

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

October 2017

Dear Colleagues,

**Mission Council  
Tuesday to Thursday 7 – 9 November 2017  
The Hayes, 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, to 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). These can be found on the URC website at: <http://bit.ly/2ol2sWX>, from page 247 onwards. They are also, for this meeting, printed in Paper M1.
2. In recent Mission Council meetings we have taken certain business *En Bloc*. The fact that an item is listed as *En Bloc* does not make it less important than timetabled items. Rather, the *En Bloc* list contains those items where the Moderators think that decisions might 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 A sign-up sheet will be available at the meeting, where you can list the paper you wish to be withdrawn. If an item gets three signatures by close of business on the first day, it will be withdrawn from *En Bloc* and added to our agenda, with time given for discussion.

I need to remind you too that we really rely on every Mission Council member to read the papers and take note of information to relay 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 our venue, a list of members, and (for new members) 'What we are about in Mission Council.' If any of these are missing, please contact Helen Munt at Church House, 020 7916 2020, [helen.munt@urc.org.uk](mailto:helen.munt@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 only applies when Council is in session; members may join in online debates during breaks, about business that is completed (although not on business that has only been adjourned to a later session of the meeting). As ever, everything 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**

A1 Assembly Arrangements  
B1 Children's and Youth Work Committee: report on work  
G2, G3 The URC Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd: two changes to rules and procedure  
I1 Mission: update on work  
J1 Nominations  
M1 Clerk: Standing Orders  
M2 Clerk: Appeals Procedure  
O1 Human Resources Advisory Group: report on work  
R1 Safeguarding Advisory Group: Past Case Review

**Category B: Majority Voting**

C1 Funding for Reform  
G1 Finance: budget for 2018  
N1 General Assembly Task Group: where to hold General Assembly in 2020

**Category C: Consensus decision making**

D2 Education and Learning: the successor to TLS  
H1 and H2 Ministries: Non-Stipendiary Ministry, and funding new forms of ministry  
J2 Nominations: supplementary report \*

P1 A complaints policy for the URC

U1 The role of General Secretary

Y1 Rules of Procedure for electing Assembly Moderators

**For information or advice rather than immediate decision**

D1 Education and Learning: Lay Development Strategy \*

F1 Faith and Order \*

I2 Mission: Commitment for Life

I3 Walking the Way

L1 URC Trust: Church House and Windermere \*

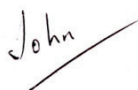
M3 Data Protection

8. A number of papers, which have to be prepared late and will only be available at the meeting, are marked above with an asterisk.\*

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,



# Mission Council

The Hayes Conference Centre  
Swanwick, Derbyshire  
7 to 9 November 2017



*The*  
United  
Reformed  
Church



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

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on behalf of Mission Council.

# Groups – November 2017

The first named person in each Group is asked to act as group Leader and the second named person in each group as Reporter

<b>A</b>	<b>DAN MORRELL</b> <b>ANDREW EVANS</b> Susan <b>Brown</b> Elizabeth <b>Clark</b> Wilma <b>Frew</b> Rita <b>Griffiths</b> Peter <b>Meek</b> Andrew <b>Mills</b> Victor <b>Russell</b> Alan <b>Yates</b>	<i>Leader</i> <i>Reporter</i>	<b>B</b>	<b>ANDREW PRASAD</b> <b>JOHN ELLIS</b> Craig <b>Bowman</b> Steve <b>Faber</b> Keir <b>Hounsome</b> Hannah <b>Jones</b> Rosie <b>Martin</b> Morag <b>McLintock</b> Helen <b>Mee</b> Chris <b>Parker</b> John <b>Piper</b>	<i>Leader</i> <i>Reporter</i>
<b>C</b>	<b>GRAHAM HOSLETT</b> <b>PETER KNOWLES</b> Adrian <b>Bulley</b> Derek <b>Estill</b> George <b>Faris</b> Nicola <b>Furley-Smith</b> Anthony <b>Haws</b> Gwen <b>Jennings</b> Charles <b>Mather</b> Christopher <b>Reed</b> Fiona <b>Thomas</b> Liz <b>Thomson</b>	<i>Leader</i> <i>Reporter</i>	<b>D</b>	<b>JACKY EMBREY</b> <b>PAMELA DENT</b> Philip <b>Brooks</b> Jake <b>Convery</b> David <b>Greatorex</b> Ian <b>Hardie</b> Shirley <b>Miller</b> Kim <b>Plumpton</b> Mark <b>Robinson</b> Nigel <b>Uden</b> Simon <b>Walkling</b>	<i>Leader</i> <i>Reporter</i>
<b>E</b>	<b>JENNY MILLS</b> <b>RUTH DIXON</b> Ray <b>Adams</b> Jane <b>Baird</b> Bernie <b>Collins</b> David <b>Herbert</b> Michael <b>Jagessar</b> Frank <b>Liddell</b> Andrew <b>Middleton</b> Maria <b>Mills</b> Val <b>Morrison</b>	<i>Leader</i> <i>Reporter</i>	<b>F</b>	<b>JOAN GRINDROD-HELMN</b> <b>DAVID GROSCH-MILLER</b> Richard <b>Church</b> Gwen <b>Collins</b> Simon <b>Fairnington</b> Richard <b>Gray</b> Brian <b>Jolly</b> Margaret <b>Marshall</b> Jim <b>Merrilees</b> John <b>Samson</b> Alan <b>Spence</b> Ruth <b>Whitehead</b>	<i>Leader</i> <i>Reporter</i>
<b>G</b>	<b>DAVID THOMPSON</b> <b>DAVID PICKERING</b> Nigel <b>Adkinson</b> Daphne <b>Beale</b> James <b>Breslin</b> Bill <b>Gould</b> Barbara <b>Jones</b> Rachel <b>Lampard</b> Maureen <b>Shepherd</b> Steve <b>Summers</b> Kevin <b>Watson</b>	<i>Leader</i> <i>Reporter</i>	<b>H</b>	<b>TREVOR JAMISON</b> <b>PHILIP NEVARD</b> Francis <b>Brienen</b> Melanie <b>Campbell</b> James <b>Coleman</b> Clare <b>Downing</b> Derrick <b>Dzandu-Hedidor</b> Ken <b>Forbes</b> Sam <b>Richards</b> Paul <b>Robinson</b> Paul <b>Whittle</b>	<i>Leader</i> <i>Reporter</i>



# Mission Council Agenda

7-9 November 2017

Notes:

1. This running order can only be provisional. The Moderators will adjust it if items get dealt with more quickly, or take longer, than we initially expect.
2. Rooms for any group work in this agenda will be made known when you arrive.

<b>Tuesday 7 Nov</b>		
12:00 – 12:45	Introduction session for new MC members	
<b>12:00 – 12:45</b>	<b><i>Registration in the Main House reception area</i></b>	
<b>1:00</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	
<b>Session One</b>		
2:00 – 3:30	Opening Worship with induction of the Revd Philip Brooks, secretary for ecumenical and interfaith relations, and commissioning of Dr Sam Richards, head of children's and youth work development.  Introductions and administration	
<b>3:30</b>	<b>Tea Break</b> <b><i>Access to rooms available</i></b>	
<b>Session Two</b>		
4:15 – 6:15	Minutes from May 2017 Matters arising Presentation by Revd Elizabeth Clark, rural advocate Ministries: NSM, and funding for ministry	<b>H1, H2</b>
<b>6:45 – 8:00</b>	<b>Dinner</b>	
<b>Session Three</b>		
8:00 – 9:15	Data Protection A complaints policy for the URC The role of General Secretary Evening prayers	<b>M3 P1 U1</b>
<b>Wednesday 8 November</b>		
<b>8:30</b>	<b>Breakfast</b>	
<b>Session Four</b>		
9:15 – 10:45	Mission: Commitment for life, and Walking the Way Education and Learning	<b>I2, I3 D2, D1</b>
<b>10:45</b>	<b>Coffee</b>	

<b>Session Five</b> 11:15	The future of General Assembly: report from Task Group, and discussion in groups		<b>N1</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	En Bloc business Nominations: supplementary report <i>Reform</i> magazine The future of General Assembly: plenary discussion Electing Assembly Moderators		<b>En Bloc J2 C1 N1 Y1</b>
<b>6:45 – 8:00</b>	<b>Dinner</b>		
<b>Session Eight</b> 8:00 – 9:15	To be confirmed Evening prayers		
<b>Thursday 9 November</b>			
<b>8:30</b>	<b>Breakfast</b>		
<b>Session Nine</b> 9:30 – 11:15	Opening Prayer The URC Trust: Church House and Windermere Budget for 2018 Remaindered business Farewells and thanks		<b>L1 G1</b>
<b>11:15 – 11:45</b>	<b>Coffee</b>		
<b>Session Ten</b> 11:45 – 12:45	Closing worship with communion		
<b>1:00</b>	<b>Lunch and departures</b>		
1:45 – 3:00 (max)	Meeting of committee convenors		





# Paper A1

**Assembly arrangements committee**

**General Assembly 2018 and 2020**

United Church 2017  
Church 2017  
Reformed Church 2017  
Church 2017



# Paper A1

## Assembly arrangements committee

General Assembly 2018 and 2020

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd James Breslin
<b>Action required</b>	None
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	For information
<b>Main points</b>	Plans for GA2018 and initial discussions for GA2020
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The Revd John Proctor

### Summary of Impact

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

# General Assembly 2018 and 2020

- 1.1 Plans for the 2018 Assembly in Nottingham proceed apace. The General Secretary of CWM, the Revd Dr Collin Cowan, has agreed to be a guest speaker and a similar invitation for the new Director of Christian Aid has also been issued. Unlike 2014 and 2016, where much of the expense of attending the Assembly by those appointed from the synods was met by the synods, at this Assembly those costs, principally travel and meals, are being met from the Assembly budget. After the last Assembly, there were some complaints that the accommodation provided was too far from the Assembly Hall. The committee has taken note of this and most members of the 2018 Assembly will be accommodated in one of three hotels immediately adjacent to the Conference Centre.
- 1.2 Following on from a successful experiment at Southport in 2016 the committee has appointed two Interns to assist in the planning and administration of the Assembly. It is hoped that their attendance at both Assembly arrangements committee and General Assembly will enable younger members of the Church to engage more fully in the work of the Assembly.
2. Working under the current rule that every sixth Assembly should be held in Scotland, the committee has been in discussions with the University of Stirling for the 2020 Assembly, but – in order not to compromise the work of the Mission Council working group on the future of the Assembly – it has entered into no formal commitments and, depending on a decision to be made at this Mission Council, is ready to bring a proposal to the Assembly for one of two possible venues in the West Midlands.



# Paper B1

**Children's and Youth Work Committee**

Update November 2017

United Church 2017  
Church 2017  
Reformed Church 2017  
Church 2017



# Paper B1

## Children's and Youth Work Committee

Update November 2017

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Jenny Mills (committee convenor) <a href="mailto:revdjmill@btinternet.com">revdjmill@btinternet.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	None
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None</b>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To inform Mission Council of the appointment of a Head of Children's and Youth Work Development and the thinking of the Children's and Youth Work Committee on current and future developments.
<b>Main points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointment of Dr Sam Richards.</li> <li>• Future of Review of Children's and Youth Work in the URC.</li> <li>• Possibilities and potential of Children's and Youth Work Committee.</li> </ul>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head of Children's and Youth Work Development Review Report, December 2016.</li> <li>• Children's and Youth Work Committee Minutes February and June 2017.</li> <li>• Mission Council Report from May 2017 relating to Children's and Youth Work Committee resolution.</li> </ul>
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The General Secretary.</li> <li>• The Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship).</li> <li>• The Children's and Youth Work Committee.</li> <li>• Education and Learning (the Revd Fiona Thomas).</li> <li>• 20s-40s Task Group (Victoria Paulding).</li> </ul>

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	Currently unknown as HCYWD to start in post on 1 November. Costs related to full review to be met from the CYWC budget.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Potential for improved ecumenical links, engagement with other partners possible depending on the outcome of Review and actions of HCYWD.



# Update November 2017

## Staffing

1. It is with delight that we are able to report that, following interviews on 19 July 2017, we were able to appoint Dr Sam Richards as Head of Children's and Youth Work Development. Dr Sam Richards is a founder of the Institute for Children Youth & Mission, and as director of Oxford Youth Works, and Oxford CYM has been involved in training Christian youth and children's workers for more than 25 years. She is a member of mayBe community (an all-age fresh expression of church), and lives near Oxford with her husband, daughter and two cats. Her ministry brings a passion for enabling children and young people to experience, explore and express the Way of Jesus. We look forward to welcoming Sam into the Church House staff team and to all that she will bring to ministry among children and young people within the United Reformed Church.
2. We are pleased for our current Programme Officer, Simon Peters, as he has been appointed to the role of Walking the Way Project Manager and will start in this role in January 2018. However, we are sad that he is moving on as this is another change in the CYW department.
3. Often times of great change bring opportunities for new ideas and thinking. We pray this will be so in the CYW department.
4. As we move into this next phase of change and we welcome Sam into her new role, her first priority is to get to know the URC and the CYW structures and people involved.

## Review

5. Once she is settled into the post, the CYW committee are keen for Sam to begin the full review, as recommended by the review into the post of HCYWD from December 2017. This latest review, as agreed at Mission Council in May 2017, will be a wide ranging review and one that is regarded as necessary. The main reasons for the necessity of the review relate to the massive budget cuts agreed by Mission Council and the restructure of the CYW department which were implemented 2013. The CYW programme was not reviewed or altered as a response at that time. The effects of these things have had an impact on the CYW department since then and now we need to develop a clear process for moving forward with this vital area of work within the Church, aware of the limitations all these changes have had.

## Future role of CYW committee

6. Children and youth have so much to offer the wider URC, and the CYW committee are concerned that there is not as effective communication between committees and departments as there could be. We will be encouraging Sam to identify ways we can optimise our engagement with others to enable the voices of children and young people to be heard throughout the URC and as an integral part of all the initiatives being developed within the structures of the Church.
7. The current Children's and Youth Work committee have expressed concern about the use of the word 'Work' and are looking at how we can emphasise that we are involved in Ministry to children and young people, not work, and changes we may

need to make in response to this. We believe that children and young people are equal partners in the church and have so much to offer and just seeing what we do as 'work' implies a one way process.

8. At the first ever joint committee meeting (with Ministries and Education and Learning) in June 2017, and following a presentation by Education and Learning, we were encouraged to undertake an audit of the skills and gifts of the current Children's and Youth Work committee members. This information will help us to develop Task and Finish groups in specific areas of CYW and to maximize our ability to work effectively as a committee and to ensure that the CYW department can continue to offer the breadth and depth of CYW plus develop new ideas and thinking in response to the challenge of the world in which we find ourselves as we speak of the kingdom and seek to be Christ to the world.
9. From October 2017, all CYW committee meetings will now follow the pattern of most other committees in that they will have 24 hour meetings (Friday afternoon to Saturday afternoon). This means that agendas need to be very focused but it also means that volunteers and ministers do not have to be away from home or church for a whole weekend. We are grateful to all who serve on the CYW committee.
10. The CYW committee has developed themes for the next three years and offers these to the wider Church. 2018: Pilgrimage, 2019: One Body and 2020: Common Ground.
11. URC Youth are a real asset to the URC and their enthusiasm is infectious. They were great advocates for the URC at this year's Greenbelt and are planning the Youth Assembly for 2018. These young people, as so many before them, have lots to offer and to contribute to the church now and in the future and it is important that we do not let them drift away once they reach 26. The work of the 20-40 Task Group ties in with this and we are pleased that this work is being done.
12. When not planning Youth Assembly (YA), Youth Executive (YE) is working hard at implementing resolutions passed at previous assemblies. Most notably, at the moment, work on regional (or individual synod) summer camps for young people and how they can be of great benefit to children and young people in their faith development and community-building. Furthermore, initial contact has been made with Mission and Communications committees following Paper B2 from May's council meeting. URC Youth remain passionate about tackling climate change and believe the church should be leading the way on this and encouraging local churches to get involved, and would appreciate further support and expertise in making this happen.
13. Finally, as convenor, I would like to offer a huge thank you to the Revd Tim Meachin for all his hard work in the role of convenor over the past 4 years; and to Simon Peters and Heather Wilkinson and Carole Sired, the Children and Youth Work department, and to Soo Webster, Pilots Management, for all they have done to keep CYW active and supported since Karen's leaving. Their commitment in difficult circumstances has been amazing and we are truly grateful for their hard work and dedication.

## Big day out

14. This was overall a success. The fact it became a joint event for all ages and interests (not just Pilots led, as at the beginning) was a positive and any future event needs to have its brief clearly communicated from the outset. There were issues relating to the venue which affected worship, but the feedback was predominantly positive. Concern was expressed at CYWC about 'saving the date' for any future BDOs so that synod events do not clash and therefore affect numbers. See link for more details: <http://www.urch.org.uk/discipleship/childrens-and-youth/good-news-stories/2371-urch-big-day-out-organised-by-pilots-a-grest-success.html>

# Paper C1

**Communications committee**

The future for *Reform*

United Church 2017  
Church 2017  
Reformed Church 2017  
Church 2017

# Paper C1

## Communications committee

### The future for *Reform*

#### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Peter Knowles <a href="mailto:peter.knowles@bbc.co.uk">peter.knowles@bbc.co.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council recognises the contribution of <i>Reform</i> to the life of the United Reformed Church as a tool of missional discipleship, and notes the commitment of the communications committee and staff team to continue developing and monitoring the use of <i>Reform</i> over the three-year period from January 2018 to December 2020. Mission Council therefore resolves to support <i>Reform</i> 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 committee to present up-to-date subscription numbers to Mission Council in May 2019.</b>

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Report on progress made in the three-year campaign to increase sales of <i>Reform</i> and improve its finances; recommendation of continued support and investment.
<b>Main points</b>	Marketing work undertaken and planned by the communications department; subscription figures; financial information.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper C3 at the November 2014 Mission Council; papers C1 and C2 at the March 2016 Mission Council.
<b>Consultation has taken place with ...</b>	The communications committee; the editorial board of <i>Reform</i> ; the finance department.

#### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	<i>Reform</i> continues to need financial investment from URC central funds. This amount remains within the £90,000 cap agreed by Mission Council and which ends on 31 December 2017. No increase in investment is needed, but an extension of the agreement is required.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	<i>Reform</i> is well read outside the denomination, but passing this resolution (and therefore supporting the continued development of <i>Reform</i> ) will enable better promotion of the URC to ecumenical partners and members working in/attending LEPs.

# The future for *Reform*

## 1. Background

- 1.1 Mission Council discussed the future for *Reform* in November 2014, and before that in May 2011. There was enthusiastic consensus that the magazine makes a valuable contribution to the life of the United Reformed Church, and it was agreed to extend the denomination's existing investment in *Reform* – not to exceed £90,000 in any one budget year – for a further three years. That period concludes at the end of 2017.
- 1.2 The communications committee submitted an interim report on *Reform*'s finances and subscriptions (papers C1 and C2) to Mission Council in March 2014.

## 2. The value of *Reform*

- 2.1 It was heartening for *Reform*'s staff, the communications team and the committee to hear Mission Council in 2014 celebrate the contribution that *Reform* makes to the denomination and express its desire that it continue to do so. The feedback that we have received since then tells the same story: *Reform* inspires and challenges readers, it provokes thought and debate, it keeps us all informed about the life of the URC, it resources local churches and adds something to our denominational identity. No other denomination has anything quite like it. And yet still not enough people buy it.
- 2.2 The added value *Reform* offers to the URC has continued to grow and develop in this three-year period. Ways in which this has happened include the following:
  - 2.2.1 Discussion materials for church groups are posted on the *Reform* website, to accompany articles in every issue, especially the 'Chapter and verse' Bible study. An anthology of 'Chapter & verse' columns is in preparation, to be published by the publications department – publication date not yet confirmed.
  - 2.2.2 The editorial board has been reinstated, with members from across the URC, giving regular feedback on how *Reform* is received in local churches and how well it is serving their needs.
  - 2.2.3 A clear trend in feedback to *Reform* revealed an appetite among readers for more good news stories about the work of local United Reformed churches. *Reform* began consciously to focus more on such stories in late 2016.
  - 2.2.4 A new column, 'I am...', began in September 2017, publishing the first-hand stories of people whom we are more used to hearing about than hearing from. This idea arose from discussion with the communications committee.
  - 2.2.5 The editor of *Reform* regularly preaches in churches, contributing to local church life and building relationships with *Reform*.
  - 2.2.6 *Reform* is one of the channels through which 'Walking the Way' will be promoted and engaged with in churches.
  - 2.2.7 The digital edition of *Reform*, launched in April 2015, offers alternative ways to read the magazine. The digital app is more accessible to people with vision impairment, and it comes with a searchable online archive.



- 2.3 The communications committee believes that the contribution of *Reform* to the mission, ministry and identity of the URC is well worth the annual investment that the denomination makes in it. *Reform* is not a money-making venture or a commercial enterprise, it is a tool for the mission and discipleship of the URC. We should not think of *Reform* simply in terms of its cost to the denomination, but as a part of our mission in which we invest like we would in any other.

### 3. The financial position

- 3.1 *Reform* continues to stay within the budget extended by Mission Council in 2014, although it comes close. It has not exceeded the £90,000 cap and is not expected to do so this year.

Annual net cost of Reform 2015-2017	
2015	£88,571
2016	£88,172
2017 (budgeted net cost)	£88,200

- 3.2 At a time when other Christian publications such as *Third Way* and *Baptist Times* are no longer printed, it is something to be grateful for that the URC's magazine continues to be sustainable.
- 3.3 However, we cannot afford to be complacent about this. Because the margin is narrow, and because costs such as paper and postage are increasing all the time, *Reform* has taken a number of steps to lower its costs and increase its revenue. They include the following:
- 3.3.1 The editor has worked a nine-day fortnight from the start of 2017, resulting in a 10% saving in salary costs.
- 3.3.2 The other members of *Reform* staff do regular work for other teams in the communications department, so that a proportion of their salaries is paid from another part of the communications budget.
- 3.3.3 The price of an annual subscription to *Reform* was raised in December 2016 from £25 to £28. *Reform* worked with local church distributors to ensure that readers understood the reasons for the price rise and accepted it. This did not result in a significant drop in the number of subscribers. In the future we expect to see a small annual rise in the price of subscriptions rather than occasional larger increases; in December 2017 the subscription price will increase to £28.50.
- 3.3.4 The print run of *Reform* was reduced in November 2016 and again in August 2017.
- 3.4 The outcome of all this is that the communications committee is confident *Reform* can continue to serve discipleship and resource mission the URC in the same way, without any increase in the level of investment that Mission Council has agreed in the past.

### 4. Subscriptions figures from 2015 to 2017

- 4.1 The following chart shows the level of subscriptions to *Reform* over the three-year funding period which Mission Council granted to *Reform* in 2014:



Subscriptions to <i>Reform</i>	
March 2015	3,661
September 2015	4,108
March 2016	3,786
September 2016	3,765
March 2017	3,656
September 2017	3,669

- 4.2 We are disappointed not to have seen the growth in subscriptions to *Reform* that we hoped for in this period, despite the work done by the communications team to market the magazine. However, we are no longer seeing the precipitous decline of previous years, and the communications team continue to explore new ways of marketing *Reform* to new readers and lapsed subscribers (see section 5 below).

## 5. Marketing *Reform*

- 5.1 The communications committee reported to Mission Council in March 2016 (Paper C1) on the many *Reform* marketing campaigns launched over the previous year and a half. Since then communications staff have also introduced the following new marketing initiatives:
- Email campaign to lapsed subscribers;
  - Phone campaign to lapsed subscribers;
  - The message 'Read it, buy it, don't lose *Reform*' brought to Mission Council and reiterated in *Reform* and NU;
  - Daily updates on social media;
  - Presence at Greenbelt festival as part of the URC's associate partnership, with a special subscription offer for Greenbelters;
  - Stall at Christian Resources Exhibition, with a special subscription offer;
  - *Reform* had a stall and the Production and Marketing Officer made a presentation as part of the URC's Big Day Out;
  - Contra advertising arrangement with the rural church magazine *Country Way*;
  - Institutional subscriptions (accessible to all students) promoted to theological colleges;
  - A spin-off book of the column 'Jumble Sales of the Apocalypse' has been published. Other spin offs are in process;
  - A podcast of vox pops from *Reform* readers was recorded in July.
- 5.2 In addition to these new initiatives, other marketing work outlined in the March 2016 paper is also continuing.

## 6. Support *Reform*

- 6.1 While the communications committee is very glad that *Reform* does not need increased investment from the URC in order to be sustainable, we do need increased support of the denomination in other ways. We appeal to members of Mission Council to support *Reform* in the following ways:
- 6.1.1 Spread the message to your synods and churches: '*Reform* is there for you.' It is a resource for preachers, service leaders and house group leaders. It is a challenge to discipleship, an inspiration to mission and a guide to Christian life. Please publicise the fact that the URC offers this resource to local churches and encourage people to subscribe.
- 6.1.2 The other message is this: 'Read it. Buy it. Don't lose *Reform*.' We are delighted that people value *Reform* enough to share it widely, but the more that single copies are bought and passed around a church or photocopied for multiple readers, the harder it is to achieve financial sustainability. Please pass on the message that *Reform* needs subscribers.

## 7. Conclusion

- 7.1 *Reform* continues to be valuable to the URC and worth the investment that the denomination makes in it. It should be seen not merely in commercial terms as a cost to the denomination, but in terms of missional discipleship as a tool for church life. Because of savings made, *Reform* also continues to be financially sustainable and operates within its budget. Therefore no increase in funding is necessary. The communications committee asks Mission Council to extend the level funding provided to *Reform* between 2014 and 2017 for a further three years.

# Paper D2

**Education and Learning Committee**

**Progress Report: Successor to TLS**

United Church 2017  
Church 2017  
Reformed Church 2017  
Church 2017



# Paper D2

## Education and Learning

Progress Report: Successor to TLS

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Professor Neil Messer <a href="mailto:Neil.Messer@winchester.ac.uk">Neil.Messer@winchester.ac.uk</a> The Revd Fiona Thomas <a href="mailto:fiona.thomas@urc.org.uk">fiona.thomas@urc.org.uk</a> The Revd Richard Church <a href="mailto:richard.church@urc.org.uk">richard.church@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Mission Council to note the progress made and endorse the directions being taken.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council commends the progress made on designing a successor to “Training for Learning and Serving” (TLS) and directs the Education and Learning Committee to continue implementation as outlined in the paper.</b>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	General Assembly 2016 endorsed the need for a vehicle for discipleship development in the United Reformed Church which starts from where we are now, and has a projected life of 15 years. This is an important strand within <i>Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today</i> .
<b>Main points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The successor programme to TLS will be for the people of the United Reformed Church of all ages and backgrounds.</li> <li>• The recommended title for the programme is <i>Stepwise</i></li> <li>• It will be available as close as possible to the people who seek to engage with it, so accessible through face to face encounters where they live, and their mobile devices.</li> <li>• The first streams will be available from September 2018 and the full programme will be in place from September 2020</li> <li>• A shared core of materials may be adapted by synods taking into account local contexts and geography</li> </ul>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper M1, Mission Council November 2015; Paper M1, Mission Council March 2016. Resolution 1, General Assembly 2016.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Joint discipleship committees gathering, synod training & development officers, Synod Moderators (via e-mail), synod lay preaching commissioners, ecumenical colleagues.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	Changes in staffing have been accommodated within the budget for 2018 assigned for lay development.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	The task and finish group responsible for the programme includes ecumenical representatives and there is ongoing discussion with ecumenical partners about shared use of material.

# Progress report: Successor to TLS

“focused on what the church will be, rather than what it is or has been”

## Executive Overview

1. The following report describes the work done by the *Successor to TLS Task and Finish Group*, setting out the approach, framework and indicative content of the successor provision, which has been given the working title of *Stepwise*.
2. This first section gives an executive overview and in particular emphasises the intentionally distinctive nature of *Stepwise*.
3. In developing *Stepwise*, the group recognised the tremendous contribution that TLS made and the heritage it has bequeathed. *Stepwise* builds upon this to provide a programme of renewal for the next 15 years. Its focus is on what the church will be rather than on what the church has been; it is a mixed ecology, fulfilling the needs of the church of tomorrow and today.
4. *Stepwise* will be a vibrant dimension of the URC discipleship development programme, and is firmly embedded within *Walking the Way: Living the Life of Jesus Today*. Its emphasis is thus on discipleship, commitment to the mission of God, and equipping both individuals and congregations with servant leadership.
5. The aim is that *Stepwise* will help bring about personal and institutional transformation. *Stepwise* is for individuals – all who are open to reflecting and developing; ready to be stimulated and challenged; and wanting to make a difference. *Stepwise* is for the Church and churches. It is designed to contribute coherently to the United Reformed Church as a learning organisation and be an integral part of its emphasis on missional discipleship. *Stepwise* development will emphasise the vital importance of individuals applying their learning in their daily lives, wherever and whoever God calls them to be.
6. *Stepwise* will be distinctively imaginative, creating the space in which the fire of discipleship and learning can burn and grow. *Stepwise* will be learner orientated, drawing on the strengths and addressing the needs of individual learners. With a commitment to promoting access to learning it will be inclusive, recognising and overcoming barriers to learning encountered by people of diverse backgrounds characterised by age, educational experience, and ethnicity. Approaches to learning will be innovative and collaborative – drawing on a range of teaching and learning styles, including mentoring, flipped learning, enquiry-led learning, and use of digital resources. Assessment will be the servant of learning, with an emphasis on recognition through the councils of the church (church meeting, synod, General Assembly) rather than external accreditation.
7. The new programme will be strategic in its approach. As well as incorporating new dynamic content it will also draw on successful elements of TLS and other discipleship development programmes where relevant. Care is being taken to ensure that as *Stepwise* develops its thinking, approach and emerging framework this is presented to key committees and feedback acted upon.

8. The task and finish group has set out the purpose of *Stepwise*, its overall format and structure and initial content. This has been shaped within a framework of theme *streams* and module *stepping stones*. It is proposed that these five streams effectively incorporate the main features of discipleship learning and development – faith-filled life; faith-filled confidence; faith-filled community; faith-filled worship; and faith-fuelled leadership.
9. In summary *Stepwise* will be recognisably Reformed; embedded within *Walking the Way*; strategic in its contribution and approach; future focussed; centred on discipleship and learning; compelling and distinctive; shaped to meet individual and church needs; creative in breadth and depth; learner led; inclusive; and designed to take the church forward and outwards.

### Ben

I am a 60 year old long term church member who has lived in different parts of the country, and my wife and I are committed to the local church. I have entrepreneurial tendencies and own my own business. I love the outdoor life: boating, islands (I own properties on two), woods (I own one), campfires, adventures. I spend a lot of time with non church friends who share my love of the outdoors. I have run Alpha courses in the past. I offered to train as a lay preacher and did a course but found it didn't meet my needs in terms of helping me to change the culture of church to be more contemporary and outward looking. I want my friends to engage with God and feel they need a completely different kind of Christian community to be part of – at least as we explore faith together. I am looking for help in changing local church culture and in reaching my friends. *Stepwise* could be a short(?) 6 week experience teaching me how I can bring change to my church and how to take the next steps with my non church friends. It would need to be evening or weekends – maybe just one residential weekend would do it. I learn well from other people's stories and easily create from transferred principles. I would gain interest and affirmation/ confidence in seeking to bring change and I would hope the church would in time engage more effectively with others beyond its doors.

## The task: context, scope and group membership

10. The Terms of Reference for the *Successor to TLS Task and Finish Group* were agreed by the Education & Learning Committee in September 2016, following the decision of Mission Council and General Assembly 2016 to endorse the need for a new vehicle for discipleship development in the United Reformed Church within the context of *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus Today*. The successor programme to TLS has a projected life of 15 years. (See appendix 1).
11. The members of the task and finish group have been drawn from across the URC and ecumenical partners in order to support a broad-based approach:

Pete Atkins	Fresh Expressions/Mission-Shaped Ministry Board, ecumenical representative
The Revd David Downing	Children and Youth Committee nominee
The Revd Dr Jack Dyce	Resource Centre for Learning nominee
Graham Handscomb	Convenor and chair
Iain Johnston	Faith in Community Scotland, ecumenical representative
Philippa Linton	Administrator



The Revd Stuart Nixon	Mission Committee/Mission Enablers' nominee
The Revd Zaidie Orr	Global and Intercultural Ministries nominee
Simon Peters	Walking the Way Programme Manager (January 2018)
The Revd Anne Sardeson	Training and Development Officers' nominee
The Revd Fiona Thomas	Secretary for Education and Learning

12. The Group has met on five occasions, including its first meeting in February 2017. These meetings have latterly been residential for up to 48 hours. The group began by examining a number of background documents which helped in understanding fully the context and nature of the task:

- Successor to TLS Task and Finish Group *Terms of Reference* (E&L Committee, 2016)
- The report from the *Review of Training for Learning and Serving* commissioned by the Education & Learning Committee (January 2015)
- *Walking the Way: Living the Life of Jesus Today* Learning tree & other material from the Walking the Way steering group (2016)
- Background papers produced in 2016 by the Secretary for Education and Learning:
  - *Design considerations for the Successor to TLS*
  - *Record of a substantial conversation with office holders of the TLS Management Group*
  - *Compendium of Stakeholders*
  - *Key Elements for the TLS Successor Task and Finish Group*
  - *Structure of Support for the Programme*
- *Richness and Ruefulness* (Goodbourn, 2013)
- *Blended Learning Framework* (Education & Learning Blended Learning Task Group, 2016)

13. A valuable part of the group's work has been to take evidence in witness sessions where the group explored the experience, expertise and thinking of a range of individuals that could help to inform the work on the new programme. These have included so far:

- Stanley Jackson, TLS Coordinator
- John Campbell, TLS Tutor and writer, currently working with the largest group of BME students in TLS-LITE
- Pete Atkins, Team coordinator for Fresh Expressions and member of the Mission Shaped Ministry board
- David Salsbury, Training and Development Officer, Synod of Wales and member of the Blended Learning Task Group
- Philip Richter, Ministry Development Officer, Methodist Church

## Programme purpose, structure, and content

14. The group began its work by considering three fundamental features of a successor programme to TLS:

- *Purpose:* What would be the essential elements of the purpose of the programme?
- *Format and structure:* What would be the way in which the programme is structured and experienced?
- *Key ingredients/content:* What would be the main components of content?

15. The following summarises the current thinking of the group related to each of these, providing headlines from the group's work. The overall direction of their thinking was presented to the joint discipleship committees meeting in June 2017 (Ministries, Children & Youth, and Education & Learning), and subjected to extensive examination by the Education & Learning Committee in June and September 2017. The outline given here is therefore the result of thorough scrutiny by appropriate bodies.

### Rosanne

I am a retired school teacher and a recent church member in my 70's, who feels a need to develop my prayer life and that of my church. My church doesn't have any small groups during the week and the only prayer time that we have together is on a Sunday morning. I don't really know where to start because prayer has always been the minister's job in the past. I want prayer to be at the heart of the church and focused within and beyond the church. I would hope *Stepwise* will help me to engage with prayer in different forms and increase my understanding of what prayer is and why we do it. I would also want *Stepwise* to help me develop and encourage the prayer life of others in my church and give me the foundations for starting a group focused on prayer for the local outreach of the church.

### Purpose

16. The main purposes of the new programme (referred to as *Stepwise* in the rest of this paper) will be to promote, foster and develop, within the overall context of the Reformed traditions:
- Discipleship
  - Critical thinking and engagement
  - Spiritual deepening
  - Life-long learning
  - Mission focused outlook
  - Leadership
17. *Stepwise* should be seen as set firmly within the context, ethos and intentions of *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus Today*. There is an overwhelming consensus that *Stepwise* should be a framework which is future facing, focussed on what the church will be, not on what it is or has been. This relates to both the content of the programme and to the learning approaches employed, particularly the use of on-line teaching and learning methods. *Stepwise* will aim to bring about both personal and organisational transformation. Its approach should embody creativity, breadth and depth. It should contribute coherently to the URC becoming a learning organisation with "joined-upness" between all its training and development programmes. The rich heritage and contribution of the TLS programme is recognised and, whilst *Stepwise* will aim to be a distinctive provision, it will draw on what has been learned and achieved through TLS.
18. The kinds and range of people who might be looking to participate in *Stepwise* would include those:
- who wish to reflect upon and develop their current church role/vocation
  - who are looking for stimulating, thought-provoking development
  - who are seeking a challenge
  - who have a mission to make a difference in the world for Christ's sake

**Dwayne**

I am a 20 year old who has recently made a commitment to following Jesus. I am new to all things Christian and some of it seems pretty weird. I have been asked by the church to help with the young people's work and although I like being around the young people, I don't feel very confident in sharing my faith with them. I didn't do very well at school and find learning difficult but I am willing to give it a go! I need *Stepwise* to help me bring my friends to Jesus and to know how to help the young people who are in the church and not in the church. I need a mentor and a small group of peers who want to do faith and life together. I will then be able to engage with young people and grow as an individual in my discipleship.

**Format and structure**

19. A range of issues have been considered regarding format and structure of the new programme.

19.1 **Assessment and accreditation**

The Academic Quality Assurance (AQuA) Task Group met for the first time in Autumn 2015 in order to discuss the ways in which standards are maintained by TLS. It agreed to meet again once progress had been made on the successor to TLS, and this meeting took place in September 2017. The AQuA Task Group discussed a paper which set out initial thoughts on assessment and accreditation in *Stepwise*. The overarching principle of assessment arrangements in the *Stepwise* programme is that **assessment should be the servant of learning and not the other way around.**

The other principles for assessment, derived from this fundamental assertion, are as follows:

- i) **It is the Church that is the assessment body**  
All *Stepwise* engagements/elements should have recognition, and rather than pursuing external accreditation, such as through a university, recognition should primarily be through URC Church Councils (Church Meetings, Synod, Assembly).
- ii) ***Stepwise* assessment will exist to recognise the learning and development of participants.**  
Given the fundamental nature of *Stepwise* as a discipleship programme involving the deepening of understanding, purpose and faith, it is important that assessment relates to both cognitive and affective achievement.
- iii) **Assessment is for learning**  
Assessment offers individuals a measure of their learning. It also provides a tool for *Stepwise* tutors/facilitators to help inform and hone the teaching and learning approach.
- iv) **There will be recognition for group work**  
Increasingly, some aspects of learning are facilitated collaboratively, as part of a group. *Stepwise* experience undertaken collaboratively will be assessed appropriately.

- v) **Assessment will aid the transformation of the Church.**  
*Stepwise* contributes to transforming both individuals and the churches to which they belong. Churches need to be prepared for the enhanced ability, skills and vocational outlook of their members as they engage in *Stepwise*.
- vi) **There will be a descriptive basis for quality assurance**  
 Statements of outcomes for participants will refer not only to academic gains but will also contain material that conveys the range and depth of experience explored, and the understanding and growth that has taken place.
- vii) **Assessment will offer a measure of attainment related to standards**  
 Standards will be developed for the range of intended cognitive and affective learning and development outcomes, with coherence across different training settings and formats.
- viii) ***Stepwise* will have an Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) function**  
 People with insufficient GCSEs and A levels (or equivalents) to access routes to diplomas in higher education would find it helpful if their *Stepwise* engagement could contribute to evidence of prior learning. This would include participants who wish to use their involvement in *Stepwise* to help meet the United Reformed Church's pre-Assessment educational criteria in candidating for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Work ministry.

#### 19.2 *Format for Stepwise programmes*

- i) All *Stepwise* engagements will have:
  - An in-depth 'growing in the faith' dimension;
  - Some broad, imaginative/creative element that will develop adaptable interpersonal skills;
  - Some specific role-focused skill development, to be shaped and applied contextually.
- ii) *Stepwise* should meet the needs of the church for lay ministries as well as supporting individuals to discern, explore and develop their own vocation. The learning environment should nurture innovation, imagination and the development of interpersonal skills. Learning will have a large element of being practice-based, so that each participant identifies an area of their life that is relevant to the particular stream that they are engaging with.
- iii) As well as individual work, mentored reflective practice, face to face taught sessions and group work, *Stepwise* will include a significant on-line dimension, with all programmes being created and delivered in an on-line learning format, supported by the necessary technical resourcing. Participants will be encouraged to not only engage with on-line teaching materials and interaction, but also to create on-line outcomes such as videos and blogs. All *Stepwise* programmes should incorporate at least some 'flipped learning' elements, and will incorporate the principles and practices outlined in the Blended Learning Framework offered in *Blended Lives, Blended Learning: Formation for Christian Discipleship* <http://bltgreporturc.org.uk/> (Education & Learning Committee 2017).
- iv) The group has begun to explore issues related to the merits and demerits of residential components. Many people have given very positive feedback from TLS residential weekends, and indeed the group itself has benefited from using residential events to further its work. It is also a challenge for some people to attend residential events, especially when they have to travel some distance to

reach them. Ways forward identified so far include working with Synods to make residential events more locally accessible, possibly by holding a series of smaller events sub-regionally. Such smaller study events could perhaps be complemented with larger annual residential events drawing people from a range of Stepwise programmes together, to ensure a mix from a range of backgrounds. The group will be giving further consideration to this issue as part of the design work for the first *Stepwise* streams.

- v) In the witness session with Philip Richter on the Methodist *Worship: Leading & Preaching* programme there was useful discussion of the possibility of a mutual exchange and use of elements from each other's programmes. This is being discussed further with Methodist colleagues.

### Brenda

I recently took early retirement. I usually attend church, but due to work commitments I would sometimes miss the occasional Sunday worship. Now that I am retired I have started attending church more regularly and I have offered to help with some of the admin tasks. I keep fairly busy as having worked in the NHS for the past 30 years, I still volunteer to help out at the local hospice twice a week. I find working in the hospice environment quite peaceful yet challenging and I believe my faith plays a vital part in my role as a volunteer.

At the last round of nomination for Elders, I was approached by the Church Secretary who said that my organisational skills could be used as an Elder, so I found myself agreeing to stand for nomination and was voted in at the last Church meeting. One Sunday last month the lay preacher was unable to lead worship and the Elders said that they would take the service. We planned the service together and everyone said it went well. Then in a conversation with the Church Secretary, she mentioned that maybe I would be interested in following up some ideas about worship and mission. She suggested that the *Stepwise* stream on Faith-filled worship may be of interest and it would offer me a deeper understanding and some other aspects of leading worship which we may wish to explore. I believe that I would find the course interesting and I would gain the knowledge and confidence I'm looking for if I am asked as part of the Eldership to lead worship.

*Possible outcome:* Brenda's strengths are in administration, communication and interpersonal skills. The church would gain an Elder who is willing to lead worship and to engage in other forms of worship outside of our traditional style.

### 19.3 Accessibility

- i) There are issues related to the accessibility of programmes to participants, taking into account varying amounts and nature of academic experience, special educational needs, and the breadth of cultures and age groups which *Stepwise* is intended to include.
- ii) A comprehensive list of considerations and actions has been identified and will be part of the design criteria for *Stepwise* material. Amongst these are for example:
  - relating the learning to the participant's own life context;
  - individualised strengths and needs assessment arrangements;



- taking account of people's preferred learning styles, whilst providing opportunities to experience a range of learning styles;
- taking account of the family context of the participant and the extent to which it is supportive;
- providing 'learning to learn' access programmes;
- providing a warm, affirming, welcoming, collaborative, discursive learning environment.

#### 19.4 *Resourcing the church of tomorrow and today*

As well as deepening the discipleship and nurturing the vocation of individuals it is important that *Stepwise* meets the needs of the URC as a whole and of individual churches. The programme will aim to equip people for a range of twenty-first century lay ministries. It will need to be pioneering in stimulating outward-looking, innovative mindsets, as well as providing development experiences for current church roles and functions. *Stepwise* will draw on strengths-based approaches and techniques to help participants to explore the features of their church and communities, and will be undergirded by a contextual understanding of theology.

#### 19.5 *Financial arrangements*

- i) Being aware of the relatively complex financial arrangements with which the TLS programme had to contend, the group sees the importance for *Stepwise* of:
  - Minimising the cost to participants of engaging in *Stepwise*
  - Streamlining the process for paying any fees so that there is consistent practice across Synods;
  - Agreeing a set of principles for financial processes that are clear, consistent, user-friendly, person-focused, inclusive, viable, fair and just;
  - Establishing an appropriately supported administrative system.
- ii) The Assembly Resource Sharing Task Group has responded positively to an invitation from the education & learning committee to co-opt one of their members to the committee for the next 18 months to two years. Work being done for the lay development strategy is likely to cover the same ground when it comes to developing better financial arrangements and therefore this is a significant step in bringing people together to create a coherent system of financial support. Capacity for managing the administrative and financial systems for *Stepwise* has been built into the job descriptions of the posts related to the programme.

### *Key ingredients and content: Streams and Stepping stones*

20. The content of *Stepwise* needs to meet two demands:

- What would be compelling and motivating to potential participants?
- What are the areas that the URC would wish to support because they are of strategic importance within the context of *Walking the Way*?



### Marlene and Roy

We are a retired couple and we would describe ourselves as ‘busy grand-parents’. Our son and daughter-in-law both work full time so we have grandparenting duties built around an after school programme. We did not realise that we would be this busy, but spending time with the grandchildren has made us reflect on our life in the local church.

In our day the church would have played a greater part in the life of our family, either through Sunday school or youth group. We were talking to the Minister about this and she suggested that we explored Messy Church. We knew that we were not the only grandparents who brought the grandchildren to church, so over coffee we asked another family about Messy Church as we did not know much. One thing led to another and we talked about the *Stepwise* stream on Faith-filled Community and how we could make a difference to worship for our grandchildren.

*Possible outcome:* The church would gain grandparents who were confident and who felt that they could contribute to worship and exploring ways to engage the young people after school. They could use setting up Messy Church as a practical learning project as part of their *Stepwise* course.

21. The group has identified five main *streams* that would meet these two criteria, and would fulfil the aim to be an innovative programme that is future facing. Within each of these streams will be modules/units called *stepping stones*.<sup>1</sup> These are indicated below and described in greater detail in Table 1 found here: <https://www.urc.org.uk/resources/papers/november-2017.html> Each of the streams will have the common intentions of cathartic conversations; developing discipleship; developing the potential of leaders and teachers; opportunity for experiential learning; experiencing God in the midst of the learning experience – affective as well as cognitive; gaining through faith engagement with others and with God; faith enrichment.

#### *Stepwise: Faith in the future – Renewal for the 21st Century*

Stream	Focus	Stepping Stones
<i>Faith-filled life</i>	Personal calling and vocation	What am I on the planet for? Who is my tribe?
<i>Faith-filled confidence</i>	Faith literacy – interfaith exploration and being confident in one’s own faith	Opportunities for encounter The common thread Living the bible
<i>Faith-filled community</i>	Living church in community	Who is my neighbour? (what are my & my church’s communities?) Developing a Christ-centred community
<i>Faith-filled worship</i>	Transforming worship – transforming lives	What is worship and who is it for? How can worship make a difference?
<i>Faith-fuelled leadership</i>	Leadership of all believers	Who decides where we are going? How can we nurture leadership contribution?

<sup>1</sup> At this broad-brush stage of the design of the programme the Task and Finish Group has sometimes used the words “unit” and “module” interchangeably. The terminology is in the process of being clarified as the group prepares the criteria for authors and creators of the content for the first streams.

**Madeline**

I am thinking of taking a year out after my A 'levels. I am not sure which direction my life is going to take but I feel that I want to learn more about my faith. I attend church mainly because my parents do. Being the only young person who worships regularly my name was put forward to attend Youth Assembly. I have just survived the week and my head is still buzzing as I would like to find out more. The language that they used was fascinating because I did not understand what all the various committees and councils were about. When I shared my thoughts and offered some insights into my experience, the Minister suggested that I could go on line to search the URC website for *Stepwise* and give some thought to signing up for the Faith-filled life stream. I searched, and it looks interesting. I hope that there are other people my age who want to join in.

Last week I was asked to help out at PILOTS as one of the volunteers was having some surgery. That was enjoyable and I volunteered to cover for the next few weeks.

*Possible outcome:* The church would gain someone who was hungry to learn, passionate and wanting to be fed. Madeline would gain confidence and deepen her understanding of her faith. She may eventually consider the ministry when looking at her future options.

**From rationale to practicalities**

22. The terms of reference of the Task & Finish group in Appendix 1 include nine areas for which proposals are to be made. Attention in the early months of the group's life was largely directed to rationale, design, methodology, and assessment which have consequences for the other aspects. An interim report endorsed by the Education & Learning Committee in June 2017 was used as a starting point for direct conversations with the *Walking the Way* Steering Group, the Synod Lay Preaching Commissioners' Annual Consultation, Synod Training and Development Officers, the Church Related Community Work Programme Committee, and an e-mail exchange with the Synod Moderators. The nominated network members within the Task and Finish Group have undertaken to use *Stepwise* reports for discussion in their networks.
23. Of the network discussions so far the longest has been with the Lay Preaching Commissioners. It was suggested to them that *Faith-filled worship* is likely to be the last of the streams to be provided and they accepted the arguments for this:
  - i) there is an existing transitional arrangement for Assembly-Accreditation as a Lay Preacher through TLS LITE, Gateways into Worship, and the year of mentored reflective practice;
  - ii) it is important for *Stepwise* to be perceived from the beginning as a whole-church discipleship development programme, so it makes sense to bring the other streams in first.

- “The name and the logo are good. Important not to be reduced to acronym” (despite being provisional);
- “modern” (positively);
- “this is doing church the way things are done in the World” (positively);
- “open and imaginative”;
- “not a like-for-like replacement for TLS” (positively);
- “We’re in a resource-rich environment and our programme needs to reflect this so this does”;
- “It needs to be flexible enough to change rapidly based on basic principles defined by adherence to the 5 solas of the Reformed traditions and URC commitment to being ecumenical – good that we’re prepared to draw on existing courses that other denominations have produced.”
- “Residential weekends were always a challenge and a joy. How will this work with small numbers?”
- “Our experience of losing younger people as Lay preachers due to family pressures preventing them from taking on TLS could be overcome with the anticipated flexibility.”

Comments on *Stepwise* from Synod Lay Preaching Commissioners, July 2017

24. There is a substantial amount of work to be done in order that *Stepwise* is made available from September 2018 as planned (see Figure 1 for an indication of the timeline). This is alongside the strong call from Mission Council in May 2017 for a costed, viable strategy for lay training and congregational development.
25. The role of programme lead for *Stepwise* needs to be seen in this broader context, and therefore a job description for a Lay Development Coordinator is being taken through the proper processes with the Human Resources team at Church House. The Lay Development Coordinator will have a major role in the design cycles for *Stepwise*. Recruited to a permanent post as soon as possible, there would be an initial intensely creative phase of early 2018 to 2020 when the programme is starting up. The postholder will need to initiate and refine the design cycle along the lines already identified. They would take forward the work that the Task and Finish Group expects to initiate during late 2017, and work alongside the Group and Synods on these areas:
  - Identify and work with authors/creators of content
  - Recruit and liaise with pilot churches
  - Advocate *Stepwise* with Synods, RCLs and networks
  - Work with the Task & Finish Group to help it become, in due course, the E&L Committee’s Lay Development Sub-Committee and management body for *Stepwise*.
  - Work with Church House colleagues: discipleship and mission departments, *Walking the Way* Project Manager, communications staff, finance office
  - Take on responsibility for the TLS transitional programme for Assembly-Accreditation of Lay Preachers from mid-2018.
26. The consolidating time for *Stepwise* will start as early as September 2018 onwards, given that the first streams to start will need to be consolidated at the same times as subsequent streams are being developed. The design cycle will continue once a stream has been established, with feedback and monitoring showing the ways in which the streams need to be updated.

27. A complementary post being developed for recruitment is that of the Lay Development Assistant, who will provide the administrative back-up for *Stepwise* in conjunction with the Lay Development Coordinator and Synods. TLS relied on Synod staff and volunteers to deliver a programme that was the same throughout the URC. The difference in *Stepwise* is that the programme may end up looking different across the 13 Synods because of the way that the components are put together in the national, regional and local contexts, yet the core structure should be recognisable. The administration of such a programme will require postholders who are flexible, imaginative and build good relationships with synod colleagues.
28. Ongoing discussion about the possible appointment of an online learning enabler, or similar post, suggested in the *Blended Lives, Blended Learning* report has been particularly relevant to the work of the Task & Finish group, given the emphasis on online access to materials in *Stepwise* and therefore the importance of creating a reliable, easy to use online learning environment. It became apparent that the job title of “online learning enabler” is too broad and vague to be likely to recruit the right person, and therefore the post which is currently undergoing standard HR processes is that of Instructional Designer –the postholder will work with subject specialists to produce the online and offline instructional experiences which make the acquisition of knowledge and skill more efficient, effective, and appealing.
29. The draft education & learning committee budget for 2018 includes the cost of employing the three posts of Lay Development Coordinator, Lay Development Administrator, and Instructional Designer from January 2018. This is in addition to continuing the posts of TLS Coordinator and Deputy Coordinator until July 2018. In reality it is likely that the recruitment of the three new posts will be sequential rather than concurrent. Calculated on the earliest appointment and maximum period of overlap for the various posts it has been possible to create a budget which is within the boundaries set by the finance committee.
30. There are a number of fundamental considerations that the Task and Finish Group is using to critique its work. Amongst these are:
- i) Continuing to ask what will be distinctive in *Stepwise*;
  - ii) Preparing for the church as it will be, not for the church as it was;
  - iii) Establishing an approach of using new ways to developing existing functions.
  - iv) Identifying the attitudes, attributes and skills people need to create the church of the future.
  - v) Ensuring a mixed economy/ecology: faithfully renewing what we have whilst developing new expressions of church;
  - vi) Attracting new learners to *Stepwise* and possibly also providing progression for those who have engaged in TLS previously.
  - vii) Ensuring that the framework is coherent, clear and robust enough so that it is understood and compelling to participants, whilst at the same time flexible to adjust and change as the needs of the church and its adherents change in the future;
  - viii) Developing a range of writers/tutors who can create high quality, relevant content and adopt the pedagogical approach inherent to the blended learning framework and online learning environments.

**Chris**

I minister with a group of three churches. As you can imagine my time is stretched across all of them. The thing I struggle with (amongst others) is getting to know the members of the congregation, to the extent where I feel I know them well enough not to have to ask them to remind me of their names whenever we meet.

A young woman called Sara is very interested in doing work in the church. Her strengths are creativity, working with other young people, and approachability. Her family have a history with this church as I think her grand-father was a minister some years ago and he used to preach in this building. Over the past month Sara has been attending the study group which we started, based on materials from *Holy Habits*. She has made some good points and her contribution has been valued by the other members of the group. Recently she has approached me to talk about a possible vocation in the ministry. In one of our chats I noted that although she was very articulate she struggled with producing any written work. When I asked her, she explained that she was 'labelled' as having special needs in secondary school. She said that she was fine but recognised that she needed some support.

I suggested that maybe she would like to consider one of the Streams in *Stepwise*. I explained that she could study at her own pace, while being part of a local group across the three churches. Following our discussion we agreed that Sara would explore Faith-filled confidence, and that I'd help her to find a mentor. I'm looking forward to facilitating the group.

*Possible outcomes:* Sara would gain confidence in her work with the young people and also in helping others explore their faith. The church would benefit from having someone with the confidence to lead sessions at Junior Church. Chris will get to know a group of people in the three churches better.

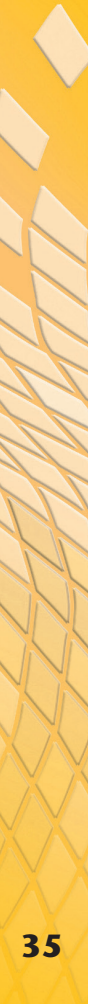
**Note from General Secretary:**

This paper includes a great deal of information, with various appendices and ancillary documents. It may not be profitable to devote a lot of plenary time at Mission Council to matters of detail. Should members have questions about detail, they are therefore asked to contact Fiona Thomas ([fiona.thomas@urc.org.uk](mailto:fiona.thomas@urc.org.uk)) before we get to Swanwick, in order that discussion in Mission Council may focus as fully as possible on the most far-reaching and important aspects of the subject.



*Note: pages 34 to 35 are a pullout diagram that will be available online and distributed at Mission Council*





# Paper D2 – Appendix 1

## Terms of Reference for TLS Successor Task and Finish Group

### 1. The Intentions

- A. To have in place by September 2018 the beginnings of a comprehensive programme of courses through which people can be inspired and equipped for discipleship and mission as part of the United Reformed Church's commitment to *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today*.
- B. To ensure that the programme is able to dovetail to a reasonable extent with local, informal congregational offerings on the one hand and externally validated courses offered through Resource Centres for Learning on the other.

### 2. The Guiding Educational Principles

The new programme is expected to be in tune with the principles adopted by the General Assembly for the 2006 Training Review in 2005:

- i) Integrated education and training to equip the whole people of God for mission – promoted with coherence and in tune with the policies flowing from the Equipping the Saints (2004) and Catch the Vision (2005) reports;
- ii) Ecumenical engagement at every stage;
- iii) The presentation of a distinctive Reformed Ethos and History in that ecumenical engagement;
- iv) The delivery of this policy in a manner appropriate to the circumstances of the three nations in which the United Reformed Church is situated.

In September 2009 the Education & Learning Committee drew on the report of the 2006 Training Review to reiterate the kind of adult education which the United Reformed Church endorses, and which will therefore be pursued through the new programme:

- *Integrated* – enabling different groups of learners to learn alongside each other.
- *Peer group focused* – offering learning through small groups of people working towards a common goal related to the ministry entrusted to them.
- *Offered through dispersed learning and/or distance* delivery – using the person's home context as a learning resource and/or providing study materials which can be pursued away from the institution shaping the study.
- *Residential when necessary* – including attendance at designated centres at appropriate times.
- *Offering blended learning* – incorporating a variety of modes of delivery, including supervised placements, online learning, individual mentoring, seminars, classroom settings, and participation in a learning community.
- *Offering excellence*: being committed to providing the highest quality of educational provision in whatever way the system is delivered.

### 3. The Tasks

1. To consult with interested parties, including Synods, Resource Centres for Learning, Assembly Committees, and relevant networks about the requirements for a programme to replace Training for Learning and Serving (TLS), and to consider the comments and representations already received by the Education and Learning Committee or its officers.
2. To maintain close contact and reporting with the *Walking the Way* Steering Group to ensure overall coherence of purposes, branding, and implementation.
3. To develop proposals for the:
  - a) rationale
  - b) design
  - c) methodology
  - d) advocacy
  - e) delivery
  - f) assessment
  - g) quality assurance
  - h) staffing
  - i) management and costing
 of the new programme, and to submit these proposals to the Education & Learning Committee for consideration at its September 2017 meeting.
4. To identify available existing resources, including TLS materials and approaches, that could be incorporated into the new programme with appropriate revision, modification or updating.
5. To commission new material and maintain timetables for writing, editing and publication.

### 4. Attitude, skills and knowledge needed in the group (9 attributes with equal weighting)

- i) Track record in developing discipleship through mentoring/apprenticeship
- ii) Understanding and commitment to contextual theology and lay community ministry
- iii) Proven ability to design high quality, replicable courses for a wide range of people
- iv) Ability to think boldly and creatively in tune with emerging faith communities
- v) Wisdom in maintaining credible relationships with church bodies
- vi) Theological thinking that reflects the full breadth of the United Reformed Church
- vii) Familiarity and confidence with blended learning including digital delivery
- viii) Commitment to pioneering and mission-based ways of being church
- ix) Understanding of intercultural, cross-generational, and diverse ability needs in education (i.e. age, ethnicity, class, gender, visible and invisible disabilities)

### 5. Membership (maximum 10 people. To be lay people wherever possible)

- Convenor
- Secretary for Education & Learning

- Secretary/admin support: PA to the Secretary for Education & Learning
- Member suggested by the Resource Centres for Learning
- Member suggested by the Synod Training & Development Officers
- Member suggested by the Mission Committee or Mission Enablers
- Member suggested by the Children & Youth Committee or CYDOs
- Ecumenical partner with relevant experience/expertise
- Up to 2 other members with relevant experience/expertise

## 6. Life span and time commitment of the task group

Phase 1: September 2016 to September 2018

Phase 2: September 2018 to September 2020

This phasing has been suggested as a means of enabling some potential continuity from the task group into the management structure of the new programme, without stipulating what that might look like at this stage. Active participation in Phase 1 does not imply or depend upon availability for Phase 2.

- It is anticipated that there will be a significant commitment for task group members in Phase 1.
- The Secretary for Education & Learning's workload will be rearranged to give this work priority and be available for ongoing coordination activities in Phase 1.
- It is likely that much of the task group's work will take place at residential 24 hour meetings every 6-8 weeks, with additional time being spent between meetings on specific delegated tasks according to individual expertise.

## 7. Timescale

There will be communication of progress by regular updates through relevant Synod committees and staff members.

The suggested timescale below is given with the understanding that work on the second year may well need to begin before Mission Council has given its feedback on the proposals.

August-end September 2016:	Agreement of Terms of Reference by the E&LC and recruitment of task group members
October 2016-August 2017:	Task group meetings and consultations, preparation of proposals for submission to E&LC
September 2017:	Submission of proposals to E&LC, including anticipated budget
October 2017:	Report of outline proposals to Mission Council
October - December 2017:	Revision of proposals in light of E&LC and Mission Council feedback
January-August 2018:	Preparation of first year's content and delivery systems
March-June 2018:	Piloting of sample module(s) with focus group(s)/congregations
March-April 2018:	Publicity through Synod meetings and the Ministers Gathering
September 2018:	Delivery of first year's programme begins preparation of subsequent years' content continues
September 2020:	New programme fully functional

# Paper G1

**Finance Committee**

Budget for 2018

United Church 2017  
Church 2017  
Reformed Church 2017  
Church 2017

# Paper G1

## Finance Committee

### Budget 2018

#### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Ian Hardie <a href="mailto:ianzhardie@googlemail.com">ianzhardie@googlemail.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council adopts the budget for 2018 as set out in the Appendix.</b>

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	The paper presents a budget for 2018 for decision and financial projections for 2019 and 2020 for information.
<b>Main points</b>	<p>M&amp;M giving for 2018 is forecast to be around 1% lower than the 2017 budget figure.</p> <p>Overall expenditure is expected to be higher than in 2017, largely as a result of depreciating the Church House refurbishment cost: but this is fully offset by the anticipated additional income from letting part of the premises.</p> <p>The URC Trust has agreed to advance £2million from reserves to the URC Lay Staff Pension Scheme to reduce an unexpectedly large deficit at its most recent valuation date.</p> <p>The main unknown re 2019 and beyond is the financial position of the URC Ministers' Pension Fund at its next triennial valuation.</p>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Budget holders in Church House, the Trustee of the Lay Staff Pension scheme and the URC Trust.

#### Summary of Impact

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



# Budget 2018

1. Attached in column 3 of the Appendix is the draft budget for 2018 which the Finance Committee presents to Mission Council. This budget has been reviewed by the URC Trustees and has their support.

## Income

2. Our income comes predominately from local churches through their Ministry and Mission Fund ('M&M') contributions. Estimates supplied by the Synods over the summer suggest the recent trend of around a 1% reduction in giving per annum compared with the previous year's budget figure is likely to continue in 2018. The ongoing decline in URC membership means that this still represents an increase in average giving to M&M per member.
3. The budget projects an increase of £100,000 in rental income and cost contributions as a result of letting freed up space at Church House.
4. It is also anticipated that a modest additional contribution towards the cost of ministers' pensions will come from some Synods during the year.

## Stipends and Ministers

5. More than two-thirds of our expenditure relates to paying stipends and directly related costs of Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Church-Related Community Workers in local settings.
6. Mission Council has delegated the task of setting the stipend to the Finance Committee in conjunction with the URC Trustees. The recommended rise for 2018, which is built into this budget, is 2.4%. This increase has been calculated using a formula applied consistently for a number of years based on the consumer price index and average weekly earnings movements at consistent annual rests. Such a rise would increase the stipend by £614 to £26,186 (approximately).
7. The 2017 budget included provision for 4 ministers of other denominations to be given Certificates of Eligibility to enable them to transfer permanently to the URC role of ministers. At the time of writing, various procedural delays have meant that no such certificates have yet been issued. However, the 2018 budget assumes that a further two such ministers will be granted such certificates in that year. Even with these additional ministers and the stipend increase suggested above, the reduction in the forecast overall number of available ministers means that total spend on costs of ministry shows a small reduction.

## Other Expenditure

8. The remainder of the Discipleship Department budget is almost the same as in 2017 despite it including around an additional £70,000 of (one-off) costs associated with the ending of the TLS programme and the start of the successor 'Stepwise' programme. The funds previously allocated to the Windermere Centre have been transferred to various other cost headings relating to iChurch, online learning and a new lay development fund.

9. The Mission Department budget is also broadly maintained at current levels.
10. The Admin and Resources Department budget is increased by £137,000. Of this increase, £95,000 relates to depreciation of the reconstruction costs of Church House (more than offset by the increased income from letting part of the building mentioned above) and £40,000 on depreciation of new IT equipment and software.
11. Over the summer, the Trustee of the URC Lay Staff Pension Scheme approached the URC to suggest that, in light of the increased deficit at the time of the most recent triennial valuation, all URC employer contributions to the scheme needed to increase substantially from January 2018 to close the gap more quickly. Discussions with the Trustee are ongoing, but it is believed the Trustee will accept the offer of an additional £2m lump sum being put into the pot now, with no increase in regular contributions during 2018. This will give the URC and other employers within the Lay Scheme – including some Synods – time to be appraised fully of the situation and consulted about how to address it without any immediate increase in contribution rate, which could lead to wholesale slashing of budgets. It will also give an opportunity to consider the Lay Staff Scheme position alongside the Ministers' Pension Fund position. The £2m will be taken from the URC Trust reserves in a way which will reduce the URC's investment income by only about £15,000.

## Overall 2018 Position

12. As a result of all of this, the 2018 budget projects a virtually 'break-even' position.

## Resolution

13. **Mission Council adopts the budget for 2018 as set out in the Appendix.**

## Projections for 2019 and 2020

14. The final two columns in the Appendix show projections for 2019 and 2020. These are not based on detailed discussions with every budget holder but incorporate estimated adjustments for likely changes within major budget categories. Accordingly, these figures should be regarded as very rough approximations only.
15. As indicated at the time of last year's budget presentation, a major uncertainty hangs over the 2019 figures relating to the potential cost of employer's contributions to the Ministers' Pension Fund. Until the next formal valuation of the notional deficit, the size of any deficit and therefore the quantum of any additional contributions to the Fund must remain highly speculative. Last year we made an assumption for the purposes of illustration that the total annual contributions by the Church to the Ministers' Pension Fund would rise from the current £2.5m to £3m. At present there is no evidence on which to base any change to that assumption.
16. However, given the need to consider the position on the URC Lay Staff Pension scheme in coming months, it seems advisable to think about the Ministers' Pension Fund at the same time. The March Mission Council or 2018 General Assembly is likely to be asked to consider steps which might be taken to address the financial position of the Church going forward with a view to bringing the 2019 and subsequent budgets nearer to balance. That would give the Finance Committee (and URC Trust) a clear steer about where the available income should be spent.

# Appendix

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

SUMMARY BUDGET &amp; PROJECTIONS 2018 - 2020

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
	Actual	Budget	Budget	Projection	Projection
	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Income</b>					
<b>Ministry and Mission contributions</b>	(19,260,087)	(19,153,000)	(18,962,000)	(18,772,000)	(18,585,000)
<b>Pensions - additional funding</b>	(20,634)	0	(50,000)	(100,000)	(100,000)
<b>Investment and other income</b>					
Dividends	(848,128)	(827,000)	(854,000)	(854,000)	(854,000)
Donations	(12,403)	0	0	0	0
Specific legacies	0	0	0	0	0
Grants/Income - Memorial Hall Trust/Fund	(257,416)	(250,000)	(260,000)	(260,000)	(260,000)
Net other interest	(10,962)	(15,000)	(10,700)	(10,000)	(10,000)
Other income, including property rentals	(42,941)	(5,000)	(137,000)	(140,800)	(140,800)
	(1,171,850)	(1,097,000)	(1,261,700)	(1,264,800)	(1,264,800)
<b>Total income</b>	<b>(20,452,571)</b>	<b>(20,250,000)</b>	<b>(20,273,700)</b>	<b>(20,136,800)</b>	<b>(19,949,800)</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>					
<b>Discipleship Dept.</b>					
<b>Ministry</b>					
Local and special ministries and CRCWs	14,274,885	14,057,800	13,992,727	14,460,000	14,343,000
Synod Moderators - stipends and expenses	703,057	678,960	690,000	699,000	709,000
Ministries department	306,100	300,275	314,300	318,000	321,000
Pastoral & welfare	559	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
	15,284,600	15,039,035	14,999,027	15,479,000	15,375,000
<b>Education &amp; Learning</b>					
Initial training for ministry	646,013	730,000	673,000	673,000	673,000
Continuing training for ministry	103,423	107,500	107,500	107,500	107,500
Resource Centres support	604,942	606,500	611,000	623,000	636,000
	1,354,377	1,444,000	1,391,500	1,403,500	1,416,500
Windermere RCL - net support	179,317	100,000	0	0	0
TLS/Stepwise	96,848	86,900	159,350	86,000	83,000
Lay preachers support	6,435	10,000	7,000	7,000	7,000
On-line learning	0	0	57,600	57,600	57,600
Lay Development Fund	0	0	20,000	20,000	20,000
Education & Learning department	145,137	148,700	175,700	178,000	180,000
	1,782,115	1,789,600	1,811,150	1,752,100	1,764,100
<b>Children's and Youth Work</b>					
Staff costs	200,717	207,517	203,500	206,000	209,000
Management, resources and programmes	59,560	78,700	81,700	83,700	84,700
	260,277	286,217	285,200	289,700	293,700
<b>Safeguarding</b>					
Safeguarding policy and practice	101,256	123,083	95,700	97,000	98,000
<b>Discipleship Secretariat</b>					
Deputy General Secretary - Discipleship co	0	51,000	51,000	52,000	53,000
<b>Mission Dept.</b>					
Mission dept staff and core costs	467,720	501,400	501,700	508,000	515,000
Mission programmes and memberships (n	188,758	219,732	221,000	221,000	221,000
	656,478	721,132	722,700	729,000	736,000
National Ecumenical Officers	35,908	35,400	35,800	37,000	37,000
	692,386	756,532	758,500	766,000	773,000
<b>Administration &amp; Resources Dept.</b>					
Central Secretariat	315,872	241,100	238,200	242,000	246,000
Church House costs	301,316	276,900	380,200	382,000	384,000
Human Resources	68,684	113,000	115,700	117,000	119,000
IT Services	182,973	178,000	217,000	218,000	220,000
Finance	434,684	402,000	408,500	414,000	419,000
Communications	376,010	425,100	414,260	419,000	425,000
	1,679,539	1,636,100	1,773,860	1,792,000	1,813,000
<b>Governance</b>					
General Assembly	96,085	115,000	115,000	100,000	100,000
Mission Council	48,894	42,000	46,000	46,000	46,000
Professional fees	122,583	98,000	90,000	90,000	90,000
Other	86,432	58,000	59,000	59,000	59,000
	353,993	313,000	310,000	295,000	295,000
Apprenticeship levy	0	37,500	50,000	50,000	50,000
Irrecoverable VAT	146,339	140,000	140,000	140,000	140,000
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>20,300,506</b>	<b>20,172,067</b>	<b>20,274,437</b>	<b>20,712,800</b>	<b>20,654,800</b>
<b>NET (SURPLUS)/DEFICIT</b>	<b>(152,065)</b>	<b>(77,933)</b>	<b>737</b>	<b>576,000</b>	<b>705,000</b>



# Paper G2

## URC Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd

Procedure relating to the nomination and appointment of 'Church Nominated Directors' of the URC Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd

United Church 2017  
Church 2017  
Reformed Church 2017  
Church 2017

# Paper G2

## URC Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd

Procedure relating to the nomination and appointment of 'Church Nominated Directors' of the URC Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Ian Hardie, Treasurer <a href="mailto:ianzhardie@googlemail.com">ianzhardie@googlemail.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council approves the amended procedure for nominating and appointing 'Church Nominated Directors' of the URC Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd as set out in Appendix A of the paper below.</b>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To invite Mission Council to amend the procedure for appointing certain directors to the URC Ministers' Pension Trust (URCMPT) Board to enable the previously explained division of work between the Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer to be given effect.
<b>Main points</b>	The Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer intend to 'job share' the responsibilities formerly undertaken by previous Treasurers. To enable this, an amendment is required to the procedure for nominating and appointing certain directors of the URCMPT.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper G4 Mission Council May 2017
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Chair, directors and Company Secretary of URCMPFT

### Summary of Impact

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



# Procedure relating to the nomination and appointment of ‘Church Nominated Directors’ of the URC Ministers’ Pension Trust Ltd

1. The United Reformed Church Ministers’ Pension Trust (URCMPT) is a company limited by guarantee and is governed by its own Memorandum and Articles of Association. These provide that the members of the company (and therefore its directors) are to be:
  - *Four members of the United Reformed Church Ministers’ Pension Fund (the “Member Nominated Directors”) to be appointed in accordance with the Member Nominated Director Procedure as approved by the Directors of the Company; and*
  - *Eight individuals nominated by the Church (the ‘Church Nominated Directors’) to be appointed in accordance with the Church Nominated Director Procedure as approved by the General Assembly (or Mission Council acting on its own behalf).*
2. At present, the Church Nominated Director Procedure provides that one of the ‘Church Nominated Directors’ is to be the Treasurer of the URC.
3. However, paper G4 for March 2017 Mission Council explained that the Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer intend to divide the lead role in the Treasurer’s relationship with individual committees between them – with the Deputy Treasurer being the normal representative at the URCMPT.
4. To give effect to this arrangement it is necessary to amend the Church Nominated Director Procedure so that the Deputy Treasurer is able to be nominated instead of the Treasurer.
5. Appendix A to this paper sets out the proposed revised Church Nominated Director Procedure which requires Mission Council approval in the form of the above draft resolution.

# Appendix A

## Procedure for Selection of Church Nominated members of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd

The URCMPT's Articles of Association specify that:

5. *The following persons shall subject to the provisions of Article 6 hereof be members of the company:*

5.1 *Eight individuals nominated by the Church (the "Church Nominated Directors") to be appointed in accordance with the Church Nominated Director procedure as approved by the General Assembly (or Mission Council acting on its own behalf).*

### Categories of Members to be appointed by the Church

Four 'Ex Officio' role holders are to be appointed, namely:

- the Treasurer or Deputy Treasurer of the URC;
- the convenor of the Pensions Executive, or their nominated representative;
- the convenor of the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee or their nominated representative; and
- the convenor of the URC Investment Committee, or their nominated representative.

In addition to the above, the Church may nominate up to four other members, who shall be drawn from amongst the wider Church membership.

In each case the individual shall be asked to consent to nomination and agree to serve for an initial period of four years or, in the case of the 'ex officio' directors, until such time as they shall no longer serve in that role.

# Paper G3

## URC Ministers' Pension Trust

### Rule changes in calculating Ministers' Pension Fund benefits

United Church 2017  
Church 2017  
Reformed Church 2017  
Church 2017

# Paper G3

## URC Ministers' Pension Trust

### Rule changes in calculating Ministers' Pension Fund benefits

#### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Ian Hardie <a href="mailto:ianzhardie@googlemail.com">ianzhardie@googlemail.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council agrees that a Deed of Amendment to the Rules of the Ministers' Pension Fund (in materially the form attached to this paper) should be approved and signed on behalf of the United Reformed Church by the Moderator and Clerk of the Assembly.</b>

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To approve amendments to the rules for calculating certain benefits provided for by the Ministers' Pension Fund.
<b>Main points</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The method set out in the present rules for qualifying for benefits of part time members in ill health retirement cases may (unintentionally) discriminate against part time workers.</li> <li>2. A recent UK Supreme Court ruling has changed the previous understanding of the law applying to pension entitlement of same sex spouses and civil partners. Although the Court decision overrides the scheme rules, we are advised to amend the rules to reflect the newly understood legal position.</li> <li>3. While making these amendments, three minor typographical corrections are also being made.</li> </ol>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The legal advisors and actuaries to the URC Ministers' Pension Trust.

#### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	The URC MPT's actuary has reported to the Trustee that the changes have no material impact on the Ministers' Pension Fund's funding requirement.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None

# Rule changes in calculating Ministers' Pension Fund benefits

1. Changes to the rules of the Ministers' Pension Fund ['MPF'] can only be achieved by a Deed of Amendment signed on behalf of the Church in its role as 'employer'. The draft Deed of Amendment set out in Appendix A is designed to make the changes indicated below and is acceptable to the directors of the URC Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd ['URCMPT'].
2. Following a previous rule change which applied from January 2013, the current (2014) version of the rules of the MPF provide for qualification for ill health retirement benefits based on the period of 'pensionable service' (which is reduced pro rata for part time service) rather than 'contributory membership' (which is not). The use of the term 'pensionable service' inadvertently replaced 'membership' in determining which ill health benefit calculation applies and also in the description in Rule 6.5.8.2 of how the ill health benefit under that rule is calculated. Recently our actuaries pointed out that this has the potential to discriminate unintentionally against part time ministers and our legal advisors agreed.
3. Accordingly, those legal advisors have drafted the amendment to the rules set out at 1.2 of the Deed of Amendment in Appendix A to this paper to correct this error.
4. The opportunity provided by this rule change is being taken to make two other minor typographical corrections which have been regarded as too insignificant in themselves to justify bringing to Mission Council hitherto. In one case, the word "of" is corrected to read "or". In the other, a cross-reference to Rule "6.5.4" is amended to "6.5.6". These are set out at 1.1 and within 1.2 (revised Rule 6.5.8.2) in Appendix A.
5. On 12 July 2017 the UK Supreme Court handed down its judgement in the case of *Walker v Innospec Limited*. This reversed a Court of Appeal decision and declared that Mr. Walker's husband had the right to a survivor's pension calculated on the same basis as if Mr. Walker were married to a woman. The provision in the Equality Act allowing schemes to limit equality for civil partners and same sex spouses to retirement benefits accrued by reference to service from 5 December 2005 was declared contrary to EU law and ineffective. The URCMPT's legal advisors indicate that this decision should be regarded as final.
6. In common with many other pension schemes, the rules of the MPF have limited pensions to reflect the Equality Act provision by excluding pre-December 2005 benefits. Although the Court decision has automatic effect in relation to future calculations, we have been advised it would be appropriate to amend the rules to reflect the position as it now stands in law.
7. The proposed amendment to the rules as set out at 1.3 to 1.6 in Appendix A to this paper make this change.
8. To give effect to all of these rule changes the approval of Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, is required in the form of the resolution set out above.

# Appendix A

Dated

2017

## The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund Deed of Amendment

THIS DEED OF AMENDMENT is made on 2017

### BETWEEN

- (1) UNITED REFORMED CHURCH (the "URC"); and
- (2) THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS' PENSION TRUST LIMITED (the "Pension Trustee").

### WHEREAS:

- (A) The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund (the "**Fund**") was established by an interim trust deed dated 29 May 1980 and is currently governed by the Trust Deed and Rules dated 5 December 2014 (the "**Trust Deed and Rules**").
- (B) The Pension Trustee is the trustee for the time being of the Fund.
- (C) Under Rule 16.1 the Trust Deed and Rules, the URC may alter or modify all or any of the provisions of the Trust Deed and Rules subject to the restrictions in Rule 16.2.
- (D) The URC wishes to alter the Trust Deed and Rules as set out in this Deed. The Actuary has provided a report on the financial effect of the alterations and none of the alterations breaches the restrictions in Rule 16.2.3.
- (E) The amendments made by this deed are not regulated modifications of the Fund within the meaning of section 67A(2) of the Pensions Act 1995.

### THIS DEED WITNESSES as follows:

- 1. In exercise of the power in Rule 16.1 of the Trust Deed and Rules the URC makes the following alterations with effect from the date of this Deed:
  - 1.1 In Rule 1 (Definitions), the definition of "*Relatives*" is altered by replacing the penultimate "*of*" with "*or*" in the last sentence of the definition.
  - 1.2 Clause 6.5 is replaced by the following:
    - "6.5 ***Ill-Health Retirement***
      - 6.5.1 *A Contributing Member who leaves Pensionable Service before Normal Pension Age due to Ill-Health shall be entitled to an immediate pension calculated in accordance with this Rule 6.5, provided that:*
        - 6.5.1.1 *The Pension Trustee has received evidence from a registered medical practitioner appointed by the Pension Trustee (or at the discretion of the Pension Trustee, some other registered medical practitioner) that the*



*member is, and will continue to be, unable to carry out his or her occupation because of physical or mental impairment; and*

- 6.5.1.2** *The member agrees to inform the Pension Trustee if he or she commences paid employment.*
- 6.5.2** *The Pension Trustee must review the state of health of any member who receives a pension on the grounds of Ill-Health at regular intervals and at least once every 5 years unless it considers that it would be inappropriate to do so.*
- 6.5.3** *Where a member in receipt of a pension paid on the grounds of Ill-Health:*
  - 6.5.3.1** *Does not agree to any medical examination that the Pension Trustee may require for the purposes of a review being carried out in accordance with Rule 6.5.2;*
  - 6.5.3.2** *In the opinion of the Pension Trustee is no longer suffering from Ill-Health; or*
  - 6.5.3.3** *In the case of a member who is not a Pre-2013 Member, and is, in the opinion of the Pension Trustee, capable of undertaking remunerated employment the Pension Trustee may reduce or suspend the payment of the pension for any period or periods before Normal Pension Age.*

*The Pension Trustee shall not be required to pay any amounts that were not paid while a pension was reduced or suspended in the event that the pension is increased back to its original level or recommences, but the Pension Trustee must be reasonably satisfied that the benefits (including death benefits) for a member who retires on the grounds of Ill-Health are at least equal in value to the benefits to which he or she would otherwise have become entitled on leaving the Fund under Rule 8.*

- 6.5.4** *A member who has less than 10 years' service as a Contributing Member shall be entitled to a pension calculated under Rule 6.1.1, but calculated disregarding any Pensionable Service after reaching his or her 65th birthday.*
- 6.5.5** *A member who has greater than 20 years' service as a Contributing Member shall be entitled to a pension calculated under Rule 6.1.1, except that:*
  - 6.5.5.1** *The pension should be calculated disregarding any Pensionable Service after reaching his or her 65th birthday;*
  - 6.5.5.2** *In the case of a member who has not reached his or her 65th birthday, his or her Pensionable Service shall be treated as being of such length as it would have been had he or she remained in Pensionable Service until reaching his or her 65th birthday; and*
  - 6.5.5.3** *Where the member is in part-time service, the prospective Pensionable Service included when calculating his or her pension shall be calculated on the assumption that he or she remains in part-time service until*

reaching his or her 65th birthday, unless the Pension Trustee has exercised its discretion under Rule 2.2.2.

- 6.5.6** A member who has between 10 and 20 years' service as a Contributing Member shall be entitled to a pension calculated under Rule 6.5.4 plus an additional amount of pension calculated as follows:

**(Pension B – Pension A) x (C / 120)**

Where:

**Pension A** is the pension calculated under Rule 6.5.4;

**Pension B** is the pension calculated under Rule 6.5.5 (but disregarding the requirement that the member must have completed 20 years' service as a Contributing Member for that Rule to apply); and

**C** is the number of complete months' in excess of 120 that the member has been in service as a Contributing Member.

- 6.5.7** Where this Rule 6.5 applies to a Pre-2013 Member, if it would result in a higher pension than that calculated under whichever of Rule 6.5.4, 6.5.5 or 6.5.6 applies in his or her case, he or she shall instead be entitled to a pension calculated under Rule 6.5.8.
- 6.5.8** The pension under this Rule 6.5.8 is whichever is the higher of:
- 6.5.8.1** A pension calculated under Rule 6.5.5 as if the Pre-2013 Member had retired due to Ill-Health on 1 January 2013 (disregarding the requirement that the member must have completed 20 years' service as a Contributing Member for that Rule to apply). For the avoidance of doubt the pension under this Rule 6.5.8.1 is based on Pensionable Service up to 1 January 2013 and prospective service and Stipend at that date (and the calculation assumes that any change after 1 January 2013 from full-time to part-time service or vice versa had not occurred); or
- 6.5.8.2** Pension B (as defined in Rule 6.5.6) but multiplied by the following fraction: the Pre-2013 Member's service as a Contributing Member up to and including 31 December 2012 divided by the Pre-2013 Member's total service as a Contributing Member up to retirement or reaching his or her 65th birthday if earlier (with each period calculated in complete months). When calculating Pension B for the purposes of this Rule 6.5.8.2, Pension B is calculated assuming that any change after 1 January 2013 from full-time to part-time service or vice versa had not occurred.
- 6.5.9** Where the Pension Trustee has exercised its discretion under Rule 2.4.3 or Rule 2.4.4 (to aggregate periods of membership in the Fund), service as a Contributing Member and Pensionable Service for the purposes of this Rule 6.5 shall include such periods during which the member was entitled to pension under Rule 8.1 as the URC shall direct, provided that the URC must be satisfied that such service was of an appropriate ecumenical nature.

**6.5.10** A person who retired on the grounds of Ill-Health before 1 January 2013 is entitled to a pension calculated in accordance with Rule 6.5.5 irrespective of the length of his or her Pensionable Service."

**1.3** In the first sentence of Rule 7.1.1.2 the following words are deleted:  
", except that in the case of a spouse who is of the same sex as the member or who is the Civil Partner of the member, the pension payable will be calculated only by reference to that part of the member's pension that relates to Pensionable Service after 5 December 2005."

**1.4** In the first sentence of Rule 7.2.1.3 the following words are deleted:  
"except that in the case of a spouse who is of the same sex as the member or who is the Civil Partner of the member, the pension payable will be calculated only by reference to that part of the member's pension that relates to Pensionable Service after 5 December 2005."

**1.5** In the second sentence of Rule 7.3.1 the following words are deleted:  
", except that in the case of a spouse who is of the same sex as the member or who is the Civil Partner of the member, the pension payable will be calculated only by reference to that part of the member's pension that relates to Pensionable Service after 5 December 2005."

**1.6** The third sentence of Rule 7.5.2 is deleted.

- 2.** Words and expressions used in this deed but not defined shall, where the context so admits, have the meanings given to them in the Trust Deed and Rules.
- 3.** This deed may be executed in any number of counterparts, all of which taken together shall constitute the same deed.

**THIS DEED** has been executed and delivered by the parties on the date written at the top of the first page.

**EXECUTED** as a deed by )  
**UNITED REFORMED CHURCH** )  
acting by: )

Director: .....

Director/Secretary .....

**EXECUTED** as a deed by )  
**UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS'** )  
**PENSION TRUST LIMITED** acting by: )

Director: .....

Director/Secretary .....



# Paper H1

**Ministries committee**

Non-stipendiary ministry of Word and  
Sacraments

United Church 2017  
Church 2017  
Reformed Church 2017  
Church 2017

# Paper H1

## Ministries committee

### Non-stipendiary ministry of Word and Sacraments

#### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Paul Whittle <a href="mailto:moderator@urceastern.org.uk">moderator@urceastern.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Mission Council instructs the Education and Learning Committee, in consultation with the Resource Centres for Learning and the Ministries Committee, to look again at training requirements for NSMs and at whether training for NSMs should have a) basic core components and b) follow specific training for Model I, II or III, or a possible Model IV. This may or may not include obtaining a university degree.</b></li> <li>2. <b>Mission Council instructs Ministries Committee to prepare a proposal for locally ordained ministers, taking account of how that fits with the other ministries of the church, including stipendiary ministry, non-stipendiary ministry as it currently is, local leadership (recognising that there is no denominational scheme as such) and the eldership, including the specific role of authorised elders.</b></li> <li>3. <b>Mission Council supports the idea of a formal appointment process for all NSMs as on-going support for their ministry and commends that to the Synods.</b></li> <li>4. <b>Mission Council supports the idea of a formal review process for all NSMs as on-going support for their ministry and commends that to the Synods.</b></li> <li>5. <b>Mission Council supports the idea of a formal retirement process for all NSMs as on-going support for their ministry and commends that to the Synods.</b></li> <li>6. <b>Mission Council instructs the Ministries Committee and Education and Learning Committee to look at the training needs of those transferring between one form of ministry and another with particular reference to the circumstances in which further preparation might be offered or required.</b></li> </ol>

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Welcoming the contribution of non-stipendiary ministry since its introduction, the paper suggests extending this form of ministry and ensuring it is properly supported.
<b>Main points</b>	This paper recognizes the value of non-stipendiary ministry and its contribution to the current challenges of church leadership. It raises the possibility of a form of locally ordained non-stipendiary ministry.



	<p>Recognising that there is a mixed pattern of support for non-stipendiary ministry across the synods, it seeks to establish a more consistent approach.</p> <p>It raises the question of how appropriate support is offered when ministers of word and sacraments transfer from one form of ministry to another.</p>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Numerous reports have concerned non-stipendiary ministry, notably reports to General Assembly 1982 and reflections on non-stipendiary ministry within the 1995 Patterns of Ministry Report.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	<p>All 13 Synods</p> <p>The Revd Fiona Thomas, Secretary for Education and Learning</p> <p>The Revd Dr Rosalind Selby, Principal Northern College</p> <p>The Revd Neil Thorogood, Principal, Westminster College</p> <p>Faith and Order Committee</p> <p>CRCW Programme Sub-Committee</p>

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	No immediate impact on the budget
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	No direct immediate impact

# Non-Stipendiary Ministry of Word and Sacraments

1. Like all ministries, Non-Stipendiary Ministry (NSM) is both a gift and a calling. Much valuable ministry has been undertaken within the URC by Non-Stipendiary Ministers (NSMs). In many cases this is ministry that could equally have been undertaken by Stipendiary Ministers. It is an important principle that there is an essential parity within the ordained Ministry of Word and Sacraments. It is also an important principle that we sometimes respond to God's call to new, emerging and pioneering ministries, as well as to ministry in particular sectors, often referred to as chaplaincy. NSM has often been an important component of such initiatives.
2. In February 2015 the Ministries Committee, with the endorsement of Mission Council in May 2015, decided to establish a new Working Group on Non-Stipendiary Ministry with the following terms of reference:
  - i. To canvas the synods in order to understand current practice with regard to the appointment and review of ministers in non-stipendiary service.
  - ii. To canvas the synods with regard to any retirement practice and planning that is currently in place, and to seek contributions from retired ministers who served in a non-stipendiary capacity indicating what was, or what might have been, helpful.
  - iii. To reflect on the established 3 models of non-stipendiary service and advise on their usefulness or otherwise, and to consider whether alternative models might better serve the church and the ministry.
  - iv. To identify Best Practice with regard to the appointment, review and retirement of ministers in non-stipendiary service, in order that the Ministries Committee can encourage the support and use of this ministry.
  - v. To consider whether there should be an age limit for candidating or ordination and if so what that age or ages should be.
  - vi. To consider any other matters that affect the support and utilization of ministers in non-stipendiary service and make recommendations to the Ministries Committee for any improvements.
3. The Working Group recognised that little, if any, of this was new, but equally recognised the significant value in re-visiting these questions at this point. The group consulted widely and produced a much longer report which can be made available to any members of Mission Council who may wish to see it.
4. The original vision for NSM within the URC was established by resolutions passed in 1979 and 1980 and was incorporated into Section K of the Manual as follows:
 

*There are three models of non-stipendiary ministry:*

*Model I – service in a congregation as part of a team. The pattern is taken from the former eldership of the Churches of Christ and is limited in scope and local in nature.*

*Model II – pastoral charge of a small congregation, or service as part of a team of ministers caring for a group of churches.*

*Model III – ministers in secular employment. Service set apart to be a focus for mission in the place of work or leisure. It is related to a local church or District Council.*
5. In practice the majority of NSMs now serve under Model II, arguably filling gaps in deployment. That is immensely valuable, but has inevitably diminished the possibilities of the more innovative usage of Model III. It is also significant that

changes in career patterns and reduced opportunities for early retirement, together with transfer to stipendiary ministry, have reduced the number of available NSMs and, in particular, affected the number of new entrants. However, the removal of the age limit on candidating may bring some reversal of this trend.

6. Given the increase in the number of local church leaders, or equivalent, across the denomination, the Working Group sees scope in a new model of ministry which would not require a candidate to be residential in one of the colleges but which would largely be done by training *in situ*, including study and reflection, being overseen by an experienced minister. This would be a local ordination, and, if a later transfer to another area of ministry was required, further training would almost certainly be needed. This would also require the commitment of local ministers to tutor such a course. There could be an annual gathering of NSMs trained in his way for mutual support and encouragement.
7. The Working Group further recognised that appointment as an NSM is necessarily different to that of a stipendiary ministry. While a stipendiary minister is expected to have no (or only reasonable) geographic limitations, an NSM will need to serve in the area in which they live and work. Thus, the process is one of appointment, and whilst a candidate's sense of calling will need to be taken into consideration, it does need to be balanced with the strategic overview of the particular Synod. In addition, it is perhaps more likely that a candidate for NSM may feel a calling to ministry other than in a congregational setting e.g. ministry in secular employment or chaplaincy.
8. The Working Group considered questions of candidating, training, appointment, review and retirement and considered how to achieve the appropriate mix of being relevant to the needs of the church and its context alongside the question of appropriate parity for all ministers. It came to the (obvious) conclusion that all ministry is important, but not all ministry is the same. It recognised that practice with respect to appointment, review and retirement of NSMs varies across the Synods and that it is important to have good processes in place across the denomination. Through the resolutions above Ministries Committee seeks to offer a range of appropriate and properly supported models of NSM which will complement the other ministries of the church, including stipendiary ministry of Word and Sacraments. The committee affirms the importance of retaining the possibility of equivalence of training between stipendiary and non-stipendiary, but suggests that we do not continue to make that applicable in all cases.
9. One particular question is that of transfer between non-stipendiary and stipendiary service. At the moment, this can involve the suggestion, offer, or even requirement of a further period of preparation. Clearly a period of preparation for a different role may be usefully offered. However, we suggest that further thought is given with respect to how such opportunities are offered and used. If, as we are suggesting a new model with a more local basis were offered, then it is clear that a fresh candidating process leading to an appropriate period of preparation would be required in order to transfer to either stipendiary or the current models of non-stipendiary service.



# Paper H2

**Ministries Committee**

**Funding Additional Ministry**

United Church 2017  
Church 2017  
Reformed Church 2017  
Church 2017

# Paper H2

## Ministries Committee

### Funding Additional Ministry

#### 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>	<b>Mission Council authorises the Ministries Committee to explore with the Finance Committee the funding of a pilot scheme for Funding Other Ministry within two synods. When the funding is arranged the Ministries Committee will draw up the details of the scheme in consultation with the synods identified and seek any necessary advice from the Resource Sharing Task Group.</b>

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Authorising a pilot scheme to release funds from the Ministry and Mission Fund to support additional local expressions of ministry, including lay ministries.
<b>Main points</b>	It is projected that by 2025 there will be approximately 30 fewer stipendiary ministers available to serve the United Reformed Church than we would expect to be supporting as determined by previous General Assembly resolutions. Action can be taken to close this gap through the welcoming of ministers of other churches. However in response to previous pressure to make funding available to support lay and other local ministries there is now an opportunity to consider making money available for these without impacting on serving stipendiary ministers. Mission Council is asked to give permission for a pilot in two synods to explore the details and impact of such a scheme.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Ministries update to Mission Council, May 2017 Ministries: resolving some issues, Mission Council minutes, October 2016 Various reports to General Assembly, notably Patterns of Ministry (1991), Patterns of Ministry (1995), Future Patterns of Ministry (2002), Equipping the Saints (2004), Challenge to the Church (2008), Resourcing Ministry (2012), and Stipendiary minister numbers and deployment (2016)
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Within Ministries Committee, with Finance staff, and at previous Mission Councils



### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	To be determined in consultation with the Finance Committee. An initial commitment of £75,000 per annum is suggested.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Potential for ministries to be developed locally with ecumenical partners.

## Funding Additional Ministry

### Background

1. In 2012 the Ministries Committee presented a proposal to General Assembly that would have enabled the Ministry and Mission Fund (M&M) to pay for ministry other than as a Minister of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Worker (CRCW) in stipendiary service.
2. In making the proposal it was recognised that there was no new money available to support lay and other ministries, therefore finding funds to pay for such ministry would require identifying where current spending could be adjusted to release money.
3. At that time there were three ways in which central finances supported ministry across the denomination:
  - Through the payment of stipends for ministers in deployed posts and General Assembly appointments.
  - Through the payment of stipends for ministers in Special Category Ministry posts approved by the Accreditation Sub-Committee
  - Through grants made via synods to support ministry in workplace and higher education chaplaincies.
4. The 2012 proposal offered the option of allowing synods to use a proportion of the money identified to pay for stipends in their synod to give grants to meet the cost or part-cost of other ministry. The Assembly did not accept the proposal. This paper does not intend to rehearse the various reasons why that outcome was reached.

### The current situation

5. Since 2012 the number of stipends available to the church through the generous giving of the M&M fund has continued to decline in line with General Assembly policy and a consistently declining membership across the denomination.
6. Through the retention of a Normal Retirement Age (NRA) for ministers in stipendiary service, the ordination of 'home-grown' ministers and the occasional use of a Certificate of Limited Service (CLS), the necessary reduction in the number of supported stipends has been managed whilst matching the number of ministers available to serve in stipendiary posts.

7. However in the past couple of years the picture has changed. The number of retirements has been considerably higher than the number required to maintain the balance and this imbalance will continue for several years leading to a projected shortage of approximately 30 ministers by 2025.
8. One way to address this shortage is by granting Certificates of Eligibility (CE) to ministers of other denominations, in order that they can transfer onto our roll and become ministers of the United Reformed Church. This is a course of action we have taken in the past and it can provide good results. Not only can it deliver good ministry for an extended period of time but it can also bring gifts and experience into the United Reformed Church from sister churches in these islands and around the world.
9. Nonetheless, the granting of Certificates of Eligibility is not without its challenges. Some ministers from other traditions find it difficult to transition into our church and the move from another part of the world can be more difficult than some ministers expect.
10. Although the Accreditation Sub-Committee is seeking to strengthen the induction provided for ministers coming through the CE route, adding a large number of ministers to our roll in a short period of time could exceed the capacity of synods to provide adequate support. The Ministries Committee has therefore supported the issuing of up to 10 CEs over the next 3 years but has deliberately chosen at this time not to undertake a course of action that would completely close the predicted gap.

## A scheme

11. Over the past five years the possibility of releasing money to support other ministries has continued to be raised. With the perceived gap between what the M&M fund might be able to provide and what is likely to be needed for stipends in the coming years, it seems right to look again at making M&M funds available to support other ministry.
12. Previous Ministries Committee reports to General Assembly<sup>1</sup> have encouraged synods and local pastorates to consider alternative ministries alongside Ministers of Word and Sacraments and CRCWs. Although progress has been made with regard to this there is a recognition that opportunity is limited in many places by the lack of resources.
13. Whilst some individual churches or group pastorates may have the funds to pay for alternative ministry and leadership on a part-time or even full-time basis this is beyond the reach of most churches, for whom the first call on their financial resources rightly remains the M&M fund. In some places lay people can be identified to exercise such ministries in a voluntary capacity but very often the lack of available volunteers thwarts such enterprises.
14. Some synods have been able to provide funding to support local ministry and leadership. This money has come from investments, legacies or through a synod levy on local churches in addition to their contributions to the M&M fund pledge, but it should be recognised that not all synods have been able to offer such funding.
15. It is believed that providing synods with funds that can be used to support lay ministries will enable such ministry to happen in settings that would otherwise be

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<sup>1</sup> Patterns of Ministry (1995), Equipping the Saints (2004), Challenge to the Church (2008)

impossible and would encourage the development of multi-skill teams as envisaged in Challenge to the Church and Equipping the Saints. These ministries could be sessional work, part-time or possibly full-time posts. Examples of such ministry could include, but would not be limited to:

- Family worker for 2 days/week in a local church
  - Pastoral assistant for one session/week in a local church
  - Community worker employed by a group of churches
  - Local church leader remunerated for a day/week
16. If Mission Council is supportive the overall figure available for deployment would be reduced by a figure to be agreed after further discussion and consultation. The reduction would be translated into a monetary value which would take account of the true cost of ministry (i.e. stipend plus NI and pension contributions). Presently that figure is approximately £37,000 per stipendiary post.
  17. For sufficient funds to be made available to synods to be worthwhile it is suggested that the number of potential deployed posts be reduced by thirteen (one per synod) creating a fund of almost £500,000. Consultation with the Finance Committee is necessary to establish whether such a sum could be identified in what is already a very tight budget. Previous General Assembly and Mission Council decisions on the affordability of ministry need to be considered along with the reality of expected future finances.
  18. This fund would then be available for synods to use for making grants to local churches to support other ministries, or for workers to be employed by the synod to work with local churches.
  19. One of the intentions in such a scheme is to support other ministries in places where the financial resources are limited. Taking this seriously would suggest that grants would be made available on a proportional basis rather than each synod having access to the same amount. The Resource Sharing Task Group would appear to be a relevant body for deciding on the shares each synod should receive from the fund. No consultation has yet taken place with the RSTG and it may be that this is not felt to be an appropriate forum to determine this and an alternative will need to be sought.
  20. The fund would be held centrally. Applications from local churches, or groups of churches, would be submitted via the synod. Those applications that synod endorses would receive their funding from central funds via the synod. This would parallel the process for Higher Education and Work Placed Ministry grants, and would allow those synods that have the resources to make their own grant funds available at the same time.
  21. It is recognised that some synods might prefer the entire scheme to be administered centrally. However, as funds are quite limited, it is likely to be necessary for synods to filter and prioritise the applications from its area and the above proposal would allow for this. Additionally, if the fund is held centrally, unspent money can be carried forward to future years.

## Further discussion

22. These proposals are based on an assumption that M&M funding will remain at the levels predicted, taking into account a reduction related to a decrease in the Church's overall membership. Further consultation with the Finance Committee and Synod Treasurers needs to take place to determine the stability of this position.

23. The synods will have important advice to give, not only on the general intention and the concrete proposal suggested in paragraphs 15-21 above, but also on the capacity and willingness of local churches and synod folk to manage the support of such posts (e.g. in HR and training needs).

## Pilot

24. Subject to satisfactory consultation with the Finance Committee the Ministries Committee suggests that it would identify two synods to act as pilots for the scheme. The detailed working arrangements for the scheme would be developed in consultation with those two synods.
25. An initial fund of £75,000 would be made available for other ministries within the two synods. Advice is to be sought from the RSTG as to the proportions available to each synod from this arrangement.
26. The arrangements agreed with the pilot synods should provide the outline of a scheme proposed for all 13 synods. This will include the administration of a scheme as well as the proposed proportional distribution of the funds available.

# Paper I1

**Mission Committee**

Update

United Church 2017  
Church 2017  
Reformed Church 2017  
Church 2017

# Paper I1

## Mission Committee

Update

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Bernie Collins: <a href="mailto:bernie.collins@thecrocker.net">bernie.collins@thecrocker.net</a> Francis Brien: <a href="mailto:francis.brien@urc.org.uk">francis.brien@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	For information
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None</b>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Update on the work of the Mission Committee
<b>Main points</b>	This paper offers an update on recent staff changes, on ecumenical relations and on fresh expressions work.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	N/a

### Summary of Impact

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



# Mission update

## 1. Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

- 1.1 The Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, the Revd David Tatem, retired at the end of July 2017 after serving eight years in the post and 38 years in ministry in the United Reformed Church. His successor, the Revd Philip Brooks, took up the post at the beginning of July and the month's overlap proved useful for induction, handover of work and introduction to ecumenical colleagues and networks.
- 1.2 Mission Committee unanimously agreed to endorse the application of The Church of God in Christ to join Churches Together in England. This was communicated to CTE by the deadline of 11 September.

## 2. Church and Society

- 2.1 There have been major staff changes in the Church and Society section of the Mission department with the retirement of Wendy Cooper (Administrator for Church and Society) after 36 years of service at Church House and the departure of Grace Pengelly (Secretary for Church and Society). Recruitment for a new secretary is in process and interviews will be held on 16 November. Recruitment for a new administrator will commence once the new secretary is in post.

## 3. Fresh Expressions

- 3.1 Mission Committee at its meeting in June considered in depth how Fresh Expressions might be embedded into the United Reformed Church. Fresh Expressions will enter its fourth phase in 2019 and all partners are currently considering this issue, as part of the discussion on the future shape of Fresh Expressions Ltd. It was agreed to commission a small task group to look at 'Where next from here?' taking into account strategy, funding, staffing and the link with *Walking the Way*. The task group will report to the February 2018 meeting of the Mission Committee.



# Paper 12

## Mission Committee

### Commitment for Life Review

United Church 2017  
Church 2017  
Reformed Church 2017  
Church 2017

# Paper I2

## Mission Committee

Commitment for Life Review

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Revd Bernie Collins: <a href="mailto:bernie.collins@thecrocker.net">bernie.collins@thecrocker.net</a> Francis Brien: <a href="mailto:francis.brien@urc.org.uk">francis.brien@urc.org.uk</a> Linda Mead: <a href="mailto:lmeadcf@urc.org.uk">lmeadcf@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	For discussion
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None</b>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Review of the Commitment for Life programme
<b>Main points</b>	Commitment for Life Reference Group organised a review of the programme, as agreed by Mission Committee October 2016. Review Group reported to Mission Committee September 2017. Mission Committee, affirming the value of Commitment for Life, urged developing without delay the new approaches identified, and taking stock of their impact after two calendar years.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Christian Aid and Global Justice Now Commitment for Life Reference Group

### Summary of Impact

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

# Commitment for Life Review

1. A review of the Commitment for Life programme took place in the period from September 2016 to September 2017. Mission Committee asked for the review to be carried out due to a substantial decline in giving, and other developments, such as political and economic changes in society, new forms of communication and information sharing, and changes within Christian Aid, which have all impacted on the programme.
2. The review took place over a period of almost a year, involving the gathering of financial and other data, consultation with synod focus groups, Commitment for Life advocates and others in local churches, the Commitment for Life Reference Group and with Commitment for Life's main partners (Christian Aid and Global Justice Now).
3. The results of the review were presented to the Mission Committee in September 2017, and Mission Committee now forwards a lightly amended version of this report (with Appendices) for the information of Mission Council.
4. In summary, Mission Committee received the Review report and:
  - 4.1 strongly affirmed the work of Commitment for Life as part of the mission of the United Reformed Church for justice in God's world
  - 4.2 recognised that the added value of worship, education and action by Commitment for Life are still important and relevant today
  - 4.3 further recognised that in the light of the present global economic and political climate there is a need for the programme to develop and reignite a passion for justice through:
    - new technology
    - engagement of a new generation of people
    - the creation of a new relationship with Christian Aid and Global Justice Now to suit their new working models
  - 4.4 urged the programme to undertake this work without delay.
5. Mission Committee also agreed to propose a resolution to this effect to the General Assembly in 2018, which would further include the provision for taking stock of the impact of Commitment for Life's new approaches after two calendar/financial years 2018 and 2019.

# Review of Commitment for Life

## 1. Context

- 1.1 The United Reformed Church, through its denominational programme 'Commitment for Life,' has been working in partnership with Christian Aid and Global Justice Now (formerly The World Development Movement) in its present form since 1992. The General Assembly programme was a direct response to the words in Micah, 'What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God'. It is about personal giving and a commitment to seek justice and an end to poverty. The programme grew out of the 1% appeal.<sup>1</sup> The Synod of Scotland joined the programme in 2000.
- 1.2 In 1992, a report to General Assembly stated: "Commitment for Life was offered to the Assembly, congregations and members of the United Reformed Church as a challenge and an invitation, one way of expressing our obedience to the words of Jesus as we follow in his way, our solidarity in the Spirit with our partners and the poor with whom they are striving for justice, and our faith in the God of hope, of peace, of love."
- 1.3 Commitment for Life's **vision** is to see the United Reformed Church play a full part in working for justice in the world, recognising that change starts with each of us.
- 1.4 Its **mission** is to encourage all United Reformed churches and Local Ecumenical Partnerships to take action and pray for people across the world so that we can make a difference in the lives of some of the world's poorest people.
- 1.5 Its **aim** is to deepen the response of congregations through education, worship and action for long term development.
- 1.6 The programme is promoted by the Commitment for Life Coordinator with a volunteer reference group, synod advocates and church link people. Today Commitment for Life churches choose to support a partner country or region (Bangladesh, Central America, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory or Zimbabwe). They accept that this is about personal giving, with the idea of 1% of their disposable income still encouraged. They receive updates twice a year on their partner region, an annual poster and mini magazine, together with a variety of worship materials. The occasional educational events are arranged to cascade information on campaigns. From the total income raised by Commitment for Life churches, 75% is divided equally between Christian Aid's four country programmes in the partner regions and 5% is paid to Global Justice Now for their work on researching systems that keep people poor.
- 1.7 The remaining United Reformed Church share of 20% provides finance for the updates, annual posters and mini magazines (Christian Aid pay 50% of this), and other resources including envelopes, intro leaflets and festival based resources.

<sup>1</sup> Both the Presbyterian Church of England and the Congregational Churches in the late 1960s passed resolutions urging church members to give one per cent of their net income for development aid. Following the Uppsala World Council of churches 1968 assembly, the Congregational Church introduced a lengthy resolution for the 1% appeal which was agreed by the assembly. It asked Christian Aid to act as their agent. The first United Reformed Church Assembly in 1973 adopted a report from Church and Society to base a world development programme on political action, education and a financial appeal.



The coordinator's salary and pension fund contributions as well as home office expenses also are funded by the 20%.

- 1.8 Until recently, grants to organisations linked to the programme such as Fairtrade Fortnight, Jubilee Debt Campaign, Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme for Palestine and Israel and One World Week were given out of the URC share, but these ceased three years ago, as margins became tighter. The EAPPI grant is now given from the Mission budget.

## 2. Reasons for review

- 2.1 Contributions used to be in the region of £500,000 per annum, but the last few years have seen a substantial decline in giving, as well as churches asking to be removed from the programme. The general economic and political situation and ageing and shrinking congregations have also impacted on the programme. The internet and email have allowed people to find out more information on development issues and changed the way we communicate to churches. Christian Aid has been through substantial changes, both in terms of staff levels but also their way of working, and that has impacted on Commitment for Life. For these reasons, it was felt that this was the right time to review the programme and look at its future role within the URC.

## 3. Review process

- 3.1 The review group consisted of Francis Brienen (Deputy General Secretary – Mission), John Collings (Mission Committee), Revd Alan McGougan (Convenor Commitment for Life Reference Group), Linda Mead (Commitment for Life Programme Coordinator) and John Plant (Christian Aid Church Relations Manager).
- 3.2 The first meeting was held on 9 November 2016 where questions were decided upon that would be used to provide a broad feedback on the impact of Commitment for Life on Church Life.
- 3.3 November 2016 to May 2017  
 Synod focus groups: Scotland, Northern, West Midlands, Eastern, Yorkshire and Southern.  
 Advocates: Of the 9 Synods where there are advocates, 5 responded to the questionnaire.  
 Link people invited to comment in the March 2017 mailing.  
 Reference group: all members made contributions and discussed responses received.  
 Partnership Reports received from the Ecumenical World Development Conference, Global Justice Now and Christian Aid updated the report by Bryony Long 2016.  
 Financial and church numbers information collected for last 5 years.
- 3.4 May 2017  
 Reference group: Questionnaire responses, including comments collected from emails, letters and personal visits by coordinator. Key issues decided by reference group using all those collated.  
 June 2017: Mission Committee offered feedback.  
 August 2017: The review group met to assess the data, discuss the information gathered and make initial recommendations.  
 September 2017: The reference group considered the recommendations of the review group.

28-29 September 2017: Mission Committee to discuss recommendations.  
 October 2017: Mission Council.  
 Post October: Discussions with Christian Aid and Global Justice Now in light of recommendations.  
 July 2018: General Assembly.

## 4. Programme Achievements

- 4.1 From the responses gathered it was evident that the programme was still highly thought of. With the gospel message of 'good news for the poor' at its heart it is seen as part of the whole mission of the church. It sits within the vision2020 framework relating to statements 8, 9 and 10.
- 4.2 Millions of pounds have been raised by local churches which has enabled Christian Aid to work with those most in need. The money we raise provides greater flexibility for Global Justice Now and Christian Aid.
- 4.3 Commitment for Life kept churches informed of all major campaigns such as Make Poverty History, Jubilee Debt, IF campaign and climate justice. It provides a significant Christian voice at many campaign meetings.
- 4.4 Resources produced have enabled churches to be well informed and knowledgeable. The yearly outline service and prayer sheets are being well used.
- 4.5 Trips to and visits from our partner areas have enriched the lives of many people and inspired them to take action and share that passion for justice.
- 4.6 The intern programme with Christian Aid ran for five years and was hugely successful. All five interns brought many gifts and still speak on our behalf. The reference group initially started funding the programme as part of our legacy for the future and this has been realised as all the interns have embarked on worthwhile careers.
- 4.7 Through Commitment for Life churches have been enabled to be involved in campaigning for justice. It was felt that 'the Church' could speak out where charities could not.

## 5. Christian Aid (Appendix 1)

- 5.1 Christian Aid has been an integral part of the programme since its inception. They continue to change, both in terms of staff levels but also in ways of working, which has impacted on Commitment for Life. Many features that were unique to the programme, such as committed giving, festival worship materials (Harvest, Lent and Christmas) and monthly campaign actions are now part of Christian Aid's fundraising year and approach. Their church partnership programme, with excellent match funding projects, has also drawn money away from Commitment for Life.<sup>ii</sup>

<sup>ii</sup> Money donated to Christian Aid through the Partnership Programme is for particular projects matched funded through contracts with the European Commission. They have a very narrow focus as the money given is for these projects for a limited period. Christian Aid have always stated that this giving should be in addition to normal giving.

- 5.2 Recent internal changes have altered the emphasis of work and it will become increasingly difficult to work with a country focus rather than Christian Aid's new thematic approach. The loss of their communication officers and CIU (Communication and Information Unit) has meant there are few people available in London with expert knowledge of our partners or relevant issues. Indeed, some communication officers are now abroad, which is a good thing, but it is more difficult to obtain the information the programme requires. As the current changes evolve, staff with responsibility for Commitment for Life at various levels, will be in different geographical areas. It becomes imperative that the line of command is clear and communication succinct. Present staff are working to raise the profile of Commitment for Life within the organisation, especially in the regions.

## 6. Global Justice Now (Appendix 2)

- 6.1 The World Development Movement was part of the original programme in 1992. Set up as a campaigning and cutting edge organisation, many of the original advocates were chosen from their members. In 2015 Global Justice Now's contributions were reduced from 10% to 5% at Mission Council because of the decrease in income and the need to cover administration costs. Their campaign actions are still shared in updates and mailings.

## 7. Current context

- 7.1 The general economic and political situation has also impacted on the programme. According to the Charities Aid Foundation's latest report, overall giving to charity fell by 5% to £9.6bn in 2015. The report said that this apparent decrease could be 'an early indication of a decrease in charitable giving amongst individuals.' Medical charities received the highest proportion of total donations with 16%. Religious charities, together with children and young people's charities, tied in second place. People, within the three nations, are questioning whether the UK government should be giving 0.7% for global development with poverty on the increase in the UK.
- 7.2 The average URC attendance figure is 55,579. That compares with a figure of 74,087 in 2007 – a decline of 25%. This includes the total attendance in ecumenical churches, most of which will not actually be URC. Originally, advocates linked into their district councils and were allowed a time to speak at these meetings. This was an excellent way of sharing topical information and reminders of the programme. In 2005 district councils ceased and, by necessity, synod meetings dealt with more business matters. Advocates missed these local links and many left in the next year as they felt they were no longer in touch with those churches for which they had a responsibility. Of the 13 Synods, 4 are without a synod advocate. These are Wales, North Western, Thames North and South Western. Of the 1,426 churches in the denomination 33% (475 churches) are Commitment for Life churches. This compares with 42% in 2012.
- 7.3 Ways of communication have changed dramatically since the programme's launch. Previously all information went by postal mail to link people whilst advocates were sent regular updates on campaign issues and successes. However, the internet has allowed people to find their own information on development issues. Enquiries often now come directly to the programme coordinator. Resources, updates, magazine and posters have regularly been redesigned to make them fresh and inviting.

## 8. Giving

- 8.1 Commitment for Life has always put equal emphasis on education and giving. Many churches have a well-established season for Commitment for Life during which a special service is held. A few churches raise money by events such as communion collections or themed evenings, although these are in decline as it is becoming more difficult to get members to attend extra events. The message of making that commitment to give regularly, even if this is not so exciting as doing a sponsored bungee jump or mountain trek, is at the heart of the programme. We give because God first loved us. Inspiring and enthusiastic speakers were seen as essential in exciting congregations in many of the responses.
- 8.2 The most common query from churches concerns confusion about where the money goes. The perception is that the contributions go directly to a church's designated region, rather than being divided equally among the four regions. This has never been the case and has been stated in all resources sent out over the last 11 years, if not before.
- 8.3 The programme understands that younger people give in different ways. They are usually interested in the issue, but topics that they can relate to are more popular, e.g. mental health. The successful internship programme worked closely with URC Youth but was not able to raise contributions. Different ways of giving should be explored that suit younger members, e.g. texting or Just Giving.

## 9. Current Financial Position

- 9.1 Contributions were in the region of £500,000 but the last few years have seen a substantial decline in giving. The year 2016 saw an 11% decrease. (Appendix 3).
- 9.2 In 2012 there were 678 churches on the database, but by 2017 this had dropped to 475. This is mainly due to churches who had not given over the last three years being asked if they wished to remain in the programme. Of the 149 church letters sent out, 21 replied to remain on the database and 14 wished to be removed. These, together with the 114 who did not respond, were deleted from the database.
- 9.3 In 2016 the total raised was £337,480. The URC 20% share was approx. £68,000. Basic running costs were in the region of £58,000. This included salary, associated pension costs, resources, home office costs, mailing, reference group and advocate expenses.
- 9.4 If the 2017 income drops by 8% there would be a deficit. If the administration percentage should need to be changed to 25%, would this be an acceptable administration cost? In a recent survey by the Charities Aid Foundation people thought charities should only spend 15% on costs.<sup>iii</sup>

## 10. Current Challenges

- 10.1 These are the most frequent issues raised in response to the questionnaire:

<sup>iii</sup> <https://nfpsynergy.net/press-release/public-thinks-charity-spending-admin-more-double-their-acceptable-level>

- 10.2 The preference for small projects where results can be seen. Long term development is not popular or visually attractive.
- 10.3 The average age of members and congregations. Many of these were newly retired when the programme came into being and were enthusiastic and willing to promote the new programme. Today many are no longer with us or feel they have 'done their bit'. Many have lost their extra income because of the fall in interest levels in this economic climate.
- 10.4 A good many people who responded saw Christian Aid and Commitment for Life as the same. This confusion was one of the most quoted responses. When a church does leave the programme, it is usually to support Christian Aid directly.
- 10.5 The unique selling point of it being a denominational appeal does not ring true today. Many people attending churches today are not aware of the denomination or are in a Local Ecumenical Partnership and find giving to one denomination difficult. A third of United Reformed Churches are LEPs.
- 10.6. Many churches prefer to campaign on issues that are ecumenical and/or interfaith, such as Fairtrade or climate change, so can include the whole community. It should be noted that the programme coordinator attends meetings of such agencies and feeds back information to churches. Commitment for Life is one of the 12 voting members of The Fairtrade Foundation and supported Fairtrade Fortnight financially until the drop in income meant grants could not be given.
- 10.7 Being 25 years old means that many of those around at its inception, who understood the move from the 1% appeal, are no longer with us. Many of those worshipping today do not know the programme's history.
- 10.8 Confusion with Synod 'Belonging to the World Church' scheme. Effective Synod linking affects the programme.
- 10.9 Concern that the programme may well be coming to a natural end.

## 11. For consideration

- 11.1 The review group brings the following statements to Mission Committee for consideration:
- The review group affirms the work of Commitment for Life as part of the mission of the United Reformed Church for justice in God's world.
  - The added value of worship, education and action by Commitment for Life are still important and relevant today.
  - In the light of the present global economic and political climate we must recognise the need for the programme to develop and reignite a passion for justice through:
    - New technology
    - Engagement of a new generation of people
    - The creation of a new relationship with Christian Aid and Global Justice Now to suit their new working models.



# Appendix 1

## Christian Aid input

### Summary

Christian Aid's relationship with the United Reform Church (URC) as a sponsoring denomination is longstanding, far reaching and well-established. Commitment for Life (CfL) exists within the wider context of this valued relationship. It reflects a key element of our partnership and raises significant income to support Christian Aid's work.

CfL supporters are some of Christian Aid's most committed supporters and engage with us throughout the year through Christian Aid Week; Community partnerships; Christmas appeal and much between. Many CfL Link people are also CAW organisers, campaigners and church multipliers.

We are keen to explore how together we can renew the inspiration and vision that has engaged supporters of CfL over the past 25 years. We believe that this practical expression of faith in action has the potential to play a significant role in the wider mission of the church as well as continuing to support the work of Christian Aid partners.

### Context of Review (July 2017)

This year is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CfL Christian Aid's partnership with the URC. Within the URC the scheme is promoted by Linda Mead, the CfL Coordinator and on a voluntary basis by the Reference Group and Link People.

CfL churches choose to support a partner country or region (Bangladesh, Central America, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory or Zimbabwe) and can change annually. They receive updates twice a year about their partner region and an annual update about all regions.

From the total income raised by CfL 75% is divided equally between Christian Aid's country programmes in the partner regions. The remaining income is 5% paid to charity partner Global Justice Now (formerly World Development Movement) and 20% is for administering the programme

### Scope of this review

This review is being undertaken by the URC Mission Committee. The TOR are summarised below (see appendix 1 for detail).

Aims: To determine how the current Commitment for Life programme will transition into any further ongoing work in this area by:

- Reviewing the achievements of the Commitment for Life programme
- Assessing the ongoing and future needs of the programme
- Assessing what form of programme the United Reformed Church needs now in order to achieve the vision and mission of Commitment for Life.



Objectives: To review the achievements of the Commitment for Life programme by:

- Its own vision and mission statement
- Looking at income, number of participating churches and interest with which it deals (including how it is expressed in worship, education and action)
- How Commitment for Life relates to vision2020.

To assess the ongoing and future needs of the programme by:

- Identifying any new priorities and future needs in local churches
- Considering how the programme can be refreshed or reinvented in order to generate a greater level of involvement and support from the URC
- Considering ways to reverse the current decline in regular financial donations
- If need be, by planning for a managed closing of the programme and making recommendations for alternative ways of supporting Christian Aid and Global Justice Now.

## Key Christian Aid stakeholders

- Linda Mead – Commitment for Life Coordinator
- John Plant – CfL Project Manager (and manages URC relationship for CA)
- Charlotte Scott – CEPO for Commitment for Life
- Mark Sturge – Project Sponsor for CfL
- Regional Coordinators – promotion of CfL across UK

## Summary of Scheme

In the past financial year, CfL raised £337, 484. At present, there are approximately 1,400 URC churches in the UK and of those 475 are actively engaged with CfL ie 34%.

For Christian Aid, the scheme provides significant and valued income. For that reason, CfL has now been established as a *project* within SPD. This enables us to give it a better focus within our wider engagement. The project now has its own Church Engagement Project Officer (CEPO) working 2 days per week with John Plant overseeing the scheme as part of his role.

The benefit of CfL being established as a project is that there is now more investment of time and resource into the scheme. It also provides opportunities to strengthen and develop our relationship, offer better support for innovation and mobilisation, and better attend to your needs and agreed objectives.

## Income

At its high point, CfL was raising around £500,000 per year. This has declined over time, and the last 5 years (2012-2016) show an overall downward trend. We are keen to find ways of working together to attend to this decline but it is important to note that income remains significant.



## Engagement levels across URC

There are 475 churches currently supporting CfL. This represents a reduction overall and that in turn reflects a number of factors including a clean-up of data. Whilst the level of support is good we would be keen to have a deeper understanding of the challenges facing churches that may have contributed to the decline and explore how those can be tackled.

## Current investment

Expenditure can be divided into three sections; printed resources, promotion and supporter trips.

## Resources

CfL programme cost of all printed materials is split 50/50 between Commitment for Life and Christian Aid. Resources produced are two A4 updates (one in March, another in November) featuring the partner regions and a small CA campaigns update. In addition, CfL churches receive an annual update in July – an A5 16 pages booklet and an A2 poster – which features all partner regions, and a CA and Global Justice Now update.

Staff time (both CA and CfL) is not accounted for within these costs. It is important to point out that the full time CfL Coordinator's (Linda) role encompasses all the administration and promotion of CfL. Linda's salary is paid for through CfL funds raised as part of the 20% admin cost.

The resources are planned and managed through the CA Creative Team and Charlotte Scott oversees this process.

Christian Aid does not do any active promotion of Commitment for Life at the moment. There are plans to do a week of social media promotion from the main CA accounts in August 2017 and this will be the first time this has been done.

## Promotion

Christian Aid does pay for advertising in URC publications for CA key moment appeals. This has been noted as confusing by some CfL churches as people have trouble understanding the difference between Christian Aid and Commitment for Life.

## Supporter trips

In 2014, Commitment for Life supporters were taken on a trip to El Salvador to see first-hand the work in their newest partner region. The total cost was £20,000 and whilst it is difficult to attribute direct financial outcomes from this, coverage of CfL across URC channels has increased and the URC supported a successful match fund bid to DFID.

In 2017 there was a similar visit to Zimbabwe with key CfL supporters and this is also likely to significantly increase coverage of CfL within the URC as well as on CA social media.

In the past, these visits have been an effective way to inspire the most committed givers, whilst also recognising their contribution to communities through Commitment for Life. A more strategic approach to promotion following a trip could be beneficial for maximising these opportunities.

## Strengthening communications

There have been many changes within Christian Aid in the past two years, especially to our communications staff. There is concern from CfL, and from the 2015 CA review of CfL, that this could make the scheme more challenging as it will be harder to gather the kinds of stories supporters are used to.

This may prove to be the case in some countries, however a recent trip to Zimbabwe has re-opened staff links and provided many stories for future updates.

The movement of Communications staff from London to being based in-country also provides opportunities for more direct updates to supporters and more up-to-date information. It also gives chances for more direct input from social media.

Gen Lomax is currently looking at the possibilities of a Communications Officer in Bangladesh and this could provide a pilot scheme for the new ways of working for CfL if a good relationship is established

## Qualitative feedback

This SWOT analysis done in combination with Linda Mead and those participating recently in the trip to Zimbabwe, reflects the breadth of views shared more widely by supporters.

It reveals opportunities for strengthening CfL and highlights issues for attention. Some of these issues can be addressed immediately and others require further exploration. The recommendations for further consideration suggest where attention should be focused.

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ownership by URC</li> <li>• Biggest denominational fundraising appeal</li> <li>• Long term commitment</li> <li>• Opt in scheme (decision of the whole church)</li> <li>• Regular updates on 4 countries gives variety</li> <li>• Focused on specific countries</li> <li>• Long term relationships with partners</li> <li>• Understood as part of the mission of the church</li> <li>• Programme coordinator embedded in URC</li> <li>• Advocates and link people</li> <li>• Has built good partnerships and engagement more broadly with Christian Aid.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire to see 'where my money is going'</li> <li>• Lack of quick wins to report back</li> <li>• Internal changes at CA disrupting communication</li> <li>• Challenge of recruiting advocates and reps.</li> <li>• Confusion with other Christian Aid offers</li> <li>• CA regional teams uncertain about CfL</li> <li>• Congregations changing and losing contact with original vision</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project approach will give greater focus</li> <li>• New communications – digital etc.</li> <li>• Refresh and renew offer</li> <li>• Developing supporter trips to reinforce connections</li> <li>• Stronger ownership by URC and connection to mission</li> <li>• Engaging with young people (FURY)</li> <li>• Greater visibility of global church partnerships</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing numbers in congregations</li> <li>• Reducing income</li> <li>• Aging congregations</li> <li>• Changes in charity giving over 25 yrs</li> <li>• Other offers from Christian Aid more attractive or filling gaps previously done by CfL</li> <li>• Wider economic situation in UK</li> <li>• Staff turnover at CA</li> </ul>

## Building on strengths, developing opportunities, addressing weaknesses and mitigating threats

CfL is a significant expression of our partnership with the URC. We believe that it demonstrates a practical endeavour to proclaim good news to the poor and reflects the heart of the church's mission. When the church acts boldly this proclamation exercises a compelling call to those in the wider community. When CfL was launched, it was regarded as inspirational. We would like to work together with the URC to renew, refresh and reinvigorate CfL in the light of the issues identified above and within the wider review.

We would welcome further joint exploration to:

- **Review our governance arrangements to ensure they support joint working effectively**

This includes ensuring that Christian Aid's project approach is delivered in a way that strengthens our partnership and enables CfL to flourish.

- **Invest in CfL to support the wider mission of the church**

CfL demonstrates a commitment to a just world and a desire to put faith into action. Our experience is that this partnership not only enables a key part of the church's mission to be delivered but has the potential to speak in a compelling way to a wider audience beyond the church. For churches that wish to reach out into the wider community and demonstrate a living faith, CfL offers an inspiring vision of transformational change to end global poverty. Supporting churches to make these connections within their wider life could offer an exciting opportunity for mission. It would require a bold investment but it is one that CA would support with strengthen capacity from regional staff.

- **Strengthen internal and external communications to increase participation in CfL**

How can we fully utilise promotional and communications channels? For example, ensure CA and URC publications (Reform), websites, social media, denominational letters for CAW all promote and reinforce the CfL message in a coherent way. There may be opportunities to build on the success of working with URC media team on the 2014 Christmas appeal to seek additional opportunities to communicate with URC network.

Christian Aid can ensure all CA staff in regions and nations have the information and tools they need to promote CfL to URC churches and nurture existing CfL churches.

How do we make best use of new ways of communicating and new ways of engaging? It would be helpful to review our materials and investigate possibilities for reducing the amount of printed communications materials produced and maximising digital offerings.

There is also an opportunity to work with a new Communications model in Bangladesh and build a relationship which will benefit CA and CfL. Charlotte Scott to explore this possibility with Gen Lomax and Bangladesh Country Team.

- **Develop and pilot new funding ideas within CfL**

The Zimbabwe trip yielded the opportunity to explore investment funding from churches for small business ventures of beneficiaries. CA Social Enterprise team are keen to explore this further given the match between CfL countries and the countries they are focusing on. It would provide a new and exciting offer that would enable greater learning about development. A pilot scheme could yield new fundraising opportunities and bring some fresh ideas to the partnership.

- **Explore areas of potential growth**  
For example, reflect on the aging population in URC congregations, combined with a high level of commitment to Christian Aid and the Commitment for Life. A CfL legacy campaign in 2010 resulted in two legacies, £75k in 2012/11 and £100k in 2012/13.
- **Strengthen supporters and their networks to build capacity for wider engagement**  
This could include possibilities for linking CfL supporters with one another through an annual event or more local synod-based events. This would build a sense of community for those who may feel isolated within their own church.
- **Deepen supporters understanding and passion**  
This could include looking at supporter travel and how we might offer that more widely. The Zimbabwe trip in 2017 and El Salvador trip in 2014 have yielded enthusiastic supporters with personal stories to tell. Working specifically with these people and setting some goals may help to use their personal enthusiasm to best effect for the partnership.



## Appendix 2

### Global Justice Now

Commitment for Life provides crucial support for Global Justice Now's work in the UK and at the global level, while also enabling Global Justice Now to support the United Reformed Church in its goal "to influence those in power and equip local congregations to take action against everything that undermines or destroys fullness of life... to challenge unjust structures and seek economic justice from the local to the global marketplace" (as outlined in the URC's vision2020).

### Partnership and accomplishments

Commitment for Life's financial and practical support over the last 25 years has been invaluable for Global Justice Now. Commitment for Life has helped us mobilise resources and reach audiences with our campaigns that we simply would not have been able to without this partnership.

The unrestricted funding we have received from Commitment for Life has enabled us to run effective campaigns that quickly respond to a changing context. There has also been a positive knock-on effect as we've been able to apply for further funds using Commitment for Life's financial support as "match funding", multiplying the impact of Commitment for Life's support. Most importantly, funding from Commitment for Life has helped empower us to maintain our independence and not rely on funding from the government or corporations. This gives Global Justice Now the freedom to continue to speak out for a more just and equal world.

Our long-standing partnership with Commitment for Life has also been key to connecting hundreds of individual churches within the United Reform Church with broader global issues. We have worked together on numerous campaigns, engaging church communities and providing them with action cards, posters and information to fight water privatisation in the global south, end exploitative arms deals and combat unfair trade. Commitment for Life's role in communicating our campaigns and connecting us with church communities has made this possible.

Commitment for Life's support has made a significant contribution to a number of our achievements over the years, with one inspiring recent example being the Trade Justice Movement and the campaign to defeat the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). Ultimately, we won this victory by building a huge coalition of faith groups, development NGOs, environmental groups and consumer groups. Commitment for Life played a crucial role, working with us (alongside Christian Aid) to produce and disseminate a prayer pack resource for churches about trade justice. The pack included prayers, writings and ideas by people from a range of Christian traditions who share a conviction that trade injustice is a barrier to the fullness of life promised by the kingdom of God (<http://www.globaljustice.org.uk/resources/ttip-and-trade-justice>). Commitment for Life's contribution expanded and strengthened the coalition, helping to ensure our success.

## Looking forward

Global Justice Now's upcoming campaigns offer an even greater opportunity for the URC community to connect with issues that are important to them, as outlined in the URC's vision2020. Our campaigns for the next year include:

- Access to medicines**

The right to health and access to effective medicines is under threat around the world from the disproportionate power of the pharmaceutical industry. Globally, more than 10 million people die every year because they cannot access or afford the drugs they need. Much of the problem stems from the dominant medical research and development (R&D) model, which lets corporations charge extortionate prices for medicines, putting patients and national health services at risk. This model also creates incentives for companies to place R&D on the most profitable drugs above badly needed medical innovation, causing a growing crisis as research on antibiotics fails to keep up with diseases. This is in spite of the fact that 30% of R&D – and up to 80% of innovative early research – is publicly funded. Our campaign, run in partnership with organisations across the global south, aims to introduce a fairer system of funding R&D that would ensure publicly-funded R&D leads to accessible, affordable medicines. This aligns well with the URC's aims, particularly Statements 8 (Global Partnerships) and 9 (Justice and Peace) of vision2020.
- Trade democracy**

As the UK government renegotiates trade deals and relationships around the world, it is more important than ever that parliament and the public have a say in trade agreements. Our campaign aims to make trade negotiations more transparent and democratic. In partnership with global trade justice networks, we are working to ensure that we can safeguard and extend protections for workers' rights, migrants' rights and the environment. Fairer trade has proved to be a popular issue with many congregations, and our campaign will provide numerous opportunities for churches to get involved.
- Migrants welcome here**

This campaign aims to address the worrying rise in hate crime and the increasingly hostile environment for migrants in the UK. Our approach combines tackling hate in the media with working at the community level to help local activists and their communities discuss migration in an open and informed way. This campaign is ideally suited for engaging congregations, giving churches the opportunity to host or become involved with a varied programme of events, including trainings, discussions, film screenings and festivals. It also aligns strongly with Statements 4 (Community Partnerships) and 5 (Hospitality and Diversity) of vision2020.

To run these campaigns into 2018 and beyond, we rely on the financial support we receive from Commitment for Life, as well as on the opportunity to connect with congregations and engage a broader audience in our campaigns. We hope we can look forward to continuing our work alongside Commitment for Life.

# Paper 13

## Walking the Way Steering Group

Walking the Way – living the life of  
Jesus today

Update

United Church 2017  
Church 2017  
Reformed Church 2017  
Church 2017

# Paper I3

## Walking the Way steering group Update

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Richard Church: <a href="mailto:richard.church@urc.org.uk">richard.church@urc.org.uk</a> Francis Brienen: <a href="mailto:francis.brienen@urc.org.uk">francis.brienen@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>	This is an update on the progress of the development of <i>Walking the Way: living the life of Jesus today</i> with its emphasis on discipleship and mission.
<b>Main points</b>	
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Mission Council 11/15 M1 and M2 Mission Council 3/16 Paper M1 General Assembly Reports 2016, p.11 Mission Council 10/16 Paper M1 Mission Council 5/17 Paper I8
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Steering Group, Mission Committee

### Summary of Impact

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

# Walking the Way: living the life of Jesus today

This is an update on the progress of the development of *Walking the Way: living the life of Jesus today* with its emphasis on discipleship and mission.

The primary means through which the life of faith is nurtured and grows is that of the local church. The steering group has therefore worked to resource local churches with materials that can be useful in developing missional discipleship which touches on all aspects of our life.

## Resourcing with missional discipleship materials

1. In September 2017, every church was sent copies of a leaflet which introduces *Walking the Way, living the life of Jesus today* to all those associated with URC churches. This mailing also included a prayer card intended to help all of us pray for this process of congregational renewal.
2. Autumn synod meetings included an item on Animating Discipleship consisting of a short-animated sequence and another clip of people explaining what they would expect to see in the life of someone trying to follow Jesus and what they think the Church is for. The intention behind these items is to explain Walking the Way and to stimulate conversation on the questions which were put to the public.
3. An Advent liturgy has been developed which involves members of local congregations in briefly explaining what living out the light of Christ involves them in, in their lives. The information for this is accessible through the Walking the Way pages of the website.
4. Occasionally, understanding contemporary culture is best done through watching films. A resource is being developed in 2018 which will spark discussion of some of the larger issues facing us today in the context of our call to live as disciples of Christ.
5. Holy Habits by Andrew Roberts charts ten habits of faithful behaviour in the early church. A URC/Methodist working party has developed resource material based on each of the habits which is available from the Bible Reading Fellowship. The publication date is 19 January and is available for pre-order through their website.
6. 'Stepwise' is the working title for the new discipleship course which replaces TLS. It is currently being developed for launch in the autumn of 2018 and further details appear in this book of reports under the Education & Learning Report, Paper D1.

## Resourcing Spirituality and Prayer

7. A growing resource within the United Reformed Church are the Daily Devotions which deliver to around 1600 individual subscribers a daily Bible reading, together with a reflection and prayer. This material has been written by over a hundred people from across the United Reformed Church. This material is part of the Walking the Way emphasis and is stimulating small groups as well as individuals as they reflect on their spiritual journey daily.
8. As part of a season of prayer throughout the autumn of 2017 around the Walking the Way themes, synods have contributed prayers focused on the needs of our country, and specifically to recognise that the big social issues affect many of us in our working out of discipleship in daily life. These are being published on the website and can be used in weekly worship, Elders and Church meetings or simply individually.
9. Walking the Way is an intergenerational approach and to that end the steering group is developing ideas for Messy Church and Godly Play sessions which explore discipleship and mission across the generations.

## Advocacy

10. In July, a meeting took place in Birmingham which brought together those in synods and Resource Centres for Learning to share initiatives, learning how an emphasis on *Walking the Way, living the life of Jesus today* is unfolding across the denomination, and sharing the steering group's work with them.
11. Members of the steering group have continued to respond to invitations from around the country to speak about Walking the Way and to listen to the needs of synods and local churches. However, with a small steering group, it is not always easy to meet every request.
12. Bookings are now being received for the gathering for Ministers and Church Related Community workers to be held in Staffordshire next year. This significant event in our denominational life will offer an opportunity for ministers to be stimulated in their thinking and share with colleagues the ideas and opportunities that this new emphasis may lead to in the life of the URC.

## Communications & Advocacy

13. Articles will appear in future issues of Reform, including an interview with Andrew Roberts. The intention is to carry articles which address the implications of our Christian calling to inform and challenge readers.
14. The web pages related to Walking the Way are live and will be added to over the coming months thus encouraging people both to visit and to share news of developments in their context.



15. A series of films will be prepared around the ten habits of Holy Habits to profile places in which the habits are being practiced and are reshaping local congregations. It is hoped that these will become available by the middle of 2018.

## Accompaniment

16. Churches from every synod will be identified which have strengths in discipleship development. The steering group will be thinking about how such congregations can be the source of inspiration for others in their immediate area.
17. The importance of accompaniment has been emphasised through many people engaged in mission and discipleship development. Accordingly, the steering group is exploring the role of mentoring and coaching with our partners at the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity.

## Recruitment

18. It will be apparent from the report that the scope of the steering group's work as it liaises with many other groups within the Church is growing. To resource and coordinate these developments, an interim part time project manager has been appointed, the Revd Elizabeth Gray-King. Elizabeth's contribution has been valuable in ensuring that our timeline for the delivery of materials to synods, RCLs and local churches has been met.
19. Elizabeth's role will continue until the end of the year, from when a fulltime project manager has been appointed. Mr Simon Peters, who is currently the Children's and Youth Work Programme Officer will assume his new responsibilities at the beginning of 2018. Simon has a wide-ranging understanding of the United Reformed Church and is an enthusiastic advocate for *Walking the Way, living the life of Jesus today*.



# Paper J1

## Nominations Committee

### List of nominations

United Church 2017  
Church 2017  
Reformed Church 2017  
Church 2017

# Paper J1

## Nominations Committee

### List of nominations

#### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Ray Adams: <a href="mailto:ray.adams12@btinternet.com">ray.adams12@btinternet.com</a> Mr George Faris: <a href="mailto:gfaris48@gmail.com">gfaris48@gmail.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council notes and approves the changes set out below to the list of Nominations agreed in May 2017.</b>

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To clarify various details of the Nominations list.
<b>Main points</b>	See detail of report.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Nominations list in Minutes of Mission Council, May 2017.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	All synods are represented on the committee.

#### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	None
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Some of these roles involve ecumenical contact and collaboration.

# List of Nominations

Mission Council is asked to note and approve the following amendments to the Nominations list that was agreed in May 2017.

## 1.3 Law and Polity Group

- i. The full title of this group is Law and Polity Advisory Group.
- ii. Ms Denise FitzPatrick was appointed to be a member of the group from 2014 to 2018 so her second term ends in 2022, not 2021.
- iii. Mr George Faris will conclude 4 years representing the Synod Clerks in 2018, not 2020.

## 2.2 Nominations Committee

- i. The Revd Dougie Burnett is now the South Western Synod member.

### 2.2.1 Panel for General Assembly Appointments

- i. Ms Angela Coxon is unable to serve.

## 2.4 Disciplinary Process – Commission Panel

- i. Ms Judith Haughton, the convenor, has resigned.
- ii. The Revd Dr Janet Tollington, the deputy convenor, was appointed to serve to 2020.
- iii. Mrs Mary Slater (11) and the Revd Alan McGougan (13) were appointed in 2013 to serve until 2018, and should therefore be added to the Nominations List.
- iv. The Revd Nigel Adkinson (2) was appointed in 2016 to serve until 2021 and should therefore be added to the Nominations List.
- v. Mr Andy Braunston (2) is now the Revd Andy Braunston (13).
- vi. Mrs Mary Kelly (11) was appointed at the 5/17 Mission Council so her term ends in 2022, not 2023.

## 2.5 Standing Panel for the Incapacity Procedure

- i. The Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe was appointed to serve to 2022.
- ii. Dr David Westwood is the Commission Officer, not Office.
- iii. David Nash is Mr David Nash.

## 2.6 Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee

- i. Mrs Wilma Frew will conclude 4 years as convenor in 2019, not 2018.

### 3.1.5 Rural Strategy Group (United Reformed Church/Methodist)

- i. The Revd Ron Forster is no longer a member.
- ii. There are now 2 URC vacancies.

### 4.1.1 Ministries – Accreditation Sub-Committee

- i. The Revd Mark Robinson has resigned.
- ii. The Revd Russell Furley-Smith is convenor for the period 2017-21.

**4.2 Education and Learning Committee**

- i. The Revd Dr Neil Messer will conclude 4 years as convenor in 2019, not 2020.
- ii. The Revd Dr Jack Dyce is no longer a Resource Centre for Learning (RCL) principal.

**5.3 Equalities Committee**

- i. Mrs Ruth Clarke has resigned.
- ii. Mrs Pat Poinen (1) accepted an invitation in 2015 to serve until 2019 and should therefore be added to the Nominations List.

**11.4 Congregational Memorial Hall Trust**

- i. Mr Graham Stacy has resigned.

**11.9 Retired Ministers' and Widows' Fund**

- i. Mr Ken Meekison has resigned.

**Westhill Endowment Trust**

Ms Julie Grove was appointed in 2014 to serve until 2018 and should therefore be added to the Nominations List.



# Paper M1

**Clerk**

Updating Standing Orders

United Church 2017  
Church 2017  
Reformed Church 2017  
Church 2017

# Paper M1

## Clerk

### Updating Standing Orders

#### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	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 adopts of the revision version of the Standing Orders as set out in paper M1 of Mission Council November 2017, with effect from the close of Mission Council.</b>

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Simplified version of Standing Orders
<b>Main points</b>	The Standing Orders have been re-written to try and make them significantly simpler to understand and standardise timings, without introducing major changes of substance.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Papers M2 of October 2016 and M2 of May 2017.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Mission Council

#### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	Nil
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	A more coherent set of Standing Orders will clarify decision-making, and reduce the risk of reputational damage.

# Updating Standing Orders

1. Feedback received after the 2016 General Assembly indicated widespread and long held concerns about the complexity of our Standing Orders. In response the Clerk initiated an anonymous questionnaire at the October 2016 Mission Council.
2. The results of the questionnaire indicated that there was a significant desire to simplify the Standing Orders and standardise things like the length of speeches.
3. As reported in May 2017, the Clerk has also been working on the possibility of combining the best points of both Consensus Decision Making and Majority Voting in one unified system that covers everything. However, this will require considerably more time until a viable proposal can be offered.
4. The rationale for such a proposal is that the key gain from Consensus Decision Making in most people's eyes is a way of handling issues (e.g. possibly Nestle, and certainly same sex marriage) where many feel uncomfortable with the implicit assumption of Majority Voting that support from 50%+1 is sufficient to be confident we have discerned God's will. Where patience with Consensus Decision Making grows thin is when it is used to allow a small majority to block an otherwise overwhelming sense of what is right, effectively raising the threshold for proceeding with a proposal from 50%+1 to 100%. Of course patience wears thin more quickly on topics where most people do not think the issue is actually very important but a tiny dissenting minority are passionate about it. A potential "combined" process will need to address, as a core issue, the value of having more than a 50%+1 threshold for some business without trapping ourselves with an implicit 100% threshold. If a way can be found to build in a way of agreeing that some issues need a higher threshold than 50%+1, then a combined process could have merit.
5. However, such a proposal is not yet ready. In the circumstances, the Clerk judges it more helpful to offer a simplified version of what we do now, rather than keep that as a reserve option to table if an eventual combined proposal is offered, but not accepted.
6. Much of the wording about Consensus Decision Making is an explanation and rationale for this, which is not strictly required in the Standing Orders themselves. After ten years of use in the United Reformed Church, and now that a book about Consensus Decision Making has been written by the people in the Uniting Church in Australia who are expert in it, the Clerk proposes that the book is used for explaining the background and rationale, which will be far more helpful than detail in Standing Orders.
7. The Standing Orders as existing are printed first, followed by the proposed alternative. "Track Changes" has not been used, because the changes are too extensive for that to be a helpful way of following them.
8. The Clerk reminds the church of Standing Order 1.3 "Standing Orders... shall apply to all meetings of the Assembly and the Mission Council and, in so far as they are applicable, to meetings of synods, district councils and their committees."

## Standing Orders of General Assembly – as existing

### 1. The Agenda of the Assembly

- 1.1 At its meetings the Assembly shall consider reports and draft motions prepared by its committees which include the Mission Council or by synods, and motions and amendments of which due notice has been given submitted by individual members of the Assembly.
- 1.2 For the good ordering of General Assembly's time, the Moderators for that Assembly, in consultation with the General Secretary and the Clerk, shall group the draft motions into three Groups which shall determine the manner in which the Assembly shall consider them: A – en bloc, B – majority voting, and C – consensus. All matters covered by paragraphs 3(1) and (2) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church shall be placed in Group B. In the case of any other matter the Moderator may rule at any time that a motion be taken from Group B and placed in Group C. At the same time the grouping of draft motions is published any matters already known to be urgent under Standing Order 2.3 shall also be published, with reasons given.
- 1.3 The motions in Group A shall be taken en bloc. Notice in writing to the effect that one or more of the motions included in Group A should be considered separately may be given to the General Secretary by the close of business on the first day of the meeting of the Assembly. If such notice, which must be signed by at least six members of the Assembly, is duly received, then the motion(s) in question shall be removed from Group A. It shall be for the Moderators, in consultation with the General Secretary and the Clerk, to determine in which of Groups B and C any such separated motions should be placed. When the single motion to approve Group A is before the Assembly, the vote shall be taken immediately, the motion being determined by a majority of the votes of members of the Assembly present and voting as indicated by a show of voting cards.
- 1.4 The motions in Group B shall be determined by majority vote, and Standing Order 2 shall not apply.
- 1.5 The motions in Group C shall be considered by means of the consensus decision making process set out in Standing Order 2.
- 1.6 The Assembly arrangements committee shall prepare before each meeting of the Assembly a draft order of business, and submit it to the Assembly as early as convenient in the programme.
- 1.7 Motions arising from a report which have been duly seconded and submitted by individual members of Assembly under Standing Order 4.2 shall be taken at a point in the business determined by the Moderator on the advice of the Convener of the Assembly arrangements committee.
- 1.8 If notice has been given of two or more motions on the same subject, or two or more amendments to the same motion, these shall be taken in the order decided by the Moderator on the advice of the Clerk.
- 1.9 The Convener of the Assembly arrangements committee may, during the meeting of the Assembly, propose that the order of business be changed.

## 2. Consensus decision making

- 2.1 Those motions in Group C shall be determined by a process of decision making by consensus. For these purposes the following Standing Order 2 will apply and the Standing Orders 4, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 6.2, 6.3, 6.5 will not apply.
- 2.2 The process of consensus:
- 2.2.1 Consensus means a decision of the council reached unanimously, or where a small minority of members of the council is willing to accept a proposal that is not their first preference.
- 2.2.2 Passed, recognising disagreement means a decision of the council where, after careful consideration of the options, a small number is unable to accept the majority opinion but agree to stand aside so that the matter may be resolved.
- 2.2.3 At each stage of the process the Moderator will clarify the nature of the session, that is whether it is for information, discussion or decision making.
- 2.3 The Information Session:  
This session aims to inform the Assembly on the issue to be considered. At the start of this session, if s/he judges that the matter before the Assembly is urgent, requiring decision during the current meeting of the Assembly, the Moderator shall inform the Assembly that this is the case and advise that if following the Consensus procedures there is continuing disagreement it may be necessary to move to a majority decision under Standing Order 2.5.9.7. A range of options may be presented by different people who shall speak in favour of their option. Those presenting issues, reports or proposals may speak for no more than five minutes unless the Assembly agrees to an extension of time. Members of Assembly are then free to ask questions on the issue or seek for clarification or further information.
- 2.4 The Discussion Session:  
This is the opportunity for discussion of various viewpoints and vigorous debate on different opinions. Speakers may speak for no more than three minutes.
- 2.4.1 The methods used may include prayer, buzz groups, group discussions, speeches to the whole council, time for thinking during a break etc. The Moderator may invite Assembly to indicate opinions by the use of coloured cards at this stage.
- 2.4.2 The Moderator shall ensure that those who have different backgrounds or who disagree or who are unsure are given space to contribute to the debate, as well as those who are enthusiastic.
- 2.4.3 The Assembly may meet around tables so that small group discussion can happen quickly and easily.
- 2.4.4 As the discussion session proceeds possible ways forward for the Church are developed until a specific proposal is reached.
- 2.5 The decision session:  
Only those Assembly members present may contribute to this session, they may speak for no more than three minutes.
- 2.5.1 Discussion continues with speakers outlining the advantages and disadvantages of the proposal. At all times, speakers are encouraged to suggest a way forward for the Assembly, rather than merely speaking with passion for a pre-determined view.
- 2.5.2 Minor changes of wording may be agreed as the discussion proceeds. It is important to hear from those indicating disquiet or disapproval as well as those who are enthusiastic.
- 2.5.3 The proposal shall be displayed throughout the discussion in such a way that all can see the text and any progressively agreed changes to it.
- 2.5.4 If there is a major new insight expressed, the Moderator may determine that it is appropriate to move back into a discussion session.
- 2.5.5 After summing up where the Assembly seems to be heading, the Moderator checks whether the Assembly is nearing consensus using one or more questions such as the following:



- 2.5.5.1 What is your response to this proposal? (inviting a show of indicator cards)
- 2.5.5.2 Do you believe we have consensus in support of this proposal?
- 2.5.5.3 Do you believe we have consensus not to support this proposal?

2.5.6 If there is strong but not unanimous support:

- 2.5.6.1 Who supports the proposal?
- 2.5.6.2 Who does not support the proposal as your first option, but is prepared to accept it? Are you prepared to have the issue declared resolved by consensus?
- 2.5.6.3 Who is not prepared to accept the proposal?

2.5.7 Where some members of Assembly indicate an unwillingness to accept a proposal there shall be further discussion and then the Moderator shall seek to ascertain that they accept that they have been heard and agree to live with the outcome.

2.5.8 The Moderator shall ask:

- 2.5.8.1 Are you prepared to have the issue declared passed, recognising disagreement? If so they may choose to record their dissent.
- 2.5.8.2 Who is not prepared to accept the proposal?

2.5.9 Continuing disagreement

Assembly may, at the discretion of the Moderator, look for further possibilities including:

- 2.5.9.1 adjourning the discussion to another time or place perhaps with more work before reconsideration
- 2.5.9.2 asking the Moderator to continue to work on the issue with relevant people until the next Assembly
- 2.5.9.3 referring the issue to another council or group to deal with
- 2.5.9.4 deciding the issue is unnecessary/inappropriate to continue dealing with;
- 2.5.9.5 declaring that there are diverse views which Christians may hold with equal integrity
- 2.5.9.6 if the issue has previously been notified as urgent, moving to majority decision
- 2.5.9.7 in the event of urgency not previously notified, moving to majority decision; in that event, the Moderator shall give her/his reasons, and test the mind of Assembly in forming her/his judgement.

2.6 The Moderator

2.6.1 The role of the Moderator is very important.

The Moderator:

- 2.6.1.1 assists the Assembly to discern the will of God as far as possible
- 2.6.1.2 is alert to the guidance of the Holy Spirit as members contribute
- 2.6.1.3 pauses for prayer or buzz group reflection as appropriate
- 2.6.1.4 encourages trust and integrity in contributions
- 2.6.1.5 ensures care and support for those whose honesty or minority voice makes them vulnerable
- 2.6.1.6 invites members to respond to speeches showing indicator cards, and reflects the mood of the meeting as it becomes apparent
- 2.6.1.7 suggests or encourages creative modifications of a proposal, picking up insights expressed
- 2.6.1.8 summarises discussion from time to time to assist in focusing the discussion.

2.7 The Assembly and Moderator may be assisted by a facilitation group.

This will be appointed at the beginning of each Assembly by the Assembly. It will:

- 2.7.1 enable group work, collate responses from groups and report back to the council
- 2.7.2 help and support the Moderator
- 2.7.3 be responsible for providing the wording of the text under discussion.



## 2.8 Coloured cards

2.8.1 Coloured cards are not essential in consensus decision making but they are helpful.

2.8.2 Each member receives two cards:

2.8.2.1 Orange – held at the end of a speech, so that the Moderator can see, indicates warmth towards a point of view or approval of a proposal.

2.8.2.2 Blue – held at the end of a speech, so that the Moderator can see indicates coolness about what has been heard or disapproval of a proposal.

2.8.3 Cards held crossed indicate to the Moderator it is time to move on to the next subject.

2.8.4 Cards should be shown only at the invitation of the Moderator and held so that the Moderator can see them. They indicate response to what has just been said. They help the Moderator to gauge the strength of feeling for various ideas, and to invite speeches from those who are unsure or cool towards the proposal.

## 2.9 Changes of order

Changes of order may be raised by any member of Assembly at any time during the meeting and must refer to the proceedings of the council. The Moderator asks the member to state their change of order. The Moderator rules on it immediately, or asks for a decision by the Assembly via a simple majority vote.

Changes of order include:

2.9.1 Out of order – the speaker is digressing from the matter being discussed.

2.9.2 Closed session – that the matter in hand is sensitive and should be conducted in private. This is voted on immediately without discussion. It can be raised more than once during a discussion. If it is agreed, all those who are not members of the council must leave. Members must treat the subsequent discussion in the strictest confidence and must not divulge its content or process to non-members.

2.9.3 Adjournment of the discussion – this is voted on immediately without further discussion. It can be proposed more than once in a discussion. It cannot be brought by a person who has already spoken. When the discussion is resumed the person whose speech was interrupted has the right to speak first.

2.9.4 Personal explanation – a member feeling that some material part of their former speech has been misunderstood or is being grossly misinterpreted by a later speaker may ask to make a personal explanation.

2.9.5 Objection – a member may raise an objection if the remarks of a speaker are deemed offensive or derogatory. On such an objection being raised the Moderator shall immediately rule as to whether the remarks are offensive or derogatory and if the ruling is in favour of the objection may require the speaker to withdraw the remark. Should the speaker refuse to do so the Moderator may require the speaker immediately to terminate their speech.

## 3. Presentation of business

3.1 All reports of committees, together with the draft motions arising therefrom, shall be delivered to the General Secretary by a date to be determined, so that they may be printed and circulated to members in time for consideration before the date of the Assembly meeting.

3.2 A synod may deliver to the General Secretary not less than twelve weeks before the commencement of the meeting of the Assembly notice in writing of a motion for consideration at the Assembly. This notice shall include the names of those appointed to propose and second the motion at the Assembly.

- 3.3 A local church wishing to put forward a motion for consideration by the General Assembly shall submit the motion to its synod for consideration and, if the synod so decides, transmission to the Assembly, at such time as will enable the synod to comply with Standing Order 3.2 above.
- 3.4 A member of the Assembly may deliver to the General Secretary not less than 21 days before the date of the meeting of the Assembly a notice in writing of a motion (which notice must include the name of a seconder) to be included in the Assembly agenda. If the subject matter of such a notice of motion appears to the General Secretary to be an infringement of the rights of a synod through which the matter could properly have been raised, the General Secretary shall inform the member accordingly and bring the matter before the Assembly arrangements committee which shall advise the Assembly as to the procedure to be followed.
- 3.5 Proposals for amendments to the Basis and Structure of the URC, which may be made by the Mission Council or a committee of the General Assembly or a synod, shall be in the hands of the General Secretary not later than 12 weeks before the opening of the Assembly. The General Secretary, in addition to the normal advice to members of the Assembly, shall, as quickly as possible, inform all Synod Clerks of the proposed amendment.
- 3.6 It shall not be in order, whether in en bloc business, majority voting, or consensus decision-making, to move a motion or amendment which:
- 3.6.1 contravenes any part of the Basis of Union, or
  - 3.6.2 involves the Church in expenditure without prior consideration by the appropriate committee, or
  - 3.6.3 pre-empts discussion of a matter to be considered later in the agenda, or
  - 3.6.4 amends or reverses a decision reached by the Assembly at its preceding two meetings unless the Moderator, Clerk and General Secretary together decide that changed circumstances or new evidence justify earlier reconsideration of the matter, or
  - 3.6.5 is not related to the report of a committee and has not been the subject of 21 days' notice under 3.6.5.

The decision of the Moderator (in the case of 3.6.1, 3.6.2, 3.6.3, and 3.6.5) and of the Moderator with the Clerk and the General Secretary (in the case of 3.6.4) on the application of this Standing Order shall be final.

## 4. Motions and amendments

- 4.1 A report presented to the Assembly by a committee or synod, under Standing Order 1.1, shall be received for debate, unless notice has been duly given under Standing Order 3.4 of a motion to refer back to that committee or synod the whole or part of the report and its attached motion(s). Such a motion for reference back shall be debated and voted upon before the relevant report is itself debated. To carry such a motion two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. When a report has been received for debate, and before any motions consequent upon it are proposed, any member may speak to a matter arising from the report which is not the subject of a motion.
- 4.2 During the meeting of the Assembly and on the report of a committee, notice (including the names of proposer and seconder) shall be given to the Clerk of any new motions which arise from the material of the report, and of any amendments which affect the substance of motions already presented. The Moderator shall decide whether such motion or amendment requires to be circulated in writing to members before it is discussed by the Assembly. During the course of the debate a new motion or amendment may be stated orally without supporting speech in order to ascertain whether a member is willing to second it.

- 4.3 No motion or amendment shall be spoken to by its proposer, debated, or put to the Assembly unless it is known that there is a seconder, the exception to this being motions presented on behalf of a committee, of which printed notice has been given.
- 4.4 A seconder may second without speaking and, by declaring the intention of doing so, reserves the right of speaking until a later period in the debate.
- 4.5 An amendment shall be either to omit words or to insert words or to do both, but no amendment shall be in order which has the effect of introducing an irrelevant proposal or of negating the motion. The Moderator may rule that a proposed amendment should be treated as an alternative motion under Standing Order 4.10.
- 4.6 If an amendment is carried, the motion as amended shall take the place of the original motion and shall become the substantive motion upon which any further amendment may be moved. If an amendment is rejected a further amendment with a different outcome may be moved.
- 4.7 An amendment which has been moved and seconded shall be disposed of before any further amendment may be moved, but notice may be given of intention to move a further amendment should the one before the Assembly be rejected.
- 4.8 The mover may, with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Assembly, alter the motion or amendment proposed.
- 4.9 A motion or amendment may be withdrawn by the proposer with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Assembly. Any such consent shall be signified without discussion. It shall not be in order for any member to speak upon it after the proposer has asked permission to withdraw unless such permission shall have been refused.
- 4.10 Alternative (but not directly negative) motions may be moved and seconded in competition with a motion before the Assembly. After any amendments duly moved under Standing Orders 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7 have been dealt with and debate on the alternative motions has ended, the movers shall reply to the debate in reverse order to that in which they spoke initially. The first vote shall be a vote in favour of each of the motions, put in the order in which they were proposed, the result not being announced for one until it is announced for all. If any of them obtains a majority of those voting, it becomes the sole motion before the Assembly. If none of them does so, the motion having the fewest votes is discarded. Should the lowest two be equal, the Moderator gives a casting vote. The voting process is repeated until one motion achieves a majority of those voting. Once a sole motion remains, votes for and against that motion shall be taken in the normal way and in accordance with Standing Order 7.

## **5. Timing of speeches and of other business**

- 5.1 Save by prior agreement of the officers of the Assembly, speeches made in the presentation of reports concerning past work of Assembly Committees which are to be open to question, comment or discussion shall not exceed five minutes.
- 5.2 Save by the prior agreement of the Officers of the Assembly, speeches made in support of the motions from any Assembly committee, including the Mission Council, or from any synod shall not in aggregate exceed 45 minutes, nor shall speeches in support of any particular committee or synod motion exceed 12 minutes, (eg a committee with three motions may not exceed 36 minutes). The proposers of any other motion of which due notice has been given shall be allowed an aggregate of 10 minutes, unless a longer period be recommended by the Officers of the Assembly or determined by the Moderator. Each subsequent speaker in any debate shall be allowed five minutes unless the Moderator

shall determine otherwise; it shall, in particular, be open to the Moderator to determine that all speeches in a debate or from a particular point in a debate shall be of not more than three minutes.

- 5.3 When a speech is made on behalf of a committee, it shall be so stated. Otherwise a speaker shall begin by giving name and accreditation to the Assembly.
- 5.4 Secretaries of committees and full-time Executive Secretaries who are not members of Assembly may speak on the report of a committee for which they have responsibility at the request of the Convener concerned. They may speak on other reports with the consent of the Moderator.
- 5.5 In each debate, whether on a motion or on an amendment, no one shall address the Assembly more than once, except that at the close of each debate the proposer of the motion or the amendment, as the case may be, shall have the right to reply, but must strictly confine the reply to answering previous speakers and must not introduce new matters. Such reply shall close the debate on the motion or the amendment.
- 5.6 The foregoing Standing Order (5.5) shall not prevent the asking or answering of a question which arises from the matter before the Assembly or from a speech made in the debate upon it.

## 6. Closure of debate

- 6.1 A member of Assembly may deliver to the General Secretary not less than 21 days before the date of the meeting of the Assembly a notice in writing of a motion that the General Assembly, for the better consideration of a specified resolution and its related documents, goes into a committee of the whole Assembly. Provided that the Moderator, Clerk and General Secretary together decide that this rule may appropriately be applied in the case of the said resolution, the motion shall be presented immediately following the opening speeches in support of the primary motion. For such a motion to be carried, two thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. Committee procedure enables members to speak more than once and exploratory votes to be taken on particular points or suggested changes. The number and length of speeches shall be at the discretion of the Moderator. After discussion in committee and decision on any proposed changes the Clerk shall draw the attention of the Assembly to any changes to the original text which have been agreed. The Moderator shall then declare the committee stage to be ended, and the Assembly shall proceed to hear a closing speech from the mover of the motion under discussion and proceed to a vote on the motion, subject to any further motion under Standing Order 6. The decision of the Moderator with the Clerk and the General Secretary on the application of this Standing Order shall be final.
- 6.2 In the course of the business any member may move that the question under consideration be not put. This motion takes precedence over every motion before the Assembly. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded and the proposer of the motion or amendment under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule. Should the motion be carried the business shall immediately end and the Assembly shall proceed to the next business.
- 6.3 In the course of any discussion, any member may move that the question be now put. This is sometimes described as “the closure motion”. If the Moderator senses that there is a wish or need to close a debate, the Moderator may ask whether any member wishes so to move; the Moderator may not simply declare a debate closed. Provided that it appears to the Moderator that the motion is a fair use of this rule, the vote shall be taken upon it immediately it has been seconded. When an amendment is under discussion, this motion shall apply only to that amendment. To carry this motion, two-thirds of the votes cast must



be given in its favour. The mover of the original motion or amendment, as the case may be, retains the right of reply before the vote is taken on the motion or amendment.

- 6.4 During the course of a debate on a motion any member may move that decision on this motion be deferred to the next Assembly. This rule does not apply to debates on amendments since the Assembly needs to decide the final form of a motion before it can responsibly vote on deferral. The motion then takes precedence over other business. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded and the proposer of the motion under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule or that deferral would have the effect of annulling the motion. To carry this motion, two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. At the discretion of the Moderator, the General Secretary may be instructed by a further motion, duly seconded, to refer the matter for consideration by other councils and/or

by one or more committees of the Assembly. The General Secretary shall provide for the deferred motion to be represented at the next Meeting of the General Assembly.

- 6.5 The motions described in Standing Orders 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4 above are exceptions to Standing Order 4.3, in that they may be moved and spoken to without the proposer having first obtained and announced the consent of a seconder. They must, however, be seconded before being put to the vote. Precedence as between motions under 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4 is determined by the fact that after one of them is before the Assembly no other motion can be moved until that one has been dealt with.

## 7. Voting

- 7.1 Voting on any motion whose effect is to alter, add to, modify or supersede the Basis, the Structure and any other form or expression of the polity and doctrinal formulations of the United Reformed Church, is governed by paragraph 3(1) and (2) of the Structure.
- 7.2 Other motions before the Assembly, not subject to the consensus process, shall be determined by a majority of the votes of members of the Assembly present and voting as indicated by a show of voting cards, except:
- 7.2.1 if the Assembly decides before the vote that a paper ballot be the method of voting or
- 7.2.2 if the show of cards indicates a very close vote, and the Moderator decides, or a member of Assembly proposes and the Assembly agrees, that a paper ballot shall be the method of voting.
- 7.3 To provide for voting in the case of a paper ballot, and to assist in taking a count of votes when the Moderator decides this is necessary, the nominations committee shall appoint tellers for each Assembly.
- 7.4 Any electronic voting system approved by the Assembly arrangements committee shall be deemed to meet the requirements of these Standing Orders.

## 8. Questions

- 8.1 A member may, if two days' notice in writing has been given to the General Secretary, ask the Moderator or the Convener of any committee any question on any matter relating to the business of the Assembly to which no reference is made in any report before the Assembly.
- 8.2 A member may, when given opportunity by the Moderator, ask the presenter of any report before the Assembly a question seeking additional information or explanation relating to matters contained within the report.

- 8.3 Questions asked under Standing Orders 8.1 and 8.2 shall be put and answered without discussion.

## 9. Points of order, personal explanations, dissent

- 9.1 A member shall have the right to rise and call attention to a point of order, and immediately on this being done any other member addressing the Assembly shall cease speaking until the Moderator has determined the question of order. The decision on any point of order rests entirely with the Moderator. Any member calling to order unnecessarily is liable to censure of the Assembly.
- 9.2 A member feeling that some material part of a former speech by such member at the same meeting has been misunderstood or is being grossly misinterpreted by a later speaker may rise and request the Moderator's permission to make a personal explanation. If the Moderator so permits, a member so rising shall be entitled to be heard forthwith.
- 9.3 The right to record in the minutes a dissent from any decision of the Assembly shall only be granted to a member by the Moderator if the reason stated, either verbally at the time or later in writing, appears to the Moderator to fall within the provisions of paragraph 10 of the Basis of Union.
- 9.4 The decision of the Moderator on a point of order, or on the admissibility of a personal explanation, or on the right to have a dissent recorded, shall not be open to discussion.

## 10. Admission of public and press

- 10.1 Members of the public and representatives of the press shall be admitted to the Assembly unless the Assembly otherwise decides, and they shall occupy such places as are assigned to them.

## 11. Circulation of documents

- 11.1 Only documents authorised by the General Secretary in consultation with the Convener of the Assembly arrangements committee may be distributed within the building in which the Assembly is meeting.

## 12. Closed Session

- 12.1 A closed session is one in which the business is highly sensitive. Only members of Assembly, the Legal Adviser, and any technical or venue staff required to enable Assembly to meet safely may be present. Neither content nor process may be divulged to non-members, save specific information authorised by the Moderator in consultation with the Clerk and the Legal Adviser. No social media in any form may be used during a closed session, nor to report upon such closed session. Any live streaming must be switched off. Minutes will be taken, but these will be held *in retentis* by the Clerk, and shall not be made available to non-members.
- 12.2 A closed session may be called for at any time in any decision-making mode, and voted upon by the Assembly, requiring a simple majority. This motion takes precedence over every motion before the Assembly. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded, and the proposer of the motion or amendment under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward,



the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule. Should the motion be carried the business shall immediately pause while non-members leave the room.

- 12.3 If a matter is known to be highly sensitive in advance, then the Assembly Officers, consulting the Legal Adviser if necessary, may announce in advance that a certain piece of business will be conducted in a closed session giving their reasons.
- 12.4 Where possible a closed session will begin after a break, in which event everyone must leave the hall. Once the hall is empty, only those entitled to be present shall be admitted. Members of Assembly may leave the hall during a closed session, but if they do so they may not be re-admitted.

### **13. Use of Electronic devices and communications during the course of debate**

- 13.1 Although many meetings take place in wi-fi enabled rooms, and many attending will have access to systems of electronic communication and to social media sites during business sessions, their primary responsibility is to attend to the business and participate in the decision making. Those present must refrain both from posting on social media sites during business sessions and from commenting upon partially completed business. It is the responsibility of the communications and editorial committee's staff to make official announcements. This restriction is only in place when in session; those attending are free to join in the online debates during breaks and after the close of business. All electronic devices must be silent when a meeting is in session.
- 13.2 Everything written and shared on social media sites at any time is the sole responsibility of the author, and is subject to the same defamation laws as any other form of written communication.

### **14. Record of the Assembly**

- 14.1 A record of attendance at the meetings of the Assembly shall be kept in such a manner as the Assembly arrangements committee may determine.
- 14.2 The draft minutes of each day's proceedings shall be made available in an appropriate form normally on the following day. They shall, after any necessary correction, be approved at the opening of a subsequent session. Concerning the minutes of the closing day of the Assembly the Clerk shall submit a motion approving their insertion in the full minutes of the Assembly after review and any necessary correction by the officers of the Assembly. Before such a motion is voted upon, any member may ask to have read out the written minute on any particular item.
- 14.3 A signed copy of the minutes shall be preserved in the custody of the General Secretary as the official record of the Assembly's proceedings.
- 14.4 As soon as possible after the Assembly meeting ends, the substance of the minutes together with any other relevant papers shall be published as a "Record of Assembly" and a copy sent to every member of the Assembly, each synod and local church.

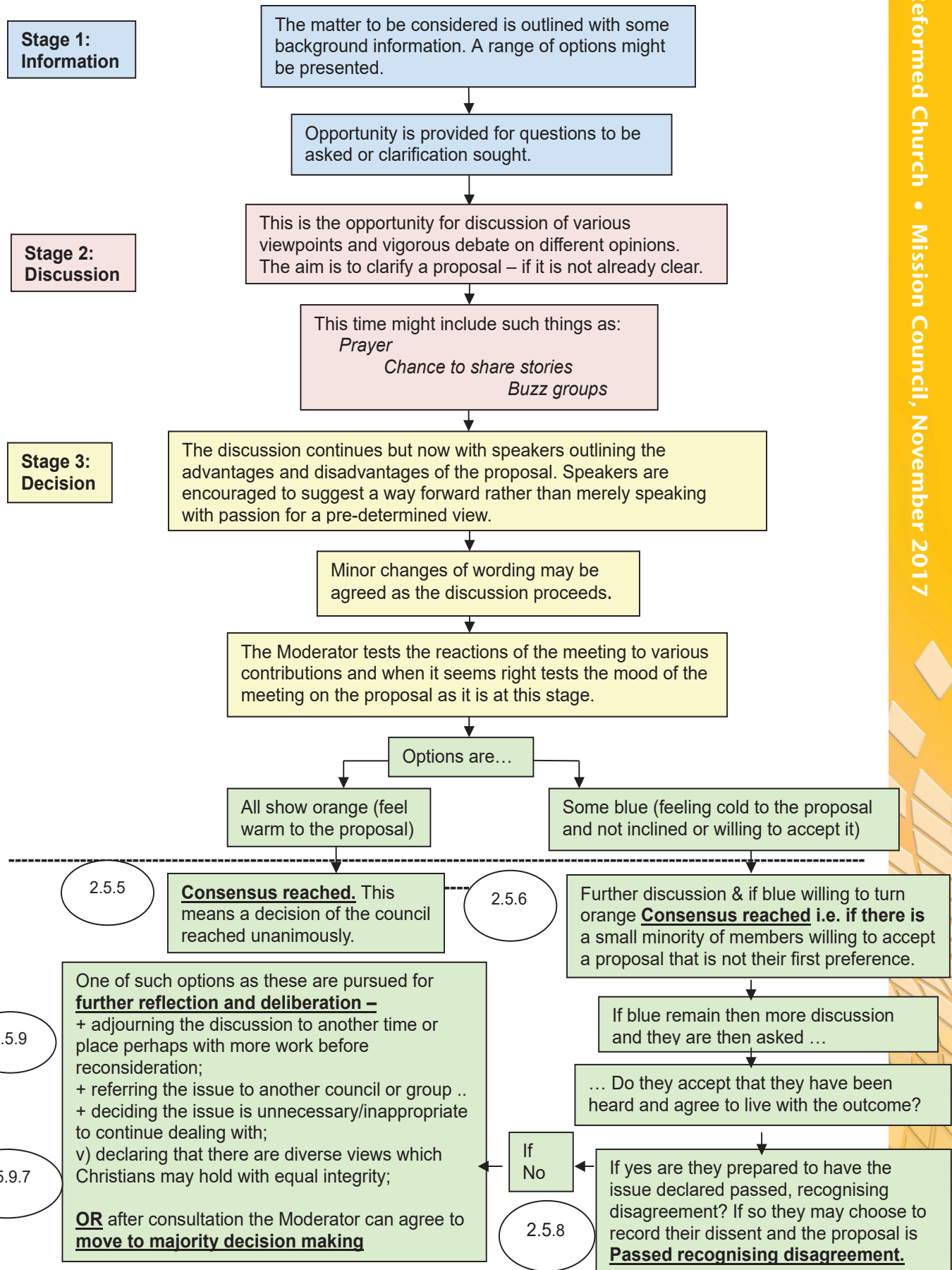
## **15. Suspension and amendment of Standing Orders**

- 15.1 In any case of urgency or upon proposal of a motion of which due notice has been given, any one or more of the Standing Orders may be suspended at any meeting, provided that three-fourths of the members of the Assembly present and voting shall so decide.
- 15.2 Motions to amend the Standing Orders shall be referred to the Clerk of the Assembly for report before being voted on by the Assembly (or, in case of urgency, by the Mission Council). The Clerk of the Assembly may from time to time suggest amendments.

*Last updated 21 March 2016*

# Flow Chart to guide the use of Standing Order 2 – Consensus Decision Making

NB – this flowchart is only for exploration, and is not definitive. The words always take precedence.



## Standing Orders of General Assembly – proposed simplified version

### 1. The Agenda of the Assembly

- 1.1 At its meetings the Assembly shall consider reports and draft motions prepared by its committees which include the Mission Council or by synods, and motions and amendments of which due notice has been given submitted by individual members of the Assembly.
- 1.2 For the good ordering of General Assembly's time, the Moderators for that Assembly, in consultation with the General Secretary and the Clerk, shall group the draft motions into three Groups which shall determine the manner in which the Assembly shall consider them: A – en bloc, B – majority voting, and C – consensus. All matters covered by paragraphs 3(1) & (2) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church shall be placed in Group B. In the case of any other matter the Moderator may rule at any time that a motion be taken from Group B and placed in Group C. At the same time the grouping of draft motions is published any matters already known to be urgent under Standing Order 2.3 shall also be published, with reasons given.
- 1.3 The motions in Group A shall be taken en bloc, following Standing Order 2.
- 1.4 The motions in Group B shall be determined by majority vote, following Standing Order 3.
- 1.5 The motions in Group C shall be considered by consensus decision making process, following Standing Order 4.
- 1.6 Standing Orders 5 to 15 shall apply at all times, regardless of the mode of decision-making in use.
- 1.6 The Assembly arrangements committee shall prepare before each meeting of the Assembly a draft order of business, and submit it to the Assembly as early as convenient in the programme.
- 1.7 Motions arising from a report which have been duly seconded and submitted by individual members of Assembly under Standing Order 4.2 shall be taken at a point in the business determined by the Moderator on the advice of the Convenor of the Assembly arrangements committee.
- 1.8 If notice has been given of two or more motions on the same subject, or two or more amendments to the same motion, these shall be taken in the order decided by the Moderator on the advice of the Clerk.
- 1.9 The Convenor of the Assembly arrangements committee may, during the meeting of the Assembly, propose that the order of business be changed.

### 2. En bloc business

- 2.1 The proposal from the Moderators of items of business to be taken en bloc should be notified to Assembly members in advance of their meeting.
- 2.2 Notice in writing to the effect that one or more of the motions included in Group A should be considered separately may be given to the General Secretary by the close of business on the first day of the meeting of the Assembly. If such notice, which must be signed by at least six members of the Assembly, is duly received, then the motion(s) in question shall be removed from Group A. It shall be for the Moderators, in consultation with the General

Secretary and the Clerk, to determine in which of Groups B and C any such separated motions should be placed.

- 2.3 When the single motion to approve en bloc business is before the Assembly, the vote shall be taken immediately, the motion being determined by a majority of the votes of members of the Assembly present and voting as indicated by a show of voting cards.

### 3. Majority Voting

- 3.1 A report presented to the Assembly by a committee or synod, under Standing Order 1.1, shall be received for debate, unless notice has been duly given under Standing Order 5.4 of a motion to refer back to that committee or synod the whole or part of the report and its attached motion(s). Such a motion for reference back shall be debated and voted upon before the relevant report is itself debated. To carry such a motion two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. When a report has been received for debate, and before any motions consequent upon it are proposed, any member may speak to a matter arising from the report which is not the subject of a motion.
- 3.2 During the meeting of the Assembly and on the report of a committee, notice (including the names of proposer and seconder) shall be given to the Clerk of any new motions which arise from the material of the report, and of any amendments which affect the substance of motions already presented. The Moderator shall decide whether such motion or amendment requires to be circulated in writing to members before it is discussed by the Assembly. During the course of the debate a new motion or amendment may be stated orally without supporting speech in order to ascertain whether a member is willing to second it.
- 3.3 No motion or amendment shall be spoken to by its proposer, debated, or put to the Assembly unless it is known that there is a seconder. The only exception to this are motions presented on behalf of a committee, of which printed notice has been given.
- 3.4 A seconder may second without speaking and, by declaring the intention of doing so, reserve the right of speaking until a later period in the debate.
- 3.5 An amendment shall be either to omit words or to insert words or to do both, but no amendment shall be in order which has the effect of introducing an irrelevant proposal or of negating the motion. The Moderator may rule that a proposed amendment should be treated as an alternative motion under Standing Order 3.10.
- 3.6 If an amendment is carried, the motion as amended shall take the place of the original motion and shall become the substantive motion upon which any further amendment may be moved. If an amendment is rejected, a further amendment with a different outcome may be moved.
- 3.7 An amendment which has been moved and seconded shall be disposed of before any further amendment may be moved, but notice may be given of intention to move a further amendment should the one before the Assembly be rejected.
- 3.8 The mover may, with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Assembly, alter the motion or amendment proposed.
- 3.9 A motion or amendment may be withdrawn by the proposer with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Assembly. Any such consent shall be signified without discussion. It shall not be in order for any member to speak upon it after the proposer has asked permission to withdraw unless such permission shall have been refused.



- 3.10 Alternative (but not directly negative) motions may be moved and seconded in competition with a motion before the Assembly. It shall be for the Moderator, on the advice of the Clerk, to rule when motions shall be considered as alternatives under the Terms of this Standing Order.
- 3.10.1 When such draft alternative motions have been received by the General Secretary, the Moderators may ask the General Secretary to convene a meeting (physical or electronic) of the proposers, to ascertain if it may be possible to agree on a single draft motion to put before the Assembly, or to clarify the areas of disagreement.
- 3.10.2 If the Assembly has alternative motions before it, each proposer shall be given the opportunity to present their motion in an order decided by the Moderator.
- 3.10.3 After any amendments duly moved under Standing Orders 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 have been dealt with and debate on the alternative motions has ended, the movers shall reply to the debate in reverse order to that in which they spoke initially. The first vote shall be a vote in favour of each of the motions, put in the order in which they were proposed, the result not being announced for one until it is announced for all. If any of them obtains a majority of those voting, it becomes the sole motion before the Assembly. If none of them does so, the motion having the fewest votes is discarded. Should the lowest two be equal, the Moderator gives a casting vote. The voting process is repeated until one motion achieves a majority of those voting.
- 3.10.4 Once a sole motion remains, further discussion is permissible and votes for and against that motion shall be taken in the normal way and in accordance with Standing Order 7.
- 3.11 In the course of the business any member may move that the question under consideration be not put. This motion takes precedence over every motion before the Assembly. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded and the proposer of the motion or amendment under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule. Should the motion be carried, the business shall immediately end and the Assembly shall proceed to the next business.
- 3.12 In the course of any discussion, any member may move that the question be now put. This is sometimes described as “the closure motion”. If the Moderator senses that there is a wish or need to close a debate, the Moderator may ask whether any member wishes so to move; the Moderator may not simply declare a debate closed. Provided that it appears to the Moderator that the motion is a fair use of this rule, the vote shall be taken upon it immediately it has been seconded. When an amendment is under discussion, this motion shall apply only to that amendment. To carry this motion, two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. The mover of the original motion or amendment, as the case may be, retains the right of reply before the vote is taken on the motion or amendment.
- 3.13 During the course of a debate on a motion any member may move that decision on this motion be deferred to the next Assembly. This rule does not apply to debates on amendments since the Assembly needs to decide the final form of a motion before it can responsibly vote on deferral. The motion then takes precedence over other business. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded and the proposer of the motion under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule or that deferral would have the effect of annulling the motion. To carry this motion, two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. At the discretion of the Moderator, the General Secretary may be instructed by a further motion, duly seconded, to refer the matter for consideration by other councils and/or by one or more committees of the Assembly. The General Secretary shall provide for the deferred motion to be presented again at the next Meeting of the General Assembly.



- 3.14 The motions described in Standing Orders 3.11, 3.12 and 3.13 above are exceptions to Standing Order 3.3, in that they may be moved and spoken to without the proposer having first obtained and announced the consent of a seconder. They must, however, be seconded before being put to the vote. Precedence as between motions under 3.11, 3.12, and 3.13 is determined by the fact that after one of them is before the Assembly no other motion can be moved until that one has been dealt with.
- 3.15 Motions before the Assembly under Standing Order 3 shall be determined by a majority of the votes of members of the Assembly present and voting as indicated by a show of voting cards, except:
- 3.15.1 if the Assembly decides before the vote that a paper ballot be the method of voting, or
- 3.15.2 if the show of cards indicates a very close vote, and the Moderator decides, or a member of Assembly proposes and the Assembly agrees, that a paper ballot shall be the method of voting.

#### 4. Consensus decision making<sup>1</sup>

- 4.1 Those motions in Group C shall be determined using this Standing Order.
- 4.2 The first stage of the Consensus Decision Making procedure is the Information Session. At the start of this session, if the Moderator judges that the matter before the Assembly is urgent, requiring decision during the current meeting of the Assembly, the Moderator shall inform the Assembly that this is the case and advise that if following the Consensus procedures results in continuing disagreement it may be necessary to move to a majority decision under Standing Order 4.4.3. During the Information Session, Members of Assembly may ask questions only to seek clarification or further information.
- 4.3 Once the Moderator decides that the information session has ended, the Assembly moves into the Discussion Session, in which the substance of the matter may be discussed.
- 4.3.1 The methods used may include prayer, buzz groups, group discussions, speeches to the whole Assembly, time for thinking during a break, etc. The Moderator may invite Assembly to indicate opinions by the use of coloured cards at this stage, and shall ensure that the full ranges of voices are given opportunity to contribute.
- 4.3.2 Minor changes of wording may be agreed as the discussion proceeds. If a proposed change is, in the opinion of the Moderator upon the advice of the Clerk, a major change, then a proposer and seconder are required.
- 4.4 When the Moderator senses that the Assembly may be ready to reach a decision, s/he shall state that Assembly is moving into the Decision Session, and shall check whether the Assembly is nearing consensus. If during the Decision Session substantially new material or proposals emerge, the Moderator may rule that the Assembly shall return to the Discussion Session.
- 4.4.1 If there is unanimous support for, or rejection of, the proposal it is declared passed or rejected by consensus.
- 4.4.2 If there is strong, but not unanimous, support, the Moderator shall ask if those who do not support the proposal as their first option are nonetheless prepared to accept the proposal. If so, the issue is declared resolved by consensus.
- 4.4.3 Where some members of Assembly indicate an unwillingness to accept a proposal there shall be further discussion and then the Moderator shall seek to ascertain that they accept that they have been heard and agree to live with the outcome, by asking if they are prepared to have the issue declared passed, recognising

<sup>1</sup> More information on Consensus Decision Making, and its ethos, detailed methodology, and practice, can be found in the book *The Church Guide for Making Decisions Together* by Terence Corkin and Julia Kuhn Wallace, Abingdon Press (2 May 2017), ISBN 978-1501838071. These Standing Orders remain the definitive guide for United Reformed Church purposes.

disagreement. Subject to Standing Order 9.3, a member may ask to have their dissent recorded in the minutes.

- 4.4.4 If there is continuing disagreement, the Assembly may, at the discretion of the Moderator, look for further possibilities including but not limited to:
- 4.4.4.1 adjourning the discussion to another time or place, perhaps with more work before reconsideration;
  - 4.4.4.2 asking a named person to continue to work on the issue with relevant people until the next Assembly;
  - 4.4.4.3 referring the issue to another council or group to deal with;
  - 4.4.4.4 deciding the issue is unnecessary/inappropriate to continue dealing with;
  - 4.4.4.5 declaring that there are diverse views which Christians may hold with equal integrity;
  - 4.4.4.6 if the issue has previously been notified as urgent, moving to majority decision;
  - 4.4.4.7 in the event of urgency not previously notified, moving to majority decision; in that event, the Moderator shall give her/his reasons, and test the mind of Assembly in forming her/his judgement.
- 4.5 The Assembly and Moderator may be assisted by a facilitation group, which shall be appointed at the beginning of each Assembly by the Assembly.
- 4.6 Coloured cards are not essential in consensus decision making but they can be helpful. Orange cards, held at the request of the Moderator, indicate warmth towards a point of view or approval of a proposal. Blue cards, held at the request of the Moderator, indicate coolness about what has been heard or the need for greater clarity or disapproval of a proposal.

## 5. Presentation of business

- 5.1 All reports of committees, together with the draft motions arising therefrom, shall be delivered to the General Secretary by a date to be determined, so that they may be printed and circulated to members in time for consideration before the date of the Assembly meeting.
- 5.2 A synod may deliver to the General Secretary not less than twelve weeks before the commencement of the meeting of the Assembly notice in writing of a motion for consideration at the Assembly. This notice shall include the names of those appointed to propose and second the motion at the Assembly.
- 5.3 A local church wishing to put forward a motion for consideration by the General Assembly shall submit the motion to its synod for consideration and, if the synod so decides, transmission to the Assembly, at such time as will enable the synod to comply with Standing Order 3.2 above.
- 5.4 A member of the Assembly may deliver to the General Secretary not less than 21 days before the date of the meeting of the Assembly a notice in writing of a motion (which notice must include the name of a seconder) to be included in the Assembly agenda. If the subject matter of such a notice of motion appears to the General Secretary to be an infringement of the rights of a synod through which the matter could properly have been raised, the General Secretary shall inform the member accordingly and bring the matter before the Assembly arrangements committee which shall advise the Assembly as to the procedure to be followed.
- 5.5 Proposals for amendments to the Basis and Structure of the URC, which may be made by the Mission Council or a committee of the General Assembly or a synod, shall be in the hands of the General Secretary not later than 12 weeks before the opening of the Assembly. The General Secretary, in addition to the normal advice to members of the

Assembly, shall, as quickly as possible, inform all Synod Clerks of the proposed amendment.

- 5.6 It shall not be in order, whether in en bloc business, majority voting, or consensus decision-making, to move a motion or amendment which:
- 5.6.1 contravenes any part of the Basis of Union, or
  - 5.6.2 involves the Church in expenditure without prior consideration by the appropriate committee, or
  - 5.6.3 pre-empts discussion of a matter to be considered later in the agenda, or
  - 5.6.4 amends or reverses a decision reached by the Assembly at its preceding two meetings unless the Moderator, Clerk and General Secretary together decide that changed circumstances or new evidence justify earlier reconsideration of the matter, or
  - 5.6.5 is not related to the report of a Committee and has not been the subject of 21 days' notice under Standing Order 5.4.

The decision of the Moderator (in the case of 5.6.1, 5.6.2, 5.6.3, and 5.6.5) and of the Moderator with the Clerk and the General Secretary (in the case of 5.6.4) on the application of this Standing Order shall be final.

## 6. Timing of speeches and of other business

- 6.1 Save by prior agreement of the Officers of the Assembly, speeches made in the presentation of reports concerning past work of Assembly committees which are to be open to question, comment or discussion shall not exceed five minutes.
- 6.2 The Assembly may meet in parallel sessions to consider the past work of Assembly committees for questions and comments. Any draft motions arising therefrom must be dealt with in a plenary session of the Assembly.
- 6.3 Save by the prior agreement of the Officers of the Assembly, speeches made in support of the motions from any Assembly committee, including the Mission Council, or from any synod shall not in aggregate exceed 45 minutes, nor shall speeches in support of any particular committee or synod motion exceed 10 minutes, (eg a committee with three motions may not exceed 30 minutes). The proposers of any other motion of which due notice has been given shall be allowed an aggregate of 10 minutes, unless a longer period be recommended by the Officers of the Assembly or determined by the Moderator.
- 6.4 Each subsequent speaker in any debate shall be allowed five minutes unless the Moderator shall determine otherwise; it shall, in particular, be open to the Moderator to determine that all speeches in a debate or from a particular point in a debate shall be of not more than a different specified number of minutes.
- 6.5 When a speech is made on behalf of a committee, it shall be so stated. Otherwise a speaker shall begin by giving name and accreditation to the Assembly.
- 6.6 Secretaries of committees and members of staff who are not members of Assembly may speak on the report of a committee for which they have responsibility at the request of the Convenor concerned. They may speak on other reports with the consent of the Moderator.
- 6.7 In each debate under Standing Order 3, whether on a motion or on an amendment, and in each Decision Session in debates under Standing Order 4, no one shall address the Assembly more than once without the permission of the Moderator, except that at the close of each debate the proposer of the motion or the amendment, as the case may be, shall have the right to reply, but must strictly confine the reply to answering previous speakers and must not introduce new matters. Such reply shall close the debate on the motion or the amendment.

- 6.8 The foregoing Standing Order (6.7) shall not prevent the asking or answering of a question which arises from the matter before the Assembly or from a speech made in the debate upon it.
- 6.9 An invited speaker, whether speaking to a draft motion or not, may address the Assembly for such period of time as may be agreed by the Assembly arrangements committee.

## 7. Voting

- 7.1 Voting on any motion whose effect is to alter, add to, modify or supersede the Basis, the Structure and any other form or expression of the polity and doctrinal formulations of the United Reformed Church, is governed by paragraph 3(1) and (2) of the Structure.
- 7.2 To provide for voting in the case of a paper ballot, and to assist in taking a count of votes when the Moderator decides this is necessary, the Assembly arrangements committee shall appoint tellers for each Assembly.
- 7.3 Any electronic voting system approved by the Assembly arrangements committee shall be deemed to meet the requirements of these Standing Orders.

## 8. Questions

- 8.1 A member may, if two days' notice in writing has been given to the General Secretary, ask the Moderator or the Convenor of any committee any question on any matter relating to the business of the Assembly to which no reference is made in any report before the Assembly.
- 8.2 A member may, when given opportunity by the Moderator, ask the presenter of any report before the Assembly a question seeking additional information or explanation relating to matters contained within the report.
- 8.3 Questions asked under Standing Orders 8.1 and 8.2 shall be put and answered without discussion.

## 9. Points of order, personal explanations, dissent

- 9.1 A member shall have the right to rise and call attention to a point of order, and immediately on this being done any other member addressing the Assembly shall cease speaking until the Moderator has determined the question of order. The decision on any point of order rests entirely with the Moderator. Any member calling to order unnecessarily is liable to censure of the Assembly.
- 9.2 A member feeling that some material part of a former speech by such member at the same meeting has been misunderstood or is being grossly misinterpreted by a later speaker may rise and request the Moderator's permission to make a personal explanation. If the Moderator so permits, a member so rising shall be entitled to be heard forthwith.
- 9.3 The right to record in the minutes a dissent from any decision of the Assembly shall only be granted to a member by the Moderator if the reason stated, either verbally at the time or later in writing, appears to the Moderator to fall within the provisions of paragraph 10 of the Basis of Union.
- 9.4 The decision of the Moderator on a point of order, or on the admissibility of a personal explanation, or on the right to have a dissent recorded, shall not be open to discussion.



## 10. Admission of public and press

- 10.1 Members of the public and representatives of the press shall be admitted to the Assembly unless the Assembly otherwise decides, and they shall occupy such places as are assigned to them.

## 11. Circulation of documents

- 11.1 Only documents authorised by the General Secretary in consultation with the Convener of the Assembly arrangements committee may be distributed within the building in which the Assembly is meeting.

## 12. Closed Session

- 12.1 A closed session is one in which the business is highly sensitive. Only members of Assembly, the Legal Adviser, and any technical or venue staff required to enable Assembly to meet safely may be present. Neither content nor process may be divulged to non-members, save specific information authorised by the Moderator in consultation with the Clerk and the Legal Adviser. No social media in any form may be used during a closed session, nor to report upon such closed session. Any live streaming must be switched off. Minutes will be taken, but these will be held *in retentis* by the Clerk, and shall not be made available to non-members.
- 12.2 A closed session may be called for at any time in any decision-making mode, and voted upon by the Assembly, requiring a simple majority. This motion takes precedence over every motion before the Assembly. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded, and the proposer of the motion or amendment under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule. Should the motion be carried the business shall immediately pause while non-members leave the room.
- 12.3 If a matter is known to be highly sensitive in advance, then the Assembly Officers, consulting the Legal Adviser if necessary, may announce in advance that a certain piece of business will be conducted in a closed session giving their reasons.
- 12.4 Where possible a closed session will begin after a break, in which event everyone must leave the hall. Once the hall is empty, only those entitled to be present shall be admitted. Members of Assembly may leave the hall during a closed session, but if they do so they may not be re-admitted.

## 13. Use of Electronic devices and communications during the course of debate

- 13.1 Although many meetings take place in wi-fi enabled rooms, and many attending will have access to systems of electronic communication and to social media sites during business sessions, their primary responsibility is to attend to the business and participate in the decision making. Those present must refrain both from posting on social media sites during business sessions and from commenting upon partially completed business. It is the responsibility of the communications committee's staff to make official announcements. This restriction is only in place when in session; those attending are free to join in the online debates during breaks and after the close of business in respect of business that the Assembly has completed. All electronic devices must be silent when a meeting is in session.

- 13.2 Everything written and shared on social media sites at any time is the sole responsibility of the author, and is subject to the same defamation laws as any other form of written communication.

## **14. Record of the Assembly**

- 14.1 A record of attendance at the meetings of the Assembly shall be kept in such a manner as the Assembly arrangements committee may determine.
- 14.2 The draft minutes of each day's proceedings shall be made available in an appropriate form normally on the following day. They shall, after any necessary correction, be approved at the opening of a subsequent session. Concerning the minutes of the closing day of the Assembly the Clerk shall submit a motion approving their insertion in the full minutes of the Assembly after review and any necessary correction by the Officers of the Assembly. Before such a motion is voted upon, any member may ask to have read out the written minute on any particular item.
- 14.3 A signed copy of the minutes shall be preserved in the custody of the General Secretary as the official record of the Assembly's proceedings.
- 14.4 As soon as possible after the Assembly meeting ends, the substance of the minutes together with any other relevant papers shall be published as a "Record of Assembly" and a copy sent to every member of the Assembly, each synod and local church.

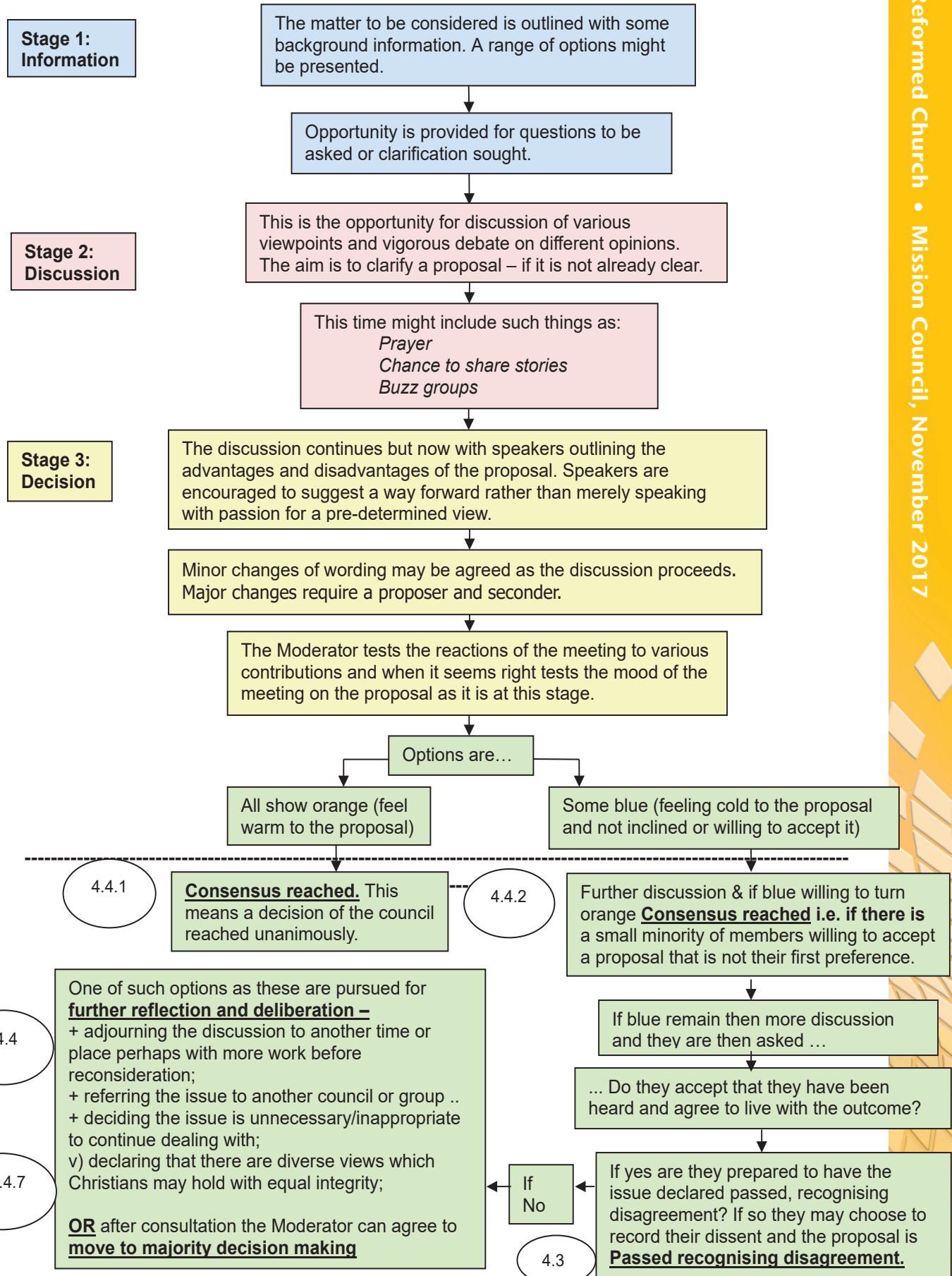
## **15. Suspension and amendment of Standing Orders**

- 15.1 In any case of urgency or upon proposal of a motion of which due notice has been given, any one or more of the Standing Orders may be suspended at any meeting, provided that three-fourths of the members of the Assembly present and voting shall so decide.
- 15.2 Motions to amend the Standing Orders shall be referred to the Clerk of the Assembly for report before being voted on by the Assembly (or, in case of urgency, by the Mission Council). The Clerk of the Assembly may from time to time suggest amendments.



# Flow Chart to guide the use of Standing Order 4 – Consensus Decision Making

NB – this flowchart is only for exploration, and is not definitive. The words always take precedence.





# Paper M2

**Clerk**

Appeals Process

United Church 2017  
Church 2017  
Reformed Church 2017  
Church 2017

# Paper M2

## Clerk

### Appeals Process

#### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	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 updates the definition of a dissident in the Appeals process as set out in paper M2 of Mission Council November 2017.</b>

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	A drafting error has been pointed out, which this paper proposes to correct.
<b>Main points</b>	The current definition of a dissident inadvertently excludes someone who is the subject of a decision from appealing, unless they are a member of the relevant Council, meaning that, for instance, someone could not appeal a synod decision that directly affected them unless they were a member of the synod. This is against natural justice, and was not intended.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	n/a
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The General Secretary

#### Summary of Impact

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

# Appeals Process

1. The current definition of a dissident inadvertently excludes someone who is the subject of a decision from appealing, unless they are a member of the relevant Council, meaning that, for instance, someone could not appeal a synod decision that directly affected them unless they were a member of the synod. This is against natural justice, and was not intended.
2. Mission Council is asked to update the definition of a “dissident” at paragraph 9.20 in the Rules of Procedure to “...a member of that council, **or a person directly affected by a decision of that council**, who dissents...”.





# Paper M3

**Deputy GS (Administration & Resources)**

General Data Protection Regulation

United Church 2017  
Church 2017  
Reformed Church 2017  
Church 2017

# Paper M3

## Deputy GS (Administration & Resources) General Data Protection Regulation

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Jane Baird <a href="mailto:jane.baird@urc.org.uk">jane.baird@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Compliance – in the long term, rather than specifically in the meeting
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To increase awareness of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
<b>Main points</b>	GDPR comes into effect in May 2018. It updates the requirements for the ways in which personal data is processed.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Data Protection Act 1995
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	

### Summary of Impact

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

# General Data Protection Regulations

1. The new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will take effect on 25 May 2018.
2. The GDPR builds on the current data protection regime in the UK, established by the Data Protection Act 1998.
3. Any organisation which handles personal data must comply with the GDPR. The GDPR defines 'personal data' as: any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (a data subject); an identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier, or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural, or social identity of that natural person.
4. The GDPR significantly restricts the use of consent as a justification for processing personal data. Under the GDPR, consent must be freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous. It must also be given by a statement or clear affirmative action. The main implications of the new regulations are that generic consents (for example, those contained in the body of an employment contract) will not be a valid legal basis to justify processing personal data.
5. Penalties for some infringements of the regulation can be the higher of 4% of annual worldwide turnover and €20 million.
6. The existing eight data principles of the Data Protection Act 1998 remain relevant.

## 7. Some of the key changes of the GDPR

- 7.1 **Consent to hold personal data**  
Consent will have to be informed, freely given, specific and unambiguously shown.
- 7.2 **Show Data Protection compliance**  
There will be increased expectations on governance and record-keeping, such as carrying out data protection impact assessments when initiating a new project or system and implementing data protection policies.
- 7.3 **Consider Data Protection**  
The GDPR requires organisations to understand and consider data protection in all new projects and technology, and be able to demonstrate that the impact on individuals has been considered and taken into account.
- 7.4 **Permit Individuals to restrict how their data is used**  
Individuals will have much greater rights, including increased rights to object to certain processing, and the right to be forgotten, to have data corrected and to restrict how data is used. The 'right to be forgotten' enables an individual to request the deletion or removal of personal data where there is no compelling reason for its continued processing.

### 7.5 **Respond more quickly to Subject Access Requests (SAR)**

Subject access requests rights will be expanded and organisations will have an obligation to comply with them without undue delay and within one month (as opposed to the current 40-day period), with a potential extension of up to two additional months.

## 8. **The Information Commissioner provides guidance about GDPR on its website:**

Preparing for GDPR –

<https://ico.org.uk/media/1624219/preparing-for-the-gdpr-12-steps.pdf>; and a readiness self-assessment tool - <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-reform/getting-ready-for-the-gdpr/>

## 9. **Implications for the United Reformed Church**

The GDPR is relevant to all parts of the United Reformed Church: local churches, synods, trust bodies, committees, Church House and any other body which holds personal data. The implications of data gathering, storage, security, transfer, retention and destruction (both physical and electronic) must be understood by all parts of the Church and data processing activities modified, if necessary, to meet the requirements of the GDPR.

## 10. **Support within the United Reformed Church**

Meetings of synod trust and property staff (PLATO) on 10 October and of Synod Clerks on 19 October will both include GDPR in their agenda. Should it become clear at these meetings that a particular kind of support within the URC – a gathering to share information and good practice, a guidance document, a help line – would be both useful and achievable, we shall make this known at Mission Council, and give what information we can about specific plans.

# Paper N1

**Task Group on the future of  
General Assembly**

**Report to Mission Council**

Church 2017  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2017

# Paper N1

## Task Group on the future of General Assembly Report to Mission Council

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Val Morrison <a href="mailto:valmorrison7@btinternet.com">valmorrison7@btinternet.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Section Nine: Decision.  Remainder: The Task Group wish to hear the views of Mission Council on their current proposals.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council instructs the Assembly Arrangements Committee to plan a venue in the central part of the UK for the 2020 General Assembly.</b>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	The matter of location in section 9 requires a decision for 2020, to enable a venue to be booked for the 2020 General Assembly.  The remainder of the report shares the current thinking of the Task Group, which may be refined in the light of feedback from Mission Council before presentation to General Assembly 2018.
<b>Main points</b>	
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	AAC supplementary report to GA 2016, Paper U12 of May 2017.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Everyone, via a survey. There were 547 responses, from individuals, committees, and synods.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	Possible modest increases in required funds whatever we do.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Improvements in the efficiency of our governance processes will reduce the risk of reputational damage.



# Task Group on the future of General Assembly: report to Mission Council November 2017

## Part One – how we reached our recommendations

### 1. The Task Group's Remit

- 1.1 In July 2016 General Assembly resolved to appoint a Task Group “to consider the documentation already available, to consult widely, particularly with synods and assembly committees, and to bring to the General Assembly of 2018 proposals for the form, size, duration, location and funding of the Assembly in subsequent years from 2020 to 2030.”
- 1.2 The report also stated that:  
“The Task Group of five people, including a former Moderator of General Assembly, a current or recent Synod Clerk, and the Clerk of the General Assembly, nominated by the nominations committee, and appointed by the Assembly Officers, to begin work immediately, and report to each meeting of Mission Council. A report to the autumn 2017 meeting of Mission Council should enable that meeting to make decisions that enable a venue to be firmly booked for the 2020 meeting of General Assembly.”
- 1.3 In the event, the Nominations process proved slower than the drafters of the Assembly resolution hoped, and the Task Group was not able to meet until late December 2016. The members of the group are Val Morrison (convenor) (former Assembly Moderator and a former Synod Clerk), Adrian Bulley (Synod Clerk), Dick Gray (former Deputy Treasurer and a current Synod Treasurer), Margaret Marshall (Synod Clerk), along with Michael Hopkins (Assembly Clerk), supported by John Proctor (General Secretary).
- 1.4 The Task Group notes that the current pattern of governance is a two-year cycle, which consists of one meeting of General Assembly and four meetings of Mission Council. The Task Group also noted that these meetings are costed at £200,000 and £20,000 each respectively, making a total budget of £280,000 over the two years of a cycle.
- 1.5 Although Mission Council was not part of the remit, the Task Group are convinced that any serious changes considered to General Assembly cannot be considered in isolation from Mission Council.

### 2. Consideration of documentation already available

- 2.1 The Task Group considered a significant amount of documentation from discussions at Mission Councils over the last few years, including extensive notes from a session led by the General Secretary in March 2016, and the discussions at the 2016 General Assembly based upon the supplementary report of the Assembly Arrangements Committee.

### 3. Consultation

- 3.1 The Task Group members had good and wide connections across the synods, and we made extensive use of these contacts.
- 3.2 Early contact was made with Convenors of assembly committees, in advance of the more general consultation.
- 3.3 Reflections from recent Moderators and their chaplains on their visits to the Assemblies of other churches were sought.
- 3.4 An open survey was undertaken in which there were 547 responses, from individuals, committees, synods, and other groups. We believe that this is a very high response rate for United Reformed Church surveys.
- 3.5 The results of all these consultations underpin all our recommendations. At every stage, we have consciously tried to make recommendations based upon evidence and theology, while having due regard to financial considerations.

### 4. Background

- 4.1 The current discussions result from General Assembly in 2012 resolving to make a significant reduction to the budget for Assembly, but failing to agree any ways to implement that cut. Mission Council did agree ways to implement that decision, but there has been a general dissatisfaction with aspects of the Assembly, voiced by members of the Assembly and by synods, since 2012.
- 4.2 The Task Group also noted that a freezing of the budget since 2012 amounted to a gradual cut in real terms because of inflation. Conference centres, railways, hotels, caterers, and technical services suppliers have all increased their charges each year.

### 5. Comparison with other denominations

- 5.1 As well as the observations from former Moderators and their chaplains, the Task Group considered how churches with similar sizes organised their equivalents to the General Assembly. This is what we discovered:

Church	No. of members	Mem. of GA equiv. and frq. of meeting
Church in Wales	84,000	143, two days twice a year
Presbyterian Ch of Wales	24,000	150, three days once a year
Methodist Ch in Ireland	50,000	260, five days once a year
Scottish Episcopal Church	54,000	150, three days once a year
United Reformed Church	48,000	315, four days every two years

- 5.2 The Task Group also considered larger churches, including the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and the Methodist Church in Great Britain. However, we discovered that these churches spend money and staff time on their equivalents to General Assembly at levels which would rapidly bankrupt the United Reformed Church.

## 6. Theology and ecclesiology of General Assembly

- 6.1 The Structure of the United Reformed Church [paragraph 2(6)] states that the General Assembly:
- “shall embody the unity of the United Reformed Church and act as the central organ of its life and the final authority, under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, in all matters of doctrine and order and in all other concerns of its common life”.
- 6.2 The Task Group believes that there are theological ideas that shape the way that Reformed churches have historically made our decisions and ordered our structures, and wishes to highlight these:
- 6.2.1 A key principle for our tradition is conciliarity, that is, that we reach our decisions as representatives meeting together in council, guided by the Holy Spirit. Congregationalists and the Churches of Christ held the Church Meeting to be the central place of authority, while Presbyterians recognise the authority of the wider councils of Presbytery, synod, and General Assembly. Together these traditions, which are held in common with other Reformed churches, represent a view of the church that understands its authority under Christ to lie in a body of representatives acting in council, rather than in an appointed person or persons. We believe this is fundamental to the ecclesiology of the United Reformed Church.
- 6.2.2 Mission Council in March 2016 was asked to consider several ways that an Assembly’s effectiveness could be viewed. What matters most – the quality of its decisions, the sense of ownership and wide participation it engenders, or the inspiration it offers to those who attend? Clearly these aims need not be at odds with one another, but if one is more important to us than the others, this preference will tend to shape how we plan and deliver Assembly.
- 6.2.3 In this discussion members of Mission Council placed most stress on wide participation, ahead but not to the exclusion of the other two aims. The value of a broad membership, including many people whose primary church involvement is local, the opportunity to hear a balance of different voices, and the sense that the whole Church is overseeing the whole Church, were all attractive aspects of this way of viewing Assembly.
- 6.2.4 However, a problem with a broadly based way of decision-making is that sometimes urgent administrative decisions are needed while the appropriate council is not in session. In such situations a smaller group is sometimes given executive power to act on behalf of the council. Where this practice is infrequent, or when the issues are of no great consequence, the principle of conciliarity is still upheld. However, when the ‘executive’ group becomes a regular and significant feature of the decision-making process, our historical understanding of conciliarity is significantly altered, particularly when the Assembly itself does not make the major decisions.
- 6.2.5 At least since 2006, there is evidence that the United Reformed Church, both at the level of synods and the General Assembly, has given significant and ongoing responsibility to various executive bodies. In the case of the General Assembly this body is the Mission Council.
- 6.3 The remit of Mission Council is:
- “a co-ordinating committee...the purpose of the Mission Council is to enable the Church, in its General Assembly, to take a more comprehensive view of the activity and policy of the Church to decide more carefully about priorities and to encourage the outreach of the Church to the community. Its service is directly towards the Assembly, but its concern is with the whole Church and all

its members, so it will seek to be aware of the pains and joys, the adventures and hopes of the whole body.”<sup>1</sup>

- 6.4 The Structure gives as one of the functions of the General Assembly that it: “shall also appoint a Mission Council with power to act in its name between meetings of the General Assembly and to discharge such other functions as the General Assembly may from time to time direct”<sup>2</sup>  
On this basis, many decisions of Mission Council carry the words “Acting on behalf of the General Assembly...” to indicate that the Mission Council does not carry such authority in its own right but only by delegation from the General Assembly. In practice, however, Mission Council looks very much like a council of the church rather than a committee.
- 6.5 Moving further towards executive government may, of course, be a direction in which the United Reformed Church wishes to proceed, but this would be at the cost of our conciliar heritage, and a step away from how we have hitherto understood Reformed theology.
- 6.6 The question of the future of General Assembly is closely bound to the future of Mission Council: the decrease of the responsibilities of the one means an increase in those of the other. Perhaps, for some, the logical course is that Mission Council should simply replace the General Assembly. If that is the case the Task Group believes that we would need to rethink radically the membership of the Mission Council so that it better reflects the rotational and egalitarian system by which people are appointed to Assembly. Depending upon how one views the Synod Moderators, at present either 50% or 33% of the members of Mission Council owe their position to fulfilling a particular role in the wider church rather than their being appointed by a synod. Some have expressed the view that this proportion is too high.
- 6.7 By contrast, those who believe it is appropriate to reaffirm our conciliar commitment might want the church to consider:
- 6.7.1 An annual meeting of General Assembly.
  - 6.7.2 A corresponding reduction in the meetings and powers of the Mission Council.
  - 6.7.3 Revising the membership of the General Assembly in a manner that attempts to return to the original egalitarian intent of Reformed conciliar structures. Everyone in the synod who desires to attend Assembly gets their fair turn.
- 6.8 We are aware that executive government carries its own self-reinforcing momentum, and if the church wishes to reverse the recent trend towards that, it will take considerable effort.

## 7. Strategic and other questions

- 7.1 The questions raised by our explorations lead the Task Group to ask the church to make some strategic choices:
- 7.1.1 Should we return to an annual Assembly?
  - 7.1.2 Should the frequency and/or powers of Mission Council be reduced?
- 7.2 Less strategic questions raised are:
- 7.2.1 Should there be one or two Moderators of General Assembly? Does the answer to this question change if the frequency of Assembly changes?

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<sup>1</sup> The Manual, section G

<sup>2</sup> Structure, paragraph 2(6)(o)

- 7.2.2 Should Moderators be inducted at the end of General Assembly, and then chair the General Assembly at the end of their period of office? [NB: while decision on this will lie with the 2020 General Assembly, the Moderators for 2018-2020 would value a strong indication of the view of Mission Council, to enable them and their chaplains to consider appropriate plans].

## 8. Criteria for making decisions

- 8.1 The Task Group believe that the United Reformed Church should make decisions on the basis of good theology, good governance, and good strategy.
- 8.2 However, we are aware that the funds are limited, and so decisions the church makes based upon the grounds in paragraph 8.1 have to be affordable and workable. Because of this we have sought to make recommendations broadly in line with the current budget.

## Part two – Recommendations

### 9. Location

- 9.1 The Task Group recommend abandoning the current pattern of rotation of venue around the UK. This pattern was agreed some years ago between the Assembly and the synods, and involves meeting in the nations of the UK in the sequence Wales, England, England, Scotland, England, England, Wales...
- 9.2 The current pattern of rotation has been largely successful in ensuring that General Assembly visits all locations, however the Task Group question the extent to which the Assembly reflects the flavour of the place where it is meeting. The Task Group also received evidence that some synods view hosting the Assembly as a burden rather than a pleasure.
- 9.3 The evidence the Task Group saw showed that the pattern of rotating venues is expensive in both finance and staff time. More site visits are needed to a new venue than one to which we return regularly. Venue hire is also more expensive, because suitable venues in some locations are limited. Travel expenses for Assemblies further from the centre of the UK are higher than more central ones.
- 9.4 The Task Group, therefore, plan to propose to General Assembly that the current pattern of rotation be abandoned, and that instead the Church seeks a venue in the central part of the UK (which we define as being roughly Yorkshire and Lancashire, down to the southern edge of the English Midlands). The Task Group further propose that General Assembly should rotate within this central part of the UK only until a good enough venue is found to which we can return regularly. Even if we met consistently in one place, other synods could be involved in hosting and in shaping the ethos and flavour of the event, if they so wished.
- 9.5 Noting that the Task Group plan to propose to General Assembly that the current pattern of rotating venue be discontinued with immediate effect, we propose the following resolution:



**Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council instructs the Assembly Arrangements Committee to plan a venue in the central part of the UK for the 2020 General Assembly.**

- 9.6 We have consulted the Synod of Scotland, through their Moderator, over the immediate effect of this proposal – that the Assembly would not meet in Scotland in 2020.

## 10. General recommendations

- 10.1 Having consulted extensively, the Task Group propose a number of general recommendations, which we wish to make regardless of decisions to be made about the size and frequency:
- 10.1.1 Time of year: the General Assembly should continue to meet in late June or early July, preferably not clashing with the Methodist Conference, the Church of England General Synod, or the Presbyterian Church of Wales General Assembly. No evidence has been found to suggest that a different time of year would bring any practical, financial, theological, or governance advantages.
- 10.1.2 Meeting at tables can be helpful, but an absolute requirement for tables should not rule out an otherwise suitable and affordable venue.
- 10.1.3 Whatever the number of synod representatives is, that number should be divided equally among the synods, and unfilled places (apart from youth reps) may not be transferred. Smaller synods have found it difficult to ensure fair representation from the breadth (theological, ecclesiological, demographic and geographical) of their synods on the current formula, while some larger synods have difficulty filling the places allocated to them. The Task Group observed that no-one thought an equal division of places among the synods at Mission Council, despite widely differing sizes of synods, was unfair. Therefore the Task Group propose that it would be simpler and fairer to divide the places at General Assembly equally among the synods.
- 10.1.4 Rather than a strict 50:50 division between Ministers of Word and Sacraments and CRCWs on the one hand, and “lay” members on the other, we recommend that a measure of flexibility be introduced, while retaining enough provision to prevent either group dominating. Therefore we propose that at least one third of each synod’s reps should be “lay”, and at least one third “ministers”, with the remaining third open to either category. Equality of representation between ministerial and “lay” has always been an important ecclesiological belief in the United Reformed Church. The Task Group, however, notes that the exact division does not take into account the fact that some Synods now have very few ministers. Nor does it take into account that a number of churches are led by various forms of “lay” leaders. The Task Group propose that the most helpful way to address this situation is to introduce a measure of flexibility, while retaining safeguards for both ministerial and “lay” representation.
- 10.1.5 The Task Group propose that Synod Moderators should be included within the number of each synod’s reps, rather than as a separate category. While the Task Group expect that most synods will wish their Moderator to represent them, this also adds a measure of flexibility because a synod whose Moderator was on sabbatical or close to retirement or on long term sick leave, for instance, might decide that place was better used by another representative.
- 10.1.6 The survey made it clear that the only way of paying for Assembly that will be acceptable to the Church is from the Ministry and Mission Fund. Expecting payment from individuals or from synods would not find support. However, the



Task Group recommend that those attending Assembly should be given a fuller explanation of its costs and a clearer invitation to donate than we presently offer. This possibility should be mentioned on the expenses form, with the option of donating by Gift Aid.

- 10.1.7 The results of the 2017 survey showed clear enthusiasm for wide participation, within the context of a strongly held view that General Assembly is first and foremost a business meeting. In our tradition a business meeting is always held within the context of worship. The Task Group also note that General Assembly being primarily a business meeting does not preclude there being other events and activities, but business is the primary purpose.
- 10.1.8 The Task Group noted from past accounts that some General Assembly Moderators had not been given guidance on discretionary spending, and recommend that the current practice that Moderators should be guided that discretionary spending is limited, and budget figures must be adhered to, is maintained.
- 10.1.9 The Task Group noted that many people now use electronic devices as their primary means of receiving documents, and prefer this to paper copies. Therefore, the Task Group recommend that, as a default, papers will be supplied electronically. The requirements form will allow people to opt into receiving paper copies, as well or instead, at the expense of the Assembly, if they wish.
- 10.1.10 Evidence from several Moderators of General Assembly, serving and former, showed a widespread desire among Moderators that they chair the General Assembly at the end of their term of office, when they had built up practice in chairing Mission Council and gained a greater familiarity with the business of the Assembly. The Task Group also noted that the Presbyterian Church of Wales successfully followed this practice. The Task Group therefore recommend that Moderators should be inducted at the end of the General Assembly at which they take up office, rather than the beginning, and then chair the meeting at the end of their term of office. Were this proposal adopted, then on a one-off basis the Moderators of the 2018 Assembly, Derek Estill and Nigel Uden, would also chair the 2020 Assembly, and their successors would chair the Assembly at the end of their term of office.
- 10.1.11 Experience at Assembly is that some members speak more than others, and by the end of a three-day meeting some faces and voices have become very familiar indeed at the microphone. A response made very strongly in the survey was that a significant majority of the 547 respondents respectfully suggested that this does not always help Assembly to do its business as well as it might. The Task Group considered how to respond to this, and decided to recommend that members of General Assembly receive **three** non-transferable tokens, allowing them to speak on three separate occasions without further permission. After a member's three tokens are used up, they may still speak, but only with the express permission of the Moderator on each subsequent occasion.

## 11. Options the Task Group is not recommending

- 11.1 Before we present options for the size and frequency of General Assembly, we need to lay out some options which we are not offering:
  - 11.1.1 Despite requests from some sections of the Church, the Task Group do not find any evidence that it is realistically possible for the Assembly to meet more often than it currently does yet with the same or a greater number of people attending. The long term trend of both income to the M&M fund and total church membership numbers are falling. We simply cannot afford the

current or a larger Assembly more often, and neither were we convinced that this was appropriate in a church of our size.

- 11.1.2 Despite possible cost savings, the Task Group do not recommend that the Assembly meets less frequently than now. The evidence that we gathered showed us that both the sense of detachment from decision-making that currently exists, and the departure from the ecclesiology of conciliarity, would both be exacerbated by this.

## 12. Number of Moderators

- 12.1 The Task Group's consultations have revealed that in general terms an Assembly Moderatorship which requires a six year commitment places a very significant limitation upon the number of people who can offer themselves for this service.
- 12.2 The Task Group has also observed that the pool of such people available to for this role is not great, and is shrinking, so it is reasonable to suppose that, while there have been no difficulties hitherto, there might be difficulties in finding the right person in the future.
- 12.3 How many Moderators should there then be? One Moderator provides greater clarity for governance, and avoids the issue of what the church would do if two Moderators disagreed upon a question that required a Moderatorial decision.
- 12.4 Two Moderators offer the advantages of sharing the work, covering more things than one Moderator could do, being able to consult one another about difficult decisions, and increasing the profile of our Church through greater exposure.
- 12.5 While there might be some small financial savings in only having one Moderator at a time, these are not significant enough to be a driving factor.
- 12.6 The Task Group's recommends that if the Assembly returns to being annual, it should revert to one Moderator who could be a Minister of Word and Sacrament, a CRCW, or an Elder. If the Assembly remains biennial, then the case for two Moderators remains.

## 13. First option for the frequency and size of General Assembly

- 13.1 Option A – *a shorter annual Assembly, and a reduced frequency of Mission Council*
- 13.2 Assembly returns to meeting annually, with one Moderator, with a slightly reduced size compared to now, and meets for 3 days. Mission Council meets once per year, mid-way between Assemblies.
- 13.3 This option is costed at £128,000 for the General Assembly, with £20,000 for each Mission Council, i.e. a total cost of £296,000 over a two-year cycle (the current budget over a two-year cycle is £280,000).
- 13.4 The detailed and underlying assumptions:
- 13.4.1 Duration 48 hours (2 nights)
- 13.4.2 Representatives reduced to 16 per synod including Moderators (reducing the total from 269 to 208)
- 13.4.3 Others total 39 (currently 46)
- 13.4.4 Cost average is £80 per person per night

- 13.4.5 Catering
  - Packed lunches on 2 days @ £9
  - No Dinners
  - Snacks @ £2/person/day
  - Other catering £250
- 13.4.6 Travel costs average £80
- 13.4.7 Venue costs £12,500
- 13.4.8 Audio visual £15,000
- 13.4.9 Transportation £3,000
- 13.4.10 Additional program costs: £2,500 for Moderators' specials
- 13.4.11 £2,000 for What do you think
- 13.4.12 Set-up costs:
  - Printing £3,000 (based on papers where requested only) remainder by internet
  - Staff costs £12,000 (could be organiser or local staff)
  - Committee costs £1,250 to include site visit costs
- 13.4.13 Contingency £5,000
  
- 13.5 While the Task Group has confidence that these figures are as realistic and achievable as it is possible for any figures relating to any General Assembly to be this far in advance, these figures are offered to demonstrate that the Task Group has undertaken proper research, not to provide a definitive budget against which account can be held with suppliers that have not yet been identified, let alone negotiations begun.
  
- 14. Second option for the frequency and size of General Assembly**
- 14.1 Option B – *a still smaller annual Assembly meeting for the same length as now and a reduced Mission Council*
- 14.2 Assembly returns to meeting annually, with one Moderator, with a more reduced size compared to Option A, but meets for 4 days. Mission Council meets once, mid-way between Assemblies.
- 14.3 This option is costed at £125,000, with £20,000 for each Mission Council, i.e. a total of £290,000 over a two-year cycle (the current budget over a two-year cycle is £280,000).
- 14.4 The detailed and underlying assumptions are:
  - 14.4.1 Duration 72 hours (3 nights)
  - 14.4.2 Representatives reduced to 10 per synod including Moderators (reducing the total from 269 to 130)
  - 14.4.3 Others total 36 (currently 46)
  - 14.4.5 Cost average is £80 per person per night
  - 14.4.6 Catering
    - Packed lunches on 3 days @ £9
    - No Dinners
    - Snacks @ £2/person/day
    - Other catering £250
  - 14.4.7 Travel costs average £80
  - 14.4.8 Venue costs £15,000
  - 14.4.9 Audio visual £15,000
  - 14.4.10 Transportation £3,000
  - 14.4.11 Additional program costs: £2,500 for Moderators specials
  - 14.4.12 £2,000 for What do you think
  - 14.4.13 Set-up costs:

- Printing £2,000 (based on papers where requested only) remainder by internet
- Staff costs £12,000 (could be organiser or local staff)
- Committee costs £1,250 to include site visit costs
- 14.4.14 Contingency £5,000

14.5 As para 13.5.

## 15. Further comments on Options A and B:

- 15.1 It might be said that returning to an annual Assembly is a step backwards. The Task Group believes that no church need be afraid to admit that something hasn't worked as well as was hoped, and if that is the case, we should look to make changes.
- 15.2 The Task Group has seen some evidence that an increase in the number of decisions made by Mission Council has created difficulties in their acceptance, because the authority of Mission Council is challenged. (The termination of the ZI campaign, and the closure of the Windermere Centre would be two examples.) The group believes that reversing the current trend, and making more decisions at General Assembly, would increase confidence in and support of such decisions, and reduce challenge, thereby improving the unity and peace of the United Reformed Church. We cite as additional evidence that the 2014 Assembly came close to calling for the special meeting of Assembly that was eventually held in 2015 because it believed that the registration of buildings (in Scotland of celebrants) for the marriage of same sex couples needed to be based on decisions of the General Assembly itself.

## 16. A third option for the frequency and size of General Assembly

- 16.1 Option C – *adjusting the current model*:
- 16.2 Retaining an Assembly which meets every two years with two Moderators, for a similar length to now, and two Mission Councils per year.
- 16.3 The Task Group is not convinced that the evidence from the survey and consultations, nor our theology, make this our preferred option. Neither does the Task Group believe that this solution solves the underlying concerns that led to our work. Nonetheless, we have provided a means to enable the current model to be adjusted to be affordable.
- 16.4 We would then recommend reducing the size slightly to:
- 16.4.1 16 reps per synod, including 2 youth, making a maximum of 10 “ministers”, and a maximum 10 “lay”;
  - 16.4.2 Ecumenical reps reduced to 5 British and Irish, 5 International and 1 CWM;
  - 16.4.3 URC Youth (those separate from synod youth reps) reduced from 3 to 2;
  - 16.4.4 Conveners reduced by 2, by removing the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee Convener from attending, and by making one of the Immediate Past Moderators Convener of the Nominations Committee, *ex officio*;
  - 16.4.5 RCLs are reduced by one rep since Windermere closed;
  - 16.4.6 Synod Moderators have also been removed from this category, and will be part of synod representatives.
- 16.5 This option is costed at £205,000, with £20,000 for each Mission Council, i.e. a total of £285,000 over a two-year cycle (the current budget over a two-year cycle is £280,000).



- 16.6 The detailed and underlying assumptions:
  - 16.6.1 Duration 72 hours (3 nights)
  - 16.6.2 Representatives reduced to 16 per synod *including Moderators*: total 208.
  - 16.6.3 Others total 43
  - 16.6.4 Cost average is £80 per person per night
  - 16.6.5 Catering
    - Packed lunches on 3 days @ £9
    - Dinners on 3 evenings @ £15
    - Snacks @ £2/person/day
    - Other catering £600
  - 16.6.6 Travel costs average £80
  - 16.6.7 Venue costs £22,000
  - 16.6.8 Audio visual £25,000
  - 16.6.9 Transportation £4,000
  - 16.6.10 Additional program costs: £2,500 for Moderators specials
  - 16.6.11 £3,300 for What do you think
  - 16.6.12 Set-up costs:
    - Printing £5,000 (based on papers where requested only) remainder by internet
    - Staff costs £20,000 (could be organiser or local staff)
    - Committee costs £2,500 to include site visit costs
  - 16.6.13 Contingency £10,000
  
- 16.7 As para 13.5..

## 17. Mission Council

- 17.1 If the Assembly were to opt for Option A or Option B, the Task Group's response to the evidence and theology is to suggest that there would be less need for Mission Council to act as it does now, which would mean that Mission Council had a smaller and more focused task, which would then merit a smaller and more focused membership.
  
- 17.2 Therefore, the Task Group propose that if Assembly were annual, Mission Council would only need to meet either for one residential meeting, or for two one-day meetings. The group's view is that more is achieved in one residential meeting at smaller travel costs, although two one-day meetings may be better for disposing of minor business more expeditiously.
  
- 17.3 At the moment it is possible for members of Mission Council not to be members of the General Assembly. It is unusual, if not unique, for people to be members of an executive body without being members of the body of which they are an executive. This could be resolved if synods were asked to nominate which of their reps to General Assembly were to be members of Mission Council in the forthcoming year.
  
- 17.4 Unintended consequences of shrinking the work of Mission Council might be a weakening of the relationships within that body that help it to handle controversial and complex matters, and a weakening of the support given to the small number of Advisory Groups (for example, Law and Polity, or Safeguarding) that report to Mission Council. Whether we think that Mission Council undermines our conciliar theology, or expresses it in a manner complementary to the work of Assembly, there do seem to be a few things that a body of under 100 people does better than an Assembly of

300. These points do not mean that changes cannot be considered, but do suggest that the implications of changes ought to be thought through with care.

## 18. Staffing

- 18.1 The bulk of the organisation of Assembly is currently handled by staff at Church House, with assistance from volunteers. In the future this could be handled either by URC staff, or by using an events management company. There would be an inevitable trade-off between in-house management of Assembly and a professional company. It is likely that professionals would manage the task more efficiently, and perhaps more cheaply. Whereas if we took some of the task away from Church House staff, the event would lose something of its family feel; members would place their bookings with strangers rather than with URC people, and some may feel that they are not as well understood as they would like to be. We have gathered some data on the potential costs of using an events management company, to assist those in Church House who are charged with making operational decisions.

## 19. Where do we go from here?

- 19.1 The Task Group require a decision from Mission Council on the location in section 9, and would then value the opinions of Mission Council on the rest of the report, to enable them to bring a final report to General Assembly in 2018.
- 19.2 Much of what is proposed may require changes to the Structure and to the Rules of Procedure. Once Mission Council has given its advice, the Clerk will prepare drafts of any possible changes to the Structure, the Rules of Procedure, and any other resolutions required, that the Task Group requests, so that these will be available to General Assembly should it wish to make decisions that require these.



# Appendix One

Comparison of the numbers of members of General Assembly in different categories under the various options

Category	The current position	Option A	Option B	Option C
Synods representatives and Moderators	269	208	130	208
Serving Assembly Moderator(s)	2	1	1	2
Clerk	1	1	1	1
General Secretary	1	1	1	1
Deputy General Secretaries	3	3	3	3
Committee Conveners	11	9	9	9
URC Trust Convenor	1	1	1	1
Immediate Past Moderators	2	1	1	2
Former Moderators (elected from all former Moderators)	2	2	2	2
RCL Reps	6	6	6	6
URC Youth	3	2	2	2
Forces Chaplain	1	1	1	1
Ecumenical and CWM reps	13	11	8	11
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>249</b>

## Appendix Two

### Questions for discussion

1. Do you support the principle of returning to an annual Assembly?
2. Do you agree that there would need to be consequent changes to the Mission Council, if Assembly returned to an annual meeting? If so, do you support the proposed changes, or have you an alternative to offer?
3. Do you support the idea that an annual Assembly would be better served by one Moderator?
4. Do you support the proposal that the total number of synod representatives be divided equally among the synods?
5. Do you support the proposal that the division of synod representatives between “ministerial” and “lay” be made more flexible by no longer insisting on an exact balance, but stipulating that there be at least one third of each?
6. Do you support the proposal that Assembly Moderators be inducted at the end of Assembly and then chair the Assembly at the end of their term of office?
7. Do you support the proposal that three speaking tokens be introduced?
8. In what order do you prefer options A, B, and C?
9. What are the reasons for your preferences among A, B and C?
10. Please indicate one way in which your preferred option could be improved.
11. Can you offer any alternative funding plans? In particular can you suggest any ways in which URC work that you are involved in could be handled more cheaply, to make more funds available for Assembly or Mission Council?

# Paper 01

**Human Resources Advisory Group**

**Report on Recent Work**

Church 2017  
**United**  
Church **2017**  
**Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2017

# Paper 01

## Human Resources Advisory Group Report on Recent Work

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Geoff Shaw <a href="mailto:geoffshaw2810@sky.com">geoffshaw2810@sky.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To update Mission Council on the recent work of the group.
<b>Main points</b>	
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Previous HRAG reports to Mission Council.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	General Secretary, Church House staff.

### Summary of Impact

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

# HRAG: report on recent work

## 1. Membership

Geoff Shaw (Convenor), Alastair Forsyth, Bridget Fosten, Mike Gould, the Revd John Proctor (General Secretary), Jane Baird (Deputy General Secretary: Administration and Resources).

These members bring to the group a wide range of HR and management experience within the Church, the Public Sector and in Industry.

## 2. Remit

HRAG was established in October 2012 and its remit reviewed by the May 2015 meeting of Mission Council. The remit is to provide a unified reference point on HR matters for General Assembly, Trust and Church House personnel.

## 3. Routine Work report, April 2017 to September 2017.

### 3.1 The following job descriptions have been reviewed:

Under its remit HRAG reviews Job Descriptions and Person Specifications for Assembly appointments. Other staff posts are only reviewed as a consequence of major changes.

- a) Three job descriptions from the Education and Learning department related to the introduction of the *Stepwise* programme in 2018.
- b) Six job descriptions regarding amendments to support and administrative roles.

Where appropriate line managers were interviewed by the HRAG team to further understand the new or amended job descriptions.

### 3.2 Salary Changes

Where the job descriptions in 3.1 were accompanied by documents requesting a salary review these were assessed in relation to the current pay bands and will be remitted to the Remuneration committee.

### 3.3 Policies and Procedures Review

The review of those policies and procedures which apply at Church House continues. The following are scheduled for review before the end of 2017:

- Anti-Bribery
- Equalities
- Whistle Blowing
- Harassment and Bullying

Appropriate training will continue to ensure understanding of these policies and procedures. Although this takes place at Church House it was noted that the training programmes are open to synod and local church staff.





# Paper P1

**Law and Polity Advisory Group**

**Complaints Policy**

United Church 2017  
Church 2017  
Reformed Church 2017  
Church 2017

# Paper P1

## Law and Polity Advisory Group

### Complaints Policy

#### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Michael Hopkins <a href="mailto:clerk@urc.org.uk">clerk@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Advice on which direction Mission Council might wish to go.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	n/a

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Possible consistent denomination-wide policy for dealing with complaints.
<b>Main points</b>	After consultation, a proposed policy is suggested, along with possible ways Mission Council might wish to implement it.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Legal Advisor, synods, General Secretary.

#### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	May reduce staff time by having a clear process.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	A clear and consistent process is the best way to be fair to everyone.

# Complaints Policy

1. This matter was drawn to the attention of the Clerk by a Church Secretary, who felt that no guidance was provided as to how his local church might respond to a complaint, and that there was a danger of people investigating complaints against themselves.
2. The Law and Polity Advisory Group initiated a consultation with synods. One synod shared a policy they had written, one shared a Trust Company policy, and a third shared some advice offered by the Deputy General Secretary (Admin and Resources). All who responded said that they would welcome a denomination-wide policy.
3. In response to the consultation, LPAG approved the draft of a possible policy. It should be noted that the proposed policy has a long pre-amble, but the steps to be followed are relatively modest.
4. LPAG now offer this to Mission Council, and would like Mission Council to do one of the following:
  - a) Reject the principle of a denominational complaints policy
  - b) Accept the principle of a denominational complaints policy, but require further work on the proposed draft.
  - c) Accept the principle of a denominational complaints policy, and accept the proposed draft policy on behalf of General Assembly, and commend it for consideration and possible adoption by synods, local churches, and Trust bodies.
  - d) Accept the principle of a denominational complaints policy, and accept the proposed draft policy on behalf of General Assembly and synods, and commend it for consideration and possible adoption by local churches, and Trust bodies.
  - e) Accept the principle of a denominational complaints policy, and accept the proposed draft policy on behalf of General Assembly, synods, and local churches, and commend it for consideration and possible adoption by Trust bodies.<sup>1</sup>
5. Once Mission Council has indicated a preference, the Clerk will present appropriate resolution(s).

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<sup>1</sup> Mission Council will remember that Trust bodies are not subject to the councils of the church, and so the most that can be done in this regard is to offer something to them for their consideration.

# The United Reformed Church Draft Complaints Procedure

## Part One: Preamble

### Why a Complaints Procedure?

The United Reformed Church needs a complaints process because humans are imperfect. The Church is made up of people, and so is a fallible community, and its members on occasion behave in ways which are damaging to themselves and others, and which undermine the credibility of the Church's witness. A complaints process is one of the means by which the Church recognises that all humans are made in the image of God, and are entitled to be treated as such, and by which it maintains its witness to the new life in which we are called through Christ.

In the absence of a policy directing otherwise, people or councils of the Church may find themselves expected to investigate and decide upon complaints about themselves, which is unfair to all concerned. Further, the horrific history of child sexual abuses in churches and other organisations is littered with cases where a complaint was made, but not properly investigated. No doubt in many cases it was thought better not to "stir things up", or that we could assume because the complainant had not repeated the complaint it had been dropped. This seems to go against all best practice in all kinds of ways. This is why a Complaints Procedure is essential.

Through the Complaints Procedure members of the United Reformed Church are accountable to the Church in matters of faith and behaviour. The Church seeks to enable healing and reconciliation to take place through that accountability whenever possible. The Church also responds to the call through Christ for justice, openness, and honesty, and to the need for each of us to accept responsibility for our own acts.

The Complaints Procedure therefore seeks to embody the following principles:

- the initiation of complaints should not be limited to members of the Church
- there should be no difference in principle between ordained and lay people in the way in which complaints against them are dealt with
- help and support should be offered both to the person making the complaint and to the person complained against at every stage during the process
- the process should be fair, and seen to be fair
- the person or body making the decision at each stage should be competent to do so
- there should be a means of correcting any errors which may be made
- there should be a means of ensuring compliance with any decision
- there should be appropriate requirements relating to confidentiality and record-keeping
- the possibility of reconciliation should be explored carefully in every case in which that is appropriate.

As the Body of Christ the Church seeks to embody justice, and to challenge injustice, the Complaints Procedure is one means of searching for truth. Justice involves loving, honouring, and respecting others, and ensuring that processes and procedures are accessible, consistent, fair, and transparent. Justice is also dynamic, implying an active concern for those who are vulnerable, marginalised, or oppressed.

## Information about making complaints

The United Reformed Church seeks to ensure that the Church is a safe, responsible, and caring environment for all. To achieve that, rules and procedures have been put in place to enable the Church to deal with any acts of inappropriate or unethical behaviour by any Church minister, elder, or office bearer.

These rules differentiate between serious issues of conduct, and other acts of inappropriate behaviour. For serious issues, the Church has internal disciplinary procedures. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to refer the matter to the police, if the complainant has not already done so.

For less serious matters, the Church has a Complaints Procedure. The aim of this Procedure is neither to trivialise serious matters, nor on the other hand to treat minor matters with undue weight. In this Procedure, the Church wishes to prioritise the use of mediation and conciliation, as experience suggests that this is the best way to ensure an outcome where everyone involved feels that their concerns have been appropriately heard and dealt with.

In framing its Complaints Procedure, the Church is strongly of the belief that a person with a legitimate grievance must be listened to, and that their complaint should be properly and fairly addressed.

If you have a complaint to make against a minister, elder, or other member of the United Reformed Church, then there are various ways in which the Church may determine that should be addressed:

- a) If the allegation is a serious one about a Minister, it will immediately be referred to Ministerial Disciplinary or Incapacity Procedures. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate also to refer the matter to the police, if the complainant has not already done so. This will be where criminal behaviour is alleged, in particular where there are allegations of a serious sexual nature, where vulnerable groups are involved, or where allegedly there has been financial impropriety. Anyone who becomes aware of offending of this nature is urged to contact the police immediately, as well as also informing the church.
- b) In some cases it might be determined at an early stage that the allegations do not require further consideration or investigation. A conversation with the appropriate officer, may well have been enough to allay your concerns or to establish that the matter does not require further investigation. However, normally the matter will be referred to the Church's Complaints Procedure.
- c) A matter which does not justify being referred to disciplinary procedures, nor to the police, and which has not been resolved at an early stage, will be referred to the Church's Complaints Procedure.

## What is and what is not a complaint?

*Examples of complaints.*

A complaint might be:

- An allegation about the conduct of a minister, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the United Reformed Church or about the way in which they have performed their duties.
- An expression of dissatisfaction about the way in which you have been treated by a minister, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the United Reformed Church or about their attitude to you.
- An allegation that a minister, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the United Reformed Church failed to do something in the way that should reasonably be expected.

- An allegation that there has been unreasonable delay by a minister, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the United Reformed Church in responding to an enquiry or request.
- A breach of confidentiality by a minister, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the United Reformed Church.

#### *What is not a complaint?*

A complaint is not:

- a routine request for information, or for an explanation of the way in which something is done
- an allegation that a council of the Church has acted beyond its powers (that is a Constitutional Review), or made a decision that you cannot accept (that is an Appeal)
- an objection to an individual, or a group of people, implementing decisions that have been correctly reached.

#### *What doesn't the Church's Complaints Procedure deal with?*

The Church's Complaints Procedure is generally for allegations made against either situations or individual persons within the Church. Some things which the Church's Complaints Procedure doesn't cover are:

- An issue about selection or training of a minister: this goes to the Ministries Committee
- an issue about synod decisions on scoping or deployment: this would be an Appeal or a Constitutional Review
- an issue about insurance, sale, or purchase of property: this would be dealt with by the trustees of the building or the relevant officers of the synod
- an issue about buildings maintenance: this would be dealt with by the trustees of the building or the relevant officers of the synod
- insurance claims: these go to the insurance company
- an attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint, or to have a complaint reconsidered where a final outcome has already been reached
- an issue which involves vulnerable people: this will go straight to Safeguarding procedures
- also, while you can complain about a matter which is already being dealt within the civil or criminal courts, such a matter will not normally be dealt with by the Church until the civil or criminal process has been concluded
- decisions of Trustee bodies, which are not subject to the councils of the Church.

Where the complaint should be dealt with under a different process, e.g. grievance procedure, as mentioned above, your Synod Clerk or the General Secretary will be able to supply you with the appropriate information about who to contact.

## **Making a complaint**

### ***Step 1: Who to contact about a complaint – informal notification***

For complaints relating to a local church, you should contact the Church Secretary. If the complaint is about the Church Secretary, you should contact the Minister or Interim Moderator. Where a local church cannot find a suitable person independent of the complaint, or feels it requires greater scrutiny, they may immediately pass the complaint to the synod. Normally complaints about Ministers should be referred to the synod, as ministers serve under the oversight of the synod not the local church.

For complaints relating to a synod, you should contact the Synod Clerk. If the complaint is about the Synod Clerk, you should contact the Synod Moderator. Where a synod cannot find



a suitable person independent of the complaint, or feels it requires greater scrutiny, they may immediately pass the complaint to the General Assembly.

For complaints relating to the General Assembly, you should contact the General Secretary. If the complaint is about the General Secretary, you should contact the Clerk of the General Assembly. The General Secretary and Clerk are empowered to consult with any other officer of the Assembly, or staff member, that they deem appropriate.

The Church hopes that wherever possible, initial discussion with the appropriate church official may well have been enough to allay your concerns or to establish that the matter does not require further investigation.

### ***Step 2: Progressing a complaint – formal notification***

If the matter is to be taken further, then the appropriate church official named in step one must have some details from you in order for a complaint to be properly investigated. This means that you need to write to them or email them, setting out:

- who you are, plus your contact details,
- whether you are a church member, and any office you hold,
- exactly what the nature of your complaint is,
- exactly which persons – minister, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the United Reformed Church – or situations you are complaining about, and
- specific details of the circumstances (including, where possible, names of individuals, places, dates etc.)

Details need to be given as quickly as possible and as fully as possible. The United Reformed Church cannot accept complaints where there is unreasonable delay in giving details after a complaint is made, or where details are withheld and an attempt made to add further matters as the complaint progresses.

The appropriate church official named in step one can assist you with this. Upon receipt of your written complaint, the appropriate church official named in step one will acknowledge this in writing within twenty days. All information which you supply in connection with your complaint will be treated sensitively. So far as is possible while still enabling your complaint to be properly dealt with, the information which you give will be treated confidentially.

### ***Step 3: Dealing with a complaint***

On receipt of your written complaint, the appropriate church official named in step one will ask an independent person or persons to consider the complaint.

The independent investigator(s) will contact you to discuss your complaint and if appropriate, to arrange to meet with you. They will also forward a copy of the complaint to the respondent (the subject of the complaint).

They may similarly meet with the respondent. They shall make such enquiries as they consider appropriate and may hold more than one meeting separately with you, the complainant, and with the respondent. If they consider this to be appropriate and both parties consent, they may facilitate a mediated meeting between you and the respondent.

On any occasion where the independent investigator(s) meets with you, you are entitled to have present another person; where there is more than one meeting, it is helpful if this is the same person.

On any occasion when the independent investigator(s) meets with the respondent, the respondent shall be entitled to have present another person; again where there is more than one meeting, it is helpful if this is the same person.

Summary notes will be kept of all meetings throughout the process.

The independent investigator(s) will endeavour to provide you with an initial response on your complaint within a period of thirty working days from when they first considered the complaint, however some complaints may require longer.

**Step 4: The outcome**

Upon completion of their enquiries, the independent investigator(s) will hope to have achieved one of the following possible outcomes (although this list is not exhaustive):

- You as complainant are satisfied that the matters raised in the complaint have been resolved
- You as complainant and the respondent have reached a mutual agreement that the matter need go no further
- The independent investigator(s) will offer advice to the respondent(s) as to their future conduct
- The complaint has been withdrawn
- The complaint has been dismissed, or
- The complaint having been dealt with, the matter is, despite no agreement having been reached, nonetheless concluded.

A local church complaint which remains unresolved may be referred to the synod for investigation using the steps above. A synod complaint which remains unresolved may be referred to the General Assembly for investigation using the steps above.

# Paper R1

**Safeguarding Advisory Group**

Past Case Review Update

United Church 2017  
Church 2017  
Reformed Church 2017  
Church 2017

# Paper R1

## Safeguarding Advisory Group

### Past Case Review Update

#### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	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>None</b>

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Update on phases 1 and 2 of the Past Case Review
<b>Main points</b>	Closure of open advertising, case progress, learning
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper R2 March Mission Council 2016 Paper R2 May Mission Council 2017
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Elizabeth Gray-King, PCR Project Manager Safeguarding Advisory Group

#### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	None
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Julie Ashby Ellis, external Safeguarding Consultant

# Past Case Review Update

## Phase 1 Update

1. The Phase 1 review and recommendation process is still underway, now finishing the work of reading files which have been held in Church House. The move out and back into Church House exacerbated the difficulty of file tracing and reading, but since the move, work is back on track, with final analysis due by 30 September 2017.
2. The two key areas of work identified in the Mission Council report, May 2017, are becoming embedded:
  - 1) *Consolidate and update the way ministers' records are kept, including ensuring consistent information and single file records for each minister*  
A special meeting to address consistent record keeping was held in July 2017, with actions created for consultation and eventual implementation.
  - 2) *Ensure that the URC's good practice policies are updated and consistent, then that they are actively, effectively and consistently carried out.* The Safeguarding Advisory group's summer meeting received a draft safeguarding strategy which includes significant work on policy development, consistency, and training. The working group to continue the process of policy updates will undertake work in the autumn of 2017.

## Phase 2 Update

3. **Open advertising stage**  
Phase Two ceased as an open advertising initiative at the end of June 2017. The PCR button has been removed from the URC website home page and the PCR web page explains the present position. However, the PCR sub pages (pastoral care, prayers, worship resources) remain; many people may still want such resources for local church use.
4. **Cases**  
27 people contacted the PCR team, arriving from most synods, with 8 cases withdrawn. One case, after the listening process, proceeded immediately to statutory agencies, with close working from the relevant synod safeguarding officer. At the time of writing, six cases are considered closed. Cases progressed at varying speeds through the process, depending on arrangements with listeners, appointment of panels and timing of the complainant. A surprise to the PCR team, and to some synods, was that a few complainants approached the PCR team with cases which had been previously addressed through councils of the church and had been considered closed. As this could not have been known until a listener produced the report from the complainant, this unduly raised expectations of complainants who wished cases to be reopened. The PCR team exercised as much empathy as possible; however it was not in a position to undermine previous work from URC appointed bodies.
5. **Process**  
Feedback showed that some found the language of the process steps to have suggested a judicial process, when at the outset it was clear that the PCR could be no more than a pastoral care process. This caused some confusion of expectation from both complainants and synods. To clarify that the process was to be fair listening, an addition was made to the process in May 2017. A form for the synod in which the

complainant was resident was added, so the synod could add comment about their prior knowledge of the case brought to the PCR.

6. The types of cases which came to the PCR were:

- sexual/abuse of power
- bullying/ harassment/ defamation of character
- bullying/ harassment/ failure to execute procedure or process
- financial/ abuse of power
- sexual/ failure to execute procedure or process

7. **Learning**

7.1 Internal Learning Reviews

In reviewing files, the external safeguarding expert strongly recommended that the URC carry out internal learning reviews, a single organisational review akin to cross-organisation serious case reviews. Three cases were recommended, with the review group comprising the URC Secretary for Ministries, the URC Safeguarding Officer, and a Safeguarding expert from the CCPAS. The group met a number of times in June 2017, with the final reports forming part of the evidence for the Learning Group.

7.2 Learning Group

This group, comprised of a church historian, a Bible scholar, a colleague denomination's safeguarding lead with a background in social work, and a professor of abuse studies, has now reviewed much data and has met in a 24 hour residential. They have confidential access to the raw data and the findings of:

- Phase 1
- the complaints made in Phase 2
- historic Section O cases
- Church House complaints and reputation management files which have had safeguarding issues
- three Internal Learning Reviews

We expect a draft report at the next Mission Council. We anticipate that systemic improvements that can be identified will be made as part of our attempts to prevent further distress/abuse.

8. **Comments**

8.1 The PCR has been a learning curve on many levels. Not as many cases came forward as anticipated and it will be difficult to know the reasons for this. It was impossible to imagine where to advertise to cover and afford the reach of all media, geographic and internet locations. We are saddened by the serious cases that have come to light but encouraged that people have had the courage to come forward to be heard. An immediate organisational benefit is closer working across safeguarding officers in synods and strong evidence for the Safeguarding Advisory Group's work.

8.2 Throughout, we are thankful indeed to the support from synods and officers. Much cannot have been easy. The support from the PCR team has been immense. We were sad to lose Cassi Wright to other employment in July and are grateful for the continuing administrative support of Helen Corbett. No process has been straightforward. Particular and deep thanks go to the many volunteers who make up our teams of listeners, allegations panels and the allegations reference group. None of them has an easy task and the URC is indebted to them for their commitment to this review.



# Paper U1

**Mission Council Advisory Group**

**Criteria for the Appointment of a  
General Secretary**

United Church 2017  
Church 2017  
Reformed Church 2017  
Church 2017

# Paper U1

## Mission Council Advisory Group

Criteria for the Appointment of a General Secretary

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	John Ellis, Immediate Past Moderator <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>Mission Council:</b> a) agrees in principle that the post of General Secretary should be open to all Ministers, CRCWs and Elders of the United Reformed Church; b) requests that changes to the Rules of Procedure be brought to the March 2018 Mission Council meeting in order to give this effect.

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To give Mission Council an opportunity to express a view on whether the current requirement for any new General Secretary to be a URC Minister of Word and Sacraments is still appropriate.
<b>Main points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Church changed the Job Description of the General Secretary in 2013.</li> <li>• The subsequent General Secretary Nomination Group felt that the change suggested the traditional restriction of the post to Ministers needed review.</li> <li>• With no evident need to seek a new General Secretary in the near future, this is a good time to consider the principle.</li> </ul>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Human Resources Task Group

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	No significant overall impact.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Some ecumenical partners may prefer to work with ministerial General Secretaries.

# Criteria for the Appointment of a General Secretary

## Background

1. The United Reformed Church has always had a General Secretary and restricted that post to URC Ministers of Word and Sacraments. Despite the many changes in the Church and wider society since 1972, this feature of our polity has remained unchanged and no evidence has been identified of any considered review of the principle by any governance body.
2. Following a variety of concerns expressed within Mission Council and elsewhere in 2012-13, a thorough review of the central staff leadership structure was led by the Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG). This led to Mission Council adopting a new pattern. This still included a General Secretary but he or she was to be supported by three Deputy General Secretaries and the secretariat collectively was to provide, in professional and godly ways, that overall guidance and management of staff and work that many felt had previously been lacking.
3. Within the new structure, Deputy General Secretary posts were open to both Ministers and lay people. Although the role description of the General Secretary was altered as part of these changes, it remained a post open only to Ministers. The role description and person specification are attached as an Appendix.
4. When the General Secretary Nomination Group was set up in 2013 under the convenorship of one of the then Moderators of General Assembly, John Ellis, its members queried the restriction to Ministers, especially given the shifts they perceived in the role described towards a stronger element of what might, as shorthand, be called “management”. This query was raised at a very early stage, well before any actual names of potential nominees were before the Group. However the Group accepted the advice of the Moderator and Clerk that it was beyond the remit of the Nomination Group to address this point. Given an assurance that the point would be raised at an appropriate time in an appropriate place, the Group proceeded to use the material and brief given to it to seek the next General Secretary.
5. The Group was glad to bring a recommendation to the 2014 General Assembly for the person to serve as General Secretary from then for up to seven years to his expected retirement date. That completed the Nomination Group’s work and it was dissolved.
6. The former Convenor of the Nomination Group agreed with the new General Secretary that the question of the Minister restriction should be raised with the Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG) but not until 2016. This timetable would give the General Secretary time to work fully into the role but would still be well before it was likely that a new search for the following General Secretary would need to begin. This would separate the principle from any particular personalities.
7. In 2016 MCAG agreed that the topic should be considered and asked John Ellis, having been Convenor of the 2013 Nomination Group, to work on the issues with HRAG. In 2017 MCAG discussed a first paper and asked John Ellis to prepare a further paper to equip Mission Council to express a view on whether the present restriction should be maintained.

8. MCAG did not believe it was within its remit to take a view on the underlying question, only to facilitate a debate. However MCAG felt it would help give Mission Council discussions a focus if there were a draft Resolution for the Council to accept, amend or reject, rather than a totally open paper.

## The Inheritance

9. It is hoped that the background paragraphs above make it entirely clear that this discussion does not arise from any dissatisfaction with the current General Secretary. This paper is not inviting a performance appraisal of the Revd John Proctor.
10. The United Reformed Church has always restricted a number of Assembly appointments to Ministers alone. These include the Synod Moderator posts and the executive Secretary for Ministries in the central staff team. There is no suggestion that these criteria should be changed.
11. Of the seven people to have served the URC as General Secretary, all have come into post with long service as Ministers behind them. However, their ministerial careers have been far from typical, with most having only a relatively short time spent in pastoral charges and usually a decade or several working in theological colleges, or overseas, as Synod Moderators or in central staff roles.

## Current Thinking

12. HRAG sent a questionnaire around a small group of Assembly officers and others who have extensive recent experience of working with successive General Secretaries. The current General Secretary was included in the circulation. A request for lay General Secretaries working in other partner Churches to complete the questionnaire unfortunately produced no response.
13. The questionnaire asked respondents to consider the advantages and disadvantages of opening up the position to a wider range of people than just Ministers in the light of the current General Secretary role description. This did not lead to any consensus in favour or against relaxing the current restriction.
14. A summary of the feedback, as prepared by HRAG, was as follows:

### *If an Ordained General Secretary:*

#### **Advantages**

- Will have the confidence of Ministers and Synod Moderators
- Has experience of and understands local ministry
- Credibility and respect – both internal and external
- Theological knowledge

#### **Disadvantages**

- Lack of management expertise (in the broadest sense)
- The pastoral approach might predominate
- Reinforces the perception that only the 'ordained minister' can lead

## *If a Lay General Secretary:*

### Advantages

- Management expertise (in the broadest sense)
- Changes the perception of what the lay and ordained can do

### Disadvantages

- Confidence and credibility issues amongst ministers
- Theological knowledge (possible lower level/lack of)
- Lack of practical experience of local ministry
- Could present problems regarding working ecumenically
- Could be seen as a 'manage/administrator' rather than a 'church leader'
- Could be expensive in terms of salary

15. There were plenty of reminders in the responses that being General Secretary is a demanding post and few individuals, whether ministerial or lay, are likely to be equally strongly qualified in every aspect of the work. Wise General Secretaries work as part of a team and draw on the skills and gifts of others.
16. Respondents were also asked what they perceived as the most important requirements in the General Secretary person specification. Again, there was no consensus about the highest priority. It was noted that almost all the requirements highlighted would be expected to be displayed by any successful senior leader, whether their background was in a Christian or a secular organisation. An exception was the ability to deal well with the diversity of the URC, but that is a skill lay people experienced in denominational roles need to display, just as much as ministers.
17. A question that might have been more thoroughly tested if respondents had included ecumenical partners is whether a ministerial General Secretary more easily achieves credibility outside the United Reformed Church. MCAG suspected that with some partners this could be the case but equally recognised that there are many ecumenical collaborations which include denominations who have a lay person in the role equivalent to General Secretary.
18. Based on the questionnaire responses, it would seem that to make a convincing argument that the General Secretary must be a Minister one has to rely heavily on the view that Ministers relate more easily to a General Secretary who is a fellow Minister. Curiously nobody put forward an argument claiming that lay people in the Church would relate more easily to a General Secretary who is a fellow lay person.

## Discerning God's Person

19. However intriguing these points are, it could be argued that they are too binary and not the principal ones. In reality any discernment process is not attempting to compare a typical lay person with a typical Minister. Nor is it trying to decide which of the requirements in the role description really matter.
20. The actual discernment process takes seriously the whole of the role description and looks at it alongside the unique individuals who have been nominated, each one with their own strengths and weaknesses and their own stories of Christian service.

21. The Church has learnt that it is important not to overlook the taxing management skills in the General Secretary role description just because a Minister candidate is exceptional in some other area. Equally there is no campaign to have a lay General Secretary for the sake of making a point. Even if lay applications were permitted, unless a lay candidate could produce clear evidence to demonstrate they could offer a depth of theological reflection, that candidate would not be a plausible one.
22. The question for Mission Council is whether there are adequate grounds for automatically ruling out in advance the possibility of someone who is not a Minister being considered as possibly the best match for the varied role of General Secretary. How confident are we that the Holy Spirit could never equip an Elder for such a role?

## Practical Implications

23. The purpose of this paper is to discover Mission Council's mind on a principle. Should the decision be to relax the current restriction, there would be some practical issues that would then arise.
24. If the role was not only open to URC Ministers it would be necessary to define whether there are other limitations on whom may apply. It might be appropriate to limit lay nominations to those who are URC Elders or Church-Related Community Workers, these being people who have formally committed themselves to exercise their ministries in accordance with the Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church.
25. As with many other roles in the United Reformed Church which are open to both Ministers and others, a Minister would be appointed on a different "terms and conditions" arrangement from a lay person. Most obviously a lay appointee would not be offered free housing and would be paid a compensating higher salary, not a stipend. The cost to the Church of a lay General Secretary would therefore be lower in terms of capital tied up and higher in terms of current expenditure.
26. Another current difference is that General Secretaries, like a number of other Assembly appointments, are appointed for fixed, albeit renewable, terms. For General Secretaries these are normally seven year terms. Current legislation would not permit a salaried General Secretary to be on a termed appointment and so any such would have to be given an open-ended contract.
27. It is worth noting that all these practical issues have already been addressed in connection the three Deputy General Secretary posts and resolved satisfactorily.

## Draft Resolution

28. Should Mission Council be minded to change the status quo, a possible Resolution to achieve that might be as follows.

### **Mission Council:**

- a) **agrees in principle that the post of General Secretary should be open to all Ministers, CRCWs and Elders of the United Reformed Church;**
- b) **requests that changes to the Rules of Procedure be brought to the March 2018 Mission Council meeting in order to give this effect.**



## JOB DESCRIPTION

<b>JOB TITLE:</b>	General Secretary
<b>RESPONSIBLE TO:</b>	The General Assembly (via an agreed, specified, Moderator of General Assembly)
<b>RESPONSIBLE FOR:</b>	The management of three Deputy General Secretaries and direct Administrative support and oversight of the Synod Moderators
<b>SALARY:</b>	Minister's stipend will apply
<p><b>JOB SUMMARY:</b> To provide theological and pastoral leadership and operational oversight to the URC by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implementing the policies and decisions of General Assembly/Mission Council;</li> <li>• the management of Church House through the General Secretariat;</li> <li>• ensuring links with the wider Church and the fostering and maintenance of positive external relations.</li> </ul>	

### Principal Responsibilities and Duties

1. Provide theological and pastoral leadership for the denomination and maintain its well-being and unity by:
  - a. ensuring that the life and mission of the URC are undergirded by its theological understanding, as expressed in the Basis of Union; and
  - b. responding to opportunities to engage with local churches, Synods and others.
  - c. fostering the unity and wellbeing of the Church
2. Provide operational oversight and leadership to the URC by:
  - a. ensuring that appointment and review groups for Synod Moderators are established and acting as consultant to them;
  - b. providing oversight to the Synod Moderators;
  - c. responding to Synod issues and opportunities as appropriate;
  - d. being an ex-officio member of all Assembly standing committees and the URC Trust;
  - e. ensuring the effective work and reporting of Faith & Order and Equal Opportunities Committees and Mission Council Advisory Groups.

3. Service both General Assembly and Mission Council by:
  - a. assuring the work of the agenda setting body(ies);
  - b. ensuring that all business is properly prepared for the Assembly and Council;
  - c. ensuring that members are given information they need;
  - d. ensuring that meeting facilities are adequate;
  - e. ensuring that the records are properly kept;
  - f. ensuring that the decisions of the Assembly are reported to the Church;
  - g. ensuring the implementation of the decisions and policies agreed by General Assembly and by Mission Council;
  - h. acting as required in relation to the Disciplinary Process and Incapacity Procedures.
4. Provide leadership to, and management of, the three Deputy General Secretaries who form the General Secretariat by:
  - a. agreeing the objectives and priorities for each of the Deputy General Secretaries in the light of Assembly and Mission Council decisions
  - b. ensuring the Church House work plans are coordinated and delivered
  - c. fostering an organisational climate that releases and focuses the energy that comes from competent, motivated specialists
  - d. monitoring and managing individual performance within the Secretariat agreeing appropriate personal development.
5. Oversee the coordination of the work of Church House by:
  - a. ensuring the effective functioning of the General Secretariat team;
  - b. ensuring effective two-way communications with Church House staff through team and Connective meetings and other mechanisms as required;
  - c. enabling cross-department project and task groups to meet agreed objectives;
  - d. preparing, and being the budget holder for, the General Secretariat budget;
  - e. ensuring personal and staff compliance with all relevant legal requirements (e.g. Health and Safety, Safeguarding, Data Protection).
6. Foster, and maintain, links with the wider Church by:
  - a. developing relationships with senior officers of other Churches and being alert to opportunities for closer ecumenical links or collaborative work;
  - b. representing the United Reformed Church on a number of national and international ecumenical bodies; and

- c. working closely with the Secretary for World Church Relations and the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith & Order on matters relating to sister Churches and the UK ecumenical instruments.
7. Ensure positive external relations by:
- a. speaking publicly on behalf of the Church, in consultation with the Moderators of General Assembly and with the Press & Media Manager, and with others as necessary; and
  - b. being prepared to act, as and when necessary, to maintain and protect the reputation and image of the URC, in conjunction with Communications.

**Health and Safety at Work:**

You are required to take reasonable care of the health and safety of yourself and other persons who may be affected by your acts or omissions at work and to co-operate with the United Reformed Church in adhering to statutory safety regulations.

**Equal Opportunities:**

The Church will behave as an equal opportunity organisation and not discriminate on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation or age.

This list is an indication of the main tasks to be performed. It is not an exhaustive list of duties and responsibilities and may be subject to amendments to take account of changing circumstances.

**FINAL DRAFT: 10 October 2013**

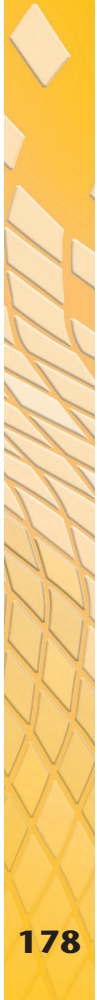


## PERSON SPECIFICATION

**JOB TITLE: GENERAL SECRETARY**

REQUIREMENTS	REQUIREMENTS		MEASUREMENT
	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE	
Education and qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ordained to the Ministry of the United Reformed Church with a proven work history in ministry.</li> <li>• Educated to degree level or equivalent and possesses a theological qualification.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of keeping abreast with theological literature.</li> </ul>	Application form, references and interview
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management of change.</li> <li>• Conflict resolution.</li> <li>• Crisis Management.</li> <li>• Collaborative and ecumenical working within and beyond the Church.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relations with and work with the media.</li> </ul>	Application form and Interview
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A wide awareness of contemporary political and social issues with an ability to reflect on them theologically.</li> <li>• An appreciation of, and sensitivity to, the complex nature of the URC, recognising the theological diversity within the denomination.</li> <li>• Awareness of how organisations function and develop.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of the wider Reformed and of other Christian traditions</li> </ul>	Application form and interview
Skills and Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to inspire confidence and demonstrate effective public speaking skills.</li> <li>• Ability to think strategically and encourage others to do the same.</li> <li>• Skilful manager of people.</li> <li>• Sound leadership skills</li> <li>• Able to build, develop and play an active part in the staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to interact comfortably in a wide variety of contexts.</li> <li>• Ability to make time for personal</li> </ul>	Application form, references and interview

	community at Church House. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to prioritise a demanding workload through effective time management and delegation.</li> <li>• An understanding of and commitment to a multicultural church (i.e. ability to relate across different cultures).</li> <li>• Able to demonstrate effective pastoral and listening skills.</li> <li>• Able to demonstrate strong written and analytical skills.</li> </ul>	study and to relax.	
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates a deep Christian faith</li> <li>• Hospitable</li> <li>• Patient</li> <li>• Resilient</li> <li>• Possesses a good sense of humour</li> </ul>		Interview and references





# Paper Y1

**Private Members' Resolution:  
Mr Dan Morrell and Ms Hannah Jones**

Changes to the Rules of Procedure  
for the conduct of the  
United Reformed Church

United Church 2017  
Church 2017  
Reformed Church 2017  
Church 2017

# Paper Y1

## Private Members Resolution: Mr Dan Morrell and Ms Hannah Jones

Changes to the Rules of Procedure for the conduct of the United Reformed Church

### Basic Information (Heading 4 style)

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Dan Morrell <a href="mailto:urcyamoderator@gmail.com">urcyamoderator@gmail.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, adopts the changes proposed to the Rules of Procedure</b>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To bring clarity to the current process for the election of the Moderators of General Assembly.</li> <li>• To provide greater fairness amongst all nominees for the role.</li> <li>• To mirror closely the procedure for electing the Moderator of Youth Assembly, as this has been proven to be fair and useful in determining, with prayer, the most suitable Moderator.</li> </ul>
<b>Main points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current procedure is flawed:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>it shows bias towards nominees who are incumbent members of Assembly;</li> <li>it does little to help voting members of Assembly discern who may be best suited for the role;</li> <li>it near-guarantees election for anyone who is a sole nominee.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• All nominees will be invited, and expected, to attend the Assembly at which they will be voted on, they will read their biography (or have it read) to the Assembly, and will be asked a question by the Moderator in the chair and have the opportunity to respond.</li> <li>• The introduction of a 'Re-Open Nominations' option to ensure that the Assembly's voice is truly heard.</li> <li>• Other, minor, amendments to bring the remaining rules in line with the proposed amendments.</li> </ul>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Rules of Procedure, Youth Assembly Standing Orders
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Assembly Clerk, General Secretary, Children's and Youth Work Committee, URC Youth Executive

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	None
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Invariably any change to Rules of Procedure brings us closer to some ecumenical partners and further away from others.

# Changes to the Rules of Procedure for the conduct of the United Reformed Church

1. URC Youth Executive felt that the current procedure for the election of the Moderators of General Assembly is unfair and not in line with what we, as the URC, believe.
2. The procedure at URC Youth Assembly for the election of the Moderator gives those standing an opportunity to read out their 'pen portrait' and answer a question posed to them by the current Moderator. This question is not aimed to encourage the candidate to produce a manifesto of what they intend to do, but rather to ascertain what skills they possess and how they feel called to the role of Moderator. This question is normally written by the Moderator-Elect (who is inducted at the end of Youth Assembly). In the case of General Assembly, it would be put by the serving and chairing Moderator; it would therefore be for the Moderator to arrange for the drafting of the question (or to draft it personally) and to be satisfied as to its suitability.
3. The option to 'Re-Open Nominations' has also been found important, to represent the voices of those who may not feel there is yet a suitable candidate.
4. Ensuring the candidates are invited to General Assembly gives an equal opportunity for them.
5. These concerns would be reflected by changing the relevant section of the Rules of Procedure, as follows.

## Proposed wording for part 3 of the Rules of Procedure

### 3. Moderators of the General Assembly

3.1 The Moderators of the General Assembly shall be elected by ballot in accordance with these Rules. Each Moderator shall serve for two years commencing at the Assembly following the Meeting at which the report of the election is received in accordance with Rule 3.40~~11~~. The period of office shall be deemed to begin with the induction of each Moderator and shall continue until that Moderator's successor is inducted into office. A Moderator will continue as immediate past Moderator until their successor ceases to be Moderator and therefore replaces them as immediate past Moderator.

3.2 The Moderators of the General Assembly shall be two in number, a Minister or a Church Related Community Worker and an Elder. The Elder may be serving or non-serving but in all cases the names of those persons nominated to serve as Moderator must be included on the membership roll of a Local Church for that person to be eligible for nomination.

3.3 A nomination for election as Moderator of the General Assembly shall be made by a Synod, the consent of the nominee not being required. The nomination shall be in writing under the hand of the Clerk of the Synod and received by the General Secretary not later than the 31st March immediately preceding the Annual Meeting of the Assembly.

3.4 The General Secretary shall forthwith send to each person nominated a list of the nominations. Any nominee may, within ten days of the receipt of this list, withdraw from nomination by notice in writing to the General Secretary.

3.5 If after 31st March or after the period for withdrawal there shall be no nominations, in either or both categories, the General Secretary shall forthwith notify the Clerks of the Synods and invite them to request nominations from the executive committees or equivalent of their Synods. Such nominations, accompanied in each case by a note of the consent of the person nominated, ~~and~~ a brief biography, **and brief indications of the reason for nomination by the Synod**, must be in the hands of the General Secretary by 15th May. **Those who have accepted nomination shall be invited to attend the Assembly if they are not already doing so.**

3.6 In either category if after the period for withdrawal there is only one nomination, this nomination shall be placed before the Assembly and voted upon by secret ballot.

3.7 If the number of those who have been nominated in either category and have not withdrawn is or exceeds two, The election shall be by a secret ballot according to the principle of the single transferable vote. All members of the Assembly shall be entitled to vote. They shall vote by indicating their preference by figures 1, 2, 3 and so forth, but no voting paper shall be invalidated by the absence of alternative choices. If the tellers find that no **name option** has an absolute majority of first choices, the second choices of those who gave as their first choice the **name option** securing the smallest number of such choices shall be added to the first choices for other names. If necessary this process shall continue until one of the **names options** has an absolute majority of votes cast. If the process continues until only two **names options** remain, the **person who option that** then has the larger number of votes shall be elected.

**3.8 At a point in the Assembly prior to the commencement of the vote, each nominee will be given a fair and equal opportunity to present their biography and to answer a question put to them by the Moderator (who shall be responsible for its content and wording). The response to this question shall not exceed three minutes. No nominees shall be in the room in which Assembly is meeting during this process, save the nominee presenting at the time.**

~~3.9~~**10** Members of the Assembly shall vote by means of a voting paper containing the name, the usual designation and the church of membership, of each of those accepting nomination which shall be sent by the General Secretary by ordinary post to each such member before the commencement of the Ordinary Meeting of the Assembly. **The voting paper shall include an option to 'Re-Open Nominations' (RON), which is a vote to seek another candidate in preference to anyone currently on the ballot paper.** Brief indication of the reasons for the nomination, as supplied by the Synod, may be circulated with the ballot paper. The General Assembly may in any case authorise further means of informing the members about those accepting nomination.

~~3.40~~**11** Normally, the General Assembly shall vote to elect the Moderators of the Assembly by secret ballot as an item of business following prayer during the meeting of the Assembly. The ballot boxes shall be delivered to the tellers by whom alone they shall be opened. They shall report the result of the ballot to the Assembly at a later session.

~~3.44~~**12** As soon as the voting papers have been examined and the result of the poll ascertained, the voting papers shall be closed up under the seal of the tellers or any two of them, and shall be retained by the General Secretary for one month after the election, and shall then be destroyed.

~~3.42~~**13** At each Ordinary Meeting the Assembly shall appoint, upon the nomination of the Nominations Committee, three tellers to be responsible for the ballot for that year. The

counting of the votes cast shall take place in secret under their supervision and control and they shall:

3.42~~13~~.1 inform the General Secretary of the names of the persons elected and the General Secretary shall thereupon individually inform those nominated whether or not they have been elected.

3.42~~13~~.2 report to the Assembly the names of the persons elected, the number of papers received and the number of papers which were invalid.

3.43~~14~~ If any of the tellers appointed by the Assembly shall become incapable of acting the Moderator shall fill any such vacancy or vacancies and report that action to the Assembly.

3.44~~15~~ Upon receipt of the report of the tellers by the Assembly the persons elected shall thereupon become the duly elected Moderators for the two years commencing at the next Ordinary Meeting of the Assembly.

3.16 Where the previous General Assembly at its ordinary meeting has failed to elect<sup>1</sup>, or in the event of either or both of the persons elected to serve as Moderator becoming unable to serve more than 120 days before the first day of the meeting of the General Assembly at which they were to have been inducted, then the General Secretary shall seek nominations from Synods in the manner prescribed in clauses 3.3 to 3.5 for persons available to serve as Moderator for the coming Assembly. On receipt of those names, the General Secretary will inform all those whose names appeared on the roll of the previous Assembly of the nominations and send them a ballot paper. Those ballot papers shall be returned by post within five working days of receipt. Thereafter, the General Secretary shall deliver these ballot papers unopened to the tellers for the election of the Moderator who shall open and count the votes cast and report the result of this election to the General Secretary in the same form as would have been reported to the General Assembly had this election been held during the Assembly.

3.17 If a Moderator is unable to take office fewer than 120 days and more than 60 days before the first day of the meeting of the General Assembly at which they were to have been inducted, then the Moderator currently in office shall continue in office until a successor is inducted. The General Secretary shall seek nominations from synods in the manner prescribed in clauses 3.3 to 3.5, and an election shall be held at the General Assembly in the manner prescribed in clauses 3.7 and 3.9~~10~~, and the Moderator so elected shall be inducted during that meeting of Assembly.

3.18 If a Moderator is unable to take office fewer than 60 days before the first day of the meeting of the General Assembly, or resigns from office after induction, or is removed from office after induction, then the General Secretary shall forthwith initiate a postal ballot as described in clause 3.16, and the person so elected shall be inducted at the next meeting of the Mission Council, save that if this clause comes into effect less than nine months before the planned meeting of General Assembly, then the remaining Moderator shall serve alone until the next meeting of General Assembly.

3.19 During the temporary absence of a Moderator, the other Moderator may serve alone. In the event of a conflict of interest with the business under discussion, the most recent former Moderator without such conflict of interest, who is present and willing to serve, shall serve. If neither Moderator is present, the most recent former Moderator present and willing to serve shall serve.

<sup>1</sup> For the avoidance of doubt, if the Assembly votes to re-open nominations, this is a failure to elect, and the procedure in this paragraph shall be followed.

