

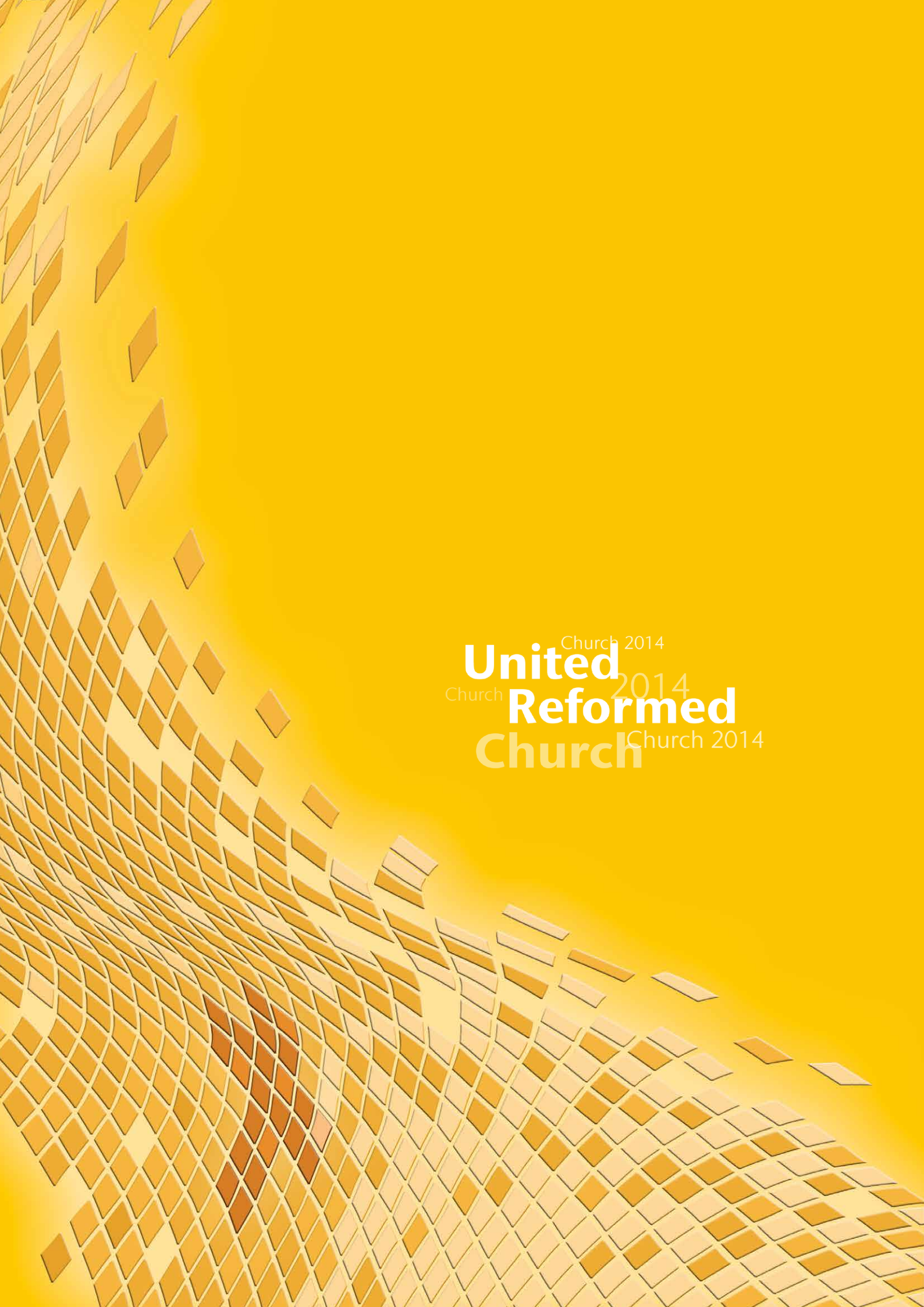
# Mission Council

The Hayes, Swanwick

03-05 November 2014







Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014

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>	<p><b>Simon WALKLING</b>      <i>Leader</i>  <b>Morag McLINTOCK</b>      <i>Reporter</i>            Bridget <b>BANKS</b>            Andy <b>BRAUNSTON</b>            Sue <b>BROWN</b>            David <b>GROSCH-MILLER</b>            Tim <b>LOWE</b>            Helen <b>MEE</b>            Augur <b>PEARCE</b>            David <b>PICKERING</b></p>	<b>B</b>	<p><b>Craig BOWMAN</b>      <i>Leader</i>  <b>Jenny POULTER</b>      <i>Reporter</i>            Joan <b>COLWELL</b>            John <b>ELLIS</b>            Graham <b>HOSLETT</b>            Peter <b>MEEK</b>            Danny <b>PIGEON</b>            Chris <b>REED</b>            Jane <b>ROWELL</b>            Martin <b>SPAIN</b>            Irene <b>WREN</b></p>
<b>C</b>	<p><b>Richard CHURCH</b>  <b>Robert JONES</b>            Jane <b>BAIRD</b>            Andrew <b>BRADSTOCK</b>            Rosie <b>MARTIN</b>            Shelagh <b>POLLARD</b>            Andrew <b>PRASAD</b>            Caro <b>SMYTH</b>            David <b>TATEM</b>            Nigel <b>UDEN</b>            Elizabeth <b>WELCH</b></p>	<b>D</b>	<p><b>Simon PETERS</b>  <b>Clare DOWNING</b>            Elizabeth <b>CLARK</b>            Simon <b>FAIRNINGTON</b>            Dick <b>GRAY</b>            John <b>HUMPHREYS</b>            Margaret <b>MARSHALL</b>            Karen <b>MORRISON</b>            John <b>PROCTOR</b>            Jenny <b>POULTER</b>            Mike <b>WALSH</b></p>
<b>E</b>	<p><b>Catherine BALL</b>  <b>George FARIS</b>            Matthew <b>BARKLEY</b>            Francis <b>BRIENEN</b>            Dougie <b>BURNETT</b>            Andrew <b>GRIMWADE</b>            Carla <b>GROSCH-MILLER</b>            Judith <b>HAUGHTON</b>            Roy <b>LOWES</b>            Daleep <b>MUKARJI</b>            Edward <b>SANNIEZ</b></p>	<b>F</b>	<p><b>Jacky EMBREY</b>  <b>Gethin RHYS</b>            James <b>BRESLIN</b>            Derrick <b>DZANDU-HEDIDOR</b>            Hugh <b>GRAHAM</b>            Michael <b>JAGESSAR</b>            Gwen <b>JENNINGS</b>            Jenny <b>MILLS</b>            Marie <b>TRUBIC</b>            Keith <b>WEBSTER</b>            Paul <b>WHITTLE</b></p>
<b>G</b>	<p><b>Ruth WHITEHEAD</b>  <b>Andrew EVANS</b>            Stephen <b>BROWN</b>            Nicola <b>FURLEY-SMITH</b>            Rita <b>GRIFFITHS</b>            Ruth <b>HENRIKSEN</b>            Andrew <b>MIDDLETON</b>            Cliff <b>PATTEN</b>            John <b>SMITH</b>            Alan <b>YATES</b></p>	<b>H</b>	<p><b>Linda HARRISON</b>  <b>Kevin WATSON</b>            Michael <b>HOPKINS</b>            Helen <b>LIDGETT</b>            Tim <b>MEADOWS</b>            Lawrence <b>MOORE</b>            Dan <b>MORRELL</b>            Lis <b>MULLEN</b>            Carol <b>ROGERS</b>            Alistair <b>WILSON</b></p>

# Agenda and Timetable

06/10/2014

## Monday 3 November 2014

		Paper/s
12.00 – 12.45	Induction session for new Mission Council members – Room 3 Derbyshire Suite	
From 12.00	Registration in the Main House, reception area	
13.00	<i>Lunch</i>	
<b>14.00</b>	<b>Session 1</b>	
	Communion service	
15.30	Room keys available	
16.00	<i>Tea</i>	
<b>16.30</b>	<b>Session 2</b>	
	greetings, apologies, minutes, matters arising	
	Standing Orders: <b>M5</b>	
	Remaindered from Assembly: <b>X2</b> , NSM ages	
18.45	<i>Evening meal</i>	
<b>20.00</b>	<b>Session 3</b>	
	<b>Q1</b> : Joint property strategy group	
	<b>L1</b> : Church House development	
21.00	Prayers	

## Tuesday 4 November 2014

		Paper/s
08.30	<i>Breakfast</i>	
09.00	Prayers	
<b>09.15</b>	<b>Session 4</b> Marriage of same-sex couples <b>X3:</b> Synod of Scotland <b>M3:</b> Possible recall of Assembly	
10.45	<i>Coffee</i>	
<b>11.15</b>	<b>Session 5</b> Resources <b>D2:</b> Education and learning budget <b>Y2</b> Southern Moderator re EM2/3 Communications review oral update <b>C3</b> and <b>C4:</b> Plans for <i>Reform</i> and the <i>Yearbook</i> <b>G1:</b> Budget 2015 and beyond Resource Sharing task group oral report	
13.00	<i>Lunch</i>	
<b>14.00</b>	<b>Session 6</b> Items removed from en bloc, or free time	
16.00	<i>Tea</i>	
<b>16.30</b>	<b>Session 7</b> <b>P1:</b> Response to Peel Commission	
18.45	<i>Evening meal</i>	
<b>20.00</b>	<b>Session 8</b> Moderator's reflection (JGE) <b>M2:</b> Lobbying Act	
21.00	Prayers	

## Wednesday 5 November 2014

		Paper/s
08.30	<i>Breakfast</i>	
<b>09.15</b>	<p><b>Session 9</b></p> <p>Prayers</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Vote on en bloc business</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Any remaindered business</p>	
10.45	<i>Coffee</i>	
<b>11.15</b>	<p><b>Session 10</b></p> <p>Closing worship</p>	
13.00	<i>Lunch and departures</i>	
13.45 <i>to end no later than 15.00</i>	<p>Committee conveners meet – Room 3 Derbyshire Suite</p>	

# Paper A1

Assembly arrangements committee  
Report

United Church 2014  
Church 2014  
**Reformed**  
Church 2014  
**Church**



# Paper A1



## Assembly arrangements committee: Report

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Michael Hopkins, Convenor (at the time of writing!) <a href="mailto:minister@farnhamurc.org.uk">minister@farnhamurc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Note
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	n/a

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Update on responses to feedback from General Assembly 2014.
<b>Main points</b>	Concerns have been heard, and are being addressed. A full report will be brought to Mission Council in May 2015.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	n/a
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Many people around the church have offered feedback.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	Not yet known.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	n/a



# Assembly arrangements committee report

1. A number of concerns have been expressed, from a broad cross section of the church, about a variety of practical and financial aspects of the organisation of General Assembly.
2. The Assembly arrangements committee wishes to re-assure Mission Council that these concerns have been heard loud and clear. However, the convenor, and any new convenor (if the nominations committee are able to bring a name for appointment by Mission Council) wish to re-assure Mission Council they have an ever open ear to continue to receive feedback.
3. Despite the fact that the Assembly arrangements committee was simply implementing the arrangements directed by Mission Council, within the reduced budget set by General Assembly, we are fully seized that all was not well, and much needs to be addressed before the 2016 General Assembly.
4. We received 111 feedback forms after Assembly (there were 329 members of Assembly, but a number of people were members of Assembly in more than one capacity), all of which have been read several times. We have also received feedback from synod moderators, from other officers of synods, and from a number of individuals. We appreciate all of this, which is most helpful.
5. Mission Council will understand that it is not yet possible to produce detailed, thought out, and costed plans for doing anything that needs to be done differently in 2016. The Assembly arrangements committee was not able to meet until 30 October, and there simply has not been time to do all the work that is obviously needed.
6. Therefore, the Assembly arrangements committee plans to bring a major report to Mission Council in May 2015, hoping that it may be a more helpful use of Mission Council's time to bring a considered response, with options and costings.
7. Should Mission Council so direct, we are in a position to make sensible contingency plans for any possible recall of General Assembly in 2015.



# Paper C1

Communications and editorial committee  
Update on the development of a  
departmental mission statement

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014

# Paper C1



## Communications and editorial committee: Update on the development of a departmental mission statement

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	John Humphreys <a href="mailto:jhumphreys@urcscotland.org.uk">jhumphreys@urcscotland.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	None – information only
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	None

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	The mission statement of the communications and editorial committee.
<b>Main points</b>	A definition of the purpose of the communications and editorial committee.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The communications and editorial committee and the departmental staff.

### Summary of Impact

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

# Update on the development of a departmental mission statement

## 1. Background

As part of the ongoing departmental view the communications and editorial committee has been considering the main purpose and functions of the communications department. At its August meeting it did some further work on writing a mission statement for the department.

## 2. The draft mission statement

The final draft produced at that meeting is:

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

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

3. The committee brings this statement to Mission Council for information. All comments will be fed back to the committee.





# Paper C2

Communications and editorial committee

## Guidelines for the use of social media within the United Reformed Church

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014

# Paper C2



## Communications and editorial committee: Guidelines for the use of social media within the United Reformed Church

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	John Humphreys <a href="mailto:jhumphreys@urcscotland.org.uk">jhumphreys@urcscotland.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council endorses the social media guidelines submitted by the communications and editorial committee, and directs the committee (a) to make these guidelines widely available across the denomination as the official social media policy of the United Reformed Church, and (b) to review and, where necessary, to update this policy every 18 months (or more frequently in line with legislative changes).</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	None

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To provide the United Reformed Church with a clear set of guidelines for the use of social media platforms.
<b>Main points</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To encourage the use of social media platforms at all levels of the denomination</li> <li>2. To offer good practice guidance for anyone with a representative role within the United Reformed Church</li> </ol>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The Church House connective (with particular input from the education and learning, ministries, and children and youth work departments), the safeguarding officer, the synod moderators, the communications and editorial committee, FURY, and the staff of the communications department.

### Summary of Impact

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

# Guidelines for the use of social media within the United Reformed Church

## Introduction

Welcome to these guidelines for the use of social media within the denomination. They have been written to provide encouragement and guidance in the wise and appropriate use of social media so that it can enhance the community and outreach of the Church. These tools offer us new ways to communicate the Gospel, and our faith journeys, in a public space – but they also remind us that it is a public space and that rules and etiquette apply here as much as anywhere!

Social media is the umbrella term used to describe websites and applications that allow users to share content (that is words, images and web links) with others and/or to participate in social networking. The best known platforms are facebook, twitter and YouTube, but the term – and these guidelines – also cover online forums and blogs as well as less well-known applications such as blipfoto, pinterest and flickr.

We invite and encourage churches and members to explore, adopt and utilise these exciting platforms for communicating and sharing the Gospel. When used well social media applications are effective communications tools, clearly benefitting the Church by providing an online space for conversations, wider exploration, learning and discussion on issues of faith, church and society and offering opportunities for forming and deepening relationships locally and globally.

We offer this guidance paper to encourage more people within the United Reformed Church to engage with social media – and to use it effectively and safely, understanding both the benefits and the potential dangers. Please note that the official United Reformed Church (URC) facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/URCcommunications>) and twitter feed (<https://twitter.com/urcmedia>) can be used as useful resources for your own social media pages, for sharing all the latest news and information from the URC.

To summarise: These guidelines for the use of social media are intended both to encourage the use of social media and to offer good practice guidance for anyone with a representative role within the URC. The guidelines are applicable across a range of uses: Church and synod social media accounts, as well as the personal accounts of anyone publicly identified with the denomination.

## Basic principles

1. The golden rule: Remember you are a representative of the United Reformed Church – therefore it is important that you are a responsible ambassador for Christ, the Church and your part in it. In essence, if you wouldn't say it, in a loud voice, in your local pub on a Saturday night, wearing your dog collar or a very big badge saying: 'I'm a member of the United Reformed Church' then don't say it online. Please.

2. If you have *any* known public role within the United Reformed Church (elder, member, minister of Word and sacraments ...) then, when you post, you are posting as a representative of the United Reformed Church. This applies whether you're posting in an official capacity on a church account or on your personal account – you are representing the denomination and cannot hide behind statements made on personal social media accounts. What you say privately (and social media is far from being a private forum!) will reflect on you and the denomination.
3. Although it may appear that the internet has little or no regulation, all content is subject to the same laws that apply in the 'real' world. You are completely responsible for the things you post and so could fall foul of the laws relating to libel and defamation.
4. There is an internet code of conduct. Although not an exclusive list, some specific examples of legally prohibited social media conduct include: Posting commentary, content or images that are defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libellous, or any material that could be seen to create a hostile environment.
5. It is important to remember that any content you post to social media could attract wider media interest – so be prepared for additional publicity, both positive and negative. If you do receive media interest (hopefully positive interest because you have posted some good news about local church life on a social media platform) then do feel free to contact the URC's central press and media office for advice, if you feel you need it. If you have posted something that attracts negative media interest, you should contact the URC's central press and media office for advice. Call the switchboard on 020 7916 2020 and ask for the press and media office.
6. Social media is fast-paced and if you do decide to enter the arena, then stay present and active – monitor your output, keep it fresh and up-to-date, and regularly review information about your church. Aim to post/update content regularly to encourage people to engage with what you are posting, to whet their appetites and to keep them coming back for more. If you really want to make a splash with social media and find your church has a lot to say, then you might want to explore applications such as hootsuite <https://hootsuite.com/> that allow you to set up social media content (on both facebook and twitter) in advance. Hootsuite is a particularly useful tool if you don't have the time to do daily updates but do want to stay engaged; it allows you to plan ahead – sending out prayers, news and reflections to go out at set times. It is a particularly useful tool for planning social media activity if your church is having a mini campaign on a specific topic, or wanting to post prayers every day of Advent or Lent etc.
7. It is important that you separate your personal social media account(s) from the 'official' church account(s).
8. Double check your privacy settings on social media platforms. Be aware that facebook is particularly prone (especially during updates) for resetting or creating new options for privacy. There are privacy policies and settings on each platform, including explanations of the different levels of privacy. When you post, bear in mind what effect your levels of privacy will have on who will – or could – see your post.



## Some dos and don'ts

### Do:

- Do appoint at least two people to monitor and manage your church's social media accounts. We recommend that, where possible, these 'account managers' include the minister and an elder. If you have a communications officer they would be a natural choice. Remember that anyone with access to the account(s) becomes the 'public voice' of your church – so take great care to choose trustworthy individuals who understand the power of social media, who can post with authority and who are able to respond quickly and appropriately to any comments. (See the 'Don't' section for more information).
- Do use a code of conduct on your facebook page; setting out what you feel is appropriate facebook behaviour. You can see the URC Communications facebook code here: <https://www.facebook.com/URCcommunications/info> – you are welcome to adapt this for your use.
- Do use an organisation facebook page (as opposed to a personal one) as this will make it very clear that you are an organisation and it will also allow you to better manage your output and interaction.
- Do be respectful of theological viewpoints you do not agree with. Public slanging matches between Christians are never a good thing.
- Do respond to queries quickly – you might find that newcomers to your area are looking for a place to worship. Be welcoming.
- Do be credible, fair and honest.
- Do respect the privacy of your congregation. Discussion of pastoral care in relation to individuals not only contravenes data protection but, for ministers and church employees, could become a disciplinary matter.
- Do make sure you have the child's agreement and the written permission of parents/guardians when posting photographs of children on to church social media sites. See section on 'Using images of children' for more information. (Please note: Good Practice 4 – the United Reformed Church's safeguarding handbook – is currently being updated and, as soon as it is available, these guidelines will link to it).
- Do use social media to share good news of church life and congregation members – first checking that the particular person/people involved is/are happy for the news of their engagement/pregnancy/marriage/anniversary/recovery from illness etc to become public. Before posting ask yourself: 'Is this my story to tell?' And if it's not, then ask permission first!
- Do post or share (on facebook) and/or retweet (on twitter) appropriate stories, reflections, prayers marking key events in the Christian calendar/ life of the denomination etc. All posts on the URC Communications facebook page/twitter account can be freely shared and retweeted.
- Do monitor church community group pages on sites such as facebook – take care to quickly remove posts by others that are visibly offensive, threatening or indicative of bullying.
- Do stay within the legal framework and make yourself aware of safeguarding issues; respect copyright, libel and defamation and data protection laws.
- Do bear in mind that what you post has the potential to be misinterpreted or misread: Emotions and attitudes are hard to convey in print – so be careful how you phrase things.
- Do be patient. Rome was not built in a day – it takes time to build a following on social media.
- Do expect to get better at it as you go on – check out what others are posting and tweeting, see what works and feel free to try similar things yourself.
- Relax. Enjoy the journey. It's just a conversation and shouldn't be a chore.

**Don't:**

- Don't respond censoriously to every little remark just because you don't like it! Take a judgement call between someone who is expressing a view that you or your church doesn't hold and someone who is writing abusive comments.
- Never make any comments that could be considered racist, sexist, or homophobic, or engage in any other conduct that would be considered unacceptable in a Christian environment or work place of the United Reformed Church.
- Never engage with posters who are being deliberately hateful. Remove the post. (It's helpful to have the code of conduct on your facebook page, which spells out the type of posts that will be removed.)
- Don't neglect the wider community who may be genuinely interested in your church or new to the area and looking for their next place of worship.
- Don't gossip or engage in conversations about personal/pastoral matters that directly relate to individuals. Do not disguise gossip as 'prayer points'. If it's not your story to tell, then don't tell it! Remember that there are data protection and safeguarding considerations, and that anything published online is subject to libel laws.
- Don't engage in verbal aggression via social media; it's ugly and has no place on a social media site run by a church. Would Christ say it? No? Then please don't either. You can correct misinformation but do it with grace. Remember, people are entitled to their opinions – but they are not entitled to share abusive or derogatory opinions and comments on your church's facebook page!
- Don't expect overnight success – social media is all about building relationships. And that takes time.

**A word about safeguarding**

Since the Data Protection Act 1998, organisations must take care how they take and use photographs or film footage of people. This does not mean that pictures should not be taken or that filming should be prohibited. However, certain protocols should be followed in order to comply with the legislation, and in order to safeguard children and young people.

**Using images of children:** Ensure that you ask the permission of the child/parent/carer before taking pictures/videos of children and ensure that the parent/carer signs consent forms. It is advisable to use group photographs of children rather than individuals. When captioning photos/videos of children, do not include any personal details about them, including their names.

**'Friending' children on social media:** At the time of writing the United Reformed Church has no overarching policy about individuals using their personal facebook pages to communicate with young people, however we strongly recommend that, wherever possible, links between young people and adults are only made on a church or youth group organisational page and not a personal page. You should be aware of the following disadvantages and risks of using a personal facebook page:

- Lack of privacy: Always having to be careful what is shared online with 'friends'
- Blurring of boundaries: The role of a church worker shifts from being a role model/mentor/advice-giver to being a more 'equal friend'
- Information on a personal profile can be used against the worker, for example, through teasing and bullying.
- Some social media websites/applications have restrictions on the minimum age of users – do not ignore these. (For example, facebook users must be at least 13 years old.)

Having pointed out some potential pitfalls, we do acknowledge that, in some congregations, young people (those under 18 years old) play a very prominent role in the life of the church.

## And not forgetting copyright

It is important that you do not use content that is subject to copyright. Please take great care in all that you publish – and never publish items that you don't have permission to publish (e.g. poems, prose extracts, song/hymn lyrics). If you do want to publish something that's protected by copyright, please seek written (or emailed) permission from the copyright holder before you post it on your church website<sup>1</sup> or print it in your newsletter.

Don't download images from the web and assume it will be ok, it almost certainly won't be! A good place for free images with no or little copyright stipulations is <https://www.flickr.com/>. Select the 'advanced search' option, and search in the 'Creative Commons-licensed content' section. Do acknowledge the photographer/artist, even when the image is copyright free. And, of course, you can always take your own photos!

The Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI) website (<http://ccli.co.uk/copyright/>) is an excellent source of information on copyright law.

## Ideas to get you started

- If you don't have a church website, or are looking for an easy-to-use alternative, an organisational facebook page could be the answer. Such a page could be used to promote your church, give information on service times, events etc and is really easy to update. (And, if you do have a website, remember that facebook and twitter can also be in conjunction with it. You can set up social media feeds to automatically feed your social media posts to your site – and you can also direct people to your website via your social media posts.
- Get on facebook and twitter and report on your community and outreach projects.
- Post films of your services to YouTube for everyone to see. If these films include images of children and young people then please ensure that the children are happy to be included and that you have the written consent of their parents or carers. And please remember that you may need a licence if hymn/song words are shown on screen – check with CCLI.
- Use a photo-sharing application like Flickr to post a selection of good quality photos of church life (ensuring that you have written parental/carer permission for publishing photos with children in them).
- Share any good news on facebook and twitter – and you will start to build a following/develop relationships.
- Use facebook or twitter to start a discussion about a particular topic or issue at the church or your activities. Remember, social media offers two-way communication (so be prepared for positive and negative feedback – and respond to comments and queries quickly).

<sup>1</sup> If you do not have a church website or are looking to improve your current church website then you might like to consider the iChurch website offer (<http://ichurch.urc.org.uk/>) developed by the URC's Windermere Centre.

## Glossary of terms

### General terms

**Applications/platforms:** Websites and mobile-phone-operated programs.

**Post:** This term is both a verb and a noun; it is both the process and the product of sharing/publishing content using online platforms.

**Profile:** The public-facing page of a social media website.

**Sharing:** The process of sharing a status, image or article from a social media account that is not your own; this is usually done by clicking a 'share' button/icon. Shared content will be displayed to all of your friends/contacts.

### Facebook specific terms

**Friending:** The process of adding an individual as a friend on facebook. Depending on your settings, and the other person's settings, being a friend allows both parties to see each other's posts, write on each other's facebook timelines and share links, videos and images.

**Liking:** The process of giving a virtual 'thumbs up' by clicking the 'like' button (indicated by a 'thumbs up' icon), showing that you approve of someone's facebook status, image or comment. This term is specific to facebook timelines. Be careful about liking – it's not always appropriate. For example, don't 'like' content about sensitive issues including illness or bereavement.

**Organisation page:** This is a facebook-specific term describing one of the types of page that facebook allows its user to create. A page that is labelled as an organisation page has useful features including easy ways for more than one person to monitor/manage/edit the page activity.

**Tag:** You can 'tag' a facebook friend in your post. Tagging indicates that the post/image is connected in some way with them – perhaps because you and they are in a photo together, or were at an event together. The friend will be notified of the tag.

### Twitter specific terms

**Favouriting:** The twitter version of a facebook 'like'

**Hashtags (#XYZ):** Hashtags are a way of signposting topics and themes on twitter. For example, you can search for hashtags to see if any twitter users are talking about the same topic, as well as use them yourself to contribute to a discussion or about an event. #URCGA14 was used for General Assembly, and enabled the communications department to monitor the tweets about General Assembly and find out what people were up to in the different sessions as well as allowing others to easily follow all General Assembly news.

**Mention (@):** You can 'mention' someone in a tweet by placing their handle after the @. The person or organisation mentioned will be notified of the tweet. You can use this feature to draw someone's attention to a tweet, or simply to say you were with him or her at the time of the tweet (e.g. 'just at the cinema with @joe\_bloggs')

**Retweet (RT):** This word is used both as a verb and a noun; it is both the process and the product of sharing someone else's twitter post to your followers/twitter feed by pressing the 'retweet' button. The retweeted post will be published on your own twitter feed.

**Tweet:** Similar to a facebook status, you have 140 characters to convey your message. Images and videos can be added to tweets.

**Twitter handle:** Similar to your name on facebook, you choose your 'handle' when you create your account and it is always preceded by an @ – and allows people to communicate directly with you. The URC communication twitter handle is @urcmedia.

# Paper C3

Communications and editorial committee

The future for *Reform*

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014





# Paper C3

## Communications and editorial committee: The future for *Reform*

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	John Humphreys <a href="mailto:jhumphreys@urcscotland.org.uk">jhumphreys@urcscotland.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council notes that the communications and editorial committee and staff team are focussed on increasing the number of subscriptions to the magazine, and committed to developing, and monitoring the use of, <i>Reform</i> within the United Reformed Church over the three-year period from January 2015 to December 2017. 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 and editorial committee to present up-to-date subscription numbers to Mission Council in March 2016.</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	None

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Updating Mission Council on <i>Reform's</i> place in the Christian publishing market – and its finances.
<b>Main points</b>	The current position of the magazine and plans for the short-to-medium term future plus the financial issues.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The communications and editorial committee and the finance department.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	<i>Reform</i> continues to need some form of financial investment from URC central funds. However, it is important to note that <i>Reform</i> has only used the full amount of the subsidy, as agreed by Mission Council in 2011, in one of the three years since. <i>Reform</i> is committed to reducing production costs where possible and is working to increase revenue from advertisers and subscribers. It is also important to note that, if the departmental budget is cut significantly in 2016 or 2017 then the department spend on <i>Reform</i> will need to be reconsidered, alongside the other areas of work of the communications department.
<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 (see the 'Marketing <i>Reform</i> ' section).

# The future for Reform

## 1. Introduction

Mission Council discussed *Reform* in May 2011, and agreed ‘a subsidy of £90,000 should be made available in the 2012 central budget but that, after adjustment for inflation, the annual subsidy should not exceed this level for at least the following two budget years.’ Since then, the committee has discussed the future of *Reform* in several meetings, and most recently, in light of the ongoing review of the communications department of Church House. As part of the review process, the communications and editorial committee have extensively discussed and evaluated *Reform* – this paper contains the committee’s thinking and conclusions.

## 2. The role of *Reform* in the life of the denomination

*Reform* plays a key role in the communications department and the delivery of its aims as outlined in the (draft) departmental mission statement, which reads:

‘The communications department exists to: promote effective communication and celebration of the Gospel in and beyond the United Reformed Church by:

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

The committee believes that *Reform* has a significant part to play:

- In communicating information between local churches, and between local churches and the centre;
- As a forum for theological and spiritual conversations within the United Reformed Church (URC) and with our ecumenical partners;
- In never ceasing to explore what the Gospel is, what impact it has on our lives, what it has to say to our world and what it demands of us as followers of Christ.

The committee is enthusiastic and unequivocal in its support of *Reform*, viewing it as a valuable resource for the denomination, recognising its contribution as a forum for conversation across the whole breadth of the URC, and seeing it as a vehicle to both stimulate and inform mission, by, for example, publicising innovative local projects in its ‘Christian Activist’ column.

It must also be noted that *Reform* staff are all members of the communications department and regularly assist the work of the press and media and graphics offices.

## 3. Recent improvements

Having been developed, updated and redesigned under its previous and present editors, *Reform* compares well with the best publications in the Christian world. Flatteringly, elements of its new design have been emulated by other Christian magazines ... compare *Reform*’s ‘Month in Numbers’ and a ‘A Good Question’ – both launched in July 2013 – to the more recently introduced ‘Month in Figures’ in Premier’s *Christianity* and ‘The Big Question’ in *Life and Work*.

The theologian Robert Beckford recently said: ‘*Reform* is a prophetic voice’ and Christina Rees of the Church of England’s General Synod called it: ‘One of the most intelligent, relevant and helpful Christian publications around’.

And, as well as the very welcome comments from external supporters, *Reform* regularly receives compliments from the internal URC audience. For example:

‘*Reform* is OURS! ... a must read for Christians seeking to think critically and live faithfully.’  
(Michael Jagessar)

‘I am pleased to see that the breadth of theology in the URC is now being reported... I look forward to *Reform* continuing to represent the URC in all its diversity.’ (Richard Alford)

‘The diversity of opinions in *Reform* is representative of the cross-section of people that make up the family of the United Reformed Church... Read *Reform* and discover more about this church that nourishes us all in our pilgrimage of faith.’ (David Grosch-Miller)

‘*Reform* is our magazine, and it is great to see a broader representation of our theological spectrum. It really does feel like ‘ours’, rather than a niche group publication. Well done!’  
(Ashley Evans)

‘Its articles are so engrossing that three times I have missed my stop on the train journey home.’ (Roberta Rominger)

‘*Reform* magazine reads well, and reflects an increasingly wide set of opinions, which is healthy and makes all opinions well represented.’ (Norman Setchell)

And, speaking about the September 2014 issue: ‘Best edition yet, I reckon.’  
(Lawrence Moore).

#### 4. The breadth of the URC

Historically, not all parts of the denomination have felt equally well represented by *Reform*. This has changed as a result of the current editorial commitment to theological breadth and to providing a forum for diverse voices. It is our hope that the resultant magazine is one that the whole of the United Reformed Church can feel belongs to them.

#### 5. Budget

*Reform* is understandably vulnerable in the life of the denomination. The communication and editorial committee considers *Reform* to play an important role across the life of the URC, but has been realistic in its discussions around the magazine’s finances<sup>1</sup>. It is clear that *Reform* needs to increase its revenue – most obviously by increasing advertising sales and/or selling more subscriptions. We are not aiming to maintain the status quo.

However, it is worth pointing out that, since the Mission Council resolution of 2011, *Reform* has cut its production costs and has not used the whole amount of the agreed investment from central funds.

The communications department made large cutbacks during 2012. *Reform* made a considerable contribution to these savings and continues to make changes to keep costs down. As a result, in 2013 printing *Reform* cost 23% less than it did in 2009 (down from £41,641 to £32,052); distribution cost 13% less than in 2009 (down from £50,606 to £44,135); and marketing cost 38% less than in 2010 (down from £18,600 to £11,550).

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A – *Reform*’s budget

## 6. Marketing *Reform* and the drive to increase sales

In the recent past the *Reform* team – in line with the editorial changes that have resulted in a magazine with greater theological breath and appeal – have focused on marketing *Reform* to audiences outside of the denomination.

These initiatives have included: Regular marketing meetings focused on brainstorming new ideas for promoting *Reform*; the launch of a three-editions-for-the-price-of-one direct debit subscription offer; promoting the magazine at the Greenbelt Festival and the Christian Resources Exhibition; themed issues to better attract advertisers; advertising *Reform* online via websites such as shipoffools.com; and sending magazine samples to university Christian groups.

However, these initiatives have had limited success and we have recently changed the direction of our focus – plans to market the magazine to audiences within the denomination are now underway.

It is essential that we take steps to place *Reform* on a more stable financial footing, and it is our belief that URC congregations are the natural and most receptive group of potential new subscribers; so, in the future, marketing efforts will be concentrated internally. This change in focus will not affect the magazine's editorial commitment to theological breadth and broad Christian appeal.

Both the communications committee and department hope that Mission Council members will support this marketing focus by helping to promote the magazine to congregations who do not currently read or receive *Reform*.

Specific plans include:

- A digital version of *Reform* available in early 2015.
- Producing resources to help churches make the most of *Reform* (see the 'Enriching church life' section below)
- A marketing push within the URC, promoting *Reform* to congregations where members do not presently receive it. (Please note that the *Reform* office is always happy to supply sample copies of the magazine, in bulk if necessary – and if stock allows, so that potential subscribers can familiarise themselves with its content and make an informed decision about subscribing.<sup>2</sup>)
- A survey of URC members who don't yet subscribe to *Reform*.

## 7. Enriching church life

*Reform* is an underused resource in local churches and the committee is confident that it could be used as an effective tool in developing the faith of individuals and congregations. To this end, plans are being developed around producing a guide on how to use the magazine in services and small groups. Ideas that are being considered include: Using some of the shorter articles related to current events, such as the 'A Letter From...' column, to inform prayers; using the four-way debate of the 'A Good Question' feature in group discussions; and using feature articles for reading-group-style sessions.

The committee discussion on these ideas was particularly encouraging. There is no doubt that the committee is enthused by the range of ways that congregations can use *Reform* both within congregations and as an outreach tool.

<sup>2</sup> If you are interested in receiving complimentary copies of *Reform* for promotional purposes please contact Charissa King by emailing [reform@urc.org.uk](mailto:reform@urc.org.uk).

## 8. Conclusion

*Reform* is a valuable and well-loved resource for the spiritual lives of members and the mission of congregations – and is a resource that the United Reformed Church can be proud of and continue to support.

The committee, together with *Reform*'s staff team and the head of communications, is completely committed to developing *Reform*'s potential and increasing its income but recognises that developing the magazine in the ways detailed in this paper will take time – and thus asks for Mission Council's support for the next three years.

## Resolution

**Mission Council notes that the communications and editorial committee and staff team are focussed on increasing the number of subscriptions to the magazine, and committed to developing, and monitoring the use of, *Reform* within the United Reformed Church over the three-year period from January 2015 to December 2017. Mission Council therefore resolves to support *Reform* by continuing with the current annual subsidy – not to exceed £90,000 in any one budget year – for the next three budget years; and asks the communications and editorial committee to present up-to-date subscription numbers to Mission Council in March 2016.**

## Appendix A – Reform’s draft income and expenditure account to June 2014

	2013 (Jan-Dec)	2014 (Jan-Jun)			2014	2015
	Actual £	Actual £	Budget £	Variance £	Budget £	Draft Budget £
<b>Reform Magazine</b>						
<b>Budget holder – Gill Nichol</b>						
<b>Staff costs</b>	128,859	65,640	65,250	390	130,500	133,400
<b>Office and Equipment</b>	1,593	490	1,250	(760)	2,500	2,500
<b>Magazine Production/ Marketing</b>						
Advertising commission	12,099	4,496	5,000	(504)	10,000	10,000
Subscription collection costs	9,919	5,573	5,000	573	10,000	10,000
Contributors fees	3,278	1,501	2,000	(499)	4,000	4,000
Images and illustrations	1,852	1,336	1,750	(414)	3,500	3,000
Marketing and promotional	11,550	3,867	3,500	367	7,000	7,000
Distribution (inc inserts/packing)	44,135	18,942	17,500	1,442	35,000	36,000
Printing of <i>Reform</i>	32,052	14,067	15,000	(933)	30,000	32,000
Editorial – board and other	200	92	0	92	500	1,000
	115,084	49,873	49,750	123	100,000	103,000
<b>Total costs</b>	245,536	116,004	116,250	(246)	233,000	238,900
<b>Income:</b>						
Subscriptions	(115,529)	(49,538)	(60,000)	10,463	(120,000)	(115,000)
Advertising	(44,015)	(17,985)	(20,000)	2,015	(40,000)	(40,000)
Royalties	0	(220)	0	(220)	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	(159,544)	(67,742)	(80,000)	12,258	(160,000)	(155,000)
<b>Net cost/ (contribution)</b>	<b>85,992</b>	<b>48,262</b>	<b>36,250</b>	<b>12,012</b>	<b>73,000</b>	<b>83,900</b>



## Appendix B – Subscriptions

The staff of *Reform* has worked hard to increase subscription sales, but we recognise that more is needed in order to make it sustainable.

At present, 9,000 copies of each edition are printed. The breakdown of this print run is as follows:

- 4,125 copies are distributed to subscribers (as of 2 September 2014)
- 500 copies are sent to the *Reform* editorial office (for the Church House reception area display, for circulation amongst Church House staff and meeting rooms, and for archiving, storage and promotional copy placement purposes)
- 420 copies are sent out for free each month to synod offices and training centres including the Windermere Centre, Scottish College, Luther King House, Crossways and Keld
- 120 copies are sent to the offices of our fulfilment partners – advertising and subscription fulfilment teams (where they are then sent on to potential advertisers and subscribers who may have missed their delivery or want to purchase back issues)
- 35 copies are sent to Christian bookshops on a sale or return basis
- 2,000 copies are sent by request to conference centres, university RE departments, libraries, and medical centre waiting areas
- The remainder are used for marketing initiatives such as the Christian Resources Exhibition and Greenbelt, where they are distributed for free.

The advertising revenue gained as a result of this free distribution helps to keep down the cover price for subscribers.

In the 12 months between July 2013 and July 2014, the number of subscribers fell, from 4,549 to 4,118 – a net decrease of 431 in one year. (By comparison, between July 2008 and July 2013, the number of subscribers fell by 2,920 – an average of 584 per year.)

A more detailed breakdown of subscription sales between July 2013 and July 2014 is as follows: *Reform* gained 280 new subscribers, but lost 219 individual subscribers and 492 subscribers in church block subscriptions. The number of subscribers rose slightly month by month, but dropped dramatically around December 2013, as it does every year, when church block subscriptions expire.

# Paper C4

Communications and editorial committee

Update on the continuation  
of the print Yearbook

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014

# Paper C4



## Communications and editorial committee: Update on the continuation of the print Yearbook

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	John Humphreys <a href="mailto:jhumphreys@urcscotland.org.uk">jhumphreys@urcscotland.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	None – information only.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	None

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	The continuation of the print Yearbook.
<b>Main points</b>	To continue printing the Yearbook without the need to carry out a consultation.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Mission Council (Questionnaire in March 2014) and the communications and editorial committee.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	No. This decision is a continuation of the current position.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	No

# Update on the continuation of the print Yearbook

## 1. Background

In October 2013 the communications and editorial committee overturned a previous decision to produce an online only version of the Yearbook, and agreed: ‘to produce a Yearbook for 2014 and 2015 and conduct a consultation during the next 18 months, on the use and production of a print Yearbook’.

The 2014 Yearbook was available from Easter 2014 (and sold out by June); production of the 2015 Yearbook is currently underway and will be available from early January 2015.

## 2. The consultation process

At the March 2014 meeting of Mission Council the first stage of the consultation took place when members were asked for their views on the future of the Yearbook and to state if their preference was for online only or to continue to make a print version available. The majority of respondents favoured retaining a printed version.

The second stage of the consultation has been planned as a Yearbook consultation questionnaire to be sent out with the annual returns questionnaire at the end of October.

## 3. Committee update and decision

At the August committee meeting the question was raised as to whether a consultation was necessary as two things were becoming clear:

- a) The majority of those asked thus far were in favour of retaining a printed Yearbook and;
- b) The thinking around moving to an online Yearbook had been driven by one person and was flawed – data protection restrictions mean that emails and contact numbers cannot be made available online in the way that people expected or needed.

The committee agreed to report to Mission Council that: ‘In due consideration of the law on privacy and data, we have decided to not go through with the Yearbook consultation as the Yearbook, in its full content, is not viable as an online resource at this point.’

A printed version of the Yearbook will continue to be produced for the foreseeable future.

## 4. Development of the online Yearbook

Development of the online Yearbook has been ongoing. Much of the information found in the print Yearbook is now available online and can be easily accessed from the homepage of the main URC website or via the URC media app. Work is ongoing to improve the amount and quality of online information but the directory of ministers is conspicuous by its absence – and it is unlikely that the online version will ever be able to include full address details of all ministers. It should also be noted that we have put a temporary stop to some of the work needed to get more information online pending a decision on the Church House database.



# Paper D1

Education and learning committee  
EM1 student grants system

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014



# Paper D1



## Education and learning committee: EM1 student grants system

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	John Smith, convenor of education and learning committee c/o <a href="mailto:philippa.linton@urc.org.uk">philippa.linton@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council agrees to adopt the revised the scheme for EM1 student grants from September 2015 as outlined in paper D1, of Mission Council November 2014.</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	n/a

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To seek Mission Council agreement to the system proposed by the education and learning committee for assessment of grants to new EM1 students starting in the academic year 2015/16.
<b>Main points</b>	Serious inadequacies in the current system will be addressed, resulting in fairer treatment of individuals.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Papers H,H1,H2 for Mission Council May 2013. Resolution 16 withdrawn from General Assembly 2014.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Resource centres for learning, United Reformed Church treasurer, relevant task groups established by the education and learning finance sub-committee, current EM1 students.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	None – the overall budget for EM1 maintenance will be unchanged from what it would have been with the current system.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None

# EM1 student grants system

## 1. Background

1.1 The United Reformed Church trains candidates for the ministry of Word and sacraments and church related community work. Their initial training leading to ordination/commissioning is called education for ministry phase one (EM1) and it takes place at one of three resource centres for learning (RCLs) – Northern College, Manchester; the Scottish College; and Westminster College, Cambridge. Their training typically lasts two to four years. The Church covers academic fees for every candidate who is offered a place for EM1 with a RCL. In addition, every candidate is eligible to apply for financial assistance towards their maintenance and support. For part-time students this is based on re-imbusement of their expenses. Full-time students may apply for a core grant with additional allowances for dependents.

1.2 The education and learning committee has recognised a number of significant shortcomings in the current system of financial assessment, which has been used for 15 years and was an improvement on the previous processes. Some of the shortcomings result from the system itself, and others arise because the financial circumstances of candidates for ministry have become more complicated. The shape of families and households has diversified, attitudes to personal debt have changed, and expectations about standards of living have risen. The result of these factors, many of which are beyond the control of the church are:

1.2.1 The current system does not fully take into account the variations in personal circumstances of individual students. Careful study of the current disbursements strongly suggests that in some cases the committee is being over generous with students whilst others are struggling to make ends meet.

1.2.2 The system is complex, difficult for students to understand, and time-consuming for finance officers at the RCLs and within Church House to implement.

1.2.3 There are some hidden subsidies in the system, particularly related to the cost of student accommodation. The resource centres for learning and the education and learning committee have agreed that it is desirable to eliminate these, so that the people and institutions concerned know the true costs. Where additional support is needed by people it should be evident and agreed.

1.2.4 The financial literacy of candidates for ministry varies widely. The shift from receiving a reasonable monthly salary to living on a termly grant can be very challenging to some people. Experience shows that exercising a degree of rigour in discussing personal finances with students at an early stage avoids unexpected problems during EM1.

## 2. The new scheme

2.1 The education and learning committee has been working through its finance sub-committee in conjunction with the RCLs for the past two years to arrive at a better system of assessing grants. This will be applied to candidates who are accepted to start their EM1 in September 2015. Existing students will continue to receive maintenance and support through the current scheme throughout their EM1 period.

2.2.1 There will be a rigorous system of financial health assessment for candidates accepted for training. This will take household income and expenditure into account more fully than is possible in the present system, so that overall fairness is maintained. The figures used will be based on a scale devised by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to provide a living income.

2.2.2 Analogous to the way that the physical and psychological health of candidates are assessed by an external organisation, all candidates will take part in a financial consultation from which a report will be produced.

2.2.3 The financial report will be given to the candidate and to a new United Reformed Church student finance panel which will make decisions on the level of grant to be given to individual students, working in conjunction with the resource centres for learning and the education and learning office at Church House.

2.2.4 Candidates will be given access to confidential financial counselling where this is needed. Due notice will be taken of sensitivities around household finances concerning private income and family responsibilities, whilst recognising that the use of money is a theological issue which candidates should expect to have to tackle in the exercise of ministry.

2.2.5 The student finance panel will consist of a representative from each of the ministries and finance committee and the chief finance officer and secretary for education and learning of the United Reformed Church. The secretary to the panel will be the finance officer for education and learning.

# Paper D2

Education and learning committee  
Budget augmentation for EM1  
student support

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014

## Education and learning committee: Budget augmentation for EM1 student support

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	John Smith <a href="mailto:c/o.philippa.linton@urc.org.uk">c/o philippa.linton@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p>1. <b>Mission Council recognises the priority given to the funding of ministers in stipendiary service and students preparing for such service expressed during the discussion of the subsequently withdrawn resolution 16 at General Assembly 2014.</b></p> <p>2. <b>Mission Council resolves that the education and learning budget for 2015 should be increased by up to £130,000 and kept at that level for the foreseeable future to enable the numbers of full-time students to be maintained at current levels.</b></p>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	That Mission Council asks the education and learning committee to prepare plans to cut other areas of its budget in order to protect EM1 student maintenance levels within the current committee budget.

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To complete the implementation of resolution 20 of General Assembly in 2012 which reduced the education and learning budget by £200,000.
<b>Main points</b>	Maintaining the levels of support to EM1 students since 2012 has been possible through temporarily underfunding the colleges where EM1 is carried out. This is not a sustainable strategy.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Papers H, H1, H2 for Mission Council May 2013. Resolution 16 for General Assembly 2014.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Resource Centres for Learning, United Reformed Church treasurer, relevant task groups established by the education and learning finance sub-committee, General Assembly 2014.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	The education and learning committee will overspend its budget unless this change is implemented.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	No direct impacts.

# Budget augmentation for EM1 student support

## 1. The current situation

1.1 In 2012, General Assembly passed Resolution 20 which made cuts from most of the standing committees of General Assembly. The reduction in the education and learning (E&L) budget was £200,000 from 2012 to 2013 on the 2012 level of £1.8m.

1.2 During a detailed extensive consultation with the stakeholders of the E&L committee in 2011/12 it had been anticipated that there would need to be reshaping of EM1 student support given that it is the largest budget line within the E&L committee's budget. However it was also recognised that this could not be done quickly given the need for candidates to have an idea of the eventual levels of support available to them during the candidating process. Therefore other areas of the E&L budget were reduced first.

1.3 The annual EM3 allowance was reduced from £700 to £350; the number of TLS weekends was cut from 4 to 3 for each year and TLS materials were taken online instead of being printed; the EM2 programme was reshaped to reduce the number of weekends attended by EM2 ministers from 6 to 5 in their usual 3 year period; EM1 student grants were frozen at 2012 levels; and funding was temporarily cut to the three RCLs with reserves i.e. the three Colleges. This latter cut amounted to £76,000.

1.4 Out of the total education and learning budget of £1.6M per annum (2013), EM1 is the largest single element. The committee has not wished to limit the number of students by financial constraints. Therefore under our current system the actual expenditure is determined by student numbers and family circumstances. The education and learning committee's budget for student maintenance and support in the financial year to December 2013 was £496,000. The actual cost was £564,635 i.e. nearly £69,000 higher than anticipated.

1.5 It is untenable to continue to expect the colleges to use their reserves. Westminster College has been subsidising the United Reformed Church for some years through not charging the market rate for accommodation. This was understandable in the days before the 2013/14 redevelopment, but the business plan of the college which has been agreed by the finance committee of the United Reformed Church is based on charging the going rate for the excellent facilities offered to students. Northern College is an independent charity and it could be argued that it should not be using its reserves to enable the United Reformed Church to balance its books. The Scottish College has been using its reserves for its primary purposes for some years, so the underfunding from the United Reformed Church will lead to those reserves dwindling more rapidly than they otherwise would have done.

## 2. The Proposal

2.1 The education and learning committee spent the two years from General Assembly in 2012 preparing a proposal for setting up a new system of funding EM1 student grants. In the process they arrived at a fairer system for assessing student grants which will not change the overall disbursement of £550,000 assigned to student grants but will ensure that this is distributed more fairly to those in greatest need. The committee also developed a proposal for setting up a Ministerial Green Shoots Fund which would have been developed over the coming years.



2.2 There was not enough time at General Assembly 2014 to reach a conclusion on the Ministerial Green Shoots Fund proposal, but it was clear that Assembly was not in favour of it, re-iterating instead its intention that the funding of stipendiary ministry in both preparation and deployment is a core function of the United Reformed Church and should be properly and entirely supported through the ministry and mission fund (M&M).

2.3 This leaves the education and learning committee with a significant dilemma, for Resolution 16 clearly stated that if £130,000 is not found from sources beyond the M&M fund the church will have to reassess its adult education priorities and commitment to whole church learning.

2.4 The anticipated expenditure on EM1 student support is lower for 2014 than it was for 2013. There are known to be an unusually large number of leavers in June 2015. The future level of funding required is unpredictable because of the unknown numbers of candidates exploring their vocation and the wide variation in their personal and household circumstances. So it may be that the overspend of £69,000 in 2013 was an unusual peak and will not recur. But the £76,000 cut from RCL budgets is real and continuing.  $£69,000 + £76,000 = £145,000$ . The education and learning committee has been conservative in estimating that the amount needed to fully support EM1 students and restore full funding to RCLs is £130,000 but that is the upper figure that is likely to be needed.

2.5 The education and learning budget supports the salaries of 18 full-time equivalent (fte) teaching and administrative posts for TLS, Westminster College, Northern College, the Windermere Centre, the Scottish College and the education and learning office. The four Resource Centres for Learning fund the rest of their staffing and running costs from other sources of incomes such as accommodation provision and investments.

### 3. Consequences

3.1 The education and learning committee, in common with other standing committees of General Assembly, is charged with keeping spending within the agreed budget. In order to achieve the current target of £1.6m the alternatives to finding the additional funding for EM1 student support from M&M would be either to discontinue significant aspects of lay development such the TLS programme or the Windermere Centre or to shift the emphasis within training for stipendiary service from full-time to part-time EM1 pathways for people preparing for the ministry of Word and sacraments. The Mission Council meeting in May 2013 was not in favour of EM1 pathways being shaped by financial, rather than educational, principles.

# Paper D3

Education and learning committee  
Governors of Westminster College

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014

# Paper D3



## Education and learning committee: Governors of Westminster College

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Nigel Appleton <a href="mailto:appletonn@aol.com">appletonn@aol.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Take note
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	None

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To inform about financial arrangements at Westminster College.
<b>Main points</b>	The college has set up a trading subsidiary, to deal with matters that are part of its business plan but not part of its core educational and charitable purpose, for example the provision of bed and breakfast and of conferences and events for non-church organisations. The control of the subsidiary is wholly in the hands of officers and senior staff of the college, its activities are under the close supervision of management committee and governors, and its surpluses are covenanted to the college. The matter is reported now to Mission Council as part of the college's accountability to the United Reformed Church.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Papers re Westminster College development and business plan, as presented to Mission Council and Assembly since 2010.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	URC treasurer and chief finance officer attend governors and management committee respectively; the matter has also been reported to the URC Trust.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	No direct impact on the central finances of the URC.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	This is a necessity under tax and charity laws.

# Paper F1

Faith and order committee  
Report

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014

# Paper F1



## Faith and order committee: Report

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Elizabeth Welch <a href="mailto:minister@theroundchapel.org.uk">minister@theroundchapel.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Receive the report. Opportunity for questions and comments.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	None

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Report of the work of the committee since General Assembly.
<b>Main points</b>	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.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Committee report to General Assembly.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Committee members

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	None
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	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](mailto:faithandorder@urc.org.uk). Work is also underway to establish a faith and order page on the URC website.

# Paper G1

Finance committee  
Budget information

United Church 2014  
Church 2014  
**Reformed**  
Church 2014  
**Church**

# Paper G1



## Finance committee: Budget information

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	John Ellis; treasurer <a href="mailto:john.ellis@urc.org.uk">john.ellis@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decisions on 2015 Budget.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p><b>1. Mission Council notes with gratitude the continuing pensions support from the synods and requests synods to continue this support in 2015 at the same level as in 2014, yielding a total contribution of £300k.</b></p> <p><b>2. Mission Council adopts the budget for 2015 set out in the Appendix.</b></p>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	The paper presents a budget for 2015 for decision, and financial projections for 2016-17 for information.
<b>Main points</b>	M&M giving is currently expected to fall again in 2015. The 2015 budget shows a deficit of 0.7%, mainly as a result of education and learning factors. Projections for 2016 and 2017 suggest that either stability in M&M giving or savings in expenditure will be needed.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Budget holders in Church House The education and learning committee The URC Trust

### Summary of Impact

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

# Budget 2015 and beyond and appendix

1. Attached in the Appendix Column 3 is the draft budget for 2015 which the finance committee presents to Mission Council. This budget has been reviewed by the URC trustees and has their support.

## Income

2. Ministry and mission (M&M) fund offers from the synods are the primary source of income for the budget. The latest information from the synods, on behalf of local churches, suggests that the M&M offering in 2015 will be a reduction of around £190,000 (£190k) compared with 2014. This continues the trend of M&M giving falling by 1% a year. It is too soon to gauge the level of response to the welcome resolution passed at General Assembly encouraging an increase in giving, and no account has been taken of possible positive outcomes.

## Expenditure on Ministry

3. The largest part of the expenditure side of the budget is the funding for stipends of ministers of Word and sacraments and church related community workers. The current stipend is £24,564.

4. Mission Council has delegated the task of setting the stipend to the finance committee in conjunction with the URC trustees. The finance committee recommended a rise of 1.75% for 2015 which the trustees agreed. This continues the traditional formula for setting stipend increases of taking the average of the annual rate of inflation and the annual average increase in earnings. At the time of calculation these two averages were closely aligned. Since then the rate of inflation has fallen so this increase should slightly increase the real value of stipends.

5. After the bulge in retirements experienced in 2013 and early 2014, the number of full-time stipendiary ministers is expected to be more stable in 2015, and to include a higher than usual number of ordinations. Taking account of these factors and the stipend increase, the budget includes £15,712k to cover stipends and related payments. This means over 75% of the total budget is directly supporting front-line ministry, reflecting the wish of General Assembly that this should be the priority.

## Expenditure on ministerial training

6. This section should be read alongside the paper from the education and learning committee (E&L) on the same topic. The numbers in the budget may change depending on the decisions Mission Council makes in response to that E&L paper.

7. When Mission Council worked hard to achieve significant reductions in programme and infrastructure budgets for 2013 the education and learning committee, with the largest programme budget, was faced with the most substantial task because of its commitments to ministerial training programmes lasting four years. It therefore put in place a short-term cut to its support for those Resource Centres for Learning (RCLs) which have their own reserves, with the aim of implementing savings to training costs over a longer period. Those short-term cuts to RCL support were extended when Mission Council failed to agree a way to reduce

E&L expenditure at its May 2013 meeting. The finance committee agrees with E&L that these grants to RCLs should be reinstated for 2015 as starving RCLs of income is not a sensible way to 'solve' an Assembly committee budget problem.

8. As the E&L paper makes clear, after proposals for longer-term savings to training costs brought to Mission Council in May 2013 did not find favour, E&L worked on an alternative approach for General Assembly 2014. This equally failed to find favour, and discussion of the relevant Resolution 16 demonstrated the clear wish that the training of stipendiary ministers should be given similar priority to their remuneration. This implies full costs being met from M&M contributions and the central budget. In the light of this, E&L withdrew Resolution 16 and the issue was effectively remitted by Assembly to Mission Council.

9. Therefore we have both an Assembly resolution to reduce the E&L budget and Mission Council and Assembly resistance to all proposals so far brought to implement this. Pending further Mission Council guidance, this draft 2015 budget therefore (i) restores cuts to RCL support, and (ii) includes the cost of supporting ministerial students on the same basis as previously. This adds £75k to the budget compared with 2014 and £128k compared with the 2013 target. This is the principal reason why the budget is in deficit and out of line with the requirements set by the 2012 Assembly when it reviewed the whole budget. As our reserves are above the minimum level set by our reserves policy, this deficit can be sustained in 2015 but Mission Council still needs to resolve what should happen to the E&L budget in the longer term.

10. The E&L Committee propose that in view of the strong support at Assembly for making ministerial training a prime call on M&M funding, the obligation laid on them to reduce their budget to £1.6m should now be eased. In effect full funding for ministerial training would in future be ringfenced under their proposals and always be provided.

11. The finance committee understands why, in the light of Mission Council and Assembly responses since 2012, E&L believe this to be the best interpretation of what the Church's governance bodies seem to be saying. If Mission Council adopts the E&L proposal the finance committee will implement it for budgeting purposes for 2016 and beyond. The finance committee would nonetheless want Mission Council to notice that the larger the proportion of the total budget that is ringfenced, the more limited are the areas from which any necessary future reductions in total expenditure have to be found.

## Other expenditure

12. Expenditure on other programmes and infrastructure (sections A3, A4, B, C and D in the Appendix summary table) shows no increase in real terms, being held below the expected cost of living increase in staff costs. Implementation of the reorganisation of the general secretariat added about £20k, offset by savings elsewhere.

13. The possibility of a one-day recall of General Assembly in 2015 has not been included: the £100k Assembly expenditure provision in 2015 is towards the costs of the regular biennial meeting in 2016.

## Pensions support

14. Following the large rises in pension fund contributions needed after the 2008 economic crash, Mission Council asked the synods to provide extra funding to avoid too great a dislocation of other parts of the budget. Mission Council agreed in 2011 that this should be phased out by 2016, and it is proposed that the final support in 2015 be at the same level as 2014.

15. The triennial valuation of the ministers' pension fund is due at the end of 2014. The level of contributions to the fund will therefore be reassessed for 2016.

## Resolutions

- 1. Mission Council notes with gratitude the continuing pensions support from the synods and requests synods to continue this support in 2015 at the same level as in 2014 which will yield a total contribution of £300k.**
- 2. Mission Council adopts the budget for 2015 set out in the Appendix.**

## Looking Further Ahead

16. The Finance Committee again offers Mission Council a look three years ahead, with a caveat that greater uncertainty means that the figures for 2016 and 2017 are less reliable than for 2015. While some known factors have been taken into account, essentially these figures are a projection of what the budget would look like if present trends continue. The projections are shown in the Appendix columns 4 and 5.

17. The first key assumption is to assume, cautiously, that the trend in M&M giving continues, with falls of 1% pa, in the light of the likely further fall in membership. Any reduction or reversal in the trend in response to the General Assembly resolution would therefore directly benefit these projections. A full 1% increase in M&M giving, as the Assembly resolution encouraged, would wholly eliminate the projected deficits in 2016 and 2017.

18. The projection for the number of stipendiary ministers is based on best current estimates, with only modest decline in 2016 but more retirements expected in 2017. The total cost of ministry over the three years in view would have fallen by only 4%, about half what would be required to meet the Assembly guideline of changing the overall costs of ministry in line with the changes in overall URC membership.

19. The third key assumption is that Mission Council adopts the proposal in the E&L paper and that the costs of ministerial training are not constrained.

20. With these assumptions and noting all the uncertainties of looking several years ahead, the overall picture shows a deficit projected for 2016 and 2017 at a level that would not be sustainable. Unless other factors change, therefore, Mission Council and committee conveners need to be aware that some further reduction in central expenditure is likely to be necessary.

## Summary budget estimates 2015-2017

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
	Actual	Budget	Draft Budget	Projection	Projection
	£	£	£		
<b>Income</b>					
<b>Ministry and Mission contributions</b>	(19,839,200)	(19,550,000)	(19,360,000)	(19,165,000)	(18,975,000)
<b>Pensions - additional funding</b>	(659,229)	(300,000)	(300,000)	0	0
<b>Investment and other income</b>					
Dividends	(657,903)	(678,000)	(725,000)	(740,000)	(760,000)
Donations	(3,237)	0	(1,000)	(1,000)	(1,000)
Specific legacies	(694)	0	0	0	0
Grants/Income - Memorial Hall Trust/Fund	(220,280)	(230,000)	(235,000)	(240,000)	(250,000)
Interest - New College Trust /Fund	(5,629)	0	0	0	0
Net other interest	(30,151)	(50,000)	(50,000)	(60,000)	(60,000)
Other income, including property rentals	5,727	(10,000)	(20,000)	(20,000)	(20,000)
	(912,166)	(968,000)	(1,031,000)	(1,061,000)	(1,091,000)
<b>Total income</b>	<b>(21,410,595)</b>	<b>(20,818,000)</b>	<b>(20,691,000)</b>	<b>(20,226,000)</b>	<b>(20,066,000)</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>					
<b>A Discipleship</b>					
<b>A1 Ministry</b>					
Local and special ministries and CRCWs	15,770,494	15,181,000	15,060,500	14,895,000	14,561,000
Synod Moderators - stipends and expenses	693,766	640,000	651,400	658,000	664,700
Ministries department	266,523	260,900	264,800	267,000	269,800
Pastoral & welfare	5,699	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
	16,736,482	16,083,900	15,978,700	15,822,000	15,497,500
<b>A2 Education &amp; Learning</b>					
Initial training for ministry	683,088	657,500	635,000	588,000	598,000
Continuing training for ministry	132,137	104,000	105,000	115,000	115,000
Resource Centres support	454,909	466,000	555,000	570,000	590,000
	1,270,135	1,227,500	1,295,000	1,273,000	1,303,000
Windermere RCL - net support	139,531	112,240	114,500	116,800	119,100
Training for Learning & Serving - net support	117,135	99,500	102,000	103,000	104,000
Lay preachers support	8,007	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Education & Learning department	159,306	172,900	176,300	178,500	180,700
	1,694,113	1,622,140	1,697,800	1,681,300	1,716,800
<b>A3 Children's and Youth Work</b>					
Staff costs	207,130	201,600	202,600	205,500	208,300
Management, resources and programmes	67,702	100,650	99,890	102,000	102,000
	274,832	302,250	302,490	307,500	310,300
<b>A4 Safeguarding</b>					
Safeguarding policy and practice	38,773	52,200	47,600	50,000	50,000
<b>B Mission</b>					
Mission dept staff and core costs	370,996	416,500	417,900	423,300	428,700
Mission programmes and memberships	221,255	271,500	266,500	265,000	265,000
	592,251	688,000	684,400	688,300	693,700
National Ecumenical Officers	33,107	35,000	35,000	35,000	35,000
	625,358	723,000	719,400	723,300	728,700
<b>C Administration &amp; Resources</b>					
Central Secretariat	366,524	421,800	461,300	467,000	472,000
URC House costs	254,210	286,500	285,000	285,000	285,000
IT Services	148,355	154,100	152,600	154,000	155,000
Finance	487,163	516,400	505,500	520,500	513,000
Communications & Editorial	373,982	344,800	366,900	364,000	368,000
	1,630,234	1,723,600	1,771,300	1,790,500	1,793,000
<b>D Governance</b>					
General Assembly	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
Mission Council	64,516	46,000	44,000	46,000	48,000
Professional fees	100,070	99,000	103,000	105,000	105,000
Other	60,044	60,000	65,000	65,000	65,000
	324,630	305,000	312,000	316,000	318,000
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>21,324,422</b>	<b>20,812,090</b>	<b>20,829,290</b>	<b>20,690,600</b>	<b>20,414,300</b>
<b>NET (SURPLUS)/DEFICIT</b>	<b>(86,173)</b>	<b>(5,910)</b>	<b>138,290</b>	<b>464,600</b>	<b>348,300</b>

Note: variances are adverse/(favourable)

G1 Mission Council budget paper Appendix.xlsx - DAJJ2014

Summary: Page 1 of 1



# Paper G2

Finance committee:

New Trust Deed and Rules for  
the URC Ministers' pension fund  
(URCMPF)

United Church 2014  
Church 2014  
Reformed Church 2014  
Church 2014



## Finance committee: New Trust Deed and Rules for the URC Ministers' pension fund (URCMPF)

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	John Ellis; treasurer <a href="mailto:John.ellis@urc.org.uk">John.ellis@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, agrees that the new URCMPF Trust Deed and Rules be signed on behalf of the United Reformed Church by the Moderator and clerk of Assembly.</b></li> <li>2. <b>Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, delegates the actions specified in Appendix 1.1.</b></li> <li>3. <b>Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, adopts the practice for early leavers from the URCMPF specified in Appendix 2.</b></li> </ol>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	The paper describes the rationale for, and contents of, a proposed new URCMPF Trust Deed and Rules and seeks agreement to their execution.
<b>Main points</b>	In order to correct issues with the Ministers' pension fund rules and produce a simplified and robust document for future use, a completely new Trust Deed and Rules has been produced. Three specific matters are highlighted concerning the delegation of responsibilities, the determination of early leaver benefits and the treatment of same-sex spouses.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper K4 for May 2013 Mission Council.
<b>Other relevant documents</b>	The proposed Trust Deed and Rules. Paper to URCMPT Ltd describing the changes. Letter from Actuary confirming no significant cost to the fund.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	URC Ministers' pensions Trust Limited Pensions Executive Travers Smith (legal advisers to URCMPT Ltd) AON (actuarial advisers to URCMPT Ltd)

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	Insignificant cost; reduction of financial risk.
<b>Ministers</b>	No adverse effect on scheme benefits.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	

# New Trust Deed and Rules for the URC Ministers' pension fund

## Background

1. At the May 2013 Mission Council, an amendment was made to the Rules of the URCMPF to resolve the more pressing of a number of issues that had arisen in implementing the benefit changes as at 1 January 2013.
2. The directors of the URC Ministers' pension fund trustee subsequently decided to commission Travers Smith, their legal advisers, to produce a new Trust Deed and Rules to fully replace the current documents dating from the early 1980s.
3. Whilst aiming to replicate the benefits provided under the current rules, the new document resolves all known issues with those rules including the removal of obsolete provisions and inclusion of up-to-date legislative requirements. The modern and simplified structure and accessible language of the new rules should form a sound basis for the Fund for a substantial further period. However there are three areas of which Mission Council may wish to take particular note.

## Delegation

4. The current Rules place some of the responsibilities of the 'employer' (as the Church is regarded under pensions legislation), as opposed to those of the trustee, upon 'General Assembly' and others on the 'Maintenance of the Ministry Committee'. In the new Rules all of these responsibilities lie with the 'United Reformed Church' and it is proposed that a number of day-to-day actions in the operation of the fund are delegated as set out in Appendix 1.1.
5. For information, a similar approach has been taken to the delegation of the trustee's day-to-day responsibilities as described in Appendix 1.2. All these delegations reflect current practice.

## The effect on members' benefits

6. The problems identified in 2013 mostly concerned the application of the statutory revaluation of preserved benefits for early leavers from the fund. Our legal advice is that there remains some ambiguity in precisely how this requirement should be applied. The approach that we have been advised to adopt, and which Mission Council is asked to approve, is described in Appendix 2.
7. Associated with this, the new rules include a simplification to early leavers benefits whereby all leavers with at least three months' service gain the same deferred pension benefit; previously a lower level had applied to those with under two years' service. Members leaving in their first three months only gain a refund or transfer of their own contributions.
8. Other minor changes include: in future the rules will permit the legislative maximum of 25% of the value of members' benefits to be paid in tax-free cash at retirement; clarification of death benefits for members who defer taking their pension; clarification that members may only re-join the fund up to age 68. Full details are included in the paper submitted to the trustee.

## Same-sex spouse benefits

9. At present (and as decided by General Assembly in 2006) the civil partner of a deceased member, in accordance with the legislative minimum, receives a spouse's pension and the benefit of any AVC contributions in respect of the period from 5 December 2005. Now that there is the possibility of same-sex spouses, we have been advised by Travers Smith that they should be granted the same benefits as civil partners pending a government decision on whether either of these should be given any further rights.

## Further information

10. The new rules have been written by Travers Smith in line with instructions from the pensions executive convener and have been reviewed by the fund actuary. A note describing all the changes and tracking the old to the new rules has been given to the directors of the pension fund trustee and is available to download at <http://www.urc.org.uk/about-mission-council/65-general/mission-council/1528-november-2014.html>.

11. The new Trust Deed and Rules and a letter from the actuary to the fund confirming that there is an insignificant impact on the financial position of the fund are available for download at <http://www.urc.org.uk/about-mission-council/65-general/mission-council/1528-november-2014.html>.

12. The directors of the trustee have reviewed and are content with the new Trust Deed and Rules, but the power to make changes resides solely with General Assembly, provided a report on the financial effect has been obtained from the actuary.

## Resolutions

- 1. Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, agrees that the new United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund Trust Deed and Rules be signed on behalf of the United Reformed Church by the moderator and clerk of Assembly.**
- 2. Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, delegates the actions specified in Appendix 1.1.**
- 3. Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, adopts the practice for early leavers from the URCMPF specified in Appendix 2.**

## Appendix 1 – Recommended Delegations for the URC Ministers’ Pension Fund (URCMPF)

The new Trust Deed governing the URCMPF is between the United Reformed Church (URC) and the United Reformed Church Ministers’ Pension Trust Limited (the Pension Trustee). Reflecting the position under the current rules, the new Rules define the powers and responsibilities of the URC and the Pension Trustee. While the current rules currently place responsibility for some matters on the ‘Maintenance of the Ministry Committee’ (ie the MoM sub-committee of the ministries committee) in practice many other matters have been informally or formally been delegated, predominantly to the Pensions Executive. It is proposed that in conjunction with the new rules Mission Council (acting for the URC) and the Pension Trustee formally adopt the delegations set out below.

### 1.1 The URC delegates the following actions and responsibilities in relation to the URCMPF:

Rule	Summary of action/responsibility	Delegated to:
1.1	Acceptability of suitable occupation (for ill-health rule purposes)	Pensions Executive
2.1.3	Admission of a late joiner	Pensions Executive
2.4.4	Permission for buying back temporary absence and authorising associated URC contributions	MoM sub-committee
6.5.9	Service credit for ill health pension purposes when engaged in ecumenical work	Pensions Executive
7.6.5	Annual review of the level of dependent children’s benefits	MoM sub-committee
15.1.1	Consent for new participating body	Pensions Executive

### 1.2 The Pension Trustee delegates the following actions and responsibilities under Rules 15.7 and 15.9:

Rule	Summary of action/responsibility	Delegated to:
2.1.3	Permission to enter fund late	Pensions Executive
2.2.2	Retention of full pension basis on reducing scoping	Pensions Executive
2.4.2	Determining the benefits for some re-joiners	Pensions Executive
2.4.3	Agreeing to the aggregation of service for re-joiners	Pensions Executive
2.4.4	Buying back service after temporary absence	Pensions Executive; the MoM sub-committee will act for the URC
5.2.4	Determining the rates of return on AVCs	Chief finance officer
5.2.7	Agree deferment of AVC at Retirement	Pension fund manager
6.5.1	Judgement of initial ill-health evidence	Pensions Executive
6.5.2	Review of state of health of member receiving ill-health pension	Pensions Executive
6.5.3	Judgment on ill-health status; judgement of employment capability; suspension or reduction of pension	Pensions Executive
6.7.2	Applying serious ill-health or trivial commutation rule	Pensions Executive
7.6.1	Recipient of children’s pension	Pensions Executive

7.6.6	Eligibility for children's pension	Pensions Executive
10.5	Recipient(s) of funds under discretionary trusts	Pensions Executive
10.8	Dealing with an incapacitated beneficiary	Pensions Executive
15.6.4-7, 15.6.11, 15.6.14	Appointment of fund manager; appointment of custodian; preparation of statement of investment principles	The Trustee Board on the recommendation of the URC investment committee
15.7	Management of the relationship with fund managers; rebalancing of assets	URC investment committee
15.8, 15.9	Administration of the fund and all member communications including disclosure	Pension fund manager advised by the actuary
15.9	Financial record keeping and transactions	Chief finance officer
17.1.2.2	Treatment of partial transfers	Pensions Executive

## Appendix 2 – The application of statutory revaluation to early leaver benefits

1. There is a statutory requirement to preserve the value of early-leavers' benefits up to 'normal pension age' ('NPA', as defined in legislation), through the application of statutory revaluation; this is complex following the change to NPA (as defined in the Rules) from 1 January 2013.
2. Due to ambiguity between the Pensions Scheme Act 1993 and Occupational Pensions Board guidance, Travers Smith cannot tell us without doubt what the statute requires and so have recommended an approach that is 'not obviously at odds with the current rules and is sensible in that it attempts to provide a way forward on revaluation without entrenching any entitlements in excess of the statutory requirements'.
3. They therefore propose that:
4. The rules state that deferred pensions are to be increased by the percentage required by the Revaluation Requirements (defined as the legal minimum), or such higher percentage as is agreed by the URC and Pension Trustee (this is therefore consistent with the current rules).
5. Separately, the URC and the Pension Trustee would agree the method of calculating deferred pensions to be applied until further notice.
6. This approach has been reflected in the new rules at 8.1. The following sets out the statement which is to be agreed between the URC and the Trustee:
7. 'Pension accrued up to and including 31 December 2013 should be revalued to age 65 and then increased over the period to Normal Pension Age in accordance with Rules 6.4.1.1 and 6.4.1.2. Pension accrued after 31 December 2013 should be revalued to Normal Pension Age.'
8. The Board is asked to approve this statement for use with the new Rules.





# Paper H1

Ministries (accreditation sub-committee)  
Special category ministry (SCM)

Church 2014  
**United**  
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**Church** Church 2014

# Paper H1



## Ministries (accreditation sub-committee): Special category ministry (SCM)

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Gethin Rhys, convenor, ministries <a href="mailto:gethin.rhys@ntlworld.com">gethin.rhys@ntlworld.com</a> or c/o <a href="mailto:ministries@urc.org.uk">ministries@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	To note and for forwarding to synod pastoral committees and equivalents.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	None

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To clarify policy regarding applications for and learning lessons from special category ministry posts.
<b>Main points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are SCM posts available</li> <li>• Ministries welcomes early discussions of any proposal</li> <li>• Synods bear responsibility for proceeding with the application, for day-to-day support and for the integrity of the funding of the project</li> <li>• SCM ministers leaving post should have an exit interview with their synod moderator including an exit statement, which should be forwarded to ministries FAO accreditation sub-committee</li> </ul>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	<p>Paper M. Mission Council October 2012 Minutes Mission Council October 2012 item 12/42 <a href="http://www.urc.org.uk/images/Ministries/Ministries%20Committee/Accreditation%20Sub-committee/Special_Category_Posts.pdf">http://www.urc.org.uk/images/Ministries/Ministries%20Committee/Accreditation%20Sub-committee/Special_Category_Posts.pdf</a> General Assembly Resolution 25: 2006, changes to ministerial service.</p>
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Results from regular consultation with ministers in SCM posts, management groups and synods.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	None
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Potential for contribution to local ecumenical initiatives through SCM programme. Many SCM posts rely on good relationships with external bodies, and maintaining these is a synod responsibility.

# Special category ministry (SCM)

## 1. In October 2012, Mission Council resolved:

Mission Council instructs the accreditation sub-committee to limit the number of special category ministry full-time equivalent posts to a maximum of 8% of the total number of stipendiary ministers available to be shared between deployed and special category ministry posts.

The minutes record that the then convenor of ministries said that this would be an interim measure, with a new proposal to be brought to Assembly in 2014.

2. In the meantime, ministries committee decided that there was no appetite for a new proposal on deployment at the present time, and that no resolution would be brought in 2014. Therefore arrangements for synod deployment and SCM have proceeded on the basis of the above resolution. However, the number of applications has seen a sharp reduction, possibly due to the uncertainty implied by this 'interim measure'.

3. Ministries therefore wish to inform Mission Council and all synods that the current arrangements will continue until Assembly is minded to alter them. At present 8% of posts would imply a total of 37 posts. At the date of the last accreditation sub-committee there were 26.5 posts filled, one of those ceasing before the end of 2014. We would therefore welcome applications for consideration at any point in 2015.

4. Guidance notes on the application procedure for special category ministry are available on the website and application forms from the ministries office. We would make the following points to synods who might wish to avail themselves of this opportunity:

- a) The ministries office welcomes early conversation regarding the possibility of a post and the application process – we would rather process successful applications than reject inadequate ones!
- b) A special category ministry can include pastoral charge of one or more churches, provided that the case can be made for the 'specialness' of the ministry concerned, and an exit strategy is in place for returning the pastoral care of the churches to synod deployment after (at most) 10 years.
- c) A local management group, housing and finance must all be in place before an application is approved, and it is the synod's responsibility to ensure and certify that this is so.
- d) Where a SCM post involves shared responsibility and/or funding with ecumenical and/or secular partners, maintaining the local relationships necessary to carry this through is a responsibility of the synod – it cannot be done remotely from the ministries office.
- e) Applications need to address the questions *How will you know if this ministry has been effective? and What will happen to this work when the post-holder leaves?* Outcomes may not be quantifiable, but they need to be demonstrable. Applications which appear designed to employ someone to engage in ministry *instead of* rather than *with* a local church will not be approved.
- f) While the accreditation sub-committee conducts periodic reviews (currently after 6 months, 12 months and then during the penultimate year of the term of a post), the regular oversight of both post and post-holder is the responsibility of the synod, as with all other ministries in its area.

5. To ensure the best use of Assembly's limited resources, the accreditation sub-committee seeks to learn lessons from the experience of each SCM post. To this end:
  - a) Synods are reminded that ministers in special category posts (and other SCM post-holders) leaving post for any reason should, like all URC ministers, prepare an 'exit statement' and the synod moderator should conduct an exit interview. The statement should be forwarded to the ministries office, and in the case of SCM post-holders, the statement will be shown to the accreditation sub-committee.
  - b) The sub-committee is particularly aware at the moment of the need to learn from 'Pioneer' ministries (Fresh Expressions of Church) and to this end ministries is intending to devote some time to this topic at its January residential, and will liaise with the URC's Fresh Expressions co-ordinator.

# Paper I1

Mission committee

## Funding our Fresh Expressions

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014

# Paper I1



## Mission committee: Funding our Fresh Expressions

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Francis Brien <a href="mailto:francis.brien@urc.org.uk">francis.brien@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council resolves to request the Council for World Mission to de-designate the unused funds of the mission programme support fund phase 2 (MSP2) and to allocate the funds towards the expansion of the post of co-ordinator for Fresh Expressions.</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	None

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Review and Funding of the post of co-ordinator for Fresh Expressions.
<b>Main points</b>	As part of the wider mission team review, the post of co-ordinator of Fresh Expressions has also been reviewed. Based on the outcomes of the review and the new areas for development identified, the review group recommends that the post is made full-time and that additional funding for this is found by asking CWM to de-designate unused funds from MSP2. The mission committee endorses the review group's recommendations and asks Mission Council to consider approving such a request to CWM.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The Fresh Expressions post review group, URC Chief finance officer, CWM european regional secretary, within the mission committee.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	None
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Increased URC participation in the Fresh Expressions initiative.



# Co-ordinator for Fresh Expressions: review and funding request

1. As part of the Mission Team review the post of co-ordinator for Fresh Expressions was also reviewed, conducted by a small review group appointed by the mission committee. As this does not concern an Assembly appointment, the outcome of the review was reported back to the Mission Committee and not to the human resources advisory group.
2. The United Reformed Church currently employs a half-time co-ordinator for Fresh Expressions, who is part of the (ecumenical) Fresh Expressions team but who works mainly within the URC. The current postholder, Ms Linda Rayner, is on a three-year contract, which is due to end on 31 December 2014.
3. Having reviewed the achievements and assessed the ongoing needs for the Fresh Expressions post, the review group reported back to the mission committee in September 2014 that it was satisfied that the objectives of the post had been achieved. It also agreed that there was an ongoing need for the Fresh Expressions post and identified new priorities for the post for the future. These include, among others, greater embedding of fresh expressions in the life of the church through training, advocacy and networking; and advocating and supporting the establishment of pioneer places. The group recommended that in order to achieve these, and the other priorities, the post should be made full-time.
4. The group also explored how an increase of staff time could be funded and concluded that the additional £22,000 per annum (on average) could not be found within the current mission team budget without staff or programme reductions elsewhere. The legacy fund was also considered as a source of funding, but as the legacy fund has already provided for Fresh Expressions, another application could not be made. The group therefore recommended that Mission Council be asked to request de-designation of unused funds from the mission support programme (MSP2) from the Council for World Mission. The unused MSP2 funds stand at £79,000 and would be sufficient to fund an increase of the Fresh Expressions post from 50% to 100% for at least three years. Mission committee considered this and agreed to bring this request to Mission Council.
5. The MSP2 funding was allocated to support the work on a campaign for radical welcome, which led to the development of the Zero Intolerance campaign. When the Mission Council agreed to discontinue the ZI campaign in May 2012, it strongly encouraged all churches to continue to work on developing their radical welcome. It was understood that the remainder of the MSP2 funds could be used for this purpose. Some further work was done using MSP2 funding. However, in the last year there has been no call on the unused MSP2 funds and it is for this reason that mission committee asks Mission Council to approve a request to CWM to de-designate the unused MSP2 funds for the increase of the Fresh Expressions post from 50% to 100%.



# Paper I2

Mission committee

Environmental URC policy update

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014

# Paper I2



## Mission committee: Environmental URC policy update

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Francis Brien <a href="mailto:francis.brien@urc.org.uk">francis.brien@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Note, and take back to synods for discussion
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None at this meeting</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Updating the URC's environmental policy.
<b>Main points</b>	This new draft policy is made available for discussion now, and will be brought back to the next meeting of Mission Council (possibly with some revisions) with a resolution that it be adopted.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Several previous Assembly and Mission Council papers, referred to throughout the draft policy document.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Within mission committee.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	No direct impact on central budget.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Other churches take this issue seriously, and will be helped by the fact that we do.

# Environmental URC policy update

Drafted November 2014

## 1. Introduction

1.1 As a Church we affirm that care for creation, a just sharing of the world's resources, and a concern for the environment are fundamental gospel commitments.

1.2 We believe that God created and continues to create the whole universe; sustains and nurtures creation; through Christ, wills to redeem the whole of creation from its bondage to decay; entrusts creation to our care, calling us to be stewards of it; calls us to be partners in God's ongoing creative, renewing and redeeming activity; commands us to act justly and in righteousness not only towards our fellow human beings but to all creation; and requires us to care for creation so that future generations, whom God also loves, can enjoy it and benefit from it.

1.3 We affirm that Christian mission includes caring for God's earth and all creation. It includes sharing in putting right the relationships within God's creation that have gone wrong, and working within the church and with partners outside the church to grow towards justice and good stewardship as envisaged in the biblical vision of the world as it is meant to be.

1.4 We know that human activity has contributed to the degradation of the earth and that this is not the will of God. We believe that this degradation limits the attainment of the fullness of life that God wills for all creation, and is a sin for which we should seek forgiveness. It also imposes most heavily upon the peoples of the developing countries of the world and is part of the intrinsic injustice to which we bear witness.

## 2. Vision2020

2.1 The previous environmental policy of the United Reformed Church, adopted by General Assembly in 2004, was founded upon *The Five Marks of Mission*, the fifth of which committed the Church 'to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation; to sustain and renew the life of the earth'. This policy is informed by the Vision2020 strategic framework for mission adopted by General Assembly in 2010, which declares that the United Reformed Church: 'will be a church that has taken significant steps to safeguard the integrity of creation, to sustain and renew the life of the earth' (Statement 10: The Integrity of Creation). Vision2020 also states that: 'Our churches, reflecting faith in God the creator and sustainer of life in all its fullness, must discover the radical voice of care for the earth that is supported by the way we live.'

2.2 This policy echoes Vision2020's affirmation that: 'The changing climate and its consequences for all life on planet earth cannot be over emphasised as the most significant underlying issue of our time – and that it is vital that the Church 'recognizes the reality and fear present in environmental debates and lives hopefully in the present climate.'

## 3. Hope in God's Future

3.1 We affirm the view expressed in the 2009 report *Hope in God's Future* that: 'it is now intellectually and morally irresponsible to fail to acknowledge and address the urgent need for radical cuts in greenhouse gas emissions in order to prevent intolerable damage to human populations and mass extinctions of many plant and animal species.'

3.2 We also endorse this report's call for repentance in the face of our complicity in the sinful structures that are causing wanton damage to the earth, to its creatures and to many poor communities. We engage in this repentance, and also commit to practices and lifestyles consistent with levels of carbon emissions the earth can sustain.

3.3 We commit ourselves, as a Church, to exceed the UK government target of reducing carbon omissions by a minimum of 80% by 2050, and to taking urgent action to meet appropriate interim goals.

#### 4. Shrinking our carbon footprint

4.1 Reflecting the commitments contained in the Vision2020 statement, in the *Hope in God's Future* report, and in a resolution on climate change passed by General Assembly in 2007, the United Reformed Church re-affirms its pledge to shrink its carbon footprint (the total greenhouse gas emissions caused by the Church's activities) and to strive to protect and restore the environment.

4.2 The Church recognises that this pledge calls for both *conversion* on the part of its individual members and *transformation* of its internal structures. The remainder of this policy, which incorporates the 'suggested indicators' contained in Statement 10 of Vision 2020, is an attempt to follow through on this 'conversion' and 'transformation'.

4.2 Accordingly, our churches will be encouraged to:

- a) carry out a systematic environmental audit of their buildings and follow the strategies outlined below for reducing their carbon footprint; in this the resource *Greening Church Buildings* produced by Eco-Congregation Scotland may be helpful – [www.ecocongregationscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Greening-Church-Buildings.pdf](http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Greening-Church-Buildings.pdf);
- b) raise awareness, through prayer, preaching, Bible study, teaching and discussion, of the need for confession and repentance in relation to the causes of climate change and for redeemed sacramental living, while also celebrating all that is achieved in fulfilling our human responsibility to live joyfully and simply, caring for and 'treasuring' creation;
- c) celebrate Time for creation as encouraged by the World Council of Churches ([www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/climate-change/time-for-creation](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/climate-change/time-for-creation)). Creation Time runs from 1 September until 4 October each year;
- d) ensure that energy is used efficiently and that their buildings are carbon friendly through the use of energy-saving technologies and by identifying and using renewable sources of energy (such as solar panels) as appropriate;
- e) help members of their congregation to make adjustments in the carbon emissions associated with their lifestyles by supporting them in a personal audit and in finding appropriate strategies;
- f) involve their children and young people in activities focusing on care for the environment;
- g) engage their local political representatives, urging them to support policies that take effective steps towards realizing the commitment to a minimum 80% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050;
- h) ensure that church-owned land is used in ways that encourage an enjoyment of nature and both enhance and protect the environment;
- i) produce a piece of community artwork celebrating the Creator God.

- 4.3 Our synods will undertake to:
- a) encourage their churches to become and continue to be ‘eco-congregations’, or churches with clear environmental action plans; in so doing they will encourage churches to see the positive benefits in terms of the financial savings that environmentally-friendly practices can bring;
  - b) develop and implement plans to become ‘eco-synods’;
  - c) encourage their churches to work in collaboration with, or initiate, local transition or sustainability groups;
  - d) encourage their churches to receive training and support on issues of climate justice and environmental care;
  - e) appoint one or more ‘green apostles’ to monitor progress on carbon reduction in their synod.
- 4.4 Assembly commits to:
- a) commissioning a suitable individual or body to calculate the Church’s carbon footprint, enabling a benchmark to be set against which future reductions in this footprint may be made;
  - b) lowering incrementally the Church’s carbon footprint by 5% each year by *carbon off-setting* and, in particular, *carbon budgeting*;
  - c) in terms of *carbon budgeting*, setting specific year-on-year reduction targets in the percentage of emissions over a defined period;
  - d) in terms of *carbon off-setting*, strongly encouraging all members of the United Reformed Church to make payments supporting sustainable projects (e.g. through climate stewards – [www.climatestewards.org](http://www.climatestewards.org)) when travelling. In the case of travel undertaken on Church business, the offset sum will be a recognised expense which the Church will expect members and staff to pay for and claim back. Car allowances for ministers and staff will also include a carbon-related element;
  - e) campaigning at local and national level for policies that strengthen, and take steps towards realizing, the government’s commitment to a minimum 80% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050;
  - f) ensuring that the Church’s buildings are carbon friendly through the use of energy-saving technologies and by identifying and using renewable sources of energy (such as solar panels) as appropriate;
  - g) encouraging its members and staff, where practicable, to reduce car and air travel for meetings through the use of video-conferencing; and to cycle, use buses and trains, and car-share and use energy-efficient vehicles where possible;
  - h) encouraging FURY to develop a strategy responding to the challenge of climate change;
  - i) setting up a working group to explore the feasibility of the Church disinvesting in fossil fuels.

## 5. Resources

- 5.1 We recognise and commend:
- a) Eco-Congregation, which provides an environmental toolkit and support network for local churches: [www.ecocongregation.org](http://www.ecocongregation.org);
  - b) Operation Noah: <http://operationnoah.org>;
  - c) Christian Ecology Link: [www.greenchristian.org.uk](http://www.greenchristian.org.uk);
  - d) A Rocha: <http://arocha.org.uk>;
  - e) Pray and Fast for the Climate: [www.prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk](http://www.prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk);
  - f) The promotion of links with transition towns, etc: [www.christian-ecology.org.uk/cit.htm](http://www.christian-ecology.org.uk/cit.htm).





# Paper J1

Nominations committee  
Report

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014

# Paper J1



## Nominations committee: Report

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Carol Rogers <a href="mailto:carannrog@aol.com">carannrog@aol.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council appoints:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Mr Andy Guthrie to serve as a member of the Windermere management committee;</li> <li>b) The Revd Jacky Embrey to serve as moderator of Mersey Synod from 1 September 2014 to 31 August 2021;</li> <li>c) The Revd Dr Andrew Prasad to extend his service as moderator of Thames North Synod from 30 September 2020 to 28 February 2021 and;</li> <li>d) other names as contained in the supplementary report.</li> </ol>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Names of those invited to join committees.
<b>Main points</b>	
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Report of the nominations committee to General Assembly 2014.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The convener

### Summary of Impact

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

# Nominations committee report

## Background

Part (b) of the resolution corrects the term assigned by Resolution 24 at General Assembly (which erroneously only stretched to Assembly 2020).

Part (c) of the resolution amends the work of the synod moderator review for Dr Prasad in June 2014, as agreed by General Assembly in July, and extends the five-year term assigned then by a further five months, to reach the retiring age.

Part (d) of the resolution reflects the fact that nominations is like painting the Forth Bridge: you never get to the end. So there will be some late nominations to report.



# Paper J2

Nominations committee

Review of synod moderators

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014

# Paper J2



## Nominations committee: Review of synod moderators

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Carol Rogers <a href="mailto:carannrog@aol.com">carannrog@aol.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision to accept the process outlined.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council directs the Assembly appointments panel to operate the process outlined, for the tenure review of synod moderators.</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Revised process for the reappointment of a synod moderator.
<b>Main points</b>	The main changes to the existing pattern are in paras 5.2, 8 and 9.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Previous version dated April 2014.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The convener and members of the nominations committee.

### Summary of Impact

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



# Process for the re-appointment review of a serving synod moderator

1.1 Before a General Assembly review group is appointed the general secretary will ascertain from the synod moderator concerned whether she/he wishes to be considered for a further term of service. (This period would normally be for five years but in exceptional circumstances, such as imminent retirement, it may be adjusted either to shorten the term or to lengthen it slightly with the consent of the Assembly review group, the moderator and the synod panel.) This consultation should take place in time for a General Assembly review group to be formed, consider the matter and reach a conclusion no later than twelve months, and preferably eighteen, before the end of the current appointment.

1.2 The general secretary will talk through the process with the moderator and the synod clerk so that expectations are clear.

2. The General Assembly review group, appointed by nominations committee, will consist of five people from outside the synod concerned. They will be selected from a panel of people appointed by the General Assembly for the purpose of Assembly appointments and reviews. The general secretary, or a deputy general secretary, will provide services to the group.

3. The synod will appoint its own internal synod review panel, which is representative of the geography as well as the programme life of the synod. Normally, it will meet under the convenership of the synod clerk. This panel is charged to consult as widely as possible across the synod and with ecumenical partners. They should also meet with the synod moderator to discover the moderator's view of the way his/her work has developed and his/her vision for a possible further period of service. Reference may be made to the outcomes of any previous internal review of the moderator's work which may have been undertaken. The synod panel will come to a view, in the light of responses received whether it believes an invitation should be issued for a further time of service.

4. The synod clerk will inform the general secretary and the convenor of the General Assembly review group of the timetable and plans for (a) appointing the members of the synod panel, (b) consulting across the synod (ministers, churches, ecumenical partners); and (c) meetings of the panel, including the meeting with the synod moderator. He/she will also agree the date and venue for the review meeting.

5.1 The General Assembly review group will need to elicit information regarding the work of the moderator for the wider church as well as to receive the written submissions from the moderator and the synod panel. The synod panel submission should demonstrate clearly that a wide consultation has been undertaken and that its view clearly reflects the views of the synod itself.

5.2 The Assembly review group convenor should satisfy him/herself on behalf of the Assembly review group that the synod has fulfilled its role in the process satisfactorily. For the sake of the moderator whose role is at stake, the convenor, in consultation with the general secretary, should suspend the process if there is any serious doubt that the information received is a responsible reflection of the views of the synod.

6. On an agreed date and place, the Assembly review group will meet separately with both the synod panel, or its representatives, and the moderator. The interviews will be based upon the submissions received. The Assembly review Group will come to a view as to whether the moderator be invited to offer a further term of service. The convenor will then make a recommendation to the nominations committee who will bring a resolution to the Mission Council or General Assembly no later than six months before the conclusion of the appointment.
7. The general secretary will communicate the recommendation both to the moderator and also to the synod. The information to the synod, giving the reasons for the Assembly review group's recommendation, should be in a form which might be published for the wider members of the synod to receive.
8. Should it be recommended that the moderator is not to be re-appointed the general secretary and the convenor of the Assembly review group should take all necessary steps to set up pastoral care for all concerned.
9. If either the synod, or those appointed to act on its behalf (e.g. an executive committee), or the moderator concerned wishes to challenge the recommendation of the review group they must ask for the recommendation to be reviewed within one month of its being made, and before it is considered by Mission Council or Assembly. The Mission Council shall then appoint a group of five people to hear the appeal and a member of its staff will provide services. The conclusion of that group will be taken forward, without further right of appeal, by the nominations committee, as a resolution to Mission Council or Assembly.
10. The review group's costs will be borne by Assembly funds; those of the synod panel by synod funds. It is helpful if a light lunch can be provided on the day of the review meeting.

# Paper L1

URC Trust

Church House development

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014

# Paper L1



## URC Trust: Church House development

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Dick Gray, chair of URC Trust <a href="mailto:dickgray643@gmail.com">dickgray643@gmail.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Discussion
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	The paper outlines work on a possible development of Church House and seeks advice on next steps.
<b>Main points</b>	Church House is an inflexible 1950s building. Architects advise it could be redeveloped, with new flats built on top covering some of the costs. All options would require a substantial initial capital investment. No option guarantees a financial return. Mission Council needs to give guidance on what, if any, sort of option it wishes to have explored further.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Architects; senior staff at Church House; finance committee.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	Initial capital of at least £8M would be required from the Church or a developer.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	More flexible use of space would make it possible to offer accommodation to ecumenical or other bodies.

# Church House development

1. During the major budget review in 2012, Mission Council expressed frustration at the inability to reduce infrastructure costs at a time when other budgets were having to be reduced. One of the subsequent requests from the finance committee to the URC Trust was to look at ways to reduce the costs of running Church House in London. The Trust has examined the possibility of moving to alternative premises or sharing with other denominations. These have not led to any obvious solutions. They have emphasised the value of having a central London base at least for meetings.
2. Therefore the Trust decided to look at the potential of Church House for improvement or further development. We briefed the architects to have objectives which included: reducing the overheads of regular running costs, providing flexibility for current and future changes in working, improving energy efficiency, and raising capital to fund the works. One important aspect was to make the building more accessible for those with physical disabilities. It is a 1950s office block which falls far short of modern standards.
3. Our chosen architects Theis & Khan (who recently developed Lumen United Reformed Church next to Church House) reported to the Trust on the possible options for developing Church House. They offered four options, two of which were for significant development by the addition of two floors of residential accommodation on top of the existing building, and two options for a complete rebuild. All of the options would lead to a significant book value increase for the building, but would not necessarily be cost effective in cash flow terms. The options provided would all involve development risk as their viability rests on the value of the new flats in an uncertain London property market.
4. The good news from their assessment includes:
  - The building is capable of adding two further floors and there is a good probability that this would be able to gain planning permission
  - The existing layout is quite wasteful of space with large corridors and fixed size offices
  - Many of the existing walls are not part of the load bearing structure and the building is capable of opening out, albeit with the need for columns to support the upper floors
  - A lift could be fitted within the stair well area
  - There were attractive options for opening up the basement and using the space between Church House and Lumen
5. The bad news was that none of the options appeared to offer much more than coverage of the development costs, and several options hardly did this. The cheapest would need an initial capital investment of around £8M. We were also advised that Camden Council were resistant to demolition and rebuilding without a very strong case. The other factor that seemed important to the Trust was that residential space was significantly more valuable than commercial or office space.
6. The Trust is aware that it is not a part of its role to set direction for the URC; rather its role is to manage the assets. The Trust did not feel able to move forward without some direction from the councils of the Church. Any significant development would need to have a lifetime measured in tens of years rather meeting short term needs.

7. We come back to the central questions concerning the purpose of having a central London office. Currently, Church House serves several purposes:
- a) To provide a base for central services such as payroll.
  - b) To provide a centre where strategic decisions can be converted into programmes and action by staff who have easy access to each other.
  - c) To provide a base from which we can maintain relations with other bodies e.g. other denominations and government.
  - d) A convenient place for meetings.

8. The problem faced by the Trust is what are the likely dimensions associated with these needs in the future. It seems clear that the space needs could change significantly over the next 20 or so years, with the advent of technology and communications probably changing many of the ways in which we shall operate. Although some sort of London base for meetings seems likely still to be required, what other space will be needed is harder to predict and likely to change over time. Some functions might move away from London. This seems to indicate the need for maximum flexibility in the use of space including the ability to enable sharing of the building with other parties if our own needs did not require the whole building. Letting out some space would help with net running costs. It might also be prudent to allow for expansion!

9. The Trust would therefore wish to ask Mission Council for guidance on the following:
- a) Does Mission Council favour in principle finding a way to make a substantial capital investment in Church House to improve working conditions for staff and increase the efficiency, cost effectiveness and flexibility of the use of space?

If so, then the Trust would value a steer on the following questions too.

- b) Is Mission Council comfortable with the Trust embarking upon property development to help fund such work, e.g. by adding flats to the top of the building, which would inevitably involve some risk?
- c) If Church House was extended to provide residential accommodation, would Mission Council be content to do so on a purely commercial basis, to maximise return, or would they want to provide social housing, which on current estimates would certainly not fully cover the office refurbishment costs?
- d) Would Mission Council be willing for the URC to risk our own capital, or would it only be willing for a project to proceed if we could find a commercial developer to bear the financial risk – and also therefore take any profit?
- e) Rather than consider Church House in isolation. should we investigate a joint development project making use of the modern facilities of Lumen URC next door, were they willing to do so, which could change the options?

# Paper M1

Clerk-elect of Assembly

Ministerial disciplinary process  
and incapacity procedure

United Church 2014  
Church 2014  
**Reformed**  
Church 2014  
**Church**



# Paper M1



## Clerk-elect of Assembly: Ministerial disciplinary process and incapacity procedure

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Michael Hopkins, clerk-elect <a href="mailto:minister@farnhamurc.org.uk">minister@farnhamurc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Extension of the term of the Revd Professor David Thompson as General Assembly representative for the ministerial disciplinary process and the incapacity procedure, because no deputy general secretary (discipleship) has been appointed.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council extends the term of the Revd Professor David Thompson as General Assembly representative for the ministerial disciplinary process and the incapacity procedure until 10 May 2015</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	Finding another trained and suitable individual available for immediate appointment.

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Ensuring that we retain a usable ministerial disciplinary process for Assembly appointed ministers.
<b>Main points</b>	Extension of the term of the Revd Professor David Thompson in a necessary key role, because no deputy general secretary (discipleship) has been appointed.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Minutes of Mission Council March 2014.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Professor Thompson, who is willing to be re-appointed.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	n/a
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Failure to appoint someone means we would no longer have a usable ministerial disciplinary process for Assembly appointed ministers.

# Paper M2

General secretariat

The Lobbying Act and the  
United Reformed Church

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014



# Paper M2

## General secretariat: The Lobbying Act and the United Reformed Church

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Francis Brienen <a href="mailto:francis.brienen@urc.org.uk">francis.brienen@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Consideration and decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council resolves to register the URC with the Electoral Commission under the Lobbying Act and directs the general secretariat to ensure that this is properly done.</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	Not registering at all, Registering as a minor campaigner, through our work with the joint public issues team (JPIT).

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Responding to legislation, in a way that is reputationally and legally secure, and which will also allow us to continue public and prophetic witness through our own staff and through JPIT.
<b>Main points</b>	Outline of the Lobbying Act, and recommendation re response.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	URC Trust. Several partner denominations, through JPIT and The Churches' Legal Advice Service.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	Work required to complete paperwork and keep records can probably be done by current staff. A nuisance, but no extra cost.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	If we don't register, it may strain our partnership in JPIT.

# The Lobbying Act and the United Reformed Church

The Transparency of Lobbying, Non Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act was granted Royal Assent on 30 January 2014.

Its main purpose is to regulate campaigning activity in the run-up to the General Election next year – specifically during the period from 19 September 2014 until the date of the election (widely expected to be Thursday 7 May 2015).

While the Act encompasses party political campaigning, in which the United Reformed Church does not engage, it also covers some areas of campaigning about social issues. This kind of activity is something which the URC, particularly through its membership of the ecumenical Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT), is likely to engage in during the pre-election period (as it does at other times).

This paper is written from the perspective of our participation in JPIT, but it is important to remember that there are other areas of the United Reformed Church's work which may be affected by this new piece of legislation, such as, for example, Commitment for Life.

## Regulated activity

The key question is whether the kind of activity we may engage in as a Church falls within the scope of the Act and therefore counts as 'regulated' activity. If we decide that it does, then the Church will need to register with the Electoral Commission as a 'non-party campaigner' in the run-up to the election, and keep an account of its total spending on its 'regulated' activities.

We do need to respond to the Act one way or the other: only by ceasing to do any work around the General Election can we avoid a response to its demands – hardly a realistic option for a Church which takes the Gospel call to be salt and light in society seriously.

So, given that the Act has now come into force, we must decide as a Church whether we are likely to be undertaking regulated activities as covered by the Act, and how much we are likely to spend on these activities (including direct costs, staff costs and overheads). If we spend under £20,000 in England, under £10,000 in Scotland and under £10,000 in Wales, we will not have reached the threshold and do not need to register with the Electoral Commission. If, however, we spend over those amounts, then registration is required and returns covering donations and expenditure will need to be made.

The Act provides for a cap on expenditure on regulated activity: £319,800 in England; £55,400 in Scotland; £44,000 in Wales; and £390,000 for the UK. If we breach these caps then we face enforcement action or prosecution.

## Key questions for the Church

So to recap, the key questions we need to face as the United Reformed Church are:

- Does our planned campaigning activity fall within the scope of the Act and therefore count as 'regulated'?
- Can we faithfully fulfil our role to equip the Church, and seek to influence wider society on social and moral issues, without performing activities regulated by the Act?

- Are we likely to spend enough money on regulated activity to need to register with the Electoral Commission?

In answering these questions we need to decide whether the kind of activity we are likely to engage in before next May does count as ‘regulated’ within the terms laid down in the Act.

The Act subjects campaigning activity to two tests: a ‘purpose’ test and a ‘public’ test. For an activity to be regulated it must pass both tests.

### **i) The purpose test**

Campaign activity will be regarded as regulated activity if it ‘can reasonably be regarded as intended to influence voters to vote for or against political parties or categories of candidates, including political parties or categories of candidates who support or do not support particular policies or issues.’ The Electoral Commission makes it clear that we do not have to name a candidate in order to be caught by this. A campaign activity may also meet the purpose test ‘even if your aim is to achieve something else such as raising awareness of an issue.’

Electoral Commission guidance states that ‘in almost all cases, an activity will meet the purpose test if it:

- identifies political parties or candidates who support or do not support your campaign’s aims
- sets out or compares the position of political parties or candidates on a policy you are promoting in a way that can reasonably be regarded as intended to influence voters to vote for or against particular parties or candidates
- promotes or opposes policies which are so closely and publicly associated with a party or parties or with categories of candidate that it is reasonable to regard your campaign activity as influencing voters to vote for or against political parties or candidates.’

It is the third point which is likely to capture some of the work undertaken on behalf of the URC by the Joint Public Issues Team.

The guidance then goes on to give four assessments we should consider:

- tone – whether the activity is negative or positive towards a party, or towards a policy which a party does or does not support
- context and timing – are we campaigning on an issue which is prominent in public debate, or on an area which represents a difference between political parties? Are we campaigning in reaction to the position of a political party? Or if we are campaigning on a long-held view which a party newly supports, have we altered or changed our campaign plans? Are we campaigning close to an election?
- call to action – is the campaign (explicitly or implicitly) asking people to vote a particular way?
- reasonableness – would a reasonable person regard the campaign as intended to influence people’s voting choices?

### **ii) The public test**

Even if an activity meets the purpose test, it will only be considered to be regulated if it also meets the public test.

An activity is judged to be public if it is ‘aimed at, seen or heard by, or involves the public, or a section of the public.’ If, however, the activity is aimed exclusively at members or ‘committed supporters’, then it is unlikely to be considered to be public and therefore would not be regulated.

The Electoral Commission offers some definitions of ‘committed supporters’ – these include regular donors by direct debit and those who are ‘actively involved’. It would not include those who have signed up to social networking sites or for email updates unless they are also committed supporters.

If our communications lists include both the public and active supporters, we are required to make an ‘honest and reasonable assessment’ of how to apportion the costs.

Press conferences and media events will be considered to be regulated activity if any pass the purpose test. Press releases to the media will not be considered to be regulated as they are not public. However, if we then publicise this work (e.g. by tweeting a link to it on our website) it would be public and therefore regulated (but not if the tweeting were undertaken by another person). Blogs, social media and websites are considered to be public.

## The joint public issues team

In deciding whether or not to register we need to pay particular regard to the work of JPIT. The mission statement for JPIT agreed by the three Churches (Methodist, Baptist and United Reformed) is:

The Joint Public Issues Team will help our three Churches to work together in living out the gospel of Christ in the church and in society. We will promote equality and justice by influencing those in power and by energising and affirming local congregations.

JPIT carries out a range of work on behalf of the Churches:

- running campaigns on, for example, foodbanks, truth and lies about poverty, Trident and housing, which have multiple levels including publications, campaign activities, communicating directly with politicians, prayer and worship resources, study resources, media work
- representing the stated views of the Churches on a range of issues, including poverty, alcohol, gambling in the media and through meetings with decision-makers and responses to government consultations
- briefings for national and regional church leaders who will be representing the Church
- informing, encouraging and inspiring members of our churches through a range of resources, including briefings, social media, blogs, worship resources and events
- resourcing our members in advance of general, local and European elections

Many of these activities will not pass both the purpose and the public test and will therefore not be regulated. Others look certain to be regulated in their current form, and many more appear to be in a grey area where it is hard to tell if they are regulated or not – for example:

- the work on poverty – this has highlighted the misuse of statistics by (some) politicians in order to blame the poor for their poverty. Since this campaign began, it has been taken up by some commentators and politicians on the left, whilst being resisted by the right. We have continued along the same principles, but have highlighted ongoing failings by department of work and pensions ministers. It could easily be argued that these concerns can be sufficiently linked with a particular party (in a negative way) to be caught by the Act
- foodbanks – these have similarly become politicised recently (though JPIT began its work on them last year)
- Trident – the general line on Trident has been a call for the non-renewal of the weapons system. This is a position supported by the SNP, Green Party and Plaid



Cymru, but not by the three largest parties. It is likely, however, that the issue to be highlighted over the coming year will be like-for-like replacement, a line which the parties may take different views on

- housing – JPIT’s work this year is likely to include a call for increased investment in affordable housing, which may form a part of the Labour Party manifesto. To stay outside regulation JPIT could fully plan its lines to take in this area in advance and stick to them regardless of what happened in the political or media world, or in research or practice. However this would restrict its ability to respond to changing circumstances and risks making it look silly
- political extremism – before elections our Churches (nationally and locally) have encouraged people to use their vote positively for community cohesion (with the implication that people should not vote for politically extreme and racist parties.) All three JPIT denominations have stated, in different terms that membership of such parties is not acceptable. Even if pre-election work is expressed in positive terms, this could still be (reasonably) understood to be us encouraging people not to vote for particular parties
- election briefings – JPIT has previously produced a summary of issues (indicating concerns and questions) on behalf of CTBI, in addition to an analysis of manifestos against those issues (for use by JPIT). CTBI will not be producing a summary of issues this year. Such voting information is not regulated if it is factual and unbiased. JPIT’s material has certainly not promoted support for a particular party, but because it highlights the choice of issues, as well as containing suggested questions, it could be argued that through it JPIT is trying to influence the way in which people vote.

Irrespective of the Lobbying Act, JPIT materials are always very careful not to advocate for political parties. At all times the content and tone of materials is carefully measured so as to speak to current debates with a distinctively Christian voice that is not party political.

However, JPIT does seek to engage with issues that are live in public debate, and that sometimes involves reacting to particular situations. To a reasonable person this might be seen as trying to influence people’s voting choices, if only by the issues that the Churches ask JPIT to talk about.

JPIT would argue that it is unashamed about seeking to influence how a person votes: not in terms of persuading them to vote for a particular party, but by encouraging them to think and pray about the issues, and then to vote.

Essentially, if we as a Church believe that the gospel message should challenge and change the way we and others think about the world around us, and then we should be helping to equip Christians in their thinking. Under one definition of the legislation, therefore, we seek, as a Church, to influence the way people vote, something of which we should be proud.

## Estimating the potential costs of regulated activity

The JPIT workplan for 2014/15 includes some work which could be considered to be regulated campaign activity, and it has sought to estimate the costs of this activity by estimating the proportion of each member of staff’s time which would be spend on an area of work which could potentially be registered, and then estimating the proportion of that area of work which would form regulated activity.

A very rough calculation suggests that eight elements of JPIT’s current work plan could be considered to be regulated activity. An equally rough calculation suggests that this would



represent £54,480 of spending on regulated activity, of which the Methodists would spend £42,000, the URC £8,300, and the Baptists £4,000. (Please note that this is only based on the work in the JPIT work plan and does not include any other work that might take place at Church House and falls within the scope of the Lobbying Act. It is possible that, once we have included the cost of this other work into the costed work of the JPIT work as above, we could exceed the £20,000 threshold for minor campaigners).

However, the rules around joint campaigning would mean that, if this calculation is accepted, each denomination would therefore be required to register spending of £54,480 on regulated activity. A joint campaign is defined as when two organisations co-ordinate work together, and where each organisation has significant influence over the activity. This would be true of all of JPIT's work, unless a denomination decided to be a minor campaigner (see below). If any further work were done beyond that which is in the workplan (or if JPIT's estimates proved not to match reality), or if JPIT signed up to any coalition, then this figure could potentially increase.

## Local churches

It is highly unlikely that the Act will impact upon the activities of local United Reformed churches.

Some of our churches, as members of local 'churches together' networks, will be involved in setting up hustings events in their local constituency, but the costs involved in this activity are unlikely to exceed the cap of £9,750 which the Act stipulates may be spent on regulated activity per constituency.

In any case, a hustings event is unlikely to be considered a 'regulated' activity unless not every candidate seeking election in the constituency is invited to participate. Where a hustings is operating on a 'selective' rather than inclusive basis, it will be considered a regulated activity unless there were objective reasons for certain candidates not to be invited – for example, a fear that they might pose a threat to public order.

## Conclusion

So, should the United Reformed Church register as a non-party campaigner? We have three options:

1. We could take a bold line and argue that our activities are not regulated (some charities will undoubtedly take this position). However, in the light of the Electoral Commission's guidance, it is doubtful that this position is sustainable. Added to this, the Church of England was told by the Electoral Commission that the activities it signed up to through CTBI alone (which were in general far less campaign-orientated than JPIT's) meant it probably should have registered at the last election.

The disadvantage of taking the position that we do not need to register is that we would still need to monitor and record our work (and our decisions as to why we believe the work is not regulated) in case we are challenged over our decision not to register. And from a reputational point of view we would be vulnerable to that accusation.

A further consequence of this position is that all work undertaken by JPIT, and other sections of the Church, would be done with one eye on avoiding the 'purpose' and/or 'public' tests set out in the Act. There is huge potential for such concerns to shape JPIT's work adversely.

2. We could scale back our activities and focus purely on our own members. This is a decision that we could take unilaterally as a denomination, although with our increasing focus on mission it is unlikely to attract widespread endorsement. Relying solely on communications channels that are for committed supporters and campaigners would close off a number of the most effective ways of communicating with our church members (as opposed to ministers and officeholders).
3. We could decide to register with the Electoral Commission as a non-party campaigner. This would have a cost for all three denominations involved in JPIT in that:
  - a) JPIT would need to monitor, record and cost its work;
  - b) one person would need to be the 'responsible person' in each denomination, who has the responsibility for agreeing expenditure and;
  - c) someone in each denomination would need to do the administrative work around submitting spending and donation records.

There would be a reputational risk in so registering with the Electoral Commission: we could be accused of being party political precisely because we have registered as non-party campaigners. But registration is arguably a better way of mitigating reputational risk: we would be demonstrating transparency in our actions, and, provided we do not breach spending limits, we would be protected from accusations that we were in breach of electoral law.

**On the basis of this we recommend that the United Reformed Church seriously consider registration.**

### **Registering as one lead campaigner with minor campaigners**

Using the current estimates, and assuming the denominations involved in JPIT limit other regulated activity, it would be possible for the United Reformed Church and Baptist Union to be minor campaigners, with the Methodist Church registering as lead campaigner. Minor campaigners spend less than £20,000, with lead campaigners in the joint campaign spending over the threshold. However being a minor campaigner would still involve:

- agreeing with other parties in the joint campaign (JPIT) how much they can spend
- telling the lead campaigner how much they have spent on regulated campaign activities
- providing receipts and invoices on regulated campaign spending over £200 to the lead campaigner (this is probably true of any joint campaigns)

The appearance of the Methodist Church as the 'lead' organisation, with the URC and Baptists as 'minor' organisations, might be seen as contrary to the ethos of JPIT. As far as is practicable, JPIT is and should be seen as an equal partnership.

Again, we and the other two denominations would need to make our own individual decision. However there may be implications if one denomination decides not to register whilst the others do. The Electoral Commission will wonder why one party to a piece of work is reporting expenditure and another is not.

## What are other denominations doing?

The Quakers and the Salvation Army will be registering, arguing that they probably spend over the threshold, but in any case registration offers ‘belt and braces’ protection.

The Church of England is looking at the situation legally, but has indicated that it is likely to register.

The Catholic Bishops Conference is undecided, things being complicated by the nature of its legal entity.

We and our partners in JPIT are suggesting to other churches intending to register with the Electoral Commission that they hold off doing so until after the URC Mission Council has met in early November. That way, should Mission Council decide that the URC will sign up, we and as many other churches as possible can register en bloc, producing at the same time a reactive (or even proactive) statement which can be issued if anyone accuses us of bias because we have registered. This will give us some protection against criticism, and will also enable us to signify our collective unhappiness with the Act.

Indeed, the idea has been mooted that as a group of churches we make our combined action more powerful by jointly issuing a statement saying that we are doing this ‘because we have to’ but it will in no way restrict the work we are committed to, namely speaking out against injustice and promoting Gospel values.



# Paper M3

Officers of Assembly  
Recall of Assembly

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014

# Paper M3



## Officers of Assembly: Recall of Assembly

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	General secretary <a href="mailto:john.proctor@urc.org.uk">john.proctor@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p><b>a) Mission Council directs the Assembly arrangements committee to make contingency plans for a one-day recalled meeting of the General Assembly on 27 June 2015 in Birmingham.</b></p> <p><b>b) Mission Council resolves to consider in May 2015 whether to recall General Assembly, in the light of returns from the Church-wide consultation on the marriage of same-sex couples.</b></p>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	Rejecting a), in which case it will be impossible to plan for a recall of Assembly next summer. Amending b) and recalling the Assembly now, to meet in June.

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To consider recalling the Assembly, to discuss the marriage of same-sex couples.
<b>Main points</b>	Contingency plans for this must be made early to keep options open; a decision to recall can and should be delayed, while we find out what the Church has to say.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Assembly papers from Cardiff, July 2014.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Assembly moderators and clerk, synod moderators' meeting, Assembly arrangements convener and staff.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	Contingency plans – possibly £5,000. A recalled one-day Assembly – up to about a further £30,000, depending on what personal expenses are covered by the Church.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Some members of Assembly are from other churches, and would need to be invited.

# Recall of Assembly

- 1 The General Assembly may be recalled by either of its moderators or by Mission Council. It was suggested during discussion at Cardiff that the Assembly could be recalled for one day, to continue the same-sex marriage conversation, bring this to an agreed conclusion, and enable the Church to go forward on the basis of any decision taken. Our consultation on this issue lasts until 31st March.
- 2 While aware of their personal power to recall Assembly, both moderators would welcome the advice of Mission Council, and they are unlikely to act in this matter in ways that run counter to that advice.
- 3 There are no specific criteria to be met before an Assembly is recalled.
- 4 If Mission Council does not make contingency plans for a recall now, the chance of doing so next summer will be lost. Hence resolution a). If Mission Council recalls Assembly before the consultation is complete, it will appear to presume on the outcome of the consultation. Hence resolution b).



# M3

United Reformed Church • Mission Council, November 2014

# Paper M4

Clerk-elect of Assembly

Follow up from Resolution 19  
at General Assembly

United Church 2014  
Church 2014  
**Reformed**  
Church 2014  
**Church**



## Clerk-elect of Assembly: Follow up from Resolution 19 at General Assembly

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Tim Meachin, <a href="mailto:tim.meachin@talktalk.net">tim.meachin@talktalk.net</a> , convenor children's and youth work committee, for specific questions on young people. Michael Hopkins, clerk-elect, <a href="mailto:minister@farnhamurc.org.uk">minister@farnhamurc.org.uk</a> , for all other queries.
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p><b>1. Mission Council extends the consultation period on resolutions 19 B2, B3, B4 and 19E of the 2014 General Assembly from 31 March 2015 to 31 March 2016.</b></p> <p><b>2. Mission Council resolves to amend the Structure of the United Reformed Church by adding the words 'members of the United Reformed Church (save for those in categories (g), (k), (l), (m) and (n)) as follows' to the first sentence of paragraph 2(6).</b></p> <p><b>3. Mission Council resolves to amend the Structure of the United Reformed Church by deleting the words 'being members of the United Reformed Church' from Paragraph 2(6)(k).</b></p> <p><b>If passed, then the general secretary will move that it be referred to synods under paragraph 3(1) of the Structure with responses to be received by 31 March 2016.</b></p>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	n/a

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To make sense of the partial passage of a series of linked resolutions, which do not make sense taken alone.
<b>Main points</b>	Extension of consultation date on parts already agreed. Decision on whether or not under-26 reps at General Assembly need to be members. Decision on six additional reps from the Synod of Scotland to be decided at a future date.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper M2 of March Mission Council 2014. General Assembly Book of Reports 2014, pages 50-57. General Assembly order paper, Saturday 5 July. General Assembly Record 2014, pages 15-17.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Synod moderators and clerks were notified of the informal suggestion not to proceed with consultation quickly. Assembly officers. Children's and youth work committee.

### Summary of Impact

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

# Follow up from Resolution 19 at General Assembly

1. Resolution 19 at General Assembly suffered the unfortunate fate of being drafted and presented to Mission Council by one Clerk, and presented to Assembly by another, through nobody's fault.
2. All the parts were linked together, and only made sense as whole, but Assembly passed some parts, while others were withdrawn for further consultation, which has caused immense confusion.
3. One object of Resolution 19 was a simple tidying up (which I suspect everyone now wishes we'd never started) by moving the words 'being members of the United Reformed Church' from each category to a combined list at the top of the paragraph. The part of the resolution creating the combined list was deferred to allow further consultation with FURY, but the parts of the resolution deleting the words lower down were in some cases passed. This means that in some cases the qualification of membership of the United Reformed Church is being removed (remember none of this takes effect until the ratification after consultation), but not re-instated where it was always planned to.
4. In order to allow time to resolve this, it is proposed that the consultation agreed by General Assembly with the synods be extended by twelve months, which will still leave time for resolution to be ratified by General Assembly in 2016.
5. General Assembly voted that the FURY reps at Mission Council did not need to be members of the United Reformed Church, accordingly the proposal before Mission Council is that General Assembly membership be treated in the same manner, for consistency and fairness.
6. The part of the resolution relating to the Synod of Scotland's number of representatives was also deferred. If this can be resolved in time to be added to the consultation, then the whole resolution can be considered by synods on one occasion, so synods are advised to wait until May 2015 Mission Council, to see if this is so.
7. The danger of continuing to ratify an incomplete set of resolutions would be to create further unnecessary confusion over relatively minor matters.



# Paper M5

Assembly arrangements committee  
Standing orders

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014

# Paper M5



## Assembly arrangements committee: Standing orders

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Michael Hopkins <a href="mailto:minister@farnhamurc.org.uk">minister@farnhamurc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Resolution
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council resolves to change the standing orders, as detailed in paper M5, November 2014</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	None proposed, but Mission Council may choose to enact all, some, or none of the proposed changes, or devise a wholly new wording.

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Updates to standing orders.
<b>Main points</b>	Most points have been raised previously, or are in direct response to General Assembly.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Reports of General Assembly 2014, pages 58-69. Paper J3 of Mission Council, May 2013.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Mission Council (May 2013), members of General Assembly 2014, MCAAG and Assembly officers.

### Summary of Impact

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

# Standing orders

1. Mission Council approved some changes to standing orders in May 2013 (paper J3), with effect from then until General Assembly 2014. At that point, the intention was to ask General Assembly to approve the changes without time limit. However, pressure of business did not allow Assembly sufficient time to do consider that, and the resolution was withdrawn.
2. Technically this means that the changes agreed in May 2013 lapse. However, as the changes in Standing Order 1 permitting the use of groups A, B, and C did not attract any negative feedback, indeed much positive feedback, and no member of General Assembly raised any objection to the principle involved, the officers have continued to follow that Standing Order in preparation for Mission Council, in the hope this will be acceptable to Mission Council. Since Assembly, full account has been taken of the feedback forms and all other feedback received.
3. This paper now offers three categories of proposed changes:
  - a) Those previously offered, marked in **red**, which Mission Council is now invited to make on a standing basis, although one part of this is subject to a proposed variation.
  - b) A number of minor changes which are not thought to be contentious, marked in **green**, which are offered to remove known inconsistencies.
  - c) Two changes of substance, marked in **blue**, which are offered to test the mind of Mission Council as to whether the effect of making any changes of substance part way through a contentious debate is more helpful than making no changes.
4. Commentary on the changes marked in **red** was given in paper J3 of Mission Council May 2013, which is available on the website.
5. Commentary on the new minor changes proposed, marked in **green** is as follows:
  - a) Standing Order 2b(3a) is proposed for deletion. This is not to restrict contributions, but has never reflected reality, and such a bald statement might imply we offer a right to speak to any member of the public who happens to enter a room. The remainder of the paragraph is consequently renumbered.
  - b) SO 2c(b) is minor change to reflect the practicalities of what happens.
  - c) SO 3f (which was 4e) is amended to make clear which business is out of order applies in all modes of decision making. It is moved to 3f as all parts of SO4 do not apply when SO2 is being followed.
  - d) SO7b and 7d are very minor changes to avoid any possible ambiguity.
  - e) The new SO12, and consequent re-numbering, brings the 'Communications Protocol' into the Standing Orders. As it stands the 'Communications Protocol' may be seen as of temporary or limited status standing alone, and liable to be forgotten, and so it is proposed to incorporate this into standing orders.
6. Commentary on the two proposals of major substance, marked in **blue**, is as follows:
  - a) SO2b(7a) refers to 'agreement'. This description has been much criticised, and it has been pointed out that 'agreement' implies a level of acceptance which some do not feel, but that they would be willing to accept the will of the overwhelming majority if their views could be more honestly described than 'agreement', which feels, to some, as an attempt to force a measure of unanimity not present. For this reason it is proposed to replace 'agreement' with 'passed, recognising disagreement'.



b) SO2b(9vi) in the Standing Orders in use at the 2014 General Assembly (using a phrase of 'red' status) prohibited the option of moving to majority voting, unless notice had been given earlier. By proposing this phrase for removal, it means that notice still needs to be given, under SO2b(2) if urgency is known in advance, but the option for urgency to be discovered during the debate would now also be restored.

7. In any event, the current document is unwieldy, and requires considerable further work, not least in simplifying numbering systems in SO2, to create an understandable and workable document. This is under active consideration.

8. It is very clear that the Church needs to undertake a thorough review of how it makes decisions. Various criticisms have been made of the consensus process. It would be imprudent to rush to decisions in the light of one difficult debate, but at some point a considered and thoughtful debate needs to be had. It would be silly to spend a great deal of time tidying the Standing Orders until the direction the Church wishes to choose is clearer. Mission Council can be assured that the Assembly officers will seek a review of the theology and practice of consensus.

# Standing orders of General Assembly

## 1. The agenda of the Assembly

1a. 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.

1b. 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 section 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.

1c. 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.

1d. The motions in group B shall be determined by majority vote, and standing order 2 shall not apply.

1e. The motions in group C shall be considered by means of the consensus decision making process set out in standing order 2.

1f. 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.

1g. Motions arising from a report which have been duly seconded and submitted by individual members of Assembly under rule 4b shall be taken at a point in the business determined by the moderator on the advice of the convener of the Assembly arrangements committee.

1h. 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.

1i. 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

2a. 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, 5d, 5e, 5f, 6b, 6c, 6e will not apply.

2b. The process of consensus:

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.

Agreement 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.

2b.(1) 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.

2b.(2) 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 2b(9)vi. 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.

2b.(3) 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.

~~2b.(3a) All those present may contribute.~~

2b.(3a) 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.

2b.(3b) 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.

2b.(3c) The Assembly may meet around tables so that small group discussion can happen quickly and easily.

2b.(3d) As the discussion session proceeds possible ways forward for the Church are developed until a specific proposal is reached.

2b.(4) The decision session:

Only those Assembly members present may contribute to this session, they may speak for no more than three minutes.

2b.(4a) 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.

2b.(4b) 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.

2b.(4c) 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.

2b.(4d) If there is a major new insight expressed, the moderator may determine that it is appropriate to move back into a discussion session.

2b.(5a) 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:

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

2b.(5b) If there is strong but not unanimous support:

- i) Who supports the proposal?
- ii) 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?
- iii) Who is not prepared to accept the proposal?

2b.(6) 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.

2b.(7) The moderator shall ask:

2b.(7a) are you prepared to have the issue declared ~~resolved by agreement~~ **passed, recognising disagreement?**

If so they may choose to record their dissent.

2b.(8) Who is not prepared to accept the proposal?

2b.(9) Continuing disagreement

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

- i) adjourning the discussion to another time or place perhaps with more work before reconsideration;
- ii) asking the moderator to continue to work on the issue with relevant people until the next Assembly;
- iii) referring the issue to another council or group to deal with;
- iv) deciding the issue is unnecessary/inappropriate to continue dealing with;
- v) declaring that there are diverse views which Christians may hold with equal integrity;
- vi) if the issue is urgent moving to majority decision. ~~but only if notice has been given under standing order 2b.(2).~~

2c. The moderator

2c.(a) The role of the moderator is very important.

The moderator:

- assists the Assembly to discern the will of God as far as possible
- is alert to the guidance of the Holy Spirit as members contribute

- pauses for prayer or buzz group reflection as appropriate
- encourages trust and integrity in contributions
- ensures care and support for those whose honesty or minority voice makes them vulnerable
- invites members to respond to speeches showing indicator cards, and reflects the mood of the meeting as it becomes apparent
- suggests or encourages creative modifications of a proposal, picking up insights expressed
- summarises discussion from time to time to assist in focusing the discussion.

2c.(b) 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:

- enable group work, collate responses from groups and report back to the council
- help and support the moderator
- be responsible for the display of **providing the wording** of the text under discussion.

2d. Coloured cards

2d.(1) Coloured cards are not essential in consensus decision making but they are helpful.

Each member receives two cards:

- 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.
- 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.

2d.(2a) Cards held crossed indicate to the moderator it's time to move on to the next subject.

2d.(2b) 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.

2e. 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:

2e.(1) Out of order – the speaker is digressing from the matter being discussed.

2e.(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.

2e.(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.

2e.(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.

2e.(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

3a. All reports of committees, together with the draft motions arising there from, shall be delivered to the general secretary by a date to be *{the word 'annually' deleted}* determined, so that they may be printed and circulated to members in time for consideration before the date of the Assembly meeting.

3b. 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.

3c. 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 3b above.

3d. 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 *{the words 'or a District Council' deleted}* 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.

3e. 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.

3f. It shall not be in order, **whether in en bloc business, majority voting, or consensus decision-making**, to move a motion or amendment which:

- i) contravenes any part of the Basis of Union, or
- ii) involves the church in expenditure without prior consideration by the appropriate committee, or
- iii) pre-empts discussion of a matter to be considered later in the agenda, or
- iv) 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
- v) is not related to the report of a committee and has not been the subject of 21 days' notice under 3d.

The decision of the moderator (in the case of i, ii, iii, and v) and of the moderator with the clerk and the general secretary (in the case of iv) on the application of this standing order shall be final.



#### 4. Motions and amendments

4a. A report presented to the Assembly by a committee or synod, under rule 1, shall be received for debate, unless notice has been duly given under rule 3d 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.

4b. 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.

4c. 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.

4d. 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.

4e. 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 4k.

4f. 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.

4g. 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.

4h. The mover may, with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Assembly, alter the motion or amendment proposed.

4i. 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.

4j. 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 4f, 4g and 4h 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**

5a. 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.

5b. 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.

5c. 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.

5d. 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.

5e. 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.

5f. The foregoing standing order (5e) 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**

6a. 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.

6b. 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.

6c. 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.

6d. 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.

6e. The motions described in standing orders 6b, 6c and 6d above are exceptions to standing order 4c, 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 6a, 6b, 6c and 6d 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

7a. 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.

7b. 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:

- i) if the Assembly decides before the vote that a paper ballot be the method of voting or
- ii) if the show of cards indicates a very close vote, and the moderator decides, or a member of Assembly proposes and the Assembly agrees, then a paper ballot shall be the method of voting.

7c. 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.

7d. **Any electronic voting system approved by the Assembly arrangements committee shall be deemed to meet the requirements of these standing orders.**

## 8. Questions

8a. 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.

8b. 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.

8c. Questions asked under standing orders 8a and 8b shall be put and answered without discussion.

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

9a. 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.

9b. 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.

9c. 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.

9d. 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

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

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

12a. 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.

12b. Everything written and shared on social media sites at any time is the sole responsibility of the author, and is subject to the same libel laws as any other form of written communication.

#### 13. Record of the Assembly

13a. Record of attendance at the meetings of the Assembly shall be kept in such a manner as the Assembly arrangements committee may determine.

13b. 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.

13c. 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.

13d. 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.

#### 14. Suspension and amendment of standing orders

14a. 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.

14b. 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.

# Paper M6

General secretary  
Local church closure

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014

# Paper M6



## General secretary: Local church closure

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	General secretary <a href="mailto:john.proctor@urc.org.uk">john.proctor@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	As resolution
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council notes the recent closure of Chapel End URC, and gives thanks to God for its worship, witness and service.</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	n/a

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To report a local church closure which was omitted from this year's Assembly papers.
<b>Main points</b>	Chapel End URC in West Midlands Synod has given credible witness from its foundation in 1807 until its closure early in 2014, and we may remember its work with gratitude and thanksgiving.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	n/a
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Synod clerk

### Summary of Impact

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

# Local church closure

## Chapel End URC, 1807-2014

1. Chapel End URC completed its witness as a village chapel that stood for honesty, kindness, and to *'do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God'* on 5 January 2014, after almost 210 years of ministering to the local populace that was fast growing up around this new church building in 1807. The congregation started meeting in an old barn, and they were mainly made up of friends and family of John Dagley, who was to become the first spiritual leader of Chapel End until he died in 1840.
2. This independent chapel was built for £200! It was an ambitious project, but it was felt by many local church ministers of the day that vice, immorality and other disgraceful practices meant that local people were in need of knowing who Jesus Christ was and that Salvation was at hand. The people in this growing hamlet were mainly ribbon weavers, but by the 1870s it had become a good-sized village, with its main employment in local coal mines.
3. Chapel has, over the years, known good and bad times. They have had fourteen ministers. The Revd J Stanley Bond (1940-1965) is fondly recalled, even today, by many of the older members. They have also known crisis and recovery in the membership, but for all this, this chapel has battled through. In the 1970s membership was over seventy, by 2014 it numbered just ten. It even survived some fifteen years without any full-time ministry, until their last minister came, the Revd David Yeo Poulton (2004-2014).
4. Chapel survived the bombing raids of the Second World War, but could not survive the bombshell of becoming Grade II Listed in 1994. At this time the church was due to be demolished and rebuilt to house Chapel End Methodist congregation and the existing URC congregation as an LEP in a modern church, but the listing put paid to that. Over the next twenty years, the cost of repairs rocketed, because it was a listed building. Finally the chapel closed because its utility bills were outstripping the income by £4 to £1, and the people simply could not afford to run or maintain their chapel any longer.
5. Some of the membership has gone to a variety of other churches within the locality, and some have followed the current minister to one of his other churches. However, once a month the congregation has decided to meet together, as a House Church to, *'do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God'*. The future for this group is knowing that God continues to walk with them. As we have often said since the decision to close, the church building is not the church, it is the people!

# M6

United Reformed Church • Mission Council, November 2014

# Paper O1

## Human Resources Advisory Group Report

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014



# Paper 01



## Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG): Report

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Keith G Webster <a href="mailto:kwebsterwms@btinternet.com">kwebsterwms@btinternet.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	For information.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Report providing an update on the recent work of HRAG.
<b>Main points</b>	
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	

### Summary of Impact

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

# Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG) Report

There are three elements to the HRAG report:-

1. Routine work
2. General secretariat review
3. HRAG – review of the role

## **Current membership of HRAG for information:**

Keith Webster (convener)

Alastair Forsyth

Mike Gould

Peter Pay

Wendy White stood down as a member in May 2014.

(The process of finding a new member for the group is currently underway.)

John Proctor, general secretary

Jane Baird deputy general secretary (administration and resources).

We were pleased to welcome both John and Jane to the July meeting.

These people bring a wide range of skills in diverse aspects of human resources (HR).

HRAG was established in October 2012 until July 2015 with a remit to provide a unified reference point on HR matters for Mission Council (General Assembly) /Trust and Church House personnel.

## **1. Routine work report – April 2014 – October 2014**

1.1 The following job descriptions and posts have been reviewed:

### **Assembly Appointments**

Secretary for ministries

CRCW development worker

Secretary for ecumenical relations – the job title has now been changed to secretary for ecumenical and interfaith relations

Secretary for world church relations

Secretary for church and society

Secretary for racial justice and multicultural ministry – the job title has now been changed to secretary for racial justice and intercultural ministry

### **Staff posts**

Senior graphic designer – amended to include web site responsibilities.

## 1.2 Post extensions

Secretary for church and society – changed from a two year contract to an open ended appointment.

Editor, *Reform* – extended to 30 June 2015 from 31 December 2014 to accord with the completion of the review of the communications department.

Fresh Expressions co-ordinator – extended to 31 December 2014 from 31 August 2014 to accord with the completion of the review of the mission department.

## 1.3 Policies review

Work continues with the review of the current set of HR policies which apply at Church House with a view to enhancing them as appropriate. To date the employment policy and redundancy policy have been reviewed and the recruitment policy is now under review.

## 2. General secretariat review

Following the Mission Council meeting in November 2013 and the submission of the revised Paper O2 (the amended job description for the deputy general secretary (administration and resources), the job descriptions for both the deputy general secretary (discipleship) and deputy general secretary (mission) were similarly amended and were then to be made available on the URC web site prior to the commencement of the recruitment and appointment processes.

Appointments for deputy general secretary (mission) and deputy general secretary (administration and resources) have been made. The deputy general secretary (discipleship) post has been re-advertised.

The general secretariat review undertaken by HRAG has now been completed.

## 3. Review of the role of HRAG and the nature of the work

In November 2013 HRAG had been in existence for 1 year and hence it seemed appropriate for HRAG to step back and assess the progress to date – the nature of the work that had been undertaken, the interfaces with operational HR and line management, and the extent to which the remit to provide a unified reference point on HR matters, as approved in 2013, had been met.

HRAG's prime concern is with the broader HR policies and issues, with the HR department and line managers being responsible for what can be termed the operational HR aspects of their work.

One particular area of HRAG's work is with regard to posts and job descriptions. The former Staffing Advisory Group (SAG) was only concerned with Assembly appointments, providing an independent review of the requirement for a post and hence the terms of the associated job description. Since the establishment of HRAG a wider range of posts at Church House has fallen within this 'review remit' and as a consequence the range of posts and job descriptions to be reviewed by HRAG is currently under consideration.

The terms of reference for HRAG are also under review bearing in mind that, apart from ensuring the provision of a unified reference point on HR matters, Mission Council agreed the establishment of HRAG until July 2015 in order to cover the interim period as the new structures are put in place. The continuing requirement for the unified reference point with the aim of ensuring that both HR and line management have the appropriate level of support will be the subject of a future paper to Mission Council.

# Paper P2

Law and polity advisory group  
Report to Mission Council  
on the group's work and  
terms of reference

United Church 2014  
Church 2014  
**Reformed**  
Church 2014  
**Church**



# Law and polity advisory group: Report to Mission Council on the group's work and terms of reference

## Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Dr Augur Pearce (Secretary) <a href="mailto:augur@dunelm.org.uk">augur@dunelm.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Part I for information only  Part II for decision – to amend and clarify the group's 2007 terms of reference and composition, including provision for attendance of a sub-group at General Assembly and Mission Council
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>See end of document</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	The draft resolution can be amended to confine the group's function to issues of the civil law, or to issues of the church's internal polity and constitutional change. If it is passed unamended the group will be concerned with both.

## Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To report on the group's work to date and bring its formal terms of reference into line with the demands made upon it.
<b>Main points</b>	Part I lists and briefly summarises the topics on which the church has consulted the group since its first members were appointed in 2010.  Part II recognises a discrepancy between this range of topics and the purposes for which the group's formation was originally proposed in 2007. The draft resolution seeks to rectify this; to clarify who can refer issues to the group; to amend the group's membership slightly from the 2007 pattern; to indemnify the group's members against claims; and to give the group a more formal role in scrutiny of church legislative proposals.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Mission Council minute of October 2007 recording the establishment of the group.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The former holders of the offices chiefly affected (clerk of Assembly and general secretary) attended preliminary discussions leading to this report.

## Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The draft resolution contains an indemnity for errors and omissions against liability in the course of the group's civil law functions.</li> <li>The draft resolution envisages a sub-group at Mission Council and General Assembly, which might consist mainly of existing members of those bodies but would include at least one advisory group member and thus add one person's board, lodging and travel costs.</li> </ol>
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None

# Report to Mission Council on the group's work and terms of reference

The law and polity advisory group was established in principle by a resolution of Mission Council in October 2007; but the first appointments were not made to the group until the General Assembly of 2010.

This report serves two purposes. Part I indicates progress on our current activity and the topics we have handled in the past. Part II proposes modifications to our terms of reference (and, in the light of these, to our membership).

The changes in Part II are suggested because, over the four years of our active existence to date, the church (acting mainly through the general secretary and clerk of Assembly) has looked to us for briefings and opinions on the law of the land (also thought of as the 'civil' or 'temporal' law), as this affects the United Reformed Church. We believe that, in responding to such requests, we have responded to a genuine need in the church. It is one which our membership is well-suited to meet. But a careful reading of the 2007 resolution establishing us suggests this is not what the word 'law' in our title was meant to indicate, and we have therefore gone beyond our existing terms of reference. If Mission Council foresees a continuing demand for assistance of this nature, it makes sense to regularise it by adjusting those terms.

## I : PAST AND CURRENT BUSINESS

### 1. Entry of United Reformed Church funds on the Register of Charities

After the Charities Act 2006, regulations excepting most church funds from entry on the Register were qualified by a charity annual income limit of £100,000. A group set up by the United Reformed Church Trust discussed with the Charity Commission the issues this would cause for local churches of the United Reformed Church, which had never before been asked to identify the trustees of their funds by name or set out concisely the trusts on which these were held. Registration guidance was agreed with the Commission in 2008-09, published on the Church website and followed by the churches then affected. The LPAG did not contribute as such to this guidance, because its first members had not then been appointed. The General Secretary invited the LPAG to take over responsibility for any subsequent updating of this guidance. Since the excepting regulations were recently extended until 2021, the existing guidance should suffice for the present. But the experience of some churches whose income has recently crossed the £100,000 threshold is that the Charity Commission has forgotten the agreement it reached earlier with the URCT working group. The LPAG is therefore assisting with further Charity Commission correspondence.

## 2. Pension issues where Baptist ministers serve Baptist-United Reformed Church LEPs

A serious problem has arisen over the pension contribution liability arising when a Baptist minister ceases to serve a single-congregation LEP with a United Reformed Church membership. The Trustees of the Baptist pension fund have been advised that this is a 'cessation event' which places on the church concerned a liability to contribute to the fund. The demanded contributions are extremely difficult for the LEPs concerned to meet, which also puts in doubt the viability of any future LEP of this nature.

Pensions law lies outside the legal specialisms of any member of the LPAG, which seriously limits the contribution it can sensibly offer; but it has sought to understand the issues and made suggestions which some of its members have been able to pursue because of their ecumenical involvement. The group has suggested to the general secretary and legal adviser what expertise may best contribute to long-term resolution of this difficulty, and the convener met with the treasurer of the North Western Synod at General Assembly to discuss the latest developments.

## 3. Civil partnership and marriage reform

A section of the Equality Act 2010 allowed the approval of religious premises in England and Wales for the legal formation of civil partnerships, something that had originally been forbidden in 2004. Mission Council commissioned the group to draft a response to the Westminster government consultation on how precisely this would work. This began our involvement with successive stages of law reform in this area, which continued with the extension of legal marriage to same-sex couples in England and Wales in 2013 and then with the Scottish legislation of 2014 on both civil partnership and marriage. The group has worked in liaison with the human sexuality task group and on one occasion sent a member to attend the church and society committee of the Synod of Scotland. Members attended several meetings with government officials at the request of the general secretary and the group's secretary testified (alongside officers of ecumenical partner churches) before a parliamentary committee. The group's guidance to local churches and trustees regarding approval of premises for civil partnership formation appears on the Church website. The general secretary has sought an opinion from the group (to be delivered before the end of 2014) on procedural issues related to the consideration of the church's position on the marriage of same-sex couples initiated at this year's Assembly.

In the longer term, the group believes that a guide to marriage (and now civil partnership) under the auspices of the United Reformed Church is needed, and is prepared to work on its production when the current raft of statutory regulations is complete. Members have reported instances of incorrect practice, and it is clear that even some registration offices are misapplying the law. A guide which explains both the English and Scottish systems in parallel may be of particular use if ministers with experience in one jurisdiction are called to pastoral charge in the other.

## 4. Trusteeship of local church assets

This is an example of how one of the group's tasks can lead it to a different, and potentially larger, issue. As we considered the implications of civil partnership and marriage law reforms, it became necessary to identify with certainty who should be considered the 'trustee(s)' of United Reformed Church buildings.



During the 20th century, most local churches (or their predecessor churches or congregations) appointed a company limited by guarantee to be trustee of their chapels, halls and manses. When we first came to this subject, the notion was prevalent in certain quarters of the church that these companies or their successors (i.e., the trust companies now serving our provinces or nations) were custodian trustees and that local elderships were managing trustee bodies.

This notion was questioned by the group and was recently confirmed to be incorrect by an opinion of charity specialist counsel. The opinion drew attention to a range of responsibilities which therefore lie not *prima facie* with the local church, but with the company. The difficulty is that some are responsibilities very difficult for a minimally-staffed remote body to discharge, especially since the charities comprising such church land do not comprise any liquid funds.

The group has passed the opinion to Trust Companies and discussed the implications at a meeting of PLATO. As requested at several briefing sessions held in Spring 2014, the group undertook to provide some central guidance. A full note indicating the group's understanding of the legal position, including its implications for the relationship between synods, Trust Companies and church meetings, was prepared and amended in the light of PLATO members' comments. At the date of this report the final version of the note has not yet been agreed. It is not proposed to publish it widely; but the intention is that it will be kept for reference to form the basis of any advice for which the group may be asked in specific future cases. At the same time (since the Trust Companies concerned operate at provincial or national level rather than that of the denomination), a PLATO working group is preparing briefer guidance on those aspects directly relevant to local churches.

## **5. Issues arising following the resignation of a Moderator-elect**

After a moderator-elect of General Assembly stood down before taking office, the Assembly of 2012 appointed a Commission to identify issues arising from this experience. With Assembly's blessing, this Commission referred to the group a number of questions concerning matters of governance, management and procedure. The group has already reported orally to Mission Council on certain of the issues raised by the Commission, but a report covering all outstanding questions is submitted to the same session of Mission Council as this report.

## **6. Secession with property**

Under United Reformed Church Act 1981 s.21 and United Reformed Church Act 2000 s.25, local churches can be given permission by General Assembly to secede from the United Reformed Church with the property held for their use. On so doing they revert to being stand-alone Churches of Christ, Presbyterian or Congregational churches, unless they choose to join some other federation. The United Reformed Church is almost unique in having such a provision, of which only very occasional use has been made.

In 1987 Assembly approved an explanation of this procedure, which indicated what must be done before Assembly would consider a request and on what bases previous requests had been granted. The 1987 statement has been updated several times but never with Assembly's authority.

At the request of the clerk of Assembly, the group devoted some time to revising the 1987 statement. It assisted the clerk and general secretary to preparing a fresh update for the guidance of synod moderators, circulated in early 2014. This update contained no changes of substance but reflected the group's understanding of the legal position and took into account changes in the law (for example, the previous update had not mentioned the 2000 Act).



When the time is opportune the group hopes to submit a more far-reaching revision, to replace the 1987 Statement altogether, for the consideration of Mission Council and ultimately of Assembly.

## **7. Appeals**

The clerk of Assembly invited the group to review the Appeals procedure under Structure paragraph 5. This was discussed at the group meeting in June 2014 and points of principle agreed: it is hoped that proposals including draft revised texts will be ready for consideration at Mission Council's Spring meeting in 2015.

## **8. Charitable Incorporated Organisations and local church liability**

Through the group's PLATO liaison and from the legal adviser, the LPAG is aware that some local churches have considered forming CIOs as a way of limiting or ending potential personal liability of church members for loss or injury resulting from local church activities and contracts. A paper on this was considered by the group and forwarded to PLATO in August 2014.

## **9. Employment status of ministers and crews**

There is a regular stream of litigation on the question whether ministers of religion are employed, are parties to a contract for services, or neither. A number of such cases involving other denominations have reached the Supreme Court; the outcome has sometimes been in favour of the minister alleging employee status, sometimes not. A longer-term project of the LPAG is to examine the criteria used by the courts in these cases specifically in the light of the polity and practice of the United Reformed Church, with a view to predicting the likely outcome should a case from our denomination ever be litigated, and tendering any consequent advice to Mission Council.

## **10. Discipline of elders**

The clerk of Assembly invited the group to review the position on the discipline of elders, with particular reference to the fact that the eldership is an office to which candidates are ordained (as are ministers of Word and sacraments), even though it is more common to encounter currently non-serving elders than non-serving ministers. There may be extreme cases where some equivalent for elders of removal from the Roll of ministers is warranted; but an exact equivalent is not practical since there is at present no Roll of elders. The group hopes to report to Mission Council during 2015.

## **11. Miscellaneous issues**

The group has discussed at its meetings, or contributed in email correspondence to, the resolution of a number of other issues. Most were referred to us by the general or deputy general secretary, in some cases forwarding enquiries from local churches considered to raise denominational concerns. On two occasions the secretary for ministries raised queries which the general secretary relayed. On two occasions the legal adviser invited discussion within the group of situations on which he was advising synods. One issue was already under discussion in PLATO and referred to us by our PLATO liaison member.

The variety of these issues is clear from the following list:

1. Access to church buildings and the right, where necessary, to exclude individuals who may pose a threat to other church members and attenders.
2. The bearing of equality law on the proposed 'Zero Intolerance' campaign.
3. The procedure for the call of a minister by a local church.
4. Immigration status checks on ministers.
5. Capital contributions to work on Methodist/United Reformed shared churches.
6. The employment of children and youth development officers.
7. House of Lords reform (the general secretary having been invited to respond to a government consultation, particularly on the place of the lords spiritual).
8. Non-members of the church as members of its councils (the issue raised by Resolution 19 at this year's General Assembly).
9. Powers in pre-union trust deeds (an issue now resolved by the passing of Resolution 21 at this year's General Assembly).

## II : THE GROUP'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. The proposal of the then general secretary, the Revd Dr David Cornick, to Mission Council in October 2007 contained the following passage:

'I therefore suggest that we introduce a small law and polity task group whose function will be to advise Mission Council on constitutional matters being taken to Assembly. Its composition will be for Mission Council to decide, but I would suggest that its membership should include the clerk and the legal adviser *ex officio*, two synod clerks and three other people who have an expertise/considerable experience in church law and polity, one of whom should act as convener. I believe that this would be supportive for the clerk, and enable the smooth process of such business on the floor of the Assembly.'

2. The actual resolution passed at that meeting was 'That Mission Council appoint a law and polity advisory group to advise the Council on such constitutional and legal matters as the Council shall remit to it'.
3. In calling for the group to advise on 'legal matters' the resolution seems wide enough to cover advice on the law of the land. It has been understood in that way by the group itself and by those who have asked us to give opinions. But Dr Cornick's preamble suggests that he at least had in mind only 'church law and polity', using the term 'law' to describe the internal rules and structures of the United Reformed Church. Thus usage can be seen in the remit of the legal questions committee of the Church of Scotland and the law and polity committee of the Methodist Church. On the other hand, the legal advisory commission of the Church of England does advise on the general law of the land as it affects the church's life; so did the legal and trusts committee which existed in the very early days of the United Reformed Church.
4. From the first part of this report it will be clear that the group has as often been asked to assist with legal questions in the sense of the law of the land (for example charity and trusts law, family law, equality law, employment law, immigration law, and the liability of unincorporated associations) as with questions of the church's constitution and internal polity (ecumenical issues, the sharing of church buildings and United Reformed Church Acts, the chain of authority at Church House and expectations of denominational volunteers,

the movement of ministers and appeals to wider councils). It will also be clear that only a small proportion of our work was directly referred by Mission Council, whose infrequent meeting would make it an unwieldy channel of reference for all the types of issue on which we have assisted. Most references have come from the clerk or general secretary, in some cases acting as a filter for queries from elsewhere, or have been issues on which the legal adviser found a wider range of opinion helpful.

5. For the future we believe it would be sensible to have a clear remit for the questions we address, which we suggest should be able to come from the officers already mentioned as well as from Mission Council itself (or of course the General Assembly). If guidance on matters within our remit is to be published to the wider church, this should take place in the name and under the authority of the clerk of assembly, the general secretary or both, as appropriate. Incidentally, we see no particular justification for the present position under which the clerk is an *ex officio* member of the group whilst the general secretary attends only by invitation, and suggest that both could usefully be full members, with the general secretary free to invite an appropriate deputy to attend as necessary.

6. One other point should be made concerning our engagement with the law of the land. Whilst all of us are church members experienced in various aspects of the functioning (and in many cases the history) of the United Reformed Church, and can therefore contribute with reasonable confidence to discussions of the church's internal polity, we are not all lawyers. Above all, we are not all *practising* lawyers. Some are retired or academic lawyers or lawyers in government service; others have no legal qualification. Those learned in Scots law would anyhow be cautious in any opinion concerning the law of England and Wales, and *vice versa*. Although we may include in our number individuals with relevant specialisms, most of these lack the indemnity insurance required for lawyers currently in practice.

7. We cannot therefore, as a group, and do not profess to, give advice on the law of the land upon which others can rely when making decisions with financial or liability implications. This is one reason – though confidentiality of background facts is another – why we have not published opinions, and do not go into great detail even in this report, on many of the issues so far referred to us.

8. We believe it is sensible that any opinions we give on the law of the land in actual cases should either be channelled through the legal adviser (by way of assistance to him in deciding what advice to offer the church), or tendered confidentially to the general secretary for such further action as he thinks fit. And we seek a clear understanding that the LPAG is not qualified to advise on the legal and technical problems of the United Reformed Church, its councils, office-bearers and members, and does not profess to do so; and that the church will hold the group's members (including the legal adviser, except when he personally endorses an opinion as his professional advice) indemnified against liability for any error or omission.

9. We turn finally to the other ('polity') side of the group's work, and recall Dr Cornick's hope that it would 'advise Mission Council on constitutional matters being taken to Assembly ... and enable the smooth process of such business on the floor of the Assembly'.

10. The former clerk of Assembly did indeed refer a number of pure 'polity' issues to us, including the conciliar appeal procedure, the discipline of elders and the question of non-members of the church as members of its councils. But when the first of these came to this year's Assembly as resolution 19, the clerk who had moved the resolution was no longer in office and the group (which had fully supported the clerk's proposals) was not in attendance as such to address the concerns which those proposals aroused.

11. Our counterpart committees in the Church of Scotland and the Methodist Church have sub-groups which attend those churches' General Assembly or Annual Conference to advise as necessary. The Methodist sub-group does not significantly increase attendance since, apart from the secretary of the law and polity committee, its other members are chosen from those who are already members of the Conference, and do not have to be members of the committee themselves. It is also common practice (mandated, in Methodism, by standing orders) that proposals to amend the constitutional documents which correspond to our Basis of Union, Structure and Rules of Procedure are submitted to our counterpart committee, which reports on them and can offer a redraft for better achievement of the intention of the decision-making body. We suggest that, if the LPAG is to realise Dr Cornick's original vision for it, as well as addressing issues of the general law as described above, there may be a case for similar practice in the United Reformed Church.

12. The resolution that we propose to Mission Council has separate limbs to address the different points made in this report, which should make it a simple matter to produce – by selective amendment – the outcome which the members of Mission Council desire. If, for example, the wish is for us to return to Dr Cornick's original vision and cease to address questions of the general law, this can be achieved by an amendment striking out certain paragraphs of the resolution. Striking out other paragraphs would make us purely an advisory body on the general law, with no role on constitutional amendments. We have also proposed a minor change to our composition; this is drawn on the supposition that both the group's current *de facto* responsibilities will continue.

**DRAFT MISSION COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS**

- 1. Mission Council resolves to receive the report of the law and polity advisory group.**
- 2. Mission Council resolves that the following terms of reference shall replace the original function of the law and polity advisory group**

**(a) Polity functions**

**To assist the clerk of Assembly, when required,**

- (i) in giving advice to the General Assembly, or rulings and guidance between sessions of Assembly, on questions of the interpretation and application of the Basis of Union, Structure, and other constitutional documents of the United Reformed Church, including ecumenical instruments and agreements which sanction deviation from the church's normal practice; and**
- (ii) in scrutiny of legislative proposals (meaning thereby proposals for new constitutional and ecumenical documents or amendment of existing texts) for their coherence with each other, and with existing constitutional provisions or usage.**

**(b) General legal functions**

- (i) To assist the legal adviser on questions on which he may invite such assistance and which lie within the experience or expertise of one or more other members of the group**
- (ii) To give an opinion, when so invited by the General Assembly, Mission Council or the general secretary, on any question of the application of the law of England and Wales, of Scotland, of Jersey, of Guernsey, of the Isle of Man or of any one or more of such territories to the life of the United Reformed Church, and to assist in the preparation of guidance on such questions to be distributed by authority of the general secretary to synods or local churches; provided, in either case, that the question raised lies within the experience or expertise of one or more members of the group.**

**(c) General**

**to undertake such other tasks in the field of church polity or the law affecting the church (provided that any question of the general law lies within the experience or expertise of one or more members of the group) as may be entrusted to it by the General Assembly, Mission Council or the general secretary.**

3. Mission Council resolves on behalf of the General Assembly, that the United Reformed Church will hold the members of the law and polity advisory group (including the legal adviser, except when he personally endorses an opinion as his professional advice) indemnified against liability for any error or omission in the discharge of their functions relating to the law of any territory.
4. Mission Council resolves to request the clerk of Assembly, in collaboration with the Assembly arrangements committee and the law and polity advisory group, to prepare, and submit to Mission Council as soon as possible amendments to the Rules of Procedure and/or the standing orders of Assembly to provide for scrutiny of legislative proposals in accordance with paragraph 2(a)(ii) of this resolution, and for the attendance and function at sessions of the General Assembly and Mission Council of a sub-group of the law and polity advisory group for the purpose outlined in paragraph 11 of the group's accompanying report.
5. Mission Council resolves that the law and polity advisory group henceforth consist of:

  - (a) a convener and secretary appointed by Mission Council, each for a renewable term of four years; the current convener to serve until 31 July 2018 and the current secretary to 31 July 2016;
  - (b) the clerk to the General Assembly, the general secretary and the legal adviser to the Church *ex officiis* (each being at liberty to attend the group's meetings by a deputy);
  - (c) one synod clerk nominated by the other synod clerks, the first member nominated after this resolution to serve until 31 July 2018 if remaining so long a synod clerk; and
  - (d) two other members appointed by the General Assembly on nominations committee's advice, with terms of office expiring on 31 July 2016 and 2018 respectively.
6. Mission Council resolves that so far as possible, future appointments to the group shall secure that:

  - (a) at least one member appointed under paragraph 5(a) of this resolution and at least one member appointed under paragraph 5(d) possesses a legal qualification in one of the territories in which the United Reformed Church exists; and that
  - (b) the other members appointed under paragraph 5(a) and 5(d) have expertise in the history, polity or administration of the United Reformed Church or in ecumenical constitutional issues.
7. Mission Council resolves that the group be at liberty to invite other committees and groups established by the General Assembly, by the provincial and legal trust officers (PLATO), or (where an issue of Scots law arises) by the Synod of Scotland to send representatives to the group's meetings to contribute knowledge or expertise required by particular anticipated business.





# Paper Q1

Joint property strategy group  
Report

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** 2014

# Paper Q1



## Joint property strategy group (JPSG): Report

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Cliff Patten <a href="mailto:cliffordpatten@btinternet.com">cliffordpatten@btinternet.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Questions and discussion
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Mission Council accepts and supports the ongoing work of the JPSG and the proposed training events.</b></li> <li><b>2. Mission Council asks the JPSG United Reformed Church members to consult further regarding a church buildings forum and developing our church building theology and report back to Mission Council.</b></li> </ol>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	None

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Reporting recent strategy group work and suggesting some United-Reformed-Church-specific work in response to this and the faith and order committee report to General Assembly 2014.
<b>Main points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· JPSG roadshows</li> <li>· United Reformed Church building forum</li> <li>· Developing a United Reformed Church buildings theology</li> </ul>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper W3 Mission Council November 2013.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The Revd John Proctor The Revd David Tatem

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	Budget required for roadshows. Limited costs associated with developing the forum.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Working with the Methodist Church. Opportunity – could be considered essential to engage with other denominations.

# Joint property strategy group report

## 1. JPSG aims and objectives

The October 2010 joint meeting of the Methodist Council and the United Reformed Church Mission Council agreed that a new group should be established to undertake work identified by the earlier Methodist/URC buildings think tank. Terms of reference were agreed by both councils in spring 2011 and the joint property strategy group (JPSG) began meeting later that year. Money was budgeted to enable the employment of an executive officer and the Revd Carla Maurer held this post from September 2012 until May 2013. Kim Medford-Vassell was then appointed in March 2014 for a period of 18 months.

The JPSG originally identified four areas of work – possibilities, people, partnership and procedure. On the latter, separate work regarding LEPs and sharing agreements, governance and compliance with legislation and expectations is now being undertaken by another group and both the Methodist Church and the URC (via the property, legal and trust officers – PLATO) has established means of addressing these issues on behalf of the denominations. The JPSG has therefore focused its work on the following:

**Possibilities:** Creating communities of inspiration and learning, sharing good practices.

**People:** Empowering people and providing training in property management for church leaders, encouraging property stewardship and developing strategies for mission development.

**Partnership:** Reviewing the Reciprocal Sharing Agreement between the two Churches and presenting best practices for partnerships with church and non-church organisations.

## 2. What the JPSG has been doing

Since the last report to Mission Council, Clifford Patten, David Skipp and David Tatem, secretary for ecumenical relations, have joined Lucy Brierley as URC members of the JPSG.

The work of the JPSG has focused on the following areas:

### 2.1 Six roadshows (in 2015)

These will be aimed at all those within the URC and Methodist Church with an interest in mission and buildings within their communities and will take place in six locations across England and Scotland.

The roadshows will be designed to:

- Enable the target audience to think creatively about using property to further mission within their local churches;
- Motivate those already engaged or willing to engage in this work within the synods, circuits and local churches;
- Show models for change that has been proved to work;
- Enable a wider discussion in terms of mission within the community.

It is envisioned for these six roadshows to be held in church buildings that have been renovated and/or designed with mission in mind. It is hoped this will provide maximum impact not only in respect of presentation and discussion on all that can be achieved but provide a visual example also. The roadshows will most likely be whole day events divided into sections to include presentations, discussions and space for a question and answer

session. Synods will be asked to promote the roadshows at both their autumn and spring meetings. It is hoped that synods, training officers and moderators will encourage local church members, elders, crcws and ministers to attend a roadshow in order to begin (or assist to continue) creative and missional thinking about buildings.

Financing arrangements are being discussed and further information should be available by the time Mission Council meets.

## 2.2 Strategic training for those in leadership roles in local churches

It is hoped the training will be designed to be accessed across both denominations particularly to equip those interested in developing and releasing buildings for mission in:

- Discovering and believing in new **possibilities**;
- Setting up simple but effective **processes**;
- Finding and keeping motivated **people**;
- Making creative and ambitious **partnerships**;
- Enabling our mission to respond to the need, not to the **pennies**.

The JPSG are currently working on ways in which to implement this and the executive officer is liaising with Fiona Thomas about possible modules of training which could be incorporated into existing training structures.

## 2.3 New webpages within the Methodist Church and URC websites

It is intended that pages relating will be linked to both the URC and Methodist Church websites. These will include good news stories designed to highlight the missional work of churches and communities through creative use of its buildings, training, roadshow information, resources, links, updates and contact information. The pages will be designed to provide support to local churches.

If there are any good news stories you would like featured on the website, where properties have been transformed, in large or small ways, to further missional work in the Church and community, please contact Kim Medford-Vassell, executive support officer, via email to [medford-vassellk@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:medford-vassellk@methodistchurch.org.uk), who will be happy to work with you on presenting this on the website.

The JPSG/URC group would welcome comments and guidance from Mission Council, and if appropriate proposes the following Resolution 1:

**RESOLUTION 1: Mission Council accepts and supports the ongoing work of the JPSG and the proposed training events.**

# 1. The United Reformed Church response to this work

In addition the JPSG/URC group suggest the following URC response to the work to date set against the familiar background outlined below.

## 3.1 People-focussed mission strategies

Almost without exception, and understandably Mission programmes produced over the years focus upon people, but to the extent that they ignore the significant part that buildings can play in facilitating, enhancing and most significantly shaping and hindering such work. Failing buildings often dictate church closure and the maintenance burden of too many buildings

will increasingly restrict effective investment in people. Programmes such as local mission and ministry review (LMMR) and vision20/20 will become more effective if formal recognition is given to the physical and financial part that buildings play in their delivery.

### 3.2 Our inherited building stock

- The dependency of church families upon the buildings they occupy is a relationship founded upon family emotional ties, the perceived duties of stewardship and the way that buildings shape what we feel able to do and what we are. In many ways our buildings reflect and shape the nature of the Church family and will often speak louder to the community than the posters on the noticeboard.
- Our inherited buildings largely determine the distribution and location of church families and the building investment and natural change inertia can maintain this distribution and building supply beyond the natural life of the cause.
- Much has been said about too many buildings maintained in many places by a reducing membership. The Church family, rather than building condition, needs to be shaping the strategic planning for future provision; this planning is enhanced if carried out on a community basis and together with our ecumenical partners.
- We have a rich resource of buildings which tell our nonconformist story and it is important that we should identify how and where this story is told and seek to interpret and preserve some of it as a denomination.

There has been a recognised need for some time to create a vehicle enabling the URC to speak with one voice when required regarding Church buildings, recognising that this may embrace a variety of views. This is particularly relevant when working with government agencies and in particular the heritage bodies. Working with the Methodist Church has again emphasised this gap and will restrict the effectiveness and extent to which we can work together on property matters.

Within the URC, advice to local churches and communities at synod or area level varies considerably in relation to the resources and personnel available. This can lead to an inconsistent approach to specialist advice, funding and reinvesting monies released by property sales, strategic planning and facilitating thorough and challenging investigations of building performance and requirements.

The faith and order committee's report to General Assembly suggested the development of a shared Church buildings theology and this coincides with the URC JPSG members' concern that such a piece of work, called for in the original task group report will not be undertaken jointly. The group are keen that this should be developed across the URC drawing upon local experience and creating a body of work that can be used by all Church families and ecumenical groups to both challenge existing established ways of working and help shape effective longer-term strategies through greater and consistent understanding.

The URC representatives to the JPSG have held separate meetings and consulted the general secretary to discuss how the URC can best facilitate and respond to these issues.

## 4. Work ahead

The members of the JPSG are prepared, for the remainder of their appointed term (until the end of 2015) to take advice from Mission Council and develop strategies for a Church building forum and a means of developing the Church building theology. If the principle is acceptable, Mission Council may choose to enhance the existing group or create another group to carry out this work.

We set out below an outline of the two pieces of work.

#### 4.1 Building forum

- Create a Church building forum linking synods and other parties such as the law and polity advisory group (LPAG) to develop and promote a building theology and promote a wider discussion of building provision and funding.
  - The forum may meet occasionally and link into the JPSG.
  - It can also work alongside the PLATO group if and when required.
  - It will provide a point of contact with other denominations, building agencies and heritage bodies.
  - To be fully effective this forum needs to be recognised alongside other General Assembly committees.
  - It will be the body which relates to Mission Council and General Assembly to raise the profile of Church buildings.
- A forum convenor is probably required to promote the work; it will be for Mission Council to determine how this may be approached. This would signal the importance attached to this work.
- Develop the patchy building theology advisory and support work at synod level and develop a more coordinated approach.
- A major piece of mindset-changing work needs to be undertaken to encourage a focussed rationalisation of buildings; this needs to be big picture mission focussed and cross denomination. We need to learn to be the catalyst in bringing the local churches together to make a difference.
- A major piece of work is required to address the use of funds released from building sales for revenue funding. Much of this money was originally given for building work and perhaps we owe a duty to see it recycled into new building projects. Only by having funds available for projects will church families dare to dream and consider mission-responsive building schemes.

## 2. Towards developing a Church building theology

The JPSG/URC members are happy to facilitate discussions with Mission Council as a method of gathering information and comment. It may be that the forum, if acceptable, will become the vehicle for assembling the responses and developing the work over time.

Again the JPSG/URC group would welcome comments and guidance from Mission Council regarding these two pieces of work, and, if appropriate, proposes Resolution 2:

**RESOLUTION 2: Mission Council asks the JPSG/URC members to consult further regarding a church buildings forum and developing our church buildings theology and report back to Mission Council.**

# Paper X1

West Midlands Synod  
Non-stipendiary ministry  
age limit

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014



# Paper X1



## West Midlands Synod: Non-stipendiary ministry age limit

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Roy Lowes <a href="mailto:moderator@urcwestmidlands.org.uk">moderator@urcwestmidlands.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Recognising that people are working longer in many occupations and that UK legislation has changed in recent years to enable people to work without fear of age discrimination, Mission Council acting on behalf of the General Assembly resolves to remove the age related entry qualifications with regard to non-stipendiary ministry.</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	
<b>Main points</b>	
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	General Assembly 1997 (resolution 34) set an age limit of 55 for candidates applying for non-stipendiary ministry.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	None

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	Additional candidates for non-stipendiary ministry would hopefully come forward for training.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None

# Non-stipendiary ministry age limit

1. The West Midlands Synod has come to the view that the time has come to remove the age limits on church members candidating to be non-stipendiary ministers (NSM).

2. In establishing an age limit for candidates for ministry, the United Reformed Church wanted to ensure that the Church received an appropriate return in length of service for its investment in education and learning (and stipend for stipendiary ministers). The synod believes that factors now are such that for non-stipendiary ministers this age restraint should be lifted. These factors include:

2.1 The denomination does not pay a stipend to these ministers and invests a smaller amount in their education for ministry phase 1 learning period (pre-ordination) than for people preparing full-time for stipendiary service. The amount estimated is, we understand, about £10,000 for four years' part-time training, including academic fees and re-imbursment of expenses.

2.2 Resolution 28, brought to Assembly 2004, emphasised that if candidates had prior experience and qualifications, this might shorten their training. Of course, whenever that is the case and learning programmes are foreshortened, the financial investment of the Church is less than the estimate above.

2.3 Whilst ministers are officer holders and even stipendiary ministers are therefore not employees, we feel we should be sensitive to those aspects of law and context in our society which might suggest we ourselves are contravening issues of justice and equal opportunities which we purport to hold dear. We think our current rules could be viewed as age discriminatory and that we would need very good reasons to continue operating them.

2.4 In the main people are living longer. As Tony Benn said in a letter to his grandchildren: 'The concept of old age has changed dramatically since even my parents' generation. The 60-year-old pensioner is the new middle aged...' so it is absurd '...to think of retirement now at 60 or 65 as a process of winding down until the curtain falls shortly thereafter'. A small number of ministers in West Midlands are now ministering at age 70 and beyond – one at 75. We suspect that this is not just the West Midlands' air but part of a wider trend.

2.5 We do recognise that ordination means setting someone aside for future ministry, but we feel that the potential for this should be considered on a case-by-case basis and not by use of a universal age limit. The risk of someone serving a short period of time after the relatively minor investment the Church makes in training is small.

2.6 Further we believe that the denomination is in sore need of people to offer for ministry, and especially for NSM, a calling which has seen a reduction in those coming forward. This potentially vital ministry, local in context, remains a valuable asset to the denomination and restricting its flow for reasons of age and finance is no longer justified.

2.7 If we are seeing reduced numbers of candidates for NSM ministry, one factor might be that the availability of people taking early retirement and thus being available for NSM in their mid-50s is reducing. An article in *The Guardian* in January indicated: 'The days of early retirement seem to be over, if a survey by Aviva is to be believed. It claims 55% of 55

to 64-year-olds were earning a wage in December 2012 – up from 41% in February 2010.’  
( <http://www.theguardian.com/money/blog/2013/jan/04/early-retirement-over> )  
Therefore we need to make it possible for people to serve as ministers of Word and sacraments closer to their potential retirement ages.

3. The synod has been provoked to raise this point and make this plea by the case of an elder in the synod who:
  - has undertaken Training for Learning and Serving to degree level at their own expense
  - has been recognised as an Assembly-accredited lay preacher
  - has become a local leader in their own church
  - has offered much appreciated ministry in another church in the synod
  - has been given, from time-to-time authorisation by the synod to preside at the sacraments at the church where they are a local leader
  - is effectively offering an appreciated ministry of Word and sacrament – yet at 61 has been for some years frustrated in having their desire to have a call to ministry of Word and sacrament tested by the church purely on grounds of age.
4. The synod thus believes that there are good reasons to remove the non-stipendiary age restriction.

# Paper X2

West Midlands Synod  
Nestlé

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014



## West Midlands Synod: Nestlé

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Roy Lowes <a href="mailto:moderator@urcwestmidlands.org.uk">moderator@urcwestmidlands.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council asks the mission committee to confirm that the monitoring of Nestlé's response to the issues raised in the Price Waterhouse Cooper Assessment Report and its compliance with the FTSE's BMS criteria in higher risk countries has been on-going. If it has it requests to know the outcome of that monitoring and whether any changes have been noted and if monitoring has not happened asks that an urgent review takes place.</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	Subsequent to the synod passing a resolution urging that Mission Council take this action its officers have been made aware that the convener of the URC's investment committee has recently written a paper on Nestlé. The synod's officers believe the paper is reassuring but believe that there are sources that suggest Nestlé are still not meeting other ethical criteria. Nestlé and the buying of water is one such area for discussion. The synod is open therefore as an alternative option to mission committee (bearing in mind the responsibility it was given by Mission Council in November 2011 as indicated below) being asked to offer a reflection on the investment committee's paper and any other monitoring that has been undertaken to Mission Council at its meeting in May 2015.

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Monitoring of Nestlé – consideration of any outcomes
<b>Main points</b>	
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	In November 2011 Mission Council passed this resolution – Mission Council, in accordance with the instructions of the General Assembly 2010, rescinds the boycott on Nestlé products adopted by General Assembly in 1992 but instructs Mission Committee to continue to monitor Nestlé's response to the issues raised in the Price Waterhouse Cooper Assessment Report and its compliance with the FTSE's BMS criteria in higher risk countries and to report any changes.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	None

### Summary of Impact

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

# Nestlé

1. The West Midlands Synod at its meeting in March 2014 came to the view that the time has come to ascertain whether monitoring of Nestlé has taken place by the mission committee.
2. In agreeing to rescind the boycott of Nestlé products, Mission Council noted that Nestlé's listing on the FTSE4Good Index only represents the first step in the process of assessing the company's compliance with FTSE criteria and the international code.
3. The mission committee was tasked with monitoring Nestlé's verification process and reporting back to Mission Council if there were any changes.
4. It is noted that should Nestlé be deleted from the FTSE4Good Index, then Mission Council has the authority to reinstate the boycott.





# Paper X3

Synod of Scotland

Marriage of same-sex couples  
in Scotland

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014

# Paper X3



## Synod of Scotland: Marriage of same-sex couples in Scotland

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Patrick Smyth, synod clerk <a href="mailto:psmyth@urcscotland.org.uk">psmyth@urcscotland.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Discussion and decision, regulations being due January 2015.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p><b>Mission Council acknowledges that there is no impediment in the polity of the United Reformed Church to same-sex marriages in Scotland being:</b></p> <p>a) solemnised on URC premises by a celebrant other than a URC minister/celebrant if so agreed by a Church Meeting;</p> <p>b) solemnised by a URC minister/celebrant, subject to being legally nominated as a celebrant for (same-sex) marriage according to Scots Law.</p>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To achieve clarity, and the agreement of Mission Council and General Assembly, on how the legal environment (together with that of URC polity) in Scotland differs from that of England and Wales, with regard to the solemnisation of the marriage of same-sex couples.
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<b>Main points</b>	<p>This resolution pursues questions that the National Synod of Scotland meeting in Edinburgh on Saturday 13 September 2014, identified as needing greater clarity following the 2014 Assembly.</p> <p>The synod, given its particular legal position and responsibility to General Assembly, reminds Mission Council that, under Scots Law, buildings do not have to be registered for marriages and that marriages between same-sex couples may lawfully be solemnised on URC premises in Scotland (albeit at present not by a URC minister, pending the ongoing deliberations about doctrine and constitution by Assembly), by permission of Church Meeting. Similarly, under Scots Law, and under current URC polity, there is no hindrance to the conduct of a service of blessing for married same-sex couples on any URC property, if the Church Meeting so decides.</p> <p>The synod therefore asks for clarity on two questions, and suggests that these be taken separately by Mission Council:</p> <p>Question a. focuses on the freedom of URC Church Meetings in Scotland (we can't speak for the other Synods) to decide on the use of their <u>premises</u> for marriages for same-sex couples conducted by ministers or others not belonging to the URC.</p> <p>Question b. asks whether there is any <u>denominational impediment</u> to the synod being registered to nominate those (normally ministers) who indicate that they sense a calling to be available to solemnise a same-sex marriage at any venue within Scotland. (This resolution recognises that the National Synod of Scotland has decided that it wished to be recognised by the Scottish government as a body that nominates celebrants for the marriage of same-sex couples.) There is however a prior question of whether this would be in line with denominational polity.</p> <p>The resolution presumes that taking this matter forward would depend on issues of doctrine and structure about which there was no clarity at General Assembly.</p>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Background paper and resolutions considered, and passed, by the meeting of the National Synod of Scotland on 13 September 2014, ' <b>Concerning same-sex marriage</b> ' (Attached to this summary).
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Mission council advisory group General secretary

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	Nothing immediate
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Local ecumenical partnerships

# Background paper concerning same-sex marriage

## **In support of the resolution from the National Synod of Scotland To Mission Council and General Assembly**

Concerning same-sex marriage, September Synod of Scotland September 2014  
~ produced by a task group of those present at General Assembly set up by PPS  
(Synod Executive)

### **Introduction**

1. The progress of legislation in the Scottish parliament (and the Westminster parliament for England and Wales) to enable people of the same gender to marry has been well reported and sometimes vigorously debated in the media and in some church gatherings. The legislation will become law later this autumn in Scotland. This will open the way for those congregations of the United Reformed Church who decide they wish to do so to make available their premises for same-sex marriage ceremonies and also for United Reformed Church ministers in Scotland to be nominated to preside at such marriages if they feel called to do so. The way is not yet open. Please read on in preparation for synod meeting
2. The legislation is not prescriptive. It does not force anyone or any congregation to do something against their conscience and has been careful to avoid any legal threat of prosecution under equalities legislation.
3. A clear majority of those at the General Assembly (July 2014) indicated they favoured following the non-prescriptive approach that the United Reformed Church has already taken to the blessing of civil partnerships (i.e. it is a decision for Church Meetings and individual ministers). It also became clear there was uncertainty as to how to make this non-prescriptive approach possible immediately and there remained unspoken questions at the Assembly about the whole issue as the agenda had not permitted sufficient time for a wholesome discussion. Consensus was not reached.

### **Within Scotland**

4. Thanks to the work of our synod's church and society committee we (URC people of Scotland) have been fully involved in the consultation process of the Scottish government and have been called to give evidence to the Equal Opportunities Committee of the Scottish parliament.
5. Over the last couple of years meetings of the Synod of Scotland have had 'same-sex marriage' on the agenda.
  - a) The synod meeting has received in full the responses made on our behalf by our synod's church and society committee
  - b) The synod meeting has received reports of consultation with the Scottish government, mainly through the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Officers though sometimes directly.
  - c) The synod meeting has held an in-depth workshop on the story of marriage through history including the variety of approaches witnessed in the Bible. This followed a well-attended workshop on differing understandings about the nature of marriage the previous year.

- d) The synod has had a prolonged conversation about the nature of marriage and of the possibility of the marriage of same-sex couples specifically.
- e) The question has not been divisive in synod meetings. The synod has received the non-prescriptive approach welcomed by the church and society committee. This approach seeks to permit churches and ministers to follow their consciences. There will be churches and ministers who recognise a call and see it as a matter of principle and biblical discipline to facilitate the marriage of same-sex couples. At the same time there will be churches and ministers who do not recognise a call and do not see it as a matter of principle and biblical discipline to facilitate the marriage of same-sex couples. The non-prescriptive principle means churches and ministers would be completely free to follow their conscience and of course review their decisions.

## The General Assembly's process

6. At the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church held in July 2014 it was clear that the overwhelming majority of those present wanted to find the right way of allowing people to follow their conscience. This means being realistic about the fact that there are some who do not believe it right for the church to be involved in the marriage of two people of the same sex. It also means being realistic about the fact that there are some who do believe it right for the church to be involved in the marriage of two people of the same sex. General Assembly wished to hold together with integrity and respect all people supporting the range of views.

7. A facilitation group that had listened carefully to the discussion at Assembly was asked to suggest a resolution to Assembly. The Assembly failed to reach full consensus (complete unanimity) on the suggested resolution. The resolution presented by the facilitation group was:

## The facilitation group's work

'General Assembly re-affirms that marriage is a gift and calling of God: that the abundance of God's love and grace is given to us as the template of human relationships. Whilst holding to its Commitment on Human Sexuality made in 2007, the United Reformed Church:

- Recognises the unique journey of salvation of each human soul through Christ
- Resolves out of love to support fellow disciples in their walk with Christ
- Understands and testifies to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit

General Assembly affirms the spiritual integrity, rooted in the discernment of the Word and will of God, both of those who prayerfully feel a calling to celebrate same-sex marriage as a Christian ordinance and of those who do not.

General Assembly gives permission to those who wish to uphold the traditional view of marriage to do so and also gives permission to Church Meetings and ministers who so decide to take the necessary steps to be able to solemnise and register marriages between same-sex couples and to instruct Trust bodies accordingly. It further invites the National Synod of Scotland to consider appropriate action for the Scottish context. Accepting our differences of conviction, General Assembly re-affirms the United Reformed Church's commitment to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'

8. This resolution failed to gain consensus (i.e. there was not unanimity total agreement).

9. Discussion continued, leading to a presentation made by the newly appointed general secretary (The Revd John Proctor) on a resolution prepared by the Assembly arrangements committee.

## Resolution presented to Assembly

‘A clear majority of members of Assembly expressed the view that local congregations should be permitted to offer same-sex marriage to those who seek that opportunity. However, because our decision-making process is based on the seeking of full consensus, Assembly was unable to reach agreement.

Assembly therefore resolves to pursue this discussion in the most constructive and consultative way that it can, as follows:

- 1) to invite synods and local congregations (a) to reflect on the report of the facilitation group, (b) to discuss whether they would wish a future meeting of the Assembly to authorise local church meetings to offer same-sex marriage services, and (c) to report their views to the general secretary by 31st March 2015.
- 2) to authorise the officers of Assembly to furnish these discussions with appropriate resources, including an offer of the support of facilitators.’

### Following many questions, the above was agreed by consensus.

10. Questions from the floor included 3 from folk from the Synod of Scotland (the response from the general secretary given below has been clarified with him):

- a) Does this resolution intentionally exclude Scotland? – response ‘no’, but ‘the resolution was drafted rather hurriedly and without anyone present who knew the Scottish situation well. Exclusion of Scotland was a matter of ignorance and haste rather than will and intent. The resolution implicitly took the view that the URC would try to act with a common approach, even though spanning two jurisdictions.’
- b) Is this truly a matter of doctrine, in light of the previous day’s reference to the Westminster Confession? – the response was this is to be further explored
- c) Is it possible to bless people who have entered a legal same-sex marriage? The response was implicitly ‘yes’. ‘There was nothing in the resolution that addresses that question. To infer the answer can be argued to be justifiable in terms of our present policy, but it wasn’t said explicitly.’

### **Soon after returning to Scotland the PPS task group met to consider the Assembly experience**

*(Within the Synod of Scotland our policy, planning and strategy committee (PPS) established a small group of people to listen to what happened at the General Assembly. It is this group that now reports to synod. This report has been through a number of drafts.)*

11. As seen above the Assembly resolution does not address the legal situation in Scotland. Church Meetings in Scotland do not need General Assembly permission to hold same-sex marriages because the church buildings are not required to be registered as places for the conduct of marriages (unlike England and Wales).

12. Parts 1a and 1c of the resolution presented to the 2014 Assembly, at paragraph 9(1) at foot of previous page, do relate to Scotland. Resolution 3 below seeks clarity on a number of matters.



13. In addition to the request to inform the general secretary by 31 March 2015, there is below a resolution asking that copies of those responses also be sent to the synod clerk so that the March synod meeting can have as full a picture as possible of the responses of our Church Meetings.

14. Discussion at the General Assembly included the question as to whether allowing same-sex marriage was altering the core doctrine or structure of the church. This question could be answered this autumn and there are voices for it to be answered sooner rather than later. It does need to be answered in order to know whether ministers are to freely conduct such marriages with impunity, rather than, potentially be subject to disciplinary action.

### **Additional information following Assembly:**

15. Since the meeting of General Assembly the general secretary met the synod moderators at their July meeting and the following should be noted:

- a) the booklet *One plus One* is to be reprinted with different format and guidance for use
- b) the booklet will be sent to synods and congregations with view to the spring synods responding to the general secretary
- c) two training days (13 and 20 September) have been identified for training facilitators (one in Manchester, the other in London) synod is invited to send participants.
- d) Any decision to recall Assembly would need to be taken by Mission Council or one of the Assembly moderators. (A date has been pencilled in for a possible recall of additional meeting of the General Assembly: 27 June 2015.)
- e) The Assembly's law and polity advisory group and faith and order committee have been asked to respond to questions raised at Assembly about whether solemnising same-sex marriages has implications for the structure or the doctrine of the church. At the time of writing it is not known when they will respond. The advice is necessary to clarify whether ministers and congregations are free to opt in to the enabling law.

#### *In addition*

- f) Synod officers and the college principal/training officer met with Scottish government civil servants on 5 August.
  - i) It was agreed that the former Congregational Union of Scotland (which no longer exists) should be removed from the list of prescribed bodies for opposite sex-marriages
  - ii) It was agreed to insert the Synod of Scotland of the United Reformed Church to the list of prescribed bodies for opposite sex-marriages. The synod clerk will write to this effect to meet the cut off date of 5 September 2014
  - iii) The meeting clarified the process whereby the Synod of Scotland could apply to be a nominating body for same-sex marriage and confirmed that the opportunity to do so is not time limited
  - iv) A number of detailed issues were clarified (a record of the meeting will become available).



## Resolutions for the Synod of Scotland 2014

At the time of writing the PPS task group offer the following resolutions to the synod meeting in September 2014. The words in italics are a brief introduction to each resolution.

*The synod's church and society committee has undertaken a considerable work load keeping the synod informed about the Scottish government's legislation to pave the way for same-sex marriage. The committee has shared their responses to the government fully with the synod in writing, presentation and workshops. This resolution says 'thank you'. Alan Paterson has also liaised with and at time attended the human sexuality task group of the General Assembly.*

- 1. The Synod of Scotland thanks the synod's church and society committee for its work and particularly for its detailed and prolonged involvement and consultation on the matter of same-sex marriage. (Agreed by consensus.)**

*Resolution 2 remembers our context within a denomination with a broad range of views on many issues and the work undertaken by the General Assembly human sexuality task group. The resolution affirms that we are committed to serve creatively together whilst often disagreeing. Some in the synod will not agree with same sex-marriage and some will.*

- 2. The Synod of Scotland is grateful for the careful and prayerful work of the General Assembly's human sexuality task group and is mindful of the fact that in this synod as in the denomination as a whole there is a range of views, theologies and responses to same sex marriage. The synod will uphold and respect the denominational covenant to live together, with differences of conviction as God enables. (Agreed by consensus.)**

BELOW, THE VERSION OF RESOLUTION 3 AS FINALLY RESOLVED.

*Resolution 3 asks questions that the task group identified as needing greater clarity following Assembly. Question a. focuses on the freedom of Church Meetings in Scotland (we can't speak for other synods) to decide on the use of their premises for marriages for same-sex couples conducted by ministers or others not belonging to the URC.*

*Question b. asks whether there is any denominational impediment to the synod being registered to nominate those (normally ministers) who indicate s/he senses a calling to be available to solemnise a same-sex marriage. (This resolution assumes that the nominating process would depend on the Synod of Scotland deciding that it wishes to be recognised by the Scottish government as a body that may nominate celebrants.) There is however the prior question of whether this would be in line with denominational polity. Specifically the resolution understands being able to move forward depends on issues of doctrine and structure about which there was no clarity at General Assembly.*

*The two parts should be taken separately.*

- 3. The National Synod of Scotland, given its particular legal position and responsibility to General Assembly, reminds Mission Council that, under Scots Law, buildings do not have to be registered for marriages and that marriages between same-sex couples may lawfully be solemnised on URC premises in Scotland, (albeit at present not by a URC minister, pending the ongoing deliberations about doctrine and constitution) by permission of Church Meeting. Similarly, under Scots Law, and under current United Reformed Church polity, there is no hindrance to the conduct of a service of blessing for married same-sex**

couples on any URC property, if the Church Meeting so decides.  
**The synod therefore requests General Assembly or Mission Council, should it meet sooner, to acknowledge that there is no impediment to same-sex marriages in Scotland being:**

- a. **solemnised on URC premises by a celebrant other than a URC minister/celebrant if so agreed by a Church Meeting;**
- b. **solemnised on by a URC minister/celebrant, subject to being legally nominated as a celebrant for (same-sex) marriage according to Scots Law.**

*Resolution 4 was Withdrawn.*

*Resolution 5 simply acknowledges additional preparation that celebrants will need to undertake as there are changes relating to opposite as well as the new option of same-sex marriage and to be aware of the difference of being a part of a prescribed body for opposite sex marriage and a nominating body for the marriage of same-sex couples in Scotland.*

5. **The Synod of Scotland thanks the Scottish College for preparing ministers of Word and sacraments and others (when applicable) based in Scotland for the conduct of new legislation on marriage in order to comply with the requirements of Scots Law and where relevant UK law. (Agreed by Consensus.)**

*Resolution 6 notes that the general secretary will be distributing material to enable congregations to discuss same-sex marriage. He needs to know how Church Meetings view the possibility of the denomination, through the General Assembly, making it possible for ministers to become celebrants of same-sex marriage. It would greatly help the work of C&S Committee and PPS to know the range of the views of Church Meetings in Scotland. The question is not whether a particular Church Meeting wishes to allow for same-sex marriage on their premises but whether Church Meetings object to any Church Meeting deciding to make its premises available for same-sex marriage.*

6. **The Synod of Scotland urges all Church Meetings to respond to the consultation being led by the general secretary following the 2014 General Assembly and to make use of the General Assembly trained facilitators and materials as they do so; and asks that all responses made to the General Secretary from within Scotland also be copied to the synod clerk. (Agreed by Consensus.)**

Resolution 7 simply recognises that worship material is available and will be needed

7. **The Synod of Scotland agrees to ask the church life committee to draw up a list of worship materials, available for marriages, including same sex-marriages from around the United Reformed Church and from sister denominations.**

*Resolution 8 recognises that the whole denomination is awaiting further clarity on as yet undefined matters concerning doctrine and church structure before further decisions can be taken. However in Scotland it is possible, if synod so wishes, for work to begin during this waiting time to make ready those who feel called to engage in facilitating same-sex marriage. The synod meeting has received the responses of our church and society committee to the consultation initiated by the Scottish government, and has engaged in prolonged conversation and study. It is possible to undertake preparatory work to a significant extent if the synod meeting so wishes even before the United Reformed Church's Mission Council or General Assembly has been able to give the assurances*

*requested in resolution 3. Some preparatory work can also be undertaken by Church Meetings wishing to consider offering their premises for the celebration of same-sex marriage. It must be understood that we (the synod meeting) cannot be certain when the necessary assurances will be made. However, we need to acknowledge that there are people (including members of our congregations) who are seeking such marriage in the context of the Christian faith.*

*Whilst the Synod of Scotland has from its inception resolved to become a prescribed body for solemnising opposite sex-marriages (which would mean that all ministers of the Word and sacraments would be authorised for as long as they are ministers of the United Reformed Church based in Scotland); the tenor of discussion about same-sex marriage (as indeed with the denomination's decision about blessing civil partnerships) is about permitting those so called without prescribing others not so called. The same approach to and principled respect of local churches and individual ministers' conscience should be upheld. The synod is asked to consider becoming a nominating body for same-sex marriages according to Scots law. (The pattern of nominating would be very similar to the present process in Scotland; namely the synod through (an officer of the synod) would nominate those eligible who wish to be nominated to conduct weddings at present.)*

- 8. The Synod of Scotland requests the synod officers to initiate procedures required for registering the Synod of Scotland of the United Reformed Church as a body authorised to nominate from amongst its ministers (and suitable lay people) after the appropriate preparation, to solemnise same sex marriage in Scotland according to Scots Law. (Agreed by Consensus.)**

Prepared by John Humphreys along with:

C&S Committee's David Coleman, Alan Paterson

PPS Task Group: Lorna Bowry, Morag McLintock, Helen Mee,

Synod officers: Patrick Smyth, Leslie Morrison

# Paper X4

Northern Synod

Tenure of synod moderator

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014

# Paper X4



## Northern Synod: Tenure of synod moderator

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Melanie Campbell, synod clerk Northern Synod <a href="mailto:Melanie.campbell@urc-northernsynod.org">Melanie.campbell@urc-northernsynod.org</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council resolves to extend the term of the Revd Lis Mullen as synod moderator for Northern Synod until July 2016.</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	The subject of this report is the proposal to extend the appointment of the moderator in Northern Synod until July 2016.
<b>Main points</b>	The proposal to extend the moderator's term of office is intended to offer Northern Synod the time to benefit from the Revd Lis Mullen's ministry, and also to fully prepare for calling a permanent moderator.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Mission Council advisory group (Paper U) March 2014
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Mission Council advisory group; The Revd Lis Mullen (who is willing to serve, if so approved); All churches in Northern Synod; Synod meeting, which strongly supports the proposal.

### Summary of Impact

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

# URC Northern Synod: Interim synod moderator

## Background paper to the resolution

### Introduction

1. The Revd Lis Mullen was appointed to be Interim Moderator for Northern Synod with effect from October 2013. In March 2014, Mission Council extended this arrangement until 31st July 2015 (Resolution 14/16 (3), Mission Council advisory group paper U).

The current situation:

2. The appointment of an interim moderator for Northern Synod was intended to provide some 'breathing space' after some difficult times. It was also to allow the opportunity to take account of discussions about future collaboration across the four northerly synods in England and the Synod of Scotland.

3. Whilst discussions across the northerly synods are continuing, there are no plans to amalgamate either synods or the moderator roles, and so Northern Synod will be seeking to find a moderator for the longer term.

4. There is much work taking place across Northern Synod under the leadership and guidance of the Revd Lis Mullen, which is effectively preparing and energising the synod as we look ahead to the future. It is important that synod has the opportunity to consolidate the benefits of Lis' ministry before completing the steps necessary to calling a new moderator. This all takes time, and for this reason, during the summer months, all churches across the synod were asked to consider the possibility of extending Lis' term of office with us, for a further year.

5. At October's synod meeting a discussion, led by an independent chair, the Revd Dr Jack Dyce, considered this suggestion. Synod unanimously supported the resolution to seek permission from Mission Council, to extend Lis' term of office until 31st July 2016, and to designate her as moderator for the remainder of her term.

6. The Revd Lis Mullen retires in July 2016 and Mission Council may wish to note that there will be no further requests to extend this post.

### Recommendation

a) Northern Synod requests Mission Council to extend the Revd Lis Mullen's term of office as Synod Moderator until 31st July 2016.





# Paper Y1

Moderator and clerk of North Western Synod  
General Assembly



# Paper Y1



## Moderator and clerk of North Western Synod: General Assembly

### Basic Information

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<b>Action required</b>	Mission Council asks the Assembly arrangements committee to consider aspects of the programme and accommodation of General Assembly and to consider changes.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p><b>Because much concern was expressed by representatives attending the 2014 General Assembly regarding three issues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <b>the amount of time that was spent at Assembly discussing detailed procedural matters, many of which should, and could, have been resolved before Assembly;</b></li> <li>b) <b>the pastoral and other issues arising from the way in which Assembly operated Consensus Decision Making and;</b></li> <li>c) <b>the dispersed accommodation meant a lack of informal opportunities for fellowship (and more work for the Synod in arranging this itself),</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Mission Council therefore asks the Assembly Arrangements Committee to consider:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <b>whether some procedural matters should be dealt with by Mission Council even during the year of a General Assembly, just because that is a better forum for that sort of technical discussion;</b></li> <li>b) <b>whether, in the absence of genuine consensus, the final stage of consensus decision making should always be a decision by majority voting – in order to provide clarity, to avoid the bullying of a minority, and to ensure that a decision is taken;</b></li> <li>c) <b>whether the Assembly arrangements committee should make a block booking for, at least, bed and breakfast for all those at General Assembly.</b></li> </ul>

<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	
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### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Aim is to ask AAC to review three aspects of GA this year which impacted, negatively, on how we operated.
<b>Main points</b>	AAC to consider: ensuring that many procedural matters are resolved by Mission Council rather than General Assembly; the pastoral issues arising from the way in which consensus decision making was used; the dispersed accommodation and its effect on both the lack of time for informal fellowship and the extra work involved for Synods.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	GA representatives of North Western Synod and officers of North Western Synod.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	We anticipate this being cost neutral.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None



# Paper Y2

Moderator and clerk of Southern Synod  
Reviewing financial priorities of  
education and learning

United Church 2014  
Church 2014  
Reformed Church 2014  
Church 2014



# Paper Y2

## Moderator and clerk of Southern Synod: Reviewing financial priorities of education and learning

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Nicola Furley-Smith <a href="mailto:moderator@urcsouthern.org.uk">moderator@urcsouthern.org.uk</a> Derrick Dzandu Hedidor <a href="mailto:synodclerk@urcsouthern.org.uk">synodclerk@urcsouthern.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Mission Council to review financial priorities for the denomination to enable education and learning to a) reinstate EM2 and EM3 grants to levels comparable with funding three years ago b) reinstate refresher courses and c) to find alternative funding source other than EM3 grants for mandatory training.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council asks the education and learning and finance committees to confer, and to bring forward recommendations about financial priorities for education and learning that will support the well-being and future vitality of the church's ministry.</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	For Mission Council to review its priorities for ministerial support and encouragement for the well being and future vitality of the church's ministry.
<b>Main points</b>	<p>The URC Southern Synod wishes to draw Mission Council's attention to the morale of its ministers which has been damaged by the combination of changes concerning training, specifically</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) the reduction of EM2 and EM3 funding by 50% acting as a significant discouragement to ministers accessing training courses, and</li> <li>b) the withdrawal of the Refresher Courses offered as a gift to its ministers</li> </ul> <p>We also believe that it is neither sensible, nor just, that mandatory training should be paid for out of the reduced EM3 funding available to its ministers.</p> <p>Reduced EM2 and EM3 funding leads to discouragement amongst ministers as training courses are now beyond financial reach of many; significant numbers of ministers are not undergoing any EM3 training; there is a financial impact on Synods to provide finance for mandatory training.</p>

<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The Synod Council of the Southern Synod.

Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	Increase in funding available for EM2 and EM3 ministers.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	









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