

# Paper H1

Ministries committee  
Deployment

United Reformed Church  
Church 2016  
2016  
Church 2016

# Paper H1

## Ministries committee Ministry issues

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Paul Whittle <a href="mailto:moderator@urceastern.org.uk">moderator@urceastern.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>To be formulated during group discussion</b>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To explore a range of questions of current concern with respect to different aspects of the ministry of the church and, in particular, the deployment of Ministers of Word and Sacraments
<b>Main points</b>	This paper explores a range of ministry issues, including call, models of ministry, the deployment formula, the use of the ministry budget, the value of the ministry and mission covenant and the place and development of local leadership
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Various reports to General Assembly, notably Patterns of Ministry (1991), Patterns of Ministry (1995), Future Patterns of Ministry (2002), Equipping the Saints (2004), Challenge to the Church (2008), Resourcing Ministry (2012), and Stipendiary minister numbers and deployment (2016)
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The synod moderators

### Summary of Impact

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

# Ministry Issues

1. Questions around ministry have rightly always been a large part of church life. Back in Acts 6 they solved what was probably the first ministry crisis by appointing *seven men among you who are known to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom and we will put them in charge of this matter*.
2. Unsurprisingly, the United Reformed Church has frequently found itself considering various aspects of how to do ministry in order to engage in effective mission. Patterns of Ministry (1991, 1995), Future Patterns of Ministry (2002), Equipping the Saints (2004), Challenge to the Church (2008) and Resourcing Ministry (2012) are probably the best known and most influential reports to General Assembly on these matters during the last 25 years.
3. As we address questions about ministers and ministry it is important to remember that the essential task of the church is what many are now calling missional discipleship. We need to play our part in that, as only then will we be responding to God's call to be people walking the way. We need to discover ways of being an authentic missional presence in order to be the church that God has called us to be, and that is being emphasised by many within our denomination. Church life is rightly varied, but mission is foundational, giving us a purpose as a church. One of the key questions we need to address, though recognising that it is not a new question, is that of what ministers are for. However, it is unlikely we will be able to answer that question without taking into account the prior question of what churches are for.
4. Whether it is justifiable to suggest that these issues have recently become more urgent is a moot point, but there seems to be a degree of angst that has thrust them into particular prominence and led to suggestions, probably not entirely new, that 'something needs to be done'.
5. This paper seeks to gather the main potential issues for that agenda in order that Mission Council might consider which need to be addressed by the denomination, and how this might be achieved. They are not presented in detail, nor does the order indicate any priority. Mission Council is invited to consider which of these issues are matters on which it can usefully comment, and what decisions might be needed in order to address the challenges of ministry in 2016 and beyond.
6. The paper poses seven key questions. The thinking that has led to this particular framing has emerged from a number of recent conversations, mostly between the synod moderators and the ministries committee, but particularly a consultation held on 7th and 8th September, involving the synod moderators, representatives of the ministry committee and a representative of one of the resource centres for learning. That consultation was facilitated by the General Secretary with some support from the convenor of the ministries committee. Further consideration took place at the meeting of the ministries committee on 15 September.
7. At the beginning of the consultation the General Secretary identified three initial questions, then a number of sub-themes, then ancillary issues. These formed the context for the discussion and led to the identifying of more specific questions, which are largely contained in this document. Those questions, sub-themes and ancillary issues were as follows.

8. The three initial questions were: (i) how does the Church want to use its ministers?, (ii) how can better ways for stipendiary ministers to work with others be identified?, and (iii) how does the Church prepare people for the ministry it needs?

9. The sub-themes were identified as: (i) Mission (What are churches for?); (ii) Role (What are ministers for?); (iii) Collaboration (How do ministers relate to other people?); (iv) Models (What models of ministry can be identified?); (v) Deployment (How can available ministers be divided among synods and assigned to different tasks?); (vi) Call (Does the way in which ministers are called need to be adapted?); (vii) Scoping (How do synods work things out on the ground?) and (viii) Working together (Which issues ought to be addressed by the URC centrally and which belong to synods?)

10. The ancillary issues were suggested to be: (i) Change management (How does the church embark on the path from here to there?); (ii) Training (How do we prepare people for the ministry that will be needed?); (iii) Ecumenism (In what ways will partner churches help the URC address these issues?); (iv) Global links (What can the URC learn from global partners?); (v) Teams (Does team ministry need to become more widely featured?) (vi) Transitional ministry (Does transitional ministry need to become more widely featured?) (vii) Circumstances (How great is the impact of particular circumstances for certain ministers and do we need to address any of those in particular ways?); (viii) Policies (What central policies are needed?)

11. These broad questions were used to set the context and to develop more specific themes, and the seven key questions (mentioned above in paragraph 6) which Mission Council is asked to consider.

12. **Question 1** concerns call. Do we want to rework our theology and practice of call? Clearly being called and the various parties who engage with that are a highly important part of our understanding of God's engagement with us. However, could it be that God is inviting us to do some parts of this differently? This matter is explored more fully in a separate paper.

13. **Question 2** concerns ways of ministering. Do we want to develop new models of ministry which will enable us to operate our stipendiary ministry differently, but without a sense that we are trying to do more than we can? How do we recognise and share the imaginative and exciting ways of ministry that are happening in some places? How do we manage decline in a missional way? We might broadly identify four ministerial tasks – worship, pastoral care, mission and teaching (enabling a learning community). How do we develop these helpfully? How do we provide for 'go to' ministers, people being able to find one when a minister is needed? How can we explore different models that fit today's URC? Do we need different models of ministry in different circumstances and, if so, how can we enable that?

14. **Question 3** concerns the deployment formula. Do we want to adjust the formula for assigning numbers of deployable ministers to Synods? The formula currently includes three elements – the number of members, the number of churches and the population. Ministries Committee recommended to Assembly 2016 that the formula be adjusted, removing the population element. However, Assembly decided that no changes should be made to the formula until Mission Council has done more work on deployment. Doubtless there are other factors but, in summary, there are two opposite perspectives, both missional. One view suggests that the population element is crucial as it is the only outward-looking and external element in the formula, while the alternative view suggests that our mission is where our members and churches are present. They do the mission, and it makes sense for them to inform the formula.

15. **Question 4** concerns the use of the budget that is there for ministry. Most of the budget of the URC, let alone that of the ministries committee, is currently spent on stipendiary Ministers of Word and Sacraments. Should that change? Might some of it be spent on other forms of ministry? At the moment giving is reducing slowly as the membership reduces. The number of ministers is also reducing. On our best current guess we are moving towards having a greater amount that could be spent on ministry than will be needed for funding the predicted numbers of Ministers of Word and Sacraments. How should that money be spent? Should some, or all, of it be spent on providing additional ministers through Certificates of Eligibility or of Limited Service? Should synods be able to offer some funding to support other forms of ministry and, if so, how should available resources be shared?
16. **Question 5** concerns local leadership. How do we achieve what we have previously said (e.g. in 'Equipping the Saints') about local leadership in every congregation? Are there things we can learn from others, especially global partners? At the moment there is no common policy on local leadership. Should there be?
17. **Question 6** concerns non-stipendiary ministry (NSM) and special category ministry (SCM). Do we need to make adjustments to NSM ministry? (NOTE: There is already a working party on NSM, and it may prove sensible to refer issues to that group.) In the current situation, can we afford an allocation to SCM? If so, what should be the level of such posts? Should we be ensuring that every minister has a 'special' element in their role?
18. **Question 7** concerns the ministry and mission (M & M) covenant. Does this need to change? Does it need to be explained in a better way? Does it need to be re-worked? Can we nurture the M & M Covenant, and the sense of purpose that needs to go with it? Or is it time to move on from this system?
19. This paper seeks to identify key priorities but, of course there will be other issues. Not least will be questions about the training that is needed for the kind of ministry we seek. In the light of changing patterns, what do we want to say to the Education and Learning Committee and the Resource Centres for Learning (and others) about training, EM1, EM2 and EM3 for ministers, and the whole range of lay training? But they need to be part of that conversation!
20. You will have noticed that this paper contains a lot of questions. That is deliberate. Would that we had all the answers already! Mission Council will be invited to help us in the search for the solution to some of these. This is where we are. What is God saying to us?

