

Paper E2

Change of name

Equal Opportunities Committee





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Equal Opportunities Committee: Change of name

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Revd Elizabeth Nash, convener elizabethjnash@gmail.com
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council agrees to change the name of the Equal Opportunities Committee to the Equalities Committee.
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To change the name of the Committee
Main points	Equality of opportunity is not enough. Underlying prejudices still prevent people from making their full contribution. The URC needs its Committee to focus on these wider issues.
Previous relevant documents	Equal opportunities policy 2008 Remit of the committee, Mission Council minutes March 2012
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Other denominations have taken similar steps

Change of name: Equalities Committee

The United Reformed Church has affirmed its commitment to show the same openness to all people in today's world and is committed to behaving as an equal opportunity organisation. It recognizes that exclusion and discrimination can occur on many grounds, including those recognised in law: gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, colour, ethnic or national origin, age, marital status and disability. (Mission Council 2008)

However, the expectation that given equality of opportunity those who have been discriminated against in the past will no longer be discriminated against, has turned out not to be true. Discrimination is much more deep seated in our society, in our church and in ourselves. We discovered the reality of this at our last Mission Council when we realized how unbalanced were the URC Trustees as a group. I don't know how long it will take us to right the balance of our Trustees, but even when we have done that, the task will not be finished because unless we keep working on it, we will lose the balance again. Opportunity is not enough. Another example is research into the position of women in science which shows how inbuilt is our discrimination. 127 faculty members from Yale University, both women and men, were given an identical completed application form and asked to rank the candidate in terms of competence, starting salary, their willingness to mentor and likeability. The only difference on the forms was that half were identified as from John and the other half from Jennifer. John was offered more money and more respect than Jennifer, but Jennifer was more likeable. (Guardian 15.01.13) Opportunity is a beginning but more is needed.

The remit of Equal Opportunities Committee includes:

1. reminding the United Reformed Church that equality is enshrined in its theology, life and work,
2. the development of detailed policies and the monitoring of their implementation,
3. the promotion of training programmes in equality and diversity and
4. the encouragement of the United Reformed Church's contribution to equality in the wider life of our society.

(Mission Council March 2012)

So if we don't want an Equal Opportunities Committee, what do we want? The Methodists have an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the Church of England have Equality and Diversity Issues. We decided that we would prefer to go for something much simpler.

We would therefore like to change the title of the Equal Opportunities Committee to the Equalities Committee.

Resolution

Mission Council agrees to change the name of the Equal Opportunities Committee to the Equalities Committee.

