

Paper F1

Faith and order committee
Report

Church 2014
United
Church **Reformed**
Church 2014

Paper F1



Faith and order committee: Report

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Elizabeth Welch minister@theroundchapel.org.uk
Action required	Receive the report. Opportunity for questions and comments.
Draft resolution(s)	None
Alternative options to consider, if any	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Report of the work of the committee since General Assembly.
Main points	Details from the committee meeting in August, in particular relating to (i) the future of the church discussion, (ii) marriage of same-sex couples, (iii) celebrant eldership and (iv) church membership.
Previous relevant documents	Committee report to General Assembly.
Consultation has taken place with...	Committee members

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Input to law and polity advisory group; requests to local churches and synods for discussion and response.

Faith and order committee report

1. Summary

Following the report to General Assembly the faith and order committee was tasked by General Assembly to continue several pieces of work. The most significant of these was the invitation to the wider church to engage in the discussion on the future of the church that the committee and the Mission Council has already been involved in.

The committee had also been asked to develop the work done on the possible role of a celebrant elder that arose from the work on ordained local ministry.

In addition the committee has been requested to assist in the consideration of the nature of Doctrine that is needed to contribute to the discussions on the marriage of same-sex couples.

The committee has met since Assembly at Westminster College on the 29 and 30 August.

2. Future of the church discussion

At the time of writing, a booklet containing the report to the Assembly, the scenarios that had been used in previous discussions and discussion questions, is being produced in conjunction with the graphics department for distribution to the churches. The committee has been conscious of the potential clash with the discussion around the marriage of same-sex couples so the material is being sent later with the request for responses to be submitted by the end of July. Consideration is also being given to other opportunities for discussion that might be created within the synods, through liaison with the mission enablers and training and development officers networks including possible conferences at the Resource Centres for Learning.

3. Celebrant eldership

A task group is being established to look more deeply into the issues around the setting up of a category of celebrant elders. At the time of writing potential members are being approached.

4. Nature of Doctrine

The committee was specifically asked to consider the nature of doctrine and to give advice to the law and polity advisory group. Following discussion at the meeting a statement has been drafted and passed to the general secretary for forwarding to the law and polity advisory group.

In addition:

5. Church membership

The committee has responded to various requests to consider issues around church membership including specific questions asked by the children's and youth work committee and the need to look at the possibility of a national category of membership for those who are geographically isolated or involved in churches of other denominations. The committee is establishing a working group under the chairmanship of Stephen Orchard.

6. The booklet *Worshipping God – Wisdom and Blessings* commissioned by the committee and produced by the graphics department and which was launched at General

Assembly has now been circulated to each church. It has been warmly welcomed and additional copies have been requested from various quarters. The World Communion has asked if a pdf file can be made available through their website. This is being agreed following an exploration of the copyright issues involved.

7. **500th anniversary of the Reformation.** The committee has also begun to consider how the URC might be involved in marking the 500th anniversary of the start of the Reformation, which will be marked in 2017. Discussion with colleges and with other interested groups are being initiated.

8. ***Towards a Common Vision*** is the ecumenical document produced by the World Council of Churches to which the churches are asked to offer comments by December 2015. The committee is exploring ways to engage properly with this document and realistic ways of engaging the wider church. Accompanying study material is being explored including what may be already in existence and the possibility of a conference in the Autumn of 2015 is being looked at.

9. **Bi-lateral dialogues** are continuing with the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales and the Church of England. The latter will be holding a 24 hour meeting in January as a development of the previous day meetings.

10. Faith and order email address

The committee now has its own email address faithandorder@urc.org.uk. Work is also underway to establish a faith and order page on the URC website.