of the National Investing Bodies of the Church of England and the Advisory Paper of the Ethical Investment Advisory Group of the Church of England

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media/2235218/climate%20change%20policy%2030%2004%2015.pdf>

Encyclical letter 'Laudato Si' of the Holy Father Francis on Care for our Common Home

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)

Laudato si': A 'Map' <http://americamagazine.org/issue/laudato-si-map>

# Paper H1

Ministries Committee

Age of application for  
non-stipendiary ministry

United Church 2015  
Church 2015  
Reformed Church 2015  
Church 2015



# Paper H1

## Ministries Committee

### Age of application for non-stipendiary ministry

#### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Gethin Rhys <a href="mailto:gethin.rhys@ntlworld.com">gethin.rhys@ntlworld.com</a> (until 1 November 2015) <a href="mailto:ministries@urc.org.uk">ministries@urc.org.uk</a> (from 1 November 2015)
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Recognising that people are working longer in many occupations and that UK legislation has changed in recent years to enable people to work without fear of age discrimination, Mission Council acting on behalf of the General Assembly resolves to remove the age related entry qualifications with regard to non-stipendiary ministry.</b>

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To remove the age limit for applications for candidacy for non-stipendiary ministry.
<b>Main points</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The age limit should be removed</li> <li>2. Clarifications regarding candidacy and assessment procedure</li> <li>3. Synods reminded of the need for regular review of NSMs</li> <li>4. Consequential matters relating to non-stipendiary CRCW ministry referred to CRCW sub-committee.</li> </ol>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Mission Council Nov 2014, Paper X1, minute 14/32. Mission Council May 2015, Paper H1, minutes 15/2, 15/21
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Since May 2015 Mission Council – with the Secretary for Education & Learning, West Midlands Synod, Ministries committee and Ministries' NSM working party. Previously – as detailed in Paper H1 (above).

#### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Some additional cost if an additional panel is required at assessment conferences due to an increased numbers of applicants.</li> <li>2. Training each additional NSM will cost c £10,000 (Education &amp; Learning budget – Secretary for E&amp;L has indicated that this will be found if suitable applicants come forward).</li> </ol>
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Brings NSM candidacy conditions closer in line with Church of England and a number of other ecumenical partners.



# Age of application for non-stipendiary ministry

1. The Task Group mandated by Mission Council met on 14 August 2015. It came to a consensus on a way forward, and commends to Council the resolution submitted by West Midlands Synod:  
**Recognising that people are working longer in many occupations and that UK legislation has changed in recent years to enable people to work without fear of age discrimination, Mission Council acting on behalf of the General Assembly resolves to remove the age related entry qualifications with regard to non-stipendiary ministry.**
2. In commending this resolution, the Task Group wishes to draw attention to the following points:
  - a) The Task Group believes that all applicants for NSM should explore at an early stage the various routes into accredited Christian ministry (SM, NSM, local leadership, etc.) and that it should be made clear that these ministries, while different, are all equally valid.
  - b) The Task Group believes that older candidates should be required to undergo the same standard of training (subject to accreditation of prior learning) as younger candidates, including the current requirements regarding level of theological education, placement hours, and a measure of collegiate experience to enhance ministerial formation. These requirements are onerous and should be fully explained to applicants at an early stage so that an informed choice may be made as to whether, and how, to proceed.
  - c) Assessment Board should be asked to assess older candidates on the same basis and in the same way as younger candidates. This already includes for all candidates an assessment of personal robustness in meeting the challenges of ministry. As with all candidates, it shall be for the medical assessor to raise any medical issues that might be of concern.
  - d) The Task Group reminds synods that all NSMs (of whatever age and in whatever sphere of service) should be required to engage in regular review of their ministry with the synod. The Task Group has asked Ministries committee to bring further recommendations on this to a future Mission Council or Assembly.
  - e) The Task Group commends to all synods the practice of West Midlands Synod in reviewing all older ministers (part-time SM and NSM) in active service to ensure that they can continue, in a system parallel to that of accreditation committee for full-time SMs. This involves a review prior to age 68, enabling continuation for up to three further years (to age 71), and then annual reviews. These reviews need not be onerous, but should be serious in intent.
3. The resolution applies to ministry of word and sacraments and CRCW ministry. However, the Task Group did not consider CRCW ministry specifically, and suggests that any consequential questions relating to that ministry be referred to the CRCW sub-committee.



# 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.

# Paper I1

Mission Committee  
Environmental Policy

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



# Paper I1

## Mission Committee Environmental Policy

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Francis Brien <a href="mailto:francis.brien@urc.org.uk">francis.brien@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Mission committee is asked to discuss the draft and decide if the policy may be put to a formal vote at General Assembly 2016.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None</b>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	An agreed statement of intent by the United Reformed Church with respect to the environment and the Church's responsibility to reduce the total greenhouse gas emissions caused by its activities (its 'carbon footprint').
<b>Main points</b>	The policy contains a theological affirmation; an explanation of how it relates to Vision 2020 and builds on the <i>Hope in God's Future</i> report; and action which churches, synods and Assembly will seek to implement with respect to caring for Creation and reducing the Church's carbon footprint.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	URC Environmental Policy adopted by General Assembly 2004.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Synods; Joint Public Issues Team; Mr Andy Bottomley (Secretary, URC Retired Ministers' Housing Society); Mrs Ann Barton (Facilities Manager, Church House); Mr Richard Nunn (Chairman, URC Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd); Climate Stewards; A Rocha; The Revd Dr Rosalind Selby (Chair, <i>Hope in God's Future</i> working group); The Revd Dr David Pickering (Environmental Issues Network); The Revd Mike Shrubsole (Environmental Issues Network); The Revd Trevor Jamison (Eco-Congregation Scotland); Mr Charles Jolly (European Churches Environmental Network); Mr Derek Estill (URC member, Blackburn Diocese Environmental Group).

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	There will be some cost in tasks such as calculating the Church's carbon footprint, redrafting travel claim forms, etc. The cost of servicing a task group can be absorbed in the Mission committee budget. Local churches (and perhaps synods) will incur expense if they try to make their buildings 'greener'. But that will be their decision, in response to the policy, rather than a direct cost of the policy.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	



# Environmental Policy

for the United Reformed Church

## 1 Purpose

- 1.1 This policy is an agreed, documented statement of the United Reformed Church's stance towards the environment in which it operates.
- 1.2 It is the cornerstone of our intent, as a body of people committed to caring for God's creation, to reduce our carbon footprint, improve recycling, minimise waste and improve efficiencies on finite natural resources in all of our operations.
- 1.3 It does not prescribe action for the Church or individual members, churches and synods, but as a statement of intent it provides a basis upon which appropriate action may be undertaken.

## 2 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

- 2.1 As a Church we affirm that care for Creation, a just sharing of the world's resources, and a concern for the environment are fundamental gospel commitments.
- 2.2 We believe that God: created and continues to create the whole universe; sustains and nurtures Creation; and wills to redeem the whole of Creation from its bondage to decay. We believe that God's creative work is identified with the Word of God, incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, and that the reconciliation of all things to God in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus cannot be separated from God's act of creation. We believe that creative and redemptive work also belongs to the work of the Spirit, who swept over the face of the waters in the beginning and who inspires a groaning creation as it awaits redemption. We acknowledge God the Trinity to be the transcendent and immanent source, sustenance and salvation of all creation.
- 2.3 We believe that God: entrusts Creation to our care, calling us to be stewards of it; calls us to be partners in God's ongoing creative, renewing and redeeming activity; commands us to act justly and in righteousness not only towards our fellow human beings but to all Creation; and requires us to care for Creation so that future generations, whom God also loves, can enjoy it and benefit from it.
- 2.4 We affirm that Christian mission includes caring for God's earth and all Creation. It includes acknowledging humankind's responsibility, sharing in putting right the relationships within God's Creation that have gone wrong, and working within the church and with partners outside the church to grow towards justice and good stewardship as envisaged in the biblical vision of the world as it is meant to be.

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<sup>1</sup> This section draws upon the Baptist Union of Great Britain statement 'A Vision for the Environment' - <http://ew.ecocongregation.org/downloads/BUGBenviropolicy.pdf>; and the Methodist, Baptist and URC report *Hope in God's Future: Christian Discipleship in the Context of Climate Change* (Peterborough: Methodist Publishing, 2009) p.7.

- 2.5 We know that human activity has contributed to the degradation of the earth and that this is not the will of God. We believe that this degradation limits the attainment of the fullness of life that God wills for all Creation, and is a sin for which we should seek forgiveness. It also imposes most heavily upon the peoples of the developing countries of the world and is part of the intrinsic injustice to which we bear witness. As the Lambeth Declaration 2015 on Climate Change, to which the United Reformed Church is a signatory, affirms, 'The demands of justice as well as of creation require the nations of the world urgently to limit the global rise in average temperatures to a maximum of 2°C... We have a responsibility to act now, for ourselves, our neighbours and for future generations.'<sup>2</sup>

### 3 Vision 2020

- 3.1 The previous Environmental Policy of the United Reformed Church, adopted by General Assembly in 2004, was founded upon *The Five Marks of Mission*, the fifth of which committed the Church 'to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation; to sustain and renew the life of the earth'. This policy is informed by the Vision2020 strategic framework for mission adopted by General Assembly in 2010,<sup>3</sup> which declares that the United Reformed Church 'will be a church that has taken significant steps to safeguard the integrity of creation, to sustain and renew the life of the earth' (Statement 10: The Integrity of Creation). Vision2020 also states that 'Our churches, reflecting faith in God the creator and sustainer of life in all its fullness, must discover the radical voice of care for the earth that is supported by the way we live.'
- 3.2 This policy echoes Vision2020's affirmation that 'The changing climate and its consequences for all life on planet earth cannot be over emphasised as the most significant underlying issue of our time' – and that it is vital that the Church 'recognizes the reality and fear present in environmental debates and lives hopefully in the present climate.'

### 4 'Hope in God's Future'

- 4.1 We affirm the view expressed in the 2009 report *Hope in God's Future* that 'it is now intellectually and morally irresponsible to fail to acknowledge and address the urgent need for radical cuts in greenhouse gas emissions in order to prevent intolerable damage to human populations and mass extinctions of many plant and animal species.'<sup>4</sup>
- 4.2 We pledge to respond to the report's call for repentance in the face of our complicity in the sinful structures that are causing wanton damage to the earth, to its creatures and to many poor communities. We also commit to intercede for those threatened by climate change, and to adopt practices and lifestyles consistent with levels of carbon emissions the earth can sustain.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, and in line with the report's recommendations, we shall strive to act urgently to reduce carbon emissions across the whole of church life in line with the national minimum 80% reduction by 2050 relative to 1990 levels. We shall also strive to reach an interim goal of reducing our carbon emissions by 42% in 2020 relative to 1990, the target set by the Scottish Parliament.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2015/06/archbishop-of-canterbury-join-faith-leaders-in-call-for-urgent-action-to-tackle-climate-change.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.urc.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/mission/documents/vision2020genlassembly\\_report.pdf](https://www.urc.org.uk/what_we_do/mission/documents/vision2020genlassembly_report.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> *Hope in God's Future*, p.4.

<sup>5</sup> the A Rocha website contains a comprehensive list of suggested practices - <http://arocha.org.uk/our-activities/living-lightly-take-action>.

## 5 Shrinking our carbon footprint

- 5.1 Reflecting the commitments contained in the Vision2020 statement, in the *Hope in God's Future* report, and in a resolution on climate change passed by General Assembly in 2007, the United Reformed Church re-affirms its pledge to shrink its carbon footprint (the total greenhouse gas emissions caused by the Church's activities) and to strive to protect and restore the environment.
- 5.2 The Church recognizes that this pledge calls for both *conversion* on the part of its individual members and *transformation* of its internal structures. The remainder of this policy, which incorporates the 'suggested indicators' contained in Statement 10 of Vision 2020, follows through on this 'conversion' and 'transformation'. We will endeavour to work ecumenically whenever possible and appropriate as we act upon this policy.
- 5.3 Accordingly, our churches will be encouraged to:
- (i) carry out a systematic environmental audit of their buildings and follow the strategies outlined below for reducing their carbon footprint; in this the resource *Greening Church Buildings* produced by Eco Congregation Scotland will be helpful;<sup>6</sup>
  - (ii) raise awareness, through prayer, preaching, Bible study, teaching and discussion, of the need for confession and repentance in relation to the causes of climate change and for redeemed sacramental living, while also celebrating all that is achieved in fulfilling our human responsibility to live joyfully and simply, caring for and 'treasuring' Creation;
  - (iii) seek to achieve 'Eco-Church' status [*link to website when this is rolled out in January 2016*]
  - (iv) celebrate 'Time for Creation' as encouraged by the World Council of Churches.<sup>7</sup> Creation Time runs from 1 September until 4 October each year;
  - (v) ensure that energy is used efficiently and that their buildings are carbon friendly through the use of energy-saving technologies and by identifying and using renewable sources of energy as appropriate;
  - (vi) help members of their congregation to make adjustments in the carbon emissions associated with their lifestyles by supporting them in a personal audit and in finding appropriate strategies;
  - (vii) involve their children and young people in activities focusing on care for the environment;
  - (viii) engage their local political representatives, urging them to support policies that take effective steps towards realizing the commitment to a minimum 80% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050;
  - (ix) support campaigns and popular action around climate change issues as appropriate;
  - (x) ensure that church-owned land is used in ways that encourage an enjoyment of Nature and both enhance and protect the environment;
  - (xi) produce a piece of community artwork celebrating the Creator God.
- 5.4 our synods will seek to:
- (i) encourage their churches to gain 'Eco-Church' status; in so doing they will encourage churches to see the positive benefits in terms of the financial savings that environmentally-friendly practices can bring;
  - (ii) develop and implement plans to become 'Eco-synods';

<sup>6</sup> [www.ecocongregationscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Greening-Church-Buildings.pdf](http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Greening-Church-Buildings.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> [www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/climate-change/time-for-creation](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/climate-change/time-for-creation).

- (iii) ensure that their buildings, including manses, are carbon friendly through the use of energy-saving technologies and by identifying and using renewable sources of energy as appropriate;
- (iv) encourage their churches to work in collaboration with, or initiate, local transition or sustainability groups;
- (v) encourage their churches to receive training and support on issues of climate justice and environmental care;
- (vi) appoint one or more 'Green Apostles' to monitor progress on carbon reduction in their synod;
- (vii) draw up an 'environmental charter' along the lines of that adopted by North Western Synod in 2015.

#### 5.5 Assembly encourages the Church

- (i) to lower incrementally its carbon footprint by 5% each year by carbon budgeting, that is by setting specific year-on-year reduction targets in the percentage of emissions over a defined period;
- (ii) to campaign at local and national level for policies that strengthen, and take steps towards realizing, the Government's commitment to a minimum 80% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050;
- (iii) to ensure that its buildings are carbon friendly through the use of energy-saving technologies and by identifying and using renewable sources of energy as appropriate;
- (iv) to reduce, where practicable, car and air travel for meetings through the use of video-conferencing. With due regard for distances and costs involved, individual members are encouraged to cycle, use buses and trains, and car-share and use energy-efficient vehicles where possible. Members are also encouraged to adopt the practice of carbon off-setting with respect to essential travel by making payments supporting sustainable projects (e.g. through Climate Stewards);<sup>8</sup>
- (v) to promote an environmental theology;
- (vi) to appoint a task group, under the oversight of Mission committee, to monitor the Church's progress toward meeting its commitment to reduce its carbon footprint. Specifically the task group will consider the budgetary implications of implementing this policy; commission a suitable individual or body to calculate the Church's carbon footprint, enabling a benchmark to be set against which future reductions in this footprint may be made; and, in liaison with the United Reformed Church Investment committee, assist the relevant bodies within the Church regarding decisions relating to the investment of Church funds in fossil fuels. The task group will sit initially for a six-year period.

#### 5.6 Assembly also encourages FURY to develop a strategy responding to the challenge of climate change.

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<sup>8</sup>

[www.climatestewards.org](http://www.climatestewards.org).

## 6 Resources

### 6.1 We recognize and commend:

- Eco-Congregation, which provides an environmental toolkit and support network for local churches: [www.ecocongregation.org](http://www.ecocongregation.org); [this will become Eco-Church from January 2016]
- Operation Noah: <http://operationnoah.org>;
- Green Christian (formerly Christian Ecology Link): [www.greenchristian.org.uk](http://www.greenchristian.org.uk);
- A Rocha: <http://arocha.org.uk>;
- Climate Stewards - [www.climatestewards.org](http://www.climatestewards.org);
- 'Time for Creation' (World Council of Churches) - [www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/climate-change/time-for-creation](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/climate-change/time-for-creation).
- Greening Church Buildings (Eco-Congregation Scotland) - [www.ecocongregationscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Greening-Church-Buildings.pdf](http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Greening-Church-Buildings.pdf)
- Hope in God's Future: Christian Discipleship in the Context of Climate Change – report of a joint working group on climate change and theology convened by the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church (Peterborough: Methodist Publishing, 2009);
- Laudato si', the encyclical of Pope Francis (2015);
- Nick Spencer & Robert White, Christianity, Climate Change and Sustainable Living (London: SPCK, 2007);
- the promotion of links with transition towns, etc: [www.greenchristian.org.uk/churches-in-transition](http://www.greenchristian.org.uk/churches-in-transition).



# Paper I2

Mission Committee

Changes to the mission  
team structure

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



# Paper I2

## Mission Committee

### Changes to the Mission Team structure

#### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Tracey Lewis <a href="mailto:tracey.a.lewis@btinternet.com">tracey.a.lewis@btinternet.com</a> Francis Brienen <a href="mailto:francis.brienen@urc.org.uk">francis.brienen@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 accepts the proposed changes to the structure of the Mission Team;</b></li> <li>2. <b>Mission Council appoints the Revd Dr Michael Jagessar as Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries with immediate effect until 31 August 2020.</b></li> </ol>

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	This paper proposes changes to the Mission Team structure and is for decision.
<b>Main points</b>	Following the reviews of various posts in the Mission Team and the current vacancy for Secretary for World Church Relations, it is proposed to reconfigure the post of Secretary for Racial Justice and Intercultural Ministry to include a strategic focus on World Church Relations and to rename it Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries. It is further proposed to create a new post of Programme Officer for Global and Intercultural Ministries, focusing on programme implementation and local impact.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	General Secretariat, Human Resources Advisory Group, Secretary for Racial Justice and Intercultural Ministry, Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

#### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	There will be a cost saving in the longer term.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None



## Changes to the Mission Team structure

1. The Mission Department was established in 2007, as part of the restructuring under Catch the Vision. The restructuring involved the winding up of a number of Assembly committees and establishing a new Mission committee and department. The Mission department would include:
  - a) Secretary for Mission,
  - b) Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith & Order,
  - c) Secretary for Church and Society,
  - d) Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry,
  - e) International Relations Programme Officer (later renamed: Secretary for World Church Relations)
  - f) Commitment for Life co-ordinator
  - g) Four administrators.
  
2. With just one committee to work to, it was envisaged that the principal working method would be through synods and locally based networks to ensure continual local/central feedback and to allow the experience of the local church to inform the priorities of the Mission committee.
  
3. The Mission department had its first major review in 2014, when the first term of several postholders came to an end. This included the posts of Secretary for Racial Justice and Intercultural Ministry and the Secretary for World Church Relations.
  
4. The review of the Secretary for World Church Relations post established a number of new objectives for the post:
  - **Strengthening our practice of Synod World Church Partnerships**, recognising the need for more local engagement with the world church.
  - **Developing leadership**, reviewing the current practice of enabling opportunities to meet and experience the world church for people in leadership.
  - **Reviewing our representation** and exploring how we learn and share learning from participation in the world church.
  - **Exploring the ‘world church’ among our neighbours in the UK** and with Racial Justice and Intercultural Ministry explore how to grow relationships within the UK.
  - **Reflection and theology**, exploring the theological challenges that come from our being part of the world church.
  
5. The review of the Secretary for Racial Justice and Intercultural Ministry also established new priorities for the next term. These included:
  - **Transforming the declaration of our intention to live as a multicultural church with an intercultural habit into the good practice of every day** and ways of thinking within the URC.
  - **Monitoring and equipping the church to speak prophetically on issues of racial justice** which is taking on very complex forms in the UK and across Europe.
  - **Supporting the development of partnerships with new migrant churches**, working both with leadership of their congregations in the UK and supporting cooperative relationships with sending churches.
  - With the Secretary for World Church Relations **building upon the recognition of and relationship with the ‘World Church’ living in the UK**, contributing both to rethinking our understanding of “World Church” and recognizing the mission potential of World Church presence in the UK.

6. Given the objectives set out for both posts, both reviews envisaged a much closer alignment between the work of the Secretary for Racial Justice and Intercultural Ministry and the Secretary for World Church Relations.
7. In August 2015 the Secretary for World Church Relations completed her term of service and moved on to a synod post. The prospect of a vacancy offered an opportunity to rethink the post. The Mission committee appointed a small task group to consider the way forward for the post, bearing in mind (i) the outcomes of the review of the posts, (ii) vision2020 statement 8 on global partnerships, and (iii) longer-term budget projections which envisage a gradual reduction in central costs.
8. On the recommendation of the task group, Mission committee agreed in June to seek to create a post that reflects closer integration of the World Church Relations and Racial Justice and Intercultural Ministry work, as envisaged by the review of both posts. This would be in response to the changing global scene, which enables more encounter and mutual sharing with the world church *both in and beyond* the UK. It also agreed that the World Church Relations work should be structured in such a way that it could have greater local impact as envisaged by the original aims of the new Mission department structure.
9. The Mission committee therefore proposes to discontinue the post of Secretary for World Church Relations and to reconfigure the post of the Secretary for Racial Justice and Intercultural Ministry bringing together the International relations aspect of the World Church Relations post and the intercultural/migrant churches aspects of the Racial Justice and Intercultural Ministry post. The reconfigured post would have a strategic focus on international relations and global partnerships, representation in international/global bodies, exploring the world church in our midst (including sharing mission partners through CWM) alongside the strategic aspects of the current racial justice and intercultural ministry work.
10. In addition, it is proposed to create a Programme Officer post to work alongside the Secretary and focusing on the facilitation and implementation of the Belonging to the World Church programme, including the synod global partners programme, education for ministry, youth opportunities and ministerial exchanges. The Programme Officer would also take on practical aspects of the Racial Justice and Intercultural Ministry work. The primary focus of the Officer's work is to be on local impact.
11. The Secretary would operate primarily at policy and strategy levels, while the Officer's focus would be on programmes, networking and implementation. The two posts would be renamed Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries and Programme Officer for Global and Intercultural Ministries. The Programme Officer would be accountable to and line managed by the Secretary and would be a full member of the Mission Team.
12. The current Administrator post would continue, but more flexibility would be written into the job description for the Administrator, to allow for changing duties in the future and for greater involvement in other aspects of the Mission Team's work.
13. The new structure offers several advantages:
  - The two posts focus on the new objectives set out in the review.
  - A re-shaped Secretary post reflects in particular the priority to link world church and local churches, enhancing our intention to be 'a multicultural church with an intercultural habit' and to strengthen the relationship with the world church in the UK.
  - The Officer post focuses on synods and local churches, thus increasing local impact.

- There is more scope for working through networks and linking them more strongly.
  - There is a potential cost saving, in that an Assembly level post is replaced by a post at officer level.
14. The proposal has been discussed with and endorsed by the Human Resources Advisory Group. Job descriptions have been drafted in consultation with HRAG. As the new Secretary post is a further development of the Secretary for Racial Justice and Intercultural Ministry post it is recommended that the Revd Dr Michael Jagessar is appointed as the new Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries. Consultation with Dr Jagessar to this effect has taken place. It is proposed that the recruitment process for the Programme Officer for Global and Intercultural Ministries starts as soon as Mission Council approval has been given.

## Resolution

1. **Mission Council accepts the proposed changes to the structure of the Mission Team;**
2. **Mission Council appoints the Revd Dr Michael Jagessar as Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries with immediate effect until 31 August 2020.**



# Paper I3

Mission Committee

A new framework for  
local ecumenism

United Church 2015  
Church 2015  
Reformed Church 2015  
Church 2015



# Paper I3

## Mission Committee

### A new framework for local ecumenism

#### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	David Tatem <a href="mailto:david.tatem@urc.org.uk">david.tatem@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Advice
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	N/A

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	The initial discussion document of the Churches Together in England working group about local ecumenism and about Local Ecumenical Partnerships in particular has been circulated for comments from member churches. This paper includes specific observations for the URC. The aim is to offer comments to feed in to the ecumenical discussion and to identify issues of particular concern for the URC.
<b>Main points</b>	The local ecumenical scene is now being engaged in by new partners not previously engaged. The pattern of Local Ecumenical Partnerships needs to be reviewed especially in relation to Intermediate Bodies. The views of churches are sought.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	The full document, of which paper I3 is a summary, can be found at <a href="http://www.cte.org.uk">www.cte.org.uk</a> , by putting 'local ecumenism' into the search bar.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Faith and Order committee, Mission committee, individuals in networks.

#### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	None
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Ecumenical partners especially in LEPS.

# A new framework for local ecumenism

## Summary of the consultation document

A New Framework for Local Ecumenism was presented to the Enabling Group of Churches Together in England in March 2015. At that meeting the Enabling Group agreed to send the paper, with a covering explanatory note from the General Secretary, to all the member churches and to Intermediate Bodies, asking them to comment on the paper and to respond to the questions appended in Annex 1 of the paper. Responses are requested by the end of October 2015. The working group which has produced this paper will then consider the responses received and report back to the Enabling Group at its meeting in March 2016, making recommendations to Churches Together in England, Intermediate Bodies and member churches, for the reform and renewal of local ecumenical partnerships within the context of local ecumenism as a whole.

1. The cover note from the General Secretary gives some background to this project. The working group consists of national ecumenical officers from the five Churches which have been the principle participants in local ecumenical partnerships, including the Baptist Union, the Church of England, the Methodist Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the United Reformed Church.
2. The aims of the working group are (paragraphs 1-6):
  - a) To seek greater clarity about the purposes, structures, and language of local ecumenism.
  - b) To develop an enabling framework for a wider range of churches to work together at local level.
3. Part I – *the Principles of Ecumenical Partnership* – sets out our thinking about churches working together in partnership (paragraphs 7-21). Local ecumenism is necessarily diverse and untidy. It is diverse in terms of the forms in which it takes and the motivations which drive it. We offer a dynamic model (paragraphs 7-10) to explore how different expressions of ecumenism, with different degrees of informality and organisation, and a different balance between action of Christian individuals together and action of churches together, interact with and feed off each other.
4. The language of *partnership* and of *covenant* has been used a great deal of local ecumenical working in recent years (explored in paragraphs 11-21). Whereas much joint activity requires little organisation and very light structures, partnerships need to be supported by agreements and structures. It is especially important to keep sight of partnership as active participation and co working. The agreements supporting a partnership express both the 'will' and the 'can': they enable something to happen that otherwise would not happen and they enable something to happen that otherwise could not happen.
5. Partnerships between churches enable them to share actions which are essential to their life as a church: its ministry and worship, the way it makes decisions, its money and buildings, its spiritual and numerical growth. Churches which have been involved

in such partnerships have found that joint actions in these areas require a framework of agreement which enables these actions to take place jointly. As partnerships between new partners develop, different questions may need to be addressed.

6. Partnership and covenanting are not quite the same things. Covenant is used in many different ways, not always with great clarity. It is used particularly to describe a specific form of partnership. However, we think that the concept of local covenanting is too important to apply only to one type of partnership, because it helps our churches to understand local ecumenical working in many contexts. We therefore suggest that it is not used to describe a particular model of partnership but to refer more to the permanent, transformative, spirit led and participatory nature of partnerships.
7. Local covenanting invariably embraces partnership, but not all partnerships will necessarily be established through local covenanting. Particular partnerships between churches do not necessarily have to include agreements on every aspect of church life; they do not have to include all churches, either actually or potentially; they may be entered into for a limited period of time, and they may focus on a specific area of joint work.
8. In Part II (paragraphs 22-52) – *Learning from Experience: reflections on partnership as experienced in Local Ecumenical Partnerships and Fresh Expressions* – we grapple with some of the issues associated with Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs) as they have developed over the years, and with some of the challenges presented by the mission shaped focus, especially in church planting and fresh expressions, of many of our churches. Among these issues we highlight (paragraphs 22-25):
  - a) That we are in a quickly changing context with new mission challenges and opportunities for new sorts of mission partnerships between a widening spectrum of churches, whereas the structures of LEPs have evolved to accommodate the needs of the main historic participants.
  - b) That there is a sense of fatigue around the complexities and other difficulties associated with a growing number of LEPs although it is part of the condition of other parts of the Church in this country as well.
  - c) That there is a serious issue about negative perceptions of so called single congregation LEPs within the churches.
9. We pay particular attention to the way partnership may be expressed in LEPs where there is one worshipping community (paragraphs 26-29). We also highlight a fundamental tension between denominational expectations on one hand and post denominationalism on the other, which are expressed most clearly around issues of membership and governance (paragraphs 30-33). Both these are brought into sharp relief in partnerships which have their origin in ecumenical church plants and more recently in ecumenical fresh expressions (paragraphs 34-37). There is further discussion of possible approaches to issues of governance in Annex 2 of the paper (paragraphs A1-A9).
10. The oversight of partnerships between local churches is a key issue (paragraphs 38-47). The role of Sponsoring Bodies is becoming increasingly unsustainable (paragraph 39), and we suggest that the responsibility for oversight of such partnerships lies primarily with the authorities of the participating denominations (paragraph 44). The role of Intermediate Bodies should essentially be that of registration of partnerships (paragraphs 41-43) and co-ordination of oversight and review (paragraphs 44 and 45-46).



11. In the final section of Part II (paragraphs 48-52) we ask whether the formal definition of Local Ecumenical Partnership needs to be revised (paragraph 48-49), and whether the term Local Ecumenical Partnership itself needs to be refreshed (paragraph 50). We also suggest that categorising LEPs into six categories hides the potential and actual variety of forms of partnership that exist (51-52). We suggest that rather than think exclusively in terms of *categories* of partnership, understanding the variety of partnerships in terms of their *characteristics* may help to express the variety that is already on the ground and may suggest other potential forms of partnership.

*The Local Ecumenism Working Group*

4 June 2015

## A URC perspective

Notes to assist consideration in a URC context

- A1. The full report and the summary paper are the result of two years work by the small group described in the report of which I have been a part. It has been an interesting and challenging piece of work that is only partly complete. The primary purpose, at this stage, is to attempt to achieve a common perspective on the best way forward for local ecumenism, primarily in England as it is a CTE exercise but which will have applications in Wales and Scotland too.

### Some observations

- A2. One of the significant differences between ourselves and the Methodists in particular is that in our polity an LEP formed from scratch becomes a URC congregation whereas others require a pre-existing church. In that sense it is not a partnership of distinct congregations but of denominations.
- A3. This connects with a serious issue that the report recognises but does not address. There are a significant number of churches that call themselves and perceive themselves to be United Churches and reject the idea that they are anymore a partnership of separate entities. For many of them they feel that they have achieved what the leaderships are still struggling to achieve. Technically we only recognise this concept in Union Churches (with the Baptists) which are united congregations in membership of more than one denomination. In practice we are happy to see this in cases where other denominations are not. This is probably because we recognise LEPs as congregations of the URC even when we have no members in them. This in itself raises questions about membership understanding and processes. What does it mean to say we have x number of URC members in an LEP if as in some cases that focus is arrived at by a simple arithmetical calculation and in other cases left to the decision of individuals which can then lead to the zero figure.
- A4. One of the original purposes of the oversight of Intermediate Bodies (IBs) was to 'learn from' LEPs and single congregational ones in particular. The reality is that this is random and largely unplanned and in too many cases the 'learning' is just how difficult LEPs can be. The suggestion that the denominations involved take responsibility for the 'technical' oversight and review of LEPs could release the IBs to engage more effectively in this learning, providing that is properly acknowledged. At the same time the denominations should, I believe, recognise the opportunity to also learn through, for example, engaging in programmes of receptive ecumenism.

- A5. The lack of the centralisation of registration and record keeping in the URC makes it difficult to gain an overview which presents a challenge to the URC to do something to redress the relative isolation of the synods in the holding and sharing of information even if not moving to a central registration system for LEPs.

### **Questions we might usefully answer or need to face.**

- A6. What is our understanding of the difference between partnership and covenant? Do we recognise any significant difference between a single congregation which is technically a partnership and one which is a Union Church?
- A7. How much value do we place on eldership as a gift to the wider church and how do we 'maintain' that gift in situations where the local church may feel that in order to be able to properly work with ecumenical partners we have to reduce eldership simply to being a member of a church council or leadership group?
- A8. What do we do about LEPs in which we no longer have any members? This question has just been raised specifically in two instances in England and in Wales but it connects directly with a variety of factors including the identity that we bring into LEPs and how we have seen our identity diminish. Do we need a distinctly different category of engagement where we do not recognise them as congregations of the URC but something else in which we nevertheless have an interest or a stake?
- A9. In relation to new projects, such as Fresh Expressions, how do we establish proper channels by which individuals can come into membership of and have sense of belonging to the URC assuming that we see this as important? If we do not, then are there other questions that need to be asked?

### **Summary of comments from discussions to date:**

#### **Faith and Order Committee**

- A10. a) Can we learn to be content with messiness (i.e. not be constantly trying to fit everything into neat structures)?
- b) Should we be prepared to accept the 'Lead Church' model (where one denomination runs the church as one of its own but acknowledges and respects the broad ecumenical makeup of the congregation)?
- c) Can we focus on letting things go (that perhaps our tradition says is important) in order to be creative?
- d) But we need to identify the first order things that we bring/offer. Significantly, that may be our participatory form of decision making and discussion in Church Meeting (and other places) and the role of eldership (which is often watered down or dropped completely in LEPs).
- e) We should make a clear statement about our continued commitment to organic unity.
- f) Can we challenge our ecumenical partners more vocally e.g. to accept the possibility of the union church model of LEP rather than the partnership model?

## Mission Committee

- A11. a) The experience on the ground in many single congregational LEPs is that they experience themselves as United Churches rather than partnerships and do not wish to be told by another level of authority that they cannot be. The URC should affirm this. It also needs to be recognised that there are often individuals in LEPs so do not wish to declare any particular denominational allegiance beyond Christian.
- b) Both for existing LEPs, and for new ones coming into existence, especially with new partners or coming out of Fresh Expressions, simpler models that do not, for example, demand the multiple submission of statistics need to be found. The financing of LEPs also needs to be much more straightforward.
- c) It was recognised that, in most cases, the issues we face are to do with our relationship with Methodist polity.
- d) Eldership is important but how do we make it work in LEPs without losing it or it becoming invisible in a place where the concept of eldership is valued and incorporated but then later lost perhaps because ordination of elders is an ecumenical problem?



# Paper J1

Nominations Committee  
Names for consideration

United Church 2015  
Church 2015  
Reformed Church 2015  
Church 2015



# Paper J1

## Nominations Committee Names for Consideration

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Carol Rogers <a href="mailto:carannrog@aol.com">carannrog@aol.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p><b>Mission Council appoints with immediate effect the names listed in paragraph (1) on the following page.</b></p> <p><b>Mission Council resolves to recommend to General Assembly that Mr Ian Hardie be appointed as Treasurer of the Church from 1st July 2017 for six years.</b></p>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Appointing people to serve on various committees. Nominating a new treasurer.
<b>Main points</b>	See list below
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	All synods, through their representatives on the committee.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	None
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	

# Names for consideration

## 1. Nominations for appointment

**Mission Council appoints with immediate effect:**

- a) Mr Sam Brown to serve as a member of the Children's and Youth Work committee until 30 June 2019
- b) The Revd Dick Gray to serve as convenor of the URC Trust until 2018.
- c) Mr Emmanuel Osae as a member of the URC Trust
- d) Miss Margaret Atkinson to extend her service as governor of Northern College until 30 June 2016.
- e) Mr Ray Dunnett as a URC appointed governor of the Milton Mount Foundation
- f) and other names as listed in the supplementary paper.

## 2. Nomination for commendation to General Assembly

**Mission Council resolves to recommend to General Assembly that Mr Ian Hardie be appointed as treasurer of the Church from 1 July 2017 for six years.**

- a) John Ellis's service as our treasurer will come to an end in 2017, and a successor will be needed. An earlier search process in 2013 was undertaken with diligence and care, but proved unfruitful. The General Secretary therefore consulted the synod moderators in spring 2015, and two names emerged after that conversation. Of these, Ian Hardie indicated that he was able and willing to be considered for the post.
- b) Ian Hardie CBE is a long-standing member and elder of Witham URC in Eastern Synod and is currently treasurer of that synod. He has retired after a career of more than thirty years in HM Revenue and Customs. The officers of the Nominations committee agreed that he be interviewed by a panel of four – Jane Baird (convenor), Dick Gray, Andrew Grimwade and John Proctor. These four were unanimous in their view that Mr Hardie would be suitable for the role of treasurer. Since the treasurer is an officer of the General Assembly, and the matter is not urgent, it is right that General Assembly have the opportunity to take its own decision about this appointment when it meets in 2016. However, Mission Council may wish to commend Mr Hardie's name to Assembly, in the light of what it has heard from the Nominations committee.





# Paper M1

Mission & Discipleship

## Missional Discipleship

A fresh emphasis on making and releasing disciples within the United Reformed Church

United Church 2015  
Church 2015  
Reformed Church 2015  
Church 2015



# Paper M1

## Mission & Discipleship

### Missional Discipleship – A fresh emphasis on making and releasing disciples within the United Reformed Church

#### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Francis Brienen <a href="mailto:francis.brienen@urc.org.uk">francis.brienen@urc.org.uk</a> Richard Church <a href="mailto:richard.church@urc.org.uk">richard.church@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council receives the report, endorses the direction of travel, and asks for further information in March 2016.</b>

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	This paper gives an update on the work of the Mission committee on the next phase of the CWM Mission Support Programme (MSP) and of the Education & Learning committee and the Discipleship department on the TLS review and its follow up. This is for information. A further paper will be tabled at the Mission Council meeting.
<b>Main points</b>	There is synergy between the work of the Mission and Discipleship departments following the MSP work and the TLS review. Both are inspired by an encompassing vision for missional discipleship. A task group has been set up and is preparing an outline plan for a fresh emphasis on making and releasing disciples within the United Reformed Church.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Mission Council November 2013 paper Mission Council March 2014 group discussion
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Mission committee; Education & Learning committee; invited attendees of a consultation day on Discipleship (27 April 2015); TLS tutors; synod moderators.

#### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	Cost of task group meetings (these can be absorbed by current budgets.)
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None

# Missional Discipleship

## A fresh emphasis on making and releasing disciples within the United Reformed Church

### CWM Mission Support Programme

1. The Council for World Mission (CWM) of which the United Reformed Church is a member, makes grants to all its 31 member churches according to an agreed budget through its Mission Support Programme. Each new funding round is designated as a new 'phase' and the United Reformed Church is now in the process of discernment as to the best use of the grant, which is designated for strategic mission work and encourages the member churches to undertake new ventures addressing the challenges of their mission contexts.
2. The Mission committee started discussions on Phase 3 of the Mission Support Programme in October 2012 and initially identified the need for evangelism and how to equip people in the URC for this task (within the broader context of discipleship) as a focus to be explored for a new mission programme. A small group developed a proposal for wide consultation with potential stakeholders in the URC, which included a three-stage process with the overall aim of creating a culture of evangelism in the URC, starting with the leadership. This was widely discussed in the URC between March and September 2013, including in Mission Council, and as a result it was agreed that the proposal be re-focused on **pre-evangelism and discipleship**. An expanded group was asked to do further work on the proposal and it suggested holding a Day on Discipleship to explore how we can (further) develop discipleship in the URC (a discipleship of which evangelism/faith sharing is a natural and integral part).
3. The Day on Discipleship was held at High Leigh on Monday 27 April 2015 and was attended by 22 people, including synod moderators, Church House staff, training and development officers, mission enablers, members of the FURY advisory board and members of Team URC (Together Ethnic and Minority). The main focus of the day was discernment of where God is leading us.
4. The gathering affirmed that developing discipleship with a view to building confidence in evangelism is something the URC must urgently pursue. The gathering also made practical suggestions to enable people locally to grow in discipleship and to show how this could be supported centrally.
5. A subsequent small group meeting reflected on the outcomes of the day and emerged with the conviction that any work on discipleship should be formational, missional, focused on people rather than programme, and concerned with the Jesus way of full life rather than church. The emphasis should be on the formation of habit and a change of culture in congregations (as well as the provision of a comprehensive approach to discipleship from which people associated with the United Reformed Church can benefit at any point in their journey of faith.) It was thought that there might be convergence between this group's ideas for deepening discipleship and the recommendations of the TLS review. Both were inspired by an

encompassing vision of missional discipleship. The group recommended that an approach should be made to Education & Learning to explore synergy between the TLS aspirations and the MSP process. This was agreed by the Mission committee at its meeting in June. It also recommended that the thinking on whole church learning for lay and ordained people in a discussion paper on Pioneer Ministry (by Peter Ball and Linda Rayner) be considered in the further development of the work.

## Training for Learning and Serving

6. At its meeting in January 2015 the Education & Learning committee received a report from the TLS Review Group. The review had shown that whilst the ingredients of TLS are valuable, the way it is perceived and structured is in need of renovation. The crucial point, however, was the desire expressed in the review of working towards an integrated system of whole-life discipleship with all learning opportunities being open to all, anchored in the Christian revelation and building up the Church. As expressed in recommendation 2 of the TLS Review:

*“Since integration of the many ways people learn and develop as Christian disciples has been a priority in recent thinking, we suggest that Education & Learning consider ways in which a common identity can be given to the many disparate strands of learning within the denomination. **Exploring Discipleship and Service** might as a title encapsulate some of our desire to see all learning opportunities being open to all, anchored in the Christian revelation, and building up the Church.”*

7. In the course of the discussion of the report, it was recognised that TLS was brought into the denomination as part of a vision concerning the learning of the whole people of God. If anything was to succeed it as a vehicle for learning throughout the denomination it would need to be launched as a fresh vision for the development of individuals and communities within the Church. It should offer flexible pathways to enable the recognised ministries in the URC to respond to the vocation of discipleship. It was hoped that something new would come on stream in 2017.
8. It had been proposed to engage two external consultants from September 2015 to start work on what a re-branded TLS would include and look like. They would draft principles and start drawing the architecture, after extensive dialogue and wide ranging conversations.

## Joint work on missional discipleship

9. During the summer this was taken further by the Mission and Discipleship departments and the idea of engaging consultants was pursued. These consultants would be asked to do the skilled work of exploring how the TLS aspirations could be combined with the work of the MSP process without losing their original remit. The desired outcome of the work would be an outline/sketch of how the two processes would fit together and what could be developed jointly. It was envisaged that the main part of this work be done between September and November 2015.
10. Following difficulty in finding available consultants a Missional Discipleship Task Group has been established with terms of reference prepared by the Secretary for Education & Learning (appended to this paper). This group comprises the Revd Richard Church & Francis Brienen (co-conveners), the Revd Dr Michael Jagessar and the Revd Fiona Thomas (consultants), the Revd Peter Ball, the Revd Dr Phil Wall, the Revd Kathryn Price, the Revd Tracey Lewis and the Revd Dr Graham Adams.

11. The group is currently conducting a survey exploring what helps people in the church to grow in faith. The survey asks the following questions:
1. *What are the elements that have been influential in your Christian discipleship and continue to help you in your journey?*
  2. *In what ways does your being a follower of Christ express itself in your daily life?*
  3. *In your local church/Christian community what sustains and nurtures your corporate life?*
  4. *Identify three ways in which you would like your local church/Christian community to make a difference to your neighbourhood?*
  5. *What if any formal patterns of learning are currently running at the church(es) you are involved with?*
  6. *What would you like the wider Church to consider as we reflect on ways to enable and encourage growth in missional discipleship in our churches?*
12. Most of the survey will be conducted in face to face conversations (e.g. synod moderators, TLS tutors, FURY advisory board and two synod meetings). The information generated by the survey will contribute towards sketching the outline and content of a new discipleship process.
13. The group has been asked to report to the November Mission Council in 2015 to ensure that the outline of the new emphasis can be endorsed by the Council.

## Timescale

14. In the event of Mission Council endorsing the process that has begun under the two Assembly committees, it is proposed to plan the materials and resourcing that the fresh emphasis will require, reporting to General Assembly 2016 the principles behind the new scheme so that those plans can be implemented. It is hoped that people wishing to access the material online may do so by early in 2017 and that people wishing to follow a validated route will begin in August/September of 2017.
15. It is proposed that TLS will not enrol any new students for the Foundation Course in 2016, permitting the Revd Stanley Jackson and the Revd Dr John Burgess to manage the remaining cohort of students through to the completion of the Foundation Course. Gateways into Worship and Developing Community Experiences will continue.
16. In the event of Mission Council affirming the direction of travel, the task group will set about commissioning new material in the spring of 2016. Senior staff at Church House are prepared to be available to address groups of ministers and synods in the Spring of 2017 in order that the fresh emphasis can be communicated effectively.

## Appendix

### Missional Discipleship Task Group

#### Terms of Reference

##### Vision

For the United Reformed Church to further encourage and develop the way in which people discover and follow Jesus through whom God calls them to participate in God's reign. Indicators of what this would look like are given in the Vision2020 statements reframed as provocative proposals.

##### Aim

To offer an integrated system of whole-life missional discipleship with all learning opportunities being open to all, anchored in the Christian revelation, and building up the Church.

#### Objectives of the Task Group

In conjunction with the Mission and Discipleship Departments of the United Reformed Church, to devise a discipleship scheme for the United Reformed Church which:

- reflects the Church's commitment to participation in the *Missio Dei*
- provides the church with the means of equipping every congregation with servant leadership which is imaginative, flexible and courageous.
- provides diverse individuals with accountable routes of discipleship
- Incorporates the fruits of dialogue with a range of partners including Children & Youth and Racial Justice and Intercultural Ministry perspectives.
- draws on the findings of the TLS Review which reported to the Education & Learning committee in January 2015;
- takes forward the valued characteristics of TLS.

#### Expectations of the Process

1. That it be established in recognised principles of adult education and missiology
2. That the initial stages of the Task Group's work will be largely based on desk study of existing documents and close discussion with key individuals and institutions.
3. That it draws on the principles of Appreciative Inquiry so as to be consistent with a significant approach being advocated within the United Reformed Church, especially in the light of the need to achieve culture change within the Church.
4. That it takes into account the importance of the emphasis on evangelism which has been a significant driver in discussions about discipleship in the United Reformed Church in recent times
5. That it recognises the depth of well-founded content which already exists through material that has been road-tested in TLS-LITE, TLS Classic, and Vision4Life and which is available for redirection, together with ecumenically produced discipleship courses.

## Time Frame for the Task Group

### *Phase 1*

1. Six months, from 1 September 2015 to 29 February 2016
2. The first two months to focus on producing an outline of the main elements of the scheme, for discussion and possible adoption by the United Reformed Church's Mission Council in November 2015
3. The remaining four months, assuming Mission Council acceptance, to be spent on putting flesh on the bones of the scheme. This will include
  - a. Working with the Extended MSP Planning Group to produce a funding proposal to CWM as a means of resourcing the scheme
  - b. Devising a realistic implementation plan with a target date for recruitment of participants ready to start URC-validated elements in Autumn 2017.
  - c. Preparation of a proposal for agreement by General Assembly in July 2016.

### *Phase 2*

*(assuming General Assembly assent in July 2016) 15 month: July 2016 – September 2017*

1. Scaffolding the implementation plan such that:
  - a. All synods are on board with the plans and ready to start on schedule
  - b. The four RCLS have agreed their role in the implementation
  - c. The technologies required to offer the programme are in place and robust
  - d. Students are enrolled where relevant in particular pathways by June 2017

## Vision2020 Statements

### Reframed as “provocative propositions”

**Statement 1: Spirituality and prayer**

We are active in our practice of prayer and spirituality, nurturing strength for our witness to Jesus Christ, and developing our discernment of where God is and what God is calling us to do by reading and studying the Bible and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Statement 2: Identity**

The United Reformed Church is a Church where every local congregation is able to say who they are, what they do and why they do it.

**Statement 3: Christian Ecumenical Partnerships**

We are confident in our identity, valuing the treasures of our tradition, discerning when to seek ecumenical partnerships, and when and how to seek the further unity of the Church.

**Statement 4: Community partnerships**

We are a Church that is active in the life of local neighbourhoods.

**Statement 5: Hospitality and diversity**

We are a Church committed to being welcoming and hospitable, and embracing all people equally.

**Statement 6: Evangelism**

We are confident to engage in evangelism, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God with friends, families and strangers, through story and action.

**Statement 7: Church growth**

We are a growing Church with an increasing membership.

**Statement 8: Global partnerships**

We are a Church that is an active partner in God’s global mission with other Churches around the world.

**Statement 9: Justice and peace**

We are a Church committed to peacemaking and reconciliation that keeps faith with the poor and challenges injustice.

**Statement 10: The integrity of creation**

We are a Church that takes significant steps to safeguard the integrity of creation, to sustain and renew the life of the earth.



# Paper M3

General Secretariat

Hearing God more clearly

United Church 2015  
Church 2015  
Reformed Church 2015  
Church 2015



# Paper M3

## General Secretariat Hearing God More Clearly

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	John Proctor, General Secretary <a href="mailto:john.proctor@urc.org.uk">john.proctor@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Take note
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None at present</b>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	The work of the Church's committees; reflecting on what it costs and what it achieves.
<b>Main points</b>	Convenors seem ready to make limited savings, but see no great prospect of radical change.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Mission Council, May 2015: Paper S2, and draft Minute 15/24.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Committee convenors, who have in some cases consulted their members. Medium Term Strategy Group (which includes the treasurer).

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	See the paper itself.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Very little.

# Hearing God More Clearly

1. Following discussion at Mission Council in May 2015, the General Secretary sent the following note to committee convenors:

“I am writing to ask how your committee might be able to save money, in the hope that savings could be directed to supporting the Assembly. Here are some things we might want to consider ...

- “– hold fewer meetings, especially of big committees
- shorten meetings, especially of committees that regularly meet overnight
- gather smaller numbers of people around committee tables
- merge programme committees. Could we compress our work into three main committees?
- hold some meetings by video-conferencing or conference phone-call
- do more of our business by email circulation rather than by meeting
- make more use of task groups, which would conclude when their work was done
- allow more responsibility to be carried by individuals, rather than depend so heavily on meeting

“There are many positives in a committee system, and we have learned to make it work pretty well. But Mission Council has asked us to think how many of the current benefits we can keep, within the context of a tighter committee budget.”

2. The responses can be summarised as follows:

- 2.1 There is no clear case for Discipleship mutating into a single large committee, in the way that Mission did a few years ago. There is some resistance too to Admin and Resources doing this.
- 2.2 There is some readiness to shrink the membership of a number of committees. If numbers shrink, we shall rely, of course, on people attending well.
- 2.3 Some committees would be willing to reduce the number or extent of their meetings.
- 2.4 There may be scope for some restructuring in the handling of ministerial welfare – the area where Pensions meets Maintenance of the Ministry and Pastoral Reference; also in the general area of Finance, Investment and Trusteeship.
- 2.5 There is a general drift towards increasing use of email. The people who think this method will never work are gradually being outnumbered by those who find that it can work very well for tasks of a certain kind.
- 2.6 All of this feels like a fractional saving – perhaps a quarter of the overall outlay – rather than a dramatic and immediate shrinking of costs.

3. If we want major and immediate saving, we must challenge some of the above. On the other hand, if we accept all the above for now, we may still have started a process that will continue for a while. New attitudes and opportunities may yet emerge within a year or two, and if we are alert for savings, we may find there are many to make.
4. There is therefore a case for supporting the suggestions that convenors have already made, and encouraging committees to follow them through. Meanwhile, if the development of Church House brings new potential for virtual meeting, we may find that much time and travel can be saved by some committees on some occasions.
5. So, as a next stage, we invite committees to reflect on the following:
  - are we there to get work done, or to be representative;
  - if the former, can we work smarter? If the latter, what are we representing and does it need to be represented in this particular way;
  - does our pattern of working foster agility and creativity? If not, how can we change it so that it does;
  - how do we look on the staff who work with our committee – mainly with trust or mainly with caution? Is the committee more of a support group for the work they do or a protection against our relying too heavily on them;
  - and if our committee were to stop entirely, what pieces of its work would need to be done, and who would get them done? What difference would it make if the committee did stop, and if these people then took up the tasks?
6. Further, we wonder whether there is a case for doing without the spring Mission Council in Assembly years.
7. The report back to Mission Council on this matter is not due until 2016. We suggest that a discussion needs to be held then, rather than now.

# Paper M4

Clerk of General Assembly  
Affirmation of voting practice

United Church 2015  
Church 2015  
Reformed Church 2015  
Church 2015



# Paper M4

## Clerk of General Assembly Affirmation of voting practice

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Michael Hopkins <a href="mailto:clerk@urc.org.uk">clerk@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council affirms the long standing practice of the United Reformed Church and its predecessor denominations, that postal and/or proxy votes are not permitted in the councils of the church on business which is subject to discussion, unless otherwise provided for in Structure, the Rules of Procedure, the URC Act, or Local Church constitutions. This is because we believe such meetings are to seek the will of God, and everyone present is open to the possibility of changing their mind in openness to the Holy Spirit until a decision is made. The views of absent members may be made known to those present before any decision is made, but only those present should make a decision.</b>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Affirming the unwritten status quo that normally only members present may vote in the councils of the church.
<b>Main points</b>	Affirming the unwritten status quo that normally only members present may vote in the councils of the church.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Director of Studies in Reformed Theology, Westminster College Cambridge.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	None
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Reduces risk of reputational damage by decisions not properly taken.

## Affirmation of voting practice

1. As Clerk, I have received queries from Ministers, often working with a church on behalf of the synod, such as serving as an Interim Moderator, who find themselves in a Church Meeting they do not know as well as their own, and faced with somewhat hostile people, perhaps not brought up in our traditions, demanding 'chapter and verse' on why they cannot vote on behalf of another person not present. In one example, a pastoral convener was visiting a Church Meeting to chair its vote on a merger with another church, and someone who was not a member produced a power of attorney for a close relative who was a member, claiming that this gave them the 'right' to their relative's vote. In another example, a minister was placed under extreme pressure because certain members who were opposed to a proposal were not present. This is what has given rise to my paper.
2. Many of our former Congregational churches have constitutions, which spell out all manner of matters of organisation and procedure. The purpose of this resolution is not to address the preparation or content of these. Mission Council, acting on the advice of the Law and Polity Advisory group, approved a model constitution for Local Churches, which has been available on the denomination's website as a resource since then. However, this resolution is about providing the tools needed to help people do jobs they have been asked to in difficult situations, not about the longer term tasks of writing or editing constitutions.
3. It is true that in theory all members of the United Reformed Church should know and understand the general theology of a Church Meeting, which should have been explained to them when they joined the United Reformed Church, and why postal or proxy votes are not appropriate for matters that are discussed; and it is even truer that all our Ministers should be able to explain this.
4. However, the world around us has changed, and the climate in which we now find ourselves is one in which the prevailing mood is directly opposed to this thinking. There are a great many organisations, from political parties and trades unions to special interest groups (such as the National Trust and the WI) which encourage their thousands of members to participate in mass votes by postal or proxy voting. It is also the case that a greater proportion of our members than ever before come from backgrounds outside our tradition, and that we live in an age increasingly assertive of democracy and rights, and an increasingly litigious culture.
5. What this is leading to is a situation in which the non-acceptance of postal and proxy votes for matters that are discussed, because of our theology of the members present seeking the will of God, is increasingly challenged, even though people should know and understand why this is so. Even more challenging is the presence of people of an increasing litigious mindset (although one might question how such thinking can be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit). One minister quoted a church member who referenced a judicial review on the requirement for secret ballots at public meetings (which was irrelevant because a Church Meeting is not a public meeting). While it is perfectly possible to answer such challenges, it can be unsettling, indeed unnecessarily distressing, to some ministers to find themselves put in such a position. The only purpose of this resolution is to enable the Clerk to help people who find themselves in tricky situations.

6. Traditionally this 'rule' has not been written down because in former times it was so self-evident that no-one ever had any need to do so. It is no longer so self-evident as to not need saying.
7. The proposed resolution is simply an immediate step to provide the Clerk with some documentation to help people do their jobs in challenging circumstances. No doubt, in the fullness of time, there will be a more appropriate way to include this in other parts of our constitutional documents, as and when they are amended.
8. The Assembly's own Rules of Procedure provide for a postal ballot, in the limited circumstances of an unexpected Moderatorial election, and the many local churches contain provisions for things like postal votes for the election of Elders. This resolution is not intended to challenge any of that, simply to provide a piece of support for pressured people in difficult circumstances. When matters are not subject to discussion, it is easier to see how postal/proxy votes are reasonable.
9. The resolution is formally seconded by the General Secretary.



# Paper M5

General Secretariat

Development of Church House

Church 2015  
United Church  
2015  
Reformed Church  
Church 2015



# Paper M5

## General Secretariat: Development of Church House

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	John Proctor, General Secretary <a href="mailto:john.proctor@urc.org.uk">john.proctor@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council authorises the General Secretariat to pursue the path outlined in this paper, and requests the URC Trust to take responsibility for contract and costs, up to a figure of 1.5 million pounds.</b>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Planning for the development of Church House
<b>Main points</b>	Seeking approval to work with a firm called Third Sector Property.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Mission Council, May 2015: Paper L1, and Resolution 10 of draft minute 15/13.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Medium Term Strategy Group (which includes the treasurer). Finance committee; URC Trust. Church House staff have been told of the plans, and expressed some hopes; they also understand where the lines of decision lie.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	Scoping and exploratory work is being done on the basis of a deposit of £12,000. The eventual development cost might exceed a million pounds, and would depend on Mission Council and Trust approval.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	We have already decided to stay in Tavistock Place, in part because of its proximity to a host of ecumenical, charitable, public and professional contacts with whom we regularly work.

# Development of Church House

1. This paper seeks to give an update on activity following Mission Council's agreement in May to explore the possibility of a 'limited project to remodel Church House'.
2. Following the Mission Council decision in May 2015 the General Secretariat has continued to explore, in consultation with the convenor of the URC Trust, the possibility of a more contained refurbishment of Church House with the objectives of:
  - making the entire building accessible to all;
  - making running the building more cost effective;
  - improving space utilisation;
  - creating a flexible design which will facilitate different ways of using the space, including sub-letting;
  - creating a pleasant working environment which meets the current and anticipated future needs of the denomination.
3. We have met with representatives of two firms. Both were enthusiastic about the project and have expertise that could support our redevelopment.
4. One is a global organisation providing professional technical and management support services for a wide range of industries and governments. Whilst it clearly has a wealth of talent upon which to draw and the means to support us, on balance it was felt that the present stage of our planning does not match well to their way of working.
5. The other, Third Sector Property, is a London-based organisation specialising in supporting charities and not-for-profit bodies with their property matters.
6. Mr Zac Goodman of Third Sector Properties (TSP) met with the General Secretariat and the convenor of the Trust in July. He demonstrated an understanding of the not-for-profit sector and of the need to invest wisely.
7. Whilst not a commitment, Mr Goodman thought that by reorganising our use of space, and creating lettable space within the current premises, we should be able to generate enough income to cover the running costs of the building.
8. TSP's suggestion is that for a project of the scope of ours a 'Design and Build' arrangement would be appropriate. This could facilitate a fixed price contract. TSP would take on the responsibility of introducing suitable contractors and manage the contract on the Church's behalf.
9. TSP's approach has much to commend it:
  - understanding of the charity sector;
  - understanding of the local property market for similar organisations;
  - built-in project management;
  - single point of contact for the project;
  - fixed price contract.
10. The General Secretariat is keen to pursue this kind of approach. Subject to satisfactory client references and undertaking some due diligence regarding financial stability, we wish to engage the services of Third Sector Property to explore the refurbishment/redevelopment of Church House.

11. Members of the General Secretariat have visited TSP's office, and have also visited one of their clients, whose building is about a mile from Church House. There they were impressed by (a) the amount of work that had been done for the sort of price that we might be considering, (b) the sensitive match in style and ethos between the building work and the concerns of the client, and (c) the fact that TSP's projections about letting income had indeed been realised in practice as the client began to use the building and to seek income from parts of it.
12. The General Secretariat has high hopes for this project.
  - we think Church House can work in some smarter and more accessible ways;
  - we value the staff highly, and some quite modest changes might make their working environment more congenial;
  - disability access, both for staff and for visitors, is a witness to some values and concerns that matter a lot to our Church;
  - it would be great if the building paid its own running costs (indeed we have recently set off along that road, by letting the flat on the roof);
  - we should like the building to feel more open to church members who come to it, who visit that part of London, or who live locally;
  - it is time to install some better kit to support virtual committee meetings.
13. The Finance committee was told that the provisional costs of a project of this sort would be around £1m-£1.5m. On that basis the committee advised that it should be possible to fund such a project in 2016-17 out of general reserves without dislocating other expenditure plans.
14. We therefore commend the following resolution to Mission Council:

**Mission Council authorises the General Secretariat to pursue the path outlined in this paper, and requests the URC Trust to take responsibility for contract and costs, up to a figure of 1.5 million pounds.**
15. The assigning of contract and cost responsibility to the Trust would honour the Trust's role as custodian of the URC's assets. It would also ensure close liaison both with the General Secretariat as senior staff of the House, and with the Finance committee, which is responsible for the stewardship and budgeting of our Church's funds. The specification of a budget will leave Mission Council in control of the overall cost.
16. Should Mission Council support this path, the Trust will oversee the agreement of the design, and it is likely to delegate to a small working group the detailed supervision of the project and liaison with TSP.

# Paper O1

Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG)  
Report on recent work

United Church 2015  
Church 2015  
Reformed Church 2015  
Church 2015



# Paper 01

## Human Resources Advisory Group Report on Current Work

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Keith G. Webster <a href="mailto:kwebsterwms@btinternet.com">kwebsterwms@btinternet.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Take note.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None</b>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	An update on the recent work of HRAG
<b>Main points</b>	Highlighted at the head of each paragraph below.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Convenors and Church House staff, re role descriptions. LPAG re Line Management of General Secretary.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	No new spending has been proposed.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None.

# HRAG: report on recent work

1. Current membership of HRAG:
  - 1.1 Keith Webster (Convenor), Alastair Forsyth, Bridget Fosten, Mike Gould, Peter Pay, John Proctor (General Secretary), Jane Baird, (DGS [Admin & Resources]).
  - 1.2 These people bring a wide range of skills in diverse aspects of Human Resources.
  
2. **Remit of HRAG**  
 HRAG was established in October 2012, and its remit was renewed at the May 2015 meeting of Mission Council. The remit is to provide a unified reference point on HR matters, and so to support the work of Mission Council, Assembly, the URC Trust and the staff of Church House.
  
3. **The following job descriptions and posts have been reviewed** between May and September 2015. Under its renewed remit HRAG reviews the job descriptions and person specifications for Assembly Appointments. Other staff posts are only reviewed as a consequence of major changes.
  - 3.1 Assembly Appointments:  
 Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries
  - 3.2 Staff posts.  
 Secretary for RHMS and Deputy Secretary to the URC Trust;  
 IT Manager;  
 Publications Officer;  
 Programme Officer for Global and Intercultural Ministries;  
 Payroll Officer.
  
4. The demands of the role of an **Assembly committee convenor** have also been reviewed. It was felt that these could best be summarised in a leaflet in the “*So they have asked me to be .....*” series.
  
5. **Policies and Procedures Review.** A review continues of the HR policies and procedures at Church House, with a view to enhancing these as appropriate.
  - 5.1 The Recruitment Policy is the latest policy to be reviewed and finalised.
  - 5.2 Appropriate training at Church House with regard to the policies and procedures is also being linked to the reviews.
  
6. **Line Management, General Secretary**  
 In November 2014 Mission Council requested the Law and Polity Advisory Group to consult with the General Secretary and Deputy General Secretaries (once the new appointees were all settled in post) on an appropriate line management mechanism. HRAG indicated its desire to be consulted as part of this process and subsequently sent a detailed submission and recommendation to LPAG about the line management of the General Secretary.





# Paper Q1

Mission Committee

Joint Property Strategy Group  
and Church Buildings Forum

United Church 2015  
Church 2015  
Reformed Church 2015  
Church 2015



# Paper Q1

## Mission Committee

### Joint Property Strategy Group and Church Buildings Forum

#### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd David Tatem <a href="mailto:david.tatem@urc.org.uk">david.tatem@urc.org.uk</a> Clifford Patten <a href="mailto:cliffordpatten@btinternet.com">cliffordpatten@btinternet.com</a> The Revd David Skipp, the Revd Lucy Brierley
<b>Action required</b>	For information
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None</b>

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To report on the final JPSG meeting and on the development of the Church Buildings Forum.
<b>Main points</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Final recommendations from JPSG for continued Methodist-URC sharing of resources and promoting of visionary programmes for Church buildings</li> <li>2) Sharing the potential issues for consideration by the URC Church Buildings Forum.</li> </ol>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper Q1 at the November 2014 Mission Council
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	General Secretary, and the Mission Committee.

#### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	These recommendations could have major and beneficial financial impact
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Promoting closer work with the Methodist Church and encouraging a wider consultation.

# Joint Property Strategy Group and the Church Buildings Forum

## JPSG

1. For the origins and background information regarding the Methodist and United Reformed Church Joint Property Strategy Group please refer to our report to November 2014 Mission Council. Following a start which looked at a variety of property issues, the focus for the last two years has been a series of roadshows. These have encouraged building that is influenced by missionary vision and have offered advice on how to structure and support projects. Roadshows were held in six locations through the summer of 2015, and they mark the end of the part-time facilitator's appointment and the completion of the group's programme. A full JPSG report will be ready for issue at about the time Mission Council is meeting.
2. The roadshows were attended by 265 people, of whom 13 were from LEPs and 59 were URC members, elders and ministers with a few synod officers. Most of the remainder were Methodists, with a small number from other denominations. The events were generally well received particularly the stories of opportunities and mission projects based upon under-used or redundant buildings, such as the *Tubestation* 'surfers' church' in Polzeath. These examples were largely of Methodist origin, and we heard how Circuits and Districts were seeking such opportunities. We were not able to find good recent URC examples of new ways of using buildings and being Church, and we are interested in hearing of any examples which can be added to the website.
3. The website password protection has been removed, allowing access to some of the roadshow content. The site will not be managed after October 2015 and it is hoped that the content can be hosted in some form by one or both of the churches. Please visit the site [www.jpsg.org](http://www.jpsg.org)
4. After JPSG's earlier decision to move away from its original wider remit and concentrate on the roadshows, our final meeting was able to return to some issues that were set out by the previous Think Tank for consideration in both churches. The final report will recommend the following suggestions, which seek to continue the working relationship established in the roadshows:
  - a) Roadshow feedback suggested a significant need in both churches for support at the early stages of any significant project involving buildings, to help with vision, information, encouragement, and even critical friendship. The report will suggest finding about a dozen networked volunteers drawn from both churches to speak and act locally and regionally. It is hoped that this may encourage greater sharing of resources and buildings.
  - b) We also hope that the URC can be invited to the Methodist Resourcing Mission Forum when relevant, and that its convenor, Richard Farmery, could in return be linked into our Buildings Forum.

## Church Buildings Forum

5. At its November 2014 meeting Mission Council approved the establishment of a Church Buildings Forum with representatives from synods, General Assembly Committees and other parties to develop and share an understanding of (i) our relationship with buildings, (ii) the ways that they speak to us and the communities we serve, and (iii) the way they shape us, both as occupiers and in the wider context. This remit aims to continue and respond to the work started by the JPSG, and the URC members of JPSG will work with the Forum for the remainder of their term of appointment.
6. Since last November the Forum now has representatives from 6 synods. Gathering names has been a longer process than anticipated, but an initial meeting is now being arranged for February 2016. Discussions have been held with the PLATO group to ensure that there will not be an overlap in areas of work and the PLATO convenor has agreed to be part of the Forum to maintain a productive working relationship.
7. The Mission Committee has agreed that the work of the Forum should come under its umbrella, given the priority focus that the Forum will have on the missional use of buildings as well as the continuing ecumenical dimension. The Forum will also keep in touch with other areas of work such as the CRCW programme. The Mission Committee budget for 2016 now has a component to cover the cost of meeting.
8. It is expected that the Forum will report back to synods and to Mission Council in due course, offering more information about its structure and suggested remit. The earlier report set out some possible aims and objectives, now repeated in an updated form used in the invitation to synods. It will be for those who represent synods to share and determine particular needs and priorities.
9. This forum may assist and develop in the following ways:
  - a) It will create a means whereby synods, Assembly Committees and other parties such as the Listed Buildings Advisory Group can share information, programmes and best practice and promote a wider discussion and understanding of the way we support, use and relate to our Church buildings.
  - b) It will develop a more widely shared understanding of how our buildings speak for us and shape our understanding of who we are and what we can do.
  - c) General Assembly received a paper from the Faith and Order Committee which included a request that the JPSG assist in developing a strategic Church Building Theology. We feel that this initially needs to be a URC-focused exercise. The Church Building Forum is our recommended means of responding to this.
  - d) The Forum can function as a point of contact and even when agreed, the voice of the URC. This will improve the effectiveness of our work with the Methodist Church, with other denominations, with government and with national agencies, such as Historic England, CADW and Historic Scotland. This will enable our voice to be heard whenever Church building issues are debated, and will enable the sharing of good practice, expertise, advice and strategic planning.
  - e) It will create a means of responding to Church building issues raised by Assembly committees, and this may address the current lack of consideration of the part that buildings play in the success or otherwise of local and wider programmes.

- f) It will develop a resource to be used for local and synod-wide strategic planning and will inform the process of evaluating existing buildings and providing visionary and practical guidance for shaping new buildings and projects. The extent of this work will need to be agreed by the Forum.
  - g) It will address some repetition of work, and gaps in the advice that synods are able to offer.
10. It may be that a Church Buildings Forum website can be developed to share resources. If so, we hope that the JPSG resources can be incorporated.
11. If we are to progress the opportunities created by JPSG, to share visionary facilitators and plan further conferences and initiatives with the Methodist Church, then we need to offer a point of contact in the URC. Any programme that develops from this cooperation will depend on appropriate approval from synods, Mission Council or Assembly. But an individual or group must be able to speak and act for the URC in initiating and promoting projects. It was always the intention that the Buildings Forum would provide continuity in this task once the JPSG was disbanded, and the Buildings Forum will include this task within their remit from Mission Council.



# Paper R1

Safeguarding Advisory Group  
General Report

United Church 2015  
Church 2015  
Reformed Church 2015  
Church 2015



# Paper R1

## Safeguarding Advisory Group General Report

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship) <a href="mailto:richard.church@urc.org.uk">richard.church@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Take note
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None</b>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Update on the work of the Safeguarding Advisory Group
<b>Main points</b>	Publication of <i>Good Practice 4</i> Change of agency for safeguarding checks Staff change in Church House
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Mission Council May 2015 Papers R1&2
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	



# Safeguarding Advisory Group

The period since the last Mission Council meeting has been exceptionally busy.

1. *Good Practice Four* has now been published online and a copy has been sent to every Synod Office. This policy document summarises best safeguarding practice and gives guidelines for implementation. The publication of this significant document reflects the input and collaboration of many people, to whom we are very grateful.

The appendices together with an 'Adults at Risk' section will be published during the autumn. Handbooks have been mailed to all local churches and additional copies are available from Church House, at a cost of £3.50 plus postage and packing.

2. We are changing the agency we use for safeguarding checks. Due Diligence Checking will be taking over DBS clearances from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2015. DDC have been in touch with local church verifiers to introduce themselves and the service they will provide to us in the future. For the time being ministers' checks will be handled in Church House. The Churches' Agency for Safeguarding, the agency we previously used, will be unable to deal with any requests made after 31<sup>st</sup> October.
3. Amy Slennett was appointed in July 2013 to work in a 50% role as the URC Safeguarding Officer. The other half of her time was spent with the Baptist Union of Great Britain. However, when it was decided that this split post would come to an end, Amy opted to continue her work in the BUGB context. The URC therefore thanked Amy warmly, when she left in September, for all that she has done for us, and we have now engaged in a recruitment process, to appoint a full-time officer to this role. We hope to report further at Mission Council.
4. Perhaps the most time-consuming task in the realm of Safeguarding has been the Historic Cases Review. The triaging of Ministers' files was authorized by the May meeting of Mission Council. This and subsequent developments are dealt with in a separate report, Paper R2.



# Paper R2

Safeguarding Advisory Group  
Historic Cases Review

United Church 2015  
Church 2015  
Reformed Church 2015  
Church 2015



# Paper R2

## Safeguarding Advisory Group Historic Cases Review

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Richard Church <a href="mailto:richard.church@urc.org.uk">richard.church@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Information on Phase 1 Decision in principle on Phase 2
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council, recognizing the need for an open consultation on issues of abuse in the Church requests the Safeguarding Advisory Group to bring detailed proposals to the next Mission Council meeting.</b>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Outline of actions taken since May, concerning the triaging of ministers' files. Request for authorisation of a wide consultation in 2016, to invite reporting of incidents of alleged abuse.
<b>Main points</b>	
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	<i>Good Practice Four</i> (2015) , <i>Courage, Cost &amp; Hope</i> (2015); <i>Protecting All God's Children</i> (2010)
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Safeguarding Advisory Group Coalition of Survivors of Clergy Abuse The Methodist Church Ms Julie Ashby Ellis, external Safeguarding Consultant

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	Five thousand pounds are set aside for this review work in 2015, and ten thousand in 2016. If new and difficult cases emerge, there could be substantial extra cost to attend to them properly.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	We have tried to learn from other churches' practice and experience, particularly from the Methodist Church.

# Historic Cases Review

1. This review was initiated following Mission Council's meeting in May 2015 which authorised the triaging of Ministers' files. This was to ensure that nothing had been missed with regard to the safety of those young people and at-risk adults who are associated with congregations of the United Reformed Church
2. The current plan is that ministers' files be read in synod offices between the end of September and the middle of November. This job is to be done by volunteer readers drawn from the synods (although not deployed within their own synods), and from lists of volunteers supplied by the Coalition of Survivors of Clergy Abuse (although not themselves survivors).
3. All URC ministers were sent an email in July about this process. This stimulated some correspondence about confidentiality and some requests for file disclosure. These ministers were advised to contact their synod moderators. Moderators have received advice on the process for responding to such requests.
4. Following the first reading, most files will simply be put back. However files requiring further scrutiny will be sent electronically to Church House for reading by our external safeguarding consultant. If further action is needed following this second reading the matter will be remitted to synod moderators to operate the usual measures required by the MIND process or to set in train an appropriate pastoral response.
5. All readers will be DBS-checked and will have entered into a formal confidentiality agreement. In addition, readers will operate to standard terms of reference and will report on a standard *pro forma*. Both of these have been produced by Elizabeth Gray-King, who is project-managing this process.
6. Following conversations with colleagues in the Methodist Church, we have informed the Police (Operation Hydrant) of this action and also the Charity Commission. Our insurers have also been informed.
7. The Safeguarding Advisory Group has been consulted and is overseeing this process.
8. Phase Two will invite any individual connected now or in the past to the United Reformed Church to report any recollection or concern that they could have been a victim of abuse. We shall be concerned for allegations involving any lay, ordained or commissioned member of the URC which could suggest that someone:
  - behaved in an abusive or inappropriate manner with a child or adult
  - may have committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child or adult
  - behaved towards a child or children or adult(s) in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children or adults
9. Phase Two has the potential to raise issues that may need to remain unresolved due to lack of evidence. Nonetheless, we wish the URC Historic Safeguarding Cases Review to be known for the quality of its listening. Even when resolution may not be possible, the quality of our listening may have the potential to lead to some kind of healing. Key to the process will be good, secure rubrics for raising and handling allegations, and careful and proper attention to pastoral care.

10. **Processes to raise allegations**  
Phase Two is expected to be launched after the March 2016 meeting of Mission Council. Communications will be sent to all synods and to all local churches, inviting people to raise any historic or present issue where there may have been a victim. Reporting forms will be designed so as allow complainants full opportunity to describe the situations as they saw (and see) these. It may be possible to offer an interview, in which the interviewer will fill in a form; this will take considerable resource if it is needed, but it cannot be excluded as part of our process. A secure email address will be set up, to the General Assembly Safeguarding Office. We hope to place a secure reporting form on the URC website. All allegations will be collated and transferred to readers under clear data protection guidelines. At every stage of Phase Two, the Police and the Charity Commission will be informed as appropriate.
11. **Process to handle allegations**  
Phase One will have tested the present protocols for reading records and reporting concerns. These existing protocols will be extended to allow for new allegations. It is suggested that a special group be set up to receive allegations forwarded from the Safeguarding Office. This group may work similarly to the present synod Expert Readers and may include readers from Phase One. Decisions will need to be made about whether this group is Assembly-wide or whether there are groups within each synod. There will be clear protocols on information handling, data storage, and communications with alleged victims. There will be clear protocols about any serious present allegations. Secure storage of electronic and paper files has already been agreed within Church House.
12. **Process to provide pastoral care**  
Research is presently underway to understand our existing Pastoral Response Teams, synod Safeguarding Advisers and synod Safe Church Advisors. Though it is understood that Moderators are frequently expected to carry out much synod pastoral care, sometimes in partnership with identified synod Pastoral Carers, it is anticipated that there could be so many allegations that the Moderator's role would become unmanageable. Other synod officers such as CYDOs and TDOs often carry out pastoral care, yet it seems important to create a new format for pastoral care around this kind of allegation.
- We intend to ensure that there is good care for alleged victims as well as for alleged perpetrators and for the families of alleged perpetrators. It is anticipated that some liturgies may be commissioned to help support pastoral care including worship for the healing of memories as well as worship for lament and confession.
13. **Timetable**  
This paper seeks the in-principle agreement of Mission Council to the detailed preparation of Phase Two, details of which will be brought to the March Mission Council. This way, more detailed design of process and the necessary gathering of human resource can be carried out in January, February and March of 2016. Most importantly, the design of Phase Two cannot be complete until the learning from Phase One has been understood. The March meeting of Mission Council will receive the detailed Phase Two plans and, subject to approval of these, Phase Two will begin immediately afterwards. It is anticipated that Phase Two will formally close at the end of October 2016, but if further allegations come forward, they will be handled appropriately.

# Paper U1

Task Group looking at the Church's  
Engagement with 20-40-year-olds

## Progress Report

Church 2015  
United  
Church 2015  
Reformed  
Church 2015  
Church



# Paper U1

## Task Group looking at the Church's Engagement with 20-40-year-olds Progress Report

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Miss Victoria Paulding <a href="mailto:victoria.paulding@ntlworld.com">victoria.paulding@ntlworld.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Resolution below.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council agrees that the Task Group looking at the Church's Engagement with 20-40-year-olds be extended by two years to thoroughly analyse the research conducted by other denominations, apply this to the URC's situation and bring fully costed proposals to General Assembly 2018.</b>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	The Church's engagement with 20-40-year-olds Aims: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To research the issues surrounding the Church's engagement with 20-40-year-olds;</li> <li>To bring fully-costed recommendations to General Assembly to improve the engagement of 20-40-year-olds at every level of the URC.</li> </ul>
<b>Main points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other denominational and academic research has been considered;</li> <li>Anecdotal evidence has been considered;</li> <li>Themes are beginning to emerge;</li> <li>The task group is engaging in conversations with Assembly committees and groups;</li> <li>The Church of England is conducting a fully-funded research project looking at the same issues;</li> <li>In order to benefit from the work done by the Church of England, the task group proposes that the conclusion of its work be extended to General Assembly 2018.</li> </ul>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	The Church's Engagement with 20-40-year-olds – Terms of Reference (Mission Council, March 2014, Paper U) Resolution from General Assembly 2012.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	General Secretariat

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	Expenses for task group required for a further 2 years
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Further opportunities to work with ecumenical partners.



# Task Group looking at the Church's Engagement with 20-40-year-olds

## Progress Report

1. Following the General Assembly resolution (2012) calling Mission Council to consider how to improve the integration of 20-40-year-olds at every level of the United Reformed Church, a task group was formed. The group consists of six people – Stewart Cutler, David Downing, Sabrina Gröschel, Victoria Paulding, Emma Pugh and Mike Walsh. The group brings together a range of experiences and skills from those both lay and ordained and those within and without the 20-40 age range. The group was formed independently of other Assembly committees but has received support from the General Secretariat. The task group initially operated without a convenor. However, in April 2015 it was decided that a convenor would be beneficial to lead the group's work. Victoria Paulding was then appointed as convenor. The task group has met five times since its formation in September 2014.
2. The task group began its work by looking at the existing research into the Church's engagement with 20-40-year-olds, such as *The Missing Generation* (The Methodist Church, 2011). The task group has also been in contact with the Church of England, who have recently commissioned a research project to determine why 20-30-year-olds who stay in the Church do so. The task group is engaging in conversations with Fresh Expressions and the Young Adults Round Table.
3. In addition to denominational research, the task group has been looking at academic research. Mayo, Savage and Collins' (2004) book *Ambiguous Evangelism* considers the reasons why Generation Y (born between 1980 and 2000) do not engage with the Church (irrespective of denomination). It also considers the faith needs of this group, as well as the differences between Generation X (born between 1960 and 1980) and Generation Y in terms of their perceptions of church and engagement with it.
4. The task group has initiated conversations with Assembly committees and groups, in order to share ideas and gather insights into this issue. In June 2015 representatives of the task group met with the Children's and Youth Work committee and discussed the issues they saw in engaging with 20-40-year-olds, what they thought helped 20-40s engage with the Church and how they saw 20-40s engaging with the Church at Assembly level. The task group is now contacting convenors of Assembly-level groups and committees to discuss this subject and its links with their existing work. The group also plans to hold a discussion at the URC Youth Assembly in order to further ascertain views from the 14-25 age group.
5. In addition to this, the task group has spoken at local level with people in the age-group, including those in churches, those who have left the Church and those who never entered it. Members of the task group have brought their own experiences and conversations from the churches and individuals that they have contact with. Mike Walsh's experiences as a pioneer minister in Manchester have brought valuable insights from some in the 20-40 age range who have never engaged with the Church. A discussion on the URC Facebook page has engaged more in the conversation and provided interesting insights. The task group has devised a questionnaire to be circulated to pioneer ministers, university chaplains, Children and Youth Development

Officers, Training and Development Officers and Church Related Community Workers in order to gather a wide range of views from those in the 20-40 age range, both inside and outside the Church.

6. So far, the majority of the task group's work has been fact finding. Many themes are beginning to emerge, including:
  - Praise for the URC's youth and children's work;
  - Young people leaving the Church when they move out of the family home or move to university;
  - Sunday working hours and shift work affecting 20-40-year-olds' ability to attend Sunday morning services;
  - Lack of social aspect in churches which 20-40-year-olds are looking for;
  - People returning to the Church once they have their own children;
  - A view that you need to be a Christian before you go to Church, rather than going to Church to explore faith issues;
  - A need to look at how the Church evangelises, and how it defines what it is.
  
7. However, all the evidence gathered so far is anecdotal. The task group feels that if it is to make recommendations to the Church, through General Assembly, it needs harder evidence to base these recommendations on. In light of the research being conducted by the Church of England (which they are willing to share with the URC), the task group proposes that we study this evidence and then conduct further research to make it appropriate to the URC. The Church of England's draft findings are due to be published in January 2016. In order to fulfil Mission Council's terms of reference thoroughly, **the task group proposes that its work be extended by two years to thoroughly analyse the research conducted by other denominations, apply this to the URC's situation and bring fully-costed proposals to General Assembly 2018.**

# Paper U2

Church House Management Team  
Terms of Reference





# Paper U2

## Church House Management Group Terms of Reference

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Jane Baird, Deputy General Secretary (Admin and Resources) <a href="mailto:jane.baird@urc.org.uk">jane.baird@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council adopts the proposed Terms of Reference for the Church House Management Group, with immediate effect</b>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Updating the Terms of Reference for current needs and circumstances
<b>Main points</b>	Membership, accountability, responsibilities.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Mission Council set up this group in January 2003, and it appears that its formal Terms of Reference date from that year.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Mission Council Advisory Group

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	No direct impact
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None

# Terms of Reference

## 1. Membership

- 1.1 Convenor: Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources)
- 1.2 Four members appointed by General Assembly (or Mission Council on its behalf) on the recommendation of the Nominations committee, who have experience in Buildings and IT management, including finance and general management.
- 1.3 Ex officio: General Secretary, Chief Finance Officer.
- 1.4 In attendance: IT Manager, Facilities Manager.
- 1.5 The group will appoint a Secretary.

## 2. Accountability

CHMG is accountable to Mission Council through the DGS (A&R). The DGS (A&R) shall be responsible for ensuring communication, to Church House staff, those decisions which are directly relevant to them and will receive any matters, within its terms of reference, which staff wish to be considered by CHMG.

## 3. Responsibilities

CHMG shall set and monitor policies relating to the management of the support services and facilities of Church House. The responsibility for implementation of such policies rests with those employees appointed by the Church to do so and ultimately the General Secretary.

- 3.1 CHMG shall have budgetary responsibility for capital expenditure on 86 Tavistock Place, London, for maintenance to the fabric (including the third floor flat, 86A Tavistock Place); and for such equipment and staffing costs as come under the "Church House Costs" budget head in the annual accounts.
- 3.2 CHMG shall have responsibility for overseeing the maintenance of centrally owned properties in accordance with the Housing Policy for Assembly Appointed Staff (December 2005).
- 3.3 CHMG shall ensure the development, implementation, maintenance and monitoring of a policy and hold budgetary responsibility (capital and revenue) for IT in Church House, for staff whose reporting base is Church House.
- 3.4 CHMG shall ensure the development, implementation, maintenance and monitoring of a Health & Safety Policy for Church House, for staff whose reporting base is Church House and synod Moderators.

- 3.5 CHMG shall ensure the development, implementation, maintenance and monitoring of a Data Protection Policy for Church House, for staff whose reporting base is Church House and synod Moderators.
- 3.6 CHMG shall ensure development, implementation, maintenance and monitoring of an Archiving Policy for Church House.
- 3.7 CHMG shall ensure the development, implementation, maintenance and testing of a Business Continuity Plan for Church House.
- 3.8 CHMG shall be responsible to the Board of Trustees for that part of the Church's Risk Register which relates to the running of Church House, including all matters covered within its Health & Safety policy.
- 3.9 CHMG shall be responsible for any other related matters which affect the welfare of staff or operational matters in Church House, which may arise from time to time, and for which a formal policy or procedure is required (excepting human resources matters which will be the responsibility of the Human Resources Advisory Group); and any other associated matters referred to it by Mission Council.

# Paper V1

Resource Sharing Task Group  
Inter-synod resource  
sharing methods

United Church 2015  
Church 2015  
Reformed Church 2015  
Church 2015



# Paper V1

## Resource Sharing Task Group Inter-synod resource sharing methods

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Paul Whittle <a href="mailto:moderator@urceastern.org.uk">moderator@urceastern.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	To rescind the resolution of November 2013 requesting the Resource Sharing Task Group to propose a mechanism for inter-synod resource sharing.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council affirms its commitment to inter-synod resource sharing. Recognising that the commitment to both voluntary generosity in giving and gracious acceptance in receiving are serving well, it affirms the importance of the continuance of that spirit, but rescinds the resolution of November 2013 requesting that a proposal be brought to provide a mechanism for inter-synod resource sharing.</b>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	The Resource Sharing Task Group (RSTG) has carefully considered the resolution requesting a proposal for a resource sharing mechanism. It has concluded that such would not be helpful. RSTG thus asks Mission Council to re-affirm the principle of inter-synod resource sharing, but to rescind the resolution.
<b>Main points</b>	RSTG has explored a number of possible methods of applying a mechanism. It has heard requests from those responsible for finance in the synods to retain the present voluntary system, though with some additional robustness. It has concluded that a mechanism is not needed.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Minute 13/47(2) of Mission Council of November 2013.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Treasurers and finance officers in the synods.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	None for Mission Council or General Assembly.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None.



# Inter-synod resource sharing methods

1. At its November 2013 meeting Mission Council considered a number of matters affecting the life of the denomination under the report of the Medium Term Strategy Group. One particular matter was as to how we sustain the life of individual synods and the need to recognise that accidents of history have led to an unequal and unfair distribution of resources. This needs to be recognised and addressed as a matter of justice. It was recognised that inter-synod resource sharing has been part of our ethos for a while but, amid acclaim, it was suggested that this commitment should be strengthened and the Resource Sharing Task Group was asked to prepare and propose a mechanism that might be adopted and used for future resource sharing.
2. The Group explored a number of options and there was an interesting variance as to the financial impact on particular synods depending on which of these might be followed.
3. However, that variation, and any difficulty in settling which to follow has not contributed to the present proposal. Subsequent to our initial work, we consulted those with financial responsibility within the synods, primarily treasurers and finance officers. This was done both through the annual small group meetings of synods to consider each other's accounts and budgets and the annual consultation on Inter-synod resource sharing. Overwhelmingly the response was that the present voluntary system works and should be retained. Some synods receive from resource sharing, some contribute to it, and some do neither. With little qualification, those in all three categories supported the status quo, and the Biblical principle of generosity was cited more than once.
4. It was recognised that the lack of a mechanism should not be used in the future to provide an escape route from engaging with resource sharing. To that end, it was agreed that we needed to do something to make the system more robust to provide for any temporary shortfalls. Thanks, primarily, to a generous additional promised contribution from Thames North, and also the ability to retain some recent small surpluses, a significant sum has been put aside to ensure that resource sharing can cope with the unexpected.
5. RSTG recognises the generosity of those who are able to give, and do so willingly and generously. It values those who receive. It affirms sharing as a matter of justice. It has concluded, however, that a voluntary system has much to commend it – and invites Mission Council to endorse that by passing this resolution.



# Paper Y1

Peter Meek and Helen Lidgett

## The Immigration Health Surcharge

United Church 2015  
Church 2015  
Reformed Church 2015  
Church 2015



# Paper Y1

## Peter Meek and Helen Lidgett The Immigration Health Surcharge

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Helen Lidgett <a href="mailto:clerk@urc5.org.uk">clerk@urc5.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Mission Council values the contribution being made to the ministry of the United Reformed Church by those ministers who have come from overseas.</b></li> <li>2. <b>Mission Council is concerned to learn of the imposition of the Immigration Health Surcharge, which increases the fees involved in renewing a visa to £1270.20 per person for a three-year period.</b></li> <li>3. <b>Mission Council instructs the General Secretariat, advised by the Ministries Committee and anyone else they wish, working collaboratively with ecumenical partners where possible, to make representations to Her Majesty's government to review their present policy about the Immigration Health Surcharge.</b></li> </ol>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	The Immigration Health Surcharge
<b>Main points</b>	That government policy should be reviewed.
<b>Previous documents</b>	None
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	East Midlands Synod Enabling Group; Secretary for Ministries

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	Removal of a burden applied to some of our ministers, and presently borne by central Church funds.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Other churches would benefit in the same way that we would.

# The Immigration Health Surcharge

1. The East Midlands Synod Enabling Group (SEG) recently heard with great concern of the costs being faced by one of our ministers, whom we called three years ago from a CWM partner church, to renew the visas that enable the minister and family to remain in this country and continue to work as a minister of the United Reformed Church.
2. In this particular case, the total bill amounted to £6351 for minister, spouse, and their three children (£1270.20 each). This amount includes a new charge introduced last year, the Immigration Health Surcharge, which must be paid (by the individual not the church or an employer) before the rest of the visa renewal process and related payments can proceed. Currently the health surcharge is 200 pounds per person, per year of the visa applied for – thus £600 per person in this case, about half of the total sum mentioned above. Failure to pay and renew the visas could result in deportation for overstaying. Synod, with the help of Ministries at Church House, took immediate steps to ensure the minister had the money to pay by the due date.
3. We quickly realised that another of our ministers would face the same charge a month later, although as a single person the total is £1270.20, of which £600 is the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS).
4. Earlier this year the Assembly's Maintenance of the Ministry sub-committee agreed to reimburse those of our ministers affected by this surcharge, by paying them a sum equivalent to the IHS element of their visa renewal costs, and this policy was implemented with immediate effect.
5. The Synod Enabling Group was, however, alarmed at the implications for partnership in the world church when ministers from overseas whom we have called to serve with us face unexpected and constantly increasing costs for visa renewal. As this issue will affect other ministers of the United Reformed Church and other churches, it agreed to ask Mission Council to take this matter up with the government, and a resolution to this effect is now brought forward by the Moderator and Clerk of the synod.

