

Paper H1

Ministries committee

Explaining possible variations in
operating a call procedure

United Church 2018
Church 2018
Reformed Church 2018
Church 2018

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Explaining possible variations in operating a call procedure

Basic information

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

Summary of content

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| Subject and aim(s) | General Assembly 2018 requested the ministries committee to bring advice on the implementation of resolution 28 which reminded Assembly of the varying provisions within the Manual with respect to calling a minister to a post. |
| Main points | Whilst not wanting to suggest legislation, and encouraging flexibility, this paper aims to offer some examples of how our call process may be appropriately exercised in a changing context. |
| Previous relevant documents | Paper H2 Mission Council October 2016 Paper H1 Mission Council May 2017 Resolutions 28 General Assembly <i>Book of Reports</i> 2018. |
| Consultation has taken place with... | N/a |

Summary of impact

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| Financial | None. |
| External (e.g. ecumenical) | No immediate relevance, although our call processes do concern ecumenical partners in those places where we are in a Local Ecumenical Partnership. |

Explaining possible variations in operating a call procedure

1. General Assembly 2018 passed the following resolution (resolution 28):
General Assembly encourages a flexible approach to how ministerial calls are issued and concurred, noting the variety of existing practice and the provisions of sections 1(1)(b), 1(1)(c), 2(1)(vii), 2(4)(A)(iii) and 2(4)(A)(vii) of the Structure of the URC.
2. The cited sections of *the Manual* (Section B Structure) state:
 - 1.(1)(b) Where two or more Local Churches together, and in consultation with the synod, decide that their mission will be more effective if they share resources and ordained ministry, they may, with the approval of the synod, form an association known as a group of churches with a structured relationship and a constitution governing the way in which they relate to one another as to the sharing of both resources and the ordained ministry. Each church within the group shall retain its own identity, and its Church Meeting and elders' meeting shall continue to exercise all their functions in relation to that church, save that, so long as the constitution shall so declare, decisions relating to the calling of a minister (see paragraph 2(1)(vii)) may be taken by a single group Church Meeting at which all the members of each of the constituent churches in the group shall be eligible to attend and vote.
3. 1.(1)(c) Where two or more local churches together, and in consultation with the synod, decide that their mission will be more effective if they share ordained ministry (but not other resources), they may, with the approval of the synod, form an association known as a joint pastorate, with a structured relationship with respect to the provision of ordained ministry only and a statement of intent governing the way in which they relate to one another in relation to the sharing of ordained ministry. Each church within the joint pastorate shall retain its own identity, and its church meeting and elders' meeting shall continue to exercise all their functions in relation to that church, save that, so long as the statement of intent shall so declare, decisions relating to the calling of a minister (see paragraph 2(1)(vii)) may be taken by a single joint pastorate church meeting at which all the members of each of the constituent churches in the joint pastorate shall be eligible to attend and vote.
4. Functions of a Church Meeting:
 - 2 (1) (vii) to call a minister or Church Related Community Worker (CRCW) with the concurrence of the synod(s) (see paragraph 2 (4) (A)(vii)); (Where two or more local churches have formed a group or joint pastorate in accordance with paragraph 1(1)(b) or (c) above on the decision of synod under its function 2(4)(A)(iii), the church meetings of each church may, with the agreement of the synod and so long as the group constitution or the statement of intent as appropriate shall so provide, join together as a group or joint pastorate church meeting for the purpose of calling a minister or CRCW, in which case this function shall be exercised by the group or joint pastorate church meeting.)
5. Functions of synod:
 - 2 (4) (A) (iii) to decide upon all matters regarding the grouping, amalgamation or dissolution of local churches;
 - 2 (4) (A) (vii) to give (or, where deep pastoral concern for the church requires it, to withhold) concurrence in calls to ministers or Church Related Community Workers and, with the Moderator of the synod or the Moderator's deputy presiding, to conduct,

in fellowship with the local church, any ordinations and/or inductions of Ministers and any commissioning and induction of Church Related Community Workers within the synod.

6. The reason this was taken to General Assembly was to reflect the significant discussions on call that have occurred in various places, but not least Mission Council, over the past months, and so to remind General Assembly of the variety of ways in which pastorates may legitimately be structured in order to enable flexibility of scoping and effective mission and ministry.
7. This paper responds to a request to offer further explanation and provide examples. It seems that part of a helpful response is to isolate the relevant portions of *the Manual*, and so that has been done above.
8. We live in a day where the church is in the context of a fast-changing society. Our calling is surely to provide flexible and appropriate ministry. The day when a single congregation calls a person to be its minister as a full-time single pastorate is largely over. Of course, it has never been as universally present as many like to imagine.
9. The key opportunity in the provisions cited is perhaps that of 1(1)(c) which allows for the sharing of ministry by two or more churches in a group to be known as a joint pastorate. There is no limit as to how many churches might be involved.
10. The previous paragraph – 1(1)(b) – allows for a deeper sharing involving other resources, as well as ministry, in what is then known as a group of churches.
11. An important point to note is that these two paragraphs provide for a single church meeting with respect to the matter of calling a minister – and that may provide the biggest challenge in operating this practice.
12. In some areas churches have held this single meeting in different locations, either simultaneously or at varied times. That is certainly ‘allowed’ when congregations are simply sharing a minister, and it could be permissible in what *the Manual* defines as a joint pastorate or a group of churches. A shared meeting is beneficial, and to be encouraged, but may be impractical, depending on geography.
13. A further factor is an increasing use of synod-directed elements as part of a post to which a minister is called. The usage of such scoping varies widely but is likely to be direct service in a significant synod role, such as an ecumenical officer, or additional service in pastorate, which may either be not fully determined at the point of call or deliberately undefined so that it may be moved from one congregation to another in transitional ministry. In some circumstances the synod may be willing to remit the determination of the call to the pastorate. However, it is more likely that a prospective candidate will be interviewed by representatives of the appropriate synod committee. Good practice would be that any such appointment process is completed in advance of a ‘preaching with a view’.
14. How might it work in practice? Here are some possible examples.
15. A group of three churches is scoped at 75%, but the synod adds 25% as a scoped post to be used as a transitional minister.
16. A group of four churches calls two ministers, but uses them in a shared way according to their gifts.

17. A group of four churches becomes accredited as a CRCW project and jointly calls a CRCW to work with them. They agree to use the CRCW on a shared basis, focussing on each church and its community in turn.
18. A group of six churches calls two ministers, allowing them to work together but with clearly defined pastoral responsibility.
19. A group of eight churches calls two ministers, but with a clear agreement as to which four are under the care of which minister. When one minister leaves, the situation is reviewed and the remaining minister retains just one out of their part of the pastorate, and takes up responsibility for three of those that were previously in the other section.
20. A group of 12 churches calls three ministers to a team ministry. Each congregation can identify its 'primary' minister though that may, from time to time, change. Particular gifts and specialisations are shared across the congregations.
21. A group of 14 churches calls two ministers, but is able to additionally identify four local leaders and two retired ministers who are willing to contribute. There is also an NSM who can give ten hours a week. Pastoral responsibilities are identified and reviewed every two years.
22. Of course, none of this prevents, where the synod so determines, a large (or larger) church with (or without) a much smaller church linked to it calling its own minister, subject to synod concurrence.