



To: Members of Mission Council,  
staff in attendance and observers

April 2019

Dear Colleagues,

**Mission Council  
Monday to Wednesday 13 to 15 May 2019  
High Leigh, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire**

I look forward warmly to seeing you at Mission Council, and write now to mention several practical matters as we prepare for the meeting.

1. There will be an introduction session at 12 noon on the first day for new Mission Council members, to outline processes and procedures, introduce the Assembly officers, and explain some items of business. Old timers who would like to attend are welcome too. A full version of our rules for doing business is in the 'Standing Orders' (which are also used at General Assembly). These can be found on the URC website at <https://urc.org.uk/about-mission-council.html>
2. At General Assembly and Mission Council meetings we take certain business *En Bloc*. The fact that an item is listed as *En Bloc* does not make it less important than timetabled items. Rather, the *En Bloc* list contains those items where the Moderators think that decisions might be reached responsibly without further discussion. You will see that the agenda includes a slot when these items will be voted on.

I suggest you read the *En Bloc* papers first. This will give you time to contact the author of a paper if you have questions. Authors' names and email addresses are noted on the cover sheets. If you think any of these papers need discussion at Mission Council, particularly if you disagree with a proposed course of action, you may ask that a piece of business be removed from *En Bloc*. A sign-up sheet will be available at the meeting, where you can list the paper you wish to be withdrawn. If an item gets three signatures by close of business on the first day, it will be withdrawn from *En Bloc* and added to our agenda, with time given for discussion.

I need to remind you too that we really rely on every Mission Council member to read the papers and take note of information to relay back to their synods. In using the *En Bloc* method of decision-making there is no wish to bury information or to avoid discussions which Mission Council ought to have. We must all ensure the appropriate flow of information from Mission Council to the synods.

3. You should already have several papers from the first mailing: a cover letter, an expenses form, directions to our venue, a list of members, and (for new members) 'What we are about in Mission Council.' If any of these are missing, please contact Helen Munt at Church House, 020 7916 2020, [helen.munt@urc.org.uk](mailto:helen.munt@urc.org.uk)
4. Observers and URC staff who are not members of Mission Council should not participate in decision-making. Staff members are welcome to speak but, like observers, they should not use orange and blue cards.
5. I remind you that we are not expected to post on social media sites during business sessions. This restriction only applies when Council is in session; members may join in online debates during breaks,

about business that is completed (although not on business that has only been adjourned to a later session of the meeting). As ever, everything shared on these sites is the responsibility of the author and subject to the same defamation laws as any other written communication.

6. All bedrooms are en-suite. To comply with the venue's health and safety regulations, please do not bring food from outside into the Centre, nor take food from the dining room to your room.
7. Below are the papers expected at the meeting, listed according to the ways the Moderators presently mean to address them:

**Category A: En Bloc**

A1	Plans for Assembly 2020
B1	Children's and youth work update
G1	Financial outcome 2018
H1	Ministries update
I1	Mission update
I2	Mission: terms of reference for environmental task group
J1	List of nominations
L1	URC Trust: Church House
L2	URC Trust: risk register process
M1	Clerk: excerpt minutes of a constitutional review
O2	Human resources advisory group: Assembly-appointed posts at Church House

**Category B: two-thirds majority voting**

N2	Changes to General Assembly
----	-----------------------------

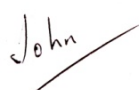
**Category C: consensus decision making**

D1	Education and learning: discipleship development strategy
D2	Education and learning: benchmarks for ministry
I3	Mission: carbon targets
J2	Supplementary nominations (this paper is coming late) *
M2 + M3	Messrs Estill, Uden and Yates: listening and strategy
N1	General Assembly task group: moderators, clerks and councils
O1	Human resources advisory group: recruitment for General Secretariat
R1 + R2	Safeguarding
T1	Ministerial disciplinary process
X1 + Z1	Investments and fossil fuels

8. One discussion – involving papers X1 and Z1 – is designated by the Moderators as urgent. This is because we ought to come to a clear mind on the best way we can respond to earth's changing climate. So if consensus eludes us, other options will be available.
9. A small number of papers, which are identified above\*, have to be prepared late, and will be available online a few days before the meeting – or, if you have requested hard copy, on arrival at the meeting.
10. As always, please come to share, listen, reflect and discern together, and to support each other in fellowship outside the formal timetable. Let us treat one another with grace as we seek the guidance of God.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,





**Mission Council  
13 to 15 May 2019**

**Groups**

*The first named person in each group is asked to act as group Leader and the second named person in each group as Reporter*

<p><b>A</b></p>	<p><b>Neil Messer</b> <b>Ruth Whitehead</b> Elaine Colechin Tony Haws Keir Hounsome Brian Jolly Sally Martin Sam Richards Vic Russell Peter Stevenson Kevin Watson</p> <p><i>Leader Reporter</i></p>	<p><b>B</b></p>	<p><b>David Grosch-Miller</b> <b>Nicola Furley-Smith</b> Steve Faber David Greatorex Bill Gould Rosie Martin Charles Mather AJ Mills Val Morrison Steve Summers Alan Yates</p> <p><i>Leader Reporter</i></p>
<p><b>C</b></p>	<p><b>David Herbert</b> <b>Marion Tugwood</b> James Breslin Sue Brown Andrew Evans Natalie Gibbs Andy Jackson Gwen Jennings Peter Pay Sandra Wallace</p> <p><i>Leader Reporter</i></p>	<p><b>D</b></p>	<p><b>Joan Grindrod-Helm</b> <b>Simon Walkling</b> Jane Baird Craig Bowman Rosie Buxton Ken Forbes Rita Griffiths Shirley Miller Bill Robson Alan Spence</p> <p><i>Leader Reporter</i></p>
<p><b>E</b></p>	<p><b>Marilyn Piper</b> <b>Philip Nevard</b> Ray Adams Adrian Bulley Richard Church David Coaker Clare Downing Mark Kirkbride Jenny Mills Andrew Prasad Pam Tolhurst</p> <p><i>Leader Reporter</i></p>	<p><b>F</b></p>	<p><b>Maria Mills</b> <b>Graham Hoslett</b> Francis Brien Simon Fairington Katie Henderson Fran Kissack Andrew Middleton Paul Rochester John Samson George Watt Paul Whittle</p> <p><i>Leader Reporter</i></p>
<p><b>G</b></p>	<p><b>Simeon Mitchell</b> <b>Helen Lidgett</b> Tina Ashitey Tim Crossley Jacky Embrey George Faris Ian Hardie Anne Lewitt Margaret Marshall David Pickering Phil Wall</p> <p><i>Leader Reporter</i></p>	<p><b>H</b></p>	<p><b>John Bradbury</b> <b>Ruth Dixon</b> Melanie Campbell Bernie Collins Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor Philip French Peter Meek Jim Merrilees Chris Parker John Piper Fiona Thomas</p> <p><i>Leader Reporter</i></p>

# Mission Council agenda

13 to 15 May 2019, High Leigh, Hoddesdon

Notes:

1. This running order can only be provisional. The Moderators will adjust it if items get dealt with more quickly, or take longer, than we initially expect.
2. Rooms for any group work in this agenda will be made known when you arrive.

<b>Monday 13 May</b>		
12:00 to 12:45	Introduction session for new MC members	
<b>12:00 to 12:45</b>	<b><i>Registration in the Main House reception area</i></b>	
<b>1:00</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	
<b>Session one</b> 2:00 to 3:30	Worship, including Bible study and Holy Communion Introductions and administration, including notice re elections to Mission Council Advisory Group Minutes and matters arising The future of General Assembly (introduction)	<b>N1</b>
<b>3:30</b>	<b>Tea break</b> <b><i>Access to rooms available</i></b>	
<b>Session two</b> 4.15 to 6.15	The future of General Assembly (groupwork) Then back into plenary at 5.00 for .... Recruitment of GS and DGS (D) Mission committee: carbon targets Feedback from Estill/Uden and Yates presentations	<b>N1</b>  <b>O1</b> <b>I3</b> <b>M2, M3</b>
<b>6:30 to 8:00</b>	<b>Dinner</b>	
<b>Session three</b> 8:00 8.30 9.00	Introduction to papers on fossil fuel investment Paul Rochester (guest speaker) Evening prayers	<b>X1, Z1</b>
<b>Tuesday 14 May</b>		
<b>8:15</b>	<b>Breakfast</b>	
<b>Session four</b> 9:15 to 11:00	Worship and Bible study Fossil fuels (continued from session three)	

<b>11:00</b>	<b>Coffee</b>		
--------------	---------------	--	--

<b>Session five</b> 11:30 to 1.00	Education and learning Introduction to safeguarding		<b>D1, D2 R1, R2</b>
<b>1:00 – 2:00</b>	<b>Lunch</b>		
<b>Session six</b> 2:00 to 4:00	Free time or remaindered business		
4.00	Tea available		
<b>Session seven</b> 4.30 to 6.30	En bloc items: <b>A1, B1, G1, H1, I1+2, J1, L1+2, M1, O2</b>  Nominations (supplementary)  Safeguarding (continued from session five)  Future of General Assembly (continued from earlier)		<b>J2   N1, N2</b>
<b>6:30 to 8:00</b>	<b>Dinner</b>		
<b>Session eight</b> 8:00 to 9:00	Revising the ministerial disciplinary process		<b>T1</b>
8.45	Friends on faith adventures: presentation on Pilots		
9.00	Evening prayers		

### **Wednesday 15 May**

<b>8:15</b>	<b>Breakfast</b>		
<b>Session nine</b> 9:30 to 11:00	Worship, including Bible study  Ministerial disc process (cont from session eight)  Ballot for elections to Mission Council Advisory Group		
<b>11:00 to 11:30</b>	<b>Coffee</b>		
<b>Session ten</b> 11:30 to 12:30	Thanks and greetings		
12:30 to 1:00	Meeting of committee convenors		
<b>1:00</b>	<b>Lunch and departures</b>		
2:00	Risk register training (for those who pre-booked)		

# Paper A1

## General Assembly 2020

### Assembly arrangements committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact</b>	The Revd James Breslin <a href="mailto:james_breslin2@outlook.com">james_breslin2@outlook.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Take note.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Arrangements for General Assembly 2020.
<b>Main points</b>	Plans are taking shape steadily and appropriately.
<b>Previous documents</b>	Paper A1 at Mission Council, November 2018.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Those groups represented on the committee – including children and youth, communications, equalities, West Midlands Synod.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	See paragraph four below.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Our Assembly does have a significant external impact; the choice of venue normally does not.

1. At Nottingham in July 2018, General Assembly approved a proposal that the next meeting of Assembly be at Aston University, Birmingham, from 10 to 13 July 2020.
2. In November 2018 Mission Council confirmed its commitment to that venue and those dates, even though it would only be possible for about half the members of Assembly to be accommodated on campus at Aston.
3. Over the last four months our discussions with Aston have proceeded steadily, and a detailed contract has now been signed. The meeting rooms, dining facilities and residential rooms on campus appear well suited to our needs. As indicated above, about half the Assembly will need to lodge off-site, but we now hope to book rooms for these people within half a mile or so of the campus, rather than three miles away as earlier suggested. As always, particular care has been given to considering those Assembly members who have special needs in regard to accommodation.
4. We are still getting a full grip on the budget, but do not expect a gross overspend.

5. Capable assistance is being given by Helen Munt in the General Secretary's office, and any questions about accommodation or facilities may be directed to Helen. Broader questions about our plans, or about the business and timetable of the Assembly meeting, should be directed to James Breslin or John Proctor.

# Paper B1

## Update May 2019

### Children's and youth work committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Jenny Mills (Convenor) <a href="mailto:revdjmill@btinternet.com">revdjmill@btinternet.com</a> Dr Sam Richards <a href="mailto:sam.richards@urc.org.uk">sam.richards@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To update Mission Council on the progress of the children's and youth work committee strategy in year one and report on Youth Assembly 2019.
<b>Main points</b>	
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	November 2018 Mission Council: B1 – Children's and youth work committee – executive summary of CYWC review report B2 – Children's and youth work committee – children's and youth work review report 2018 B3 – Children's and youth work committee – CYWC outline strategy.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Stephen Thornton John Samson URC communications URCGSF ROOTS Messy Church Greenbelt planning group.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	Funding will be sought from a variety of sources for Messy Church discipleship research.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Closer working relationships with ROOTS and Messy Church.



# Update May 2019

## 1. 2018 summary of activity

Our theme for 2018 was Pilgrimage, as children's and youth work explored how to enable all to engage in *Walking the Way*. Pilots worship materials were shared with all URC churches.

At Youth Assembly in January over 100 14-25s asked, 'Are we nearly there yet?'. Hannah Jones was inducted as Youth Moderator, Lawrence Moore was keynote speaker, and the Revd Stuart Radcliffe led worship as chaplain. The Youth Executive were elected and spent 2018 following up resolutions on Greenbelt, merchandise, lowering the age range, creating a handbook to enable synods to support their Youth Reps, and planning for the next Youth Assembly.

In the staff team, Lorraine Webb was appointed Programme Officer, and Steve Tait took on a new part-time post of Pilots Coordinator.

The V&N event was re-imagined as 'The Big Speak Out', a weekend for 43 11-18s focussing on finding their voice and included a presentation to General Assembly. 'What Do You Think?' prepared Synod Youth Reps for General Assembly, where children and youth work committee presented a resolution revisiting the Charter for Children in the Church and hosted a party.

Eight Greenbelt Youth Ambassadors were recruited to support the URC's presence at the festival and promote the event within the URC. A leaders' gathering for volunteer youth workers and Making Space conference for children's, families and youth workers provided support and training. Resources on South Korea were produced for Pilots. Throughout the year a thorough review of children's and youth work was conducted and the report received by Mission Council in November along with a five-year strategy.

The summary of statistics published in the 2019 *URC Yearbook* (from Church Returns forms as at 31 December 2017) showed that while the total average congregation including children had declined by over 5% from 53,379 to 50,587, the number of children worshipping at the main service had increased by over 4% from 14,188 to 14,789, in effect returning to the level of two years earlier. At the same time the number of children associated with the life of the church was maintained at 30,865 (previously 30,784). This implies that our churches, whilst declining over all, may be growing younger.

## 2. Update on General Assembly 2018

Resolution 22: General Assembly tasks the children and youth work committee to re-evaluate the Charter for Children and to bring a Charter to General Assembly 2020

for the URC to commit to, taking into account all that has been referred to in General Assembly 2018 and in the children and youth review and in the wider church.

Children's and youth work committee have set up a task group of CYWC members, URC Youth Executive Members and CYDOs to take this forward. Stephen Thornton has provided the history and context for the original Charter for Children in the Church.

### **3. Update on strategy and implementation of resolutions from Mission Council November 2018**

Mission Council resolutions B2 November 2018:

#### **1. Children's and youth work committee: review report.**

**Mission Council welcomes the 2018 review of children's and youth work in the URC and reaffirms its longstanding commitment to enabling and resourcing children and young people to play their part in the mission of God and its desire for this to be integral to the whole life of the United Reformed Church.**

Following the 2018 review the staffing structure was approved. The Programme Officer one-year post was made permanent, the Pilots Coordinator 0.4FTE post was extended for a second year, and the Administrative Assistant post was confirmed as permanent and a new appointment made. Children's and youth work ended 2018 approximately £20,000 under budget, largely due to staff vacancies.

Children's and youth work has been actively engaged in the development of *Walking the Way* and proactively integrating this into its work. For example the monthly web resources for 2018 followed Holy Habits, the One Body resource included *Walking the Way* ideas, and the new Pilots Programme includes *Walking the Way* challenges. We have been contributing to the development of *Stepwise* through the Learning Standards Board and the Writing Groups for the various streams.

#### **2. Children's and youth work committee: future strategy**

**Mission Council directs the children's and youth work committee to strengthen and support local congregations in their engagement with children and young people through the implementation of the proposed strategy.**

A booklet of resources on One Body (the children's and youth work theme for 2019) was produced to include all ages and types of work with children and young people, including Pilots, Messy Church, uniformed organisations, additional needs, and pre-school through to young adult in addition to all age worship materials. This has been sent to every church along with a companion issue of ROOTS, URC Youth Assembly Round Up 2019, a request for craft contributions for the URC Greenbelt presence and information on Crossfire Camp and the Big Speak Out 2019. Churches identified by their Church Returns as having no children and young people received a focused letter with simple suggestions for how they might engage prayerfully or more actively with supporting children and young people.

A two-year research project to discover 'how can we enable local churches to enhance Messy Church practice for discipleship development' is being developed. This will involve the CYDO+ team supporting local churches through appreciative inquiry and

action research to capture and disseminate innovation and effective practice. Funding for this will be sought from URC and wider sources. In addition, Messy Church training is being rolled out in many synods.

Children's and youth work committee has signed a sponsorship agreement to enable the URC Guide and Scout Fellowship to remain an Active Scout Support Unit within Scouting UK. A new logo for URC Children has been approved to complement URC Youth and grow a sense of identity. Communication is increasing with a bi-monthly e-newsletter, social media presence, and the sharing of good news stories from local congregations (collected through visits to them) along with reports from groups and individuals who have received grants or taken up opportunities through children's and youth work on our web pages.

Annual themes have been agreed for 2020 Common Ground, 2021 Heroes and Villains, 2022 Jubilee, and 2023 Love Is. We are consulting with other departments to see if Jubilee could be a shared theme for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the URC.

### **3. Children's and youth work committee: reshaping the 'CYDO Programme'**

**Mission Council encourages all synods to play an active part in developing, delivering and benefitting from Assembly-level resources, programmes and events in conjunction with the children's and youth work committee through a reimagined CYDO+ Programme.**

A joint meeting of CYDOs with other synod lead workers (together referred to as CYDO+ team) and their line-managers agreed a process for negotiating Assembly level work across the synods, which will take into account the variety of situations, expertise and priorities. This work includes attending conferences and training, developing resources, running events, and other projects identified by the group such as redesigning the Child Friendly Church Award process for the URC. Work is underway to support those synods without CYDOs to find their place within this new culture of team working.

### **4. Children's and youth work committee: future of Pilots**

**Mission Council authorises children's and youth work committee, with Pilots management committee, to develop a fresh expression of Pilots as part of the 'mixed economy' of United Reformed Church children's and youth work.**

Pilots Management Committee (PMC) has agreed a new strapline 'Friends On Faith Adventures' and this will be the name of the new programme being developed. Friends On Faith Adventures or FOFA is being trialled currently and will be launched officially in Autumn 2019 for new groups. The aim is to have 140 new groups in two years (10% of URC). Alongside this, existing Pilots Companies will continue to be resourced and supported, and with the option to use the new material. A short presentation on the new FOFA programme is available. FOFA is designed to work as either a stand alone programme or to complement other provision such as Messy Church, on a monthly, fortnightly or weekly basis.

PMC is reviewing its constitution and relationship to Children and Youth Work Committee to reflect the desire to be an integrated part of wider provision within the URC. PMC now incorporates the Pilots Publications Board and it endorsed decisions to include Pilots worship materials in a wider resource (as trialled this year with One Body), to move The Bridge newsletter to being more frequent and electronic, and to produce

Overseas Voyage materials and FOFA session materials in a loose-leaf format going forwards.

Regional Pilots Officers now receive summary PMC minutes, and will work with CYDO+ team to support existing Pilots Companies and promote FOFA to churches looking to start a new children's work group. PMC is still hoping to recruit a Pilots Advocate – a volunteer role to promote and support the whole Pilots community (to be appointed through nominations committee).

## 4. Youth Assembly 2019 report

**ONE BODY: we're all in this together** 18-20 January at Whitemoor Lakes, Staffs.

Youth Assembly was attended by 98 members of URC Youth from all 13 synods. The programme, planned by the Youth Exec, explored how, as one body in Christ, we all have a part to play in the environment, social justice and creating an inclusive church. Speakers from ARocha, JPIT and Beacon highlighted the challenges and how everyone can be part of the solution. Themes were then unpacked through a wide variety of workshops including craft, Bible study, drama, prayer, outside activities, and going deeper with the speaker. Small groups enabled everyone to make new friends whilst unpacking 1 Corinthians 12. A new feature was Messy Assembly, an hour of happy activity with provoking conversations. The whole event was wrapped in worship led by Chaplain Katie Gravenor, with music coordinated by Elinor Davies. Five Ecumenical Reps were welcomed, and all three RCLs were represented by students. The Late Night Communion led by Carole Marsden was a particular highlight.

Elections for keys roles were conducted, with Reuben Watt emerging as URC Youth Moderator Elect and AJ Mills as General Assembly and Mission Council Rep. There was a report from the first ever Equality and Diversity Rep, Katherine Buckland, who was elected to continue in post. This role now sits on the equalities committee, and is their representative on the children's and youth work committee. Youth Assembly had increased accessibility this year with the layout of the main hall enabling wheel chair access to all areas, the removal of the stage for speakers, optional pronoun stickers for participants to add to name badges and mental health first aid provision. Attention to the diversity of participants is now focussed on increasing levels of engagement, for instance facilitating BAME URC Youth to take up a variety of roles going forwards.

In response to a resolution from Youth Assembly 2018 to consider dropping the lower age boundary from 14 to 11, a Taster Day was held for young people aged 11-16 on Saturday alongside the main programme. Eleven young people enjoyed team building challenges, an introduction to URC Youth, joined Assembly for the afternoon keynote and workshops, learnt about consensus decision making and closed with a time of reflective prayer. In addition, a creche was provided throughout the event to enable parents of Youth Assembly age to participate in the event.

In her closing address as outgoing URC Youth Moderator, Hannah Jones reflected on her sense of call to the role: "It came in the form of URC General Assembly 2016. This assembly hit me as one of the biggest steps the church could have made in progression and inclusion – accepting same sex marriage. There, with those conversations going around I began to think about further inclusivity and diversity within the URC. With some conversations with my colleagues, there sparked the idea of creating the equality and

diversity representation role to bring about further change in inclusivity within the URC. Now being reaffirmed that it is an accepting church of who I am personally, I felt with many years of URC events worth of experience under my belt it was time to step up to the plate.” She concluded with this encouragement to all URC Youth: “Have a little faith, don’t be scared of a little failure, and go out and act, as you all have a part to play within the URC and within the worldwide church.”

Katie Henderson and Natalie Gibbs were inducted as new URC Youth Moderators on a job-share basis, along with the new Youth Exec, and have appointed Jenny Mills as their Chaplain. Two synods (Scotland and West Midlands) have taken the novel step of appointing a small group of young people to share the role of Synod Rep as they work towards finding representation for the future. Wessex Synod, unable to appoint from within the synod, was delighted to have Jessica England (from Thames North, but studying in Wessex) elected as Synod Rep. Southern and South Western remain without representation.

“This was a fantastic weekend to kick off our year as Moderators. We are looking forward to pursuing the resolutions agreed; following up the General Assembly resolution to review the Charter for Children in the Church; working to extend and widen the reach of URC Youth; and making URC Youth even more inclusive. It is going to be a challenging and exciting year!” Katie Henderson and Natalie Gibbs, URC Youth Moderators 2019.

As we said farewell to those attending for the last time, concern was expressed about what comes next for those who move on from YA. The CYWC want to follow this up and engage in conversations with those who have previously raised this concern.

Resolution one

**URC Youth Assembly accepts the changes proposed to the Standing Orders. To be brought into effect from Youth Assembly 2020.**

Proposed Dan Morrell (Immediate Past Mod); seconded A J Mills (East Midlands)

If the amendment is not accepted by the proposer and seconder of the motion, following a discussion, the amendment is then put to a simple majority vote. The Resolution was passed with consensus.

Resolution two

**Recognising the importance of the voices of children and young people within local church contexts, URC Youth Assembly seeks to actively encourage local churches to provide the means for young people to have a meaningful voice at Elders meetings, or equivalent.**

**URC Youth Assembly challenges all URC local congregations to affirm their commitment to young people as present and future members of the church by creating a space within their respective structures for representation by children and young people with appropriate support.**

Prop: Reuben Watt (Southern); sec: Helen Glasse (Eastern). Passed by consensus.

Resolution three

**Acting for mental health and against loneliness in young people.**

**URC Youth Assembly tasks Youth Executive to form a task group, to explore successful youth projects across the UK, with the objective to bring a proposal**

**for a national youth strategy that can be delivered locally across URC churches and reach as many lonely young people as possible to Youth Assembly 2020.**

Prop: Jo Harris (Wales); sec: Victoria Turner (Wales). Motion passed by agreement.

Resolution four

**Youth Assembly, recognising internet access in social locations is now a cultural norm, instructs Youth Executive to request that General Assembly explores ways to assist churches in facilitating wifi access throughout their buildings, including with the legal challenges and obligations. This facilitation could take the form of Synod level training, online guidance forms or similar at the discretion of General Assembly.**

Prop: Joshua Undy-Jamison (Scot); sec: Dan Morrell (Yorks). Passed by consensus.

# Paper D1

## The discipleship development fund

### Education and learning committee

Proposal to establish a discipleship development fund managed by the resource sharing task group

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Professor Neil Messer <a href="mailto:neil.messer@winchester.ac.uk">neil.messer@winchester.ac.uk</a> The Revd Fiona Thomas <a href="mailto:fiona.thomas@urc.org.uk">fiona.thomas@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council resolves:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>To accept the principles and processes for a discipleship development fund put forward in this paper by the education and learning committee, in alignment with the strategy accepted by Mission Council in March 2018</b></li><li><b>To operate the discipleship development fund through the existing inter-synod resource sharing mechanism</b></li><li><b>To allocate £100,000 to the first year of operation of the fund (June 2019 to May 2020), to be disbursed according to the policy laid out in appendix A of this paper as an initial step</b></li><li><b>To appoint the resource sharing task group (RSTG) to design the permanent DDF processes, in consultation with the finance and education and learning committees, and present this to Mission Council for approval no later than March 2020.</b></li></ol>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	The paper focuses on supporting the development of disciples, in tune with <i>Walking the Way. Living the life of Jesus today</i> . It aims to start using the proceeds from the sale of the Windermere Centre building.
<b>Main points</b>	The advice from discussion groups at Mission Council in November 2018 was that vision should lead resourcing, and that resourcing should be directed to where it has best effect. This paper proposes both a relatively modest, practical way to get started, and the use of an established mechanism to develop a bolder use of funds in due course.

<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper D1 Mission Council November 2018 and Paper D2 Mission Council March 2018.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Officers of the resource sharing task group and the finance committee.

## Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	The proposed fund of £100,000 in the first year draws on funds designated for this purpose in the education and learning committee budget; the investment income from the capital from the sale of the Windermere Centre building; and 5% of the capital from the sale of the Windermere Centre building. It would augment budgets already set aside by synods for discipleship development.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	No direct impact, although there may be ecumenical projects which could benefit from the involvement of individuals supported by the fund.

## The discipleship development fund (DDF)

### 1. Introduction

1. This paper follows on from paper D1 presented by the education and learning committee (E&LC) to Mission Council in the November 2018 meeting which reminded Mission Council of the discipleship development strategy (DDS) and the agreements made in Mission Council in March 2018:  
[https://urc.org.uk/images/MissionCouncil/March\\_2018/D2.pdf](https://urc.org.uk/images/MissionCouncil/March_2018/D2.pdf)
- 1.1 During the November 2018 meeting of Mission Council, discussion groups were asked to comment on how the funds from the sale of the Windermere Centre might be used. Three options were given: income, some capital and income, or all of the capital. The feedback from the discussion groups is summarised in appendix B. Although not providing definitive answers they generally agreed that action flows from vision. The responses have encouraged the E&LC, with the help of others, to formulate the following proposals for the discipleship development fund (DDF), which if they are approved in principle by Mission Council will be worked out in more detail in ways explained in this paper.



1.2 The DDF proposals are covered under the following sections:

- Alignment with the DDS
- Principles of the DDF
- Processes
- Next steps.

## 2. Alignment with the DDS

2.1 The DDF is clearly part of the means by which the DDS seeks to help individuals, congregations, and the Councils of the church to 'Walk the Way' and 'Live the life of Jesus today'. The fund is in tune with the values embodied in the strategy: inclusion, equity, generosity, and hope. While the mapping of existing resources available through synods and other committees is yet to be completed, this process is likely to be aided by working together on the first year's implementation of the DDF.

## 3. Principles of the DDF

3.1 **Equitable.** All lay<sup>1</sup> people will have access to the fund in ways that take their needs seriously, within the context and aims of the DDS.

3.2 **Enduring.** The fund will be needed for the foreseeable future. Although seeded by the proceeds from the sale of the Windermere Centre, the fund will require further resources in the future.

3.3 **Driven by the DDS.** The purpose of the DDF is to support the implementation of the DDS by giving lay people access to financial resources to support their development, in line with the DDS. It is anticipated that the DDS will need to be updated from time to time, which may then have implications for the use of the fund.

3.4 **Steered by DDF policy.** The education and learning committee is responsible for producing the policy steering the use of the fund. Mission Council is responsible for amending and approving the policy. The current draft of the policy is given as appendix A.

3.5 **Operated by synods.** The total amount available each year from the DDF will be allocated to the synods by the resource sharing task group (RSTG) in consultation with the synods through the inter synod resource sharing (ISRS) mechanism. Each synod will then be responsible for issuing grants to its own people in line with the approved policy. This is to ensure that those taking decisions about grants are as close as possible to those applying for them. Each synod will report back annually to the RSTG on its use of the fund, and the RSTG

---

<sup>1</sup> Lay refers to all who are in good standing with their local church who are not ordained as ministers of word and sacrament, nor commissioned as CRCWs or Assembly-accredited lay preachers (as these groups already have access to separate funding). This embraces elders, church members and adherents of all ages including children and young people. It is for the local church meeting to define who they would consider to be eligible for support.

will provide a report to the education and learning committee, in a format to be agreed by the education and learning committee. The RSTG will also negotiate annually with the synods, through the ISRS mechanism, on the need for further funding.

## 4. Processes

4.1 **There are three processes needed to operate the DDF.** These are income, budgeting, and grants. Although described below, these are yet to be designed in detail. A recommendation covering their design is included below.

4.2 **DDF income.** The fund will be seeded initially by the Windermere building proceeds. Once these are exhausted the fund will be topped up by the synods using a process similar to that used by the ISRS mechanism for the Church Building Fund.

4.3 **Synod DDF budgets.** It is anticipated that each synod will be allocated an annual budget for their part of the DDF to be spent in that year. This will be above and beyond the amount which they are already setting aside for the support of lay people from their own funds. Should a synod wish to exceed their DDF budget there needs to be a process through which their budget can be increased by the resource sharing task group (RSTG) if appropriate. Synods which are currently less able to set aside funds of their own will be given preferential access to the DDF.

4.4 **DDF grants.** Synods will make grants to suitable candidates in accord with the DDF Policy. Once a year, synods will provide the RSTG with a summary of the grants they have made (by category, not recipient's name) and assess the impact of the awards they have made, with a view to informing policy amendments if needed. The RSTG will subsequently provide an annual DDF grant report to education and learning. There will be a simple standard application form designed by the education and learning committee for use by synods.

## 5. Next steps

5.1 **Design of funding approach.** There is a need to design carefully the complete funding approach, which will take time, and is unlikely to be completed in 2019. There is also a desire on the part of Mission Council to start using the fund as soon as possible. To enable these incompatible needs to be satisfied, a temporary solution is recommended.

5.2 **Temporary solution.** The temporary solution is intended to cover the period from June 2019 to May 2020. This will enable permanent proposals to be agreed in the Mission Council in March 2020 and implemented by June 2020. For the temporary solution there would be a total budget for the DDF equal to 5% of the capital, plus the expected income from the capital during that time (about 4%),

plus the £20,000 already allocated from the education and learning budget for 2019. In round figures this will be about £100,000. This budget will be allocated to the synods by the RSTG at its meeting in May 2019, based on its understanding of the financial strengths of the synods, with a view to the financial resources being available to the synods from June 2019. This will give them time to estimate their needs beyond what they are already allocating to funds for individual lay development.

- 5.3 **Permanent solution.** Mission Council is invited to appoint the resource sharing task group (RSTG) to design the permanent DDF processes, in consultation with the finance committee and the education and learning committee, this design to be presented to Mission Council for approval no later than March 2020. The RSTG is already used to working out the equitable use of resources among synods, and their task would be to design the processes to allow for more substantial uses of the funds in tune with some of the ideas suggested in the feedback given in appendix B.

# Appendix A – Policy for the discipleship development fund

(draft dated 16.3.19)

(This is for the period June 2019 to May 2020)

**1. Who is eligible to claim this support?**

Applicants will be committed member or adherents, including young people, of a congregation within the United Reformed Church who are exercising, or want to exercise, a form of lay ministry which is endorsed by their church meeting and their synod. This is intended to be permissive rather than restrictive, and so it could be ministry exercised locally (e.g. eldership or children's work etc.) for a particular pastorate, or regionally. It could also be used to enable someone to develop their discipleship in their life beyond the church. The DDF is not open to Ministers of Word and Sacraments, CRCWs, or Assembly accredited lay preachers as there are other designated funds available for those groups.

**2. What is provided?**

What is needed – although this would normally be restricted to £200 per calendar year per application. It will be for the applicant's synod to decide whether or not to offer a higher level of funding from the DDF.

**3. What can this money be used for?**

The DDF is intended to contribute to the development of lay people and therefore the purposes for which it can be used are as broad as the purposes generated by creativity and vocation, in line with the URC's discipleship development strategy (DDS). The eligible learning activities would include, without being restricted to:

- Courses (at any level) at any of the United Reformed Church Resource Centres for Learning
- Courses and learning events through other learning providers
- Books and resources related to a particular topic
- Attendance at synod learning events
- Travel costs for attending learning events

**4. What criteria should each request fulfil?**

The support requested must be used for enabling the individual's learning for discipleship, so the applicant making the request should be able to say what they expect to learn and how they will use this learning in their area of service for God. This can be within the church, the community or an institution in which they are serving. The application will need to define how and when the outcomes will be assessed.

**5. Are there any restrictions?**

All eligible lay people will have access to the funds, although priority will be given to those who:

- a. cannot get sufficient funding from any other source, e.g. from their church, synod, employment, and their own funds
- b. would not be able to make use of the development opportunity without a grant.

**6. How are applications made?**

Applications are to be made to the synod using a standard form designed by the URC's education and learning committee. Applications should be made well before the beginning of the course or learning event. Retrospective applications will not necessarily be met. Application forms will be obtainable through the synod office and should be sent for authorisation to the designated synod officer. The synod office will be able to advise on who this is, although it should normally be made clear on the application form.

**7. How are grants paid?**

Grants authorised by the designated synod officer are usually paid by the synod by reimbursement to the recipient upon presentation of proof of payment relating to expenditure made. Where necessary the synod can pay the training provider directly.

## Appendix B

### Summary of the outcomes from group discussions at Mission Council November 2018

#### 1. Background

Eight groups met and were asked to discuss Paper D1, which offered three main options for using the proceeds from the sale of the Windermere Centre (£850k) within the context of *Walking the Way. Living the life of Jesus today*. The options given were:

1. Using interest only
2. Using interest and some of the capital
3. Using all the capital

For the full paper see:

[www.urc.org.uk/images/MissionCouncil/Nov2018/D1\\_\\_Education\\_and\\_learning\\_committee\\_\\_Honouring\\_the\\_Windermere\\_Centres\\_legacy\\_through\\_the\\_discipleship\\_development\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.urc.org.uk/images/MissionCouncil/Nov2018/D1__Education_and_learning_committee__Honouring_the_Windermere_Centres_legacy_through_the_discipleship_development_strategy.pdf)

There were four questions in the paper for discussion, and pairs of groups were asked to start with specific questions.

#### 2. Outcomes

##### 2.1.1 Overall messages from the groups

- Vision should come first, and that then determines the spending
- This should be part of a long-term strategy, in the current situation
- Identify connections, resources, gaps and needs at the outset
- Develop discipleship to change the culture of the church
- Develop people rather than buildings
- Focus on the local and nourish the roots
- The legacy of the Windermere Centre is about lay development and taking risk, so be bold

##### 2.2 Considering the options

*Two groups (A, B) favoured option one. They and other groups said about this option:*

- a. It would allow for capital spending in the longer term, as churches would take time to get used to using a fund
- b. Link it with inter-synod resource sharing so that it makes a difference
- c. It could be used for training within churches on facilitation skills, discipling, and online learning

*Three groups (D, E, H) favoured option two. They and other groups said about this option:*

- d. Set up a fund to which synods and committee could apply
- e. Know the need first by connecting with what's already going on in synods
- f. Empower locally, resource nationally – without being staffed from the centre
- g. Give funding to synods to use for lay development
- h. There may be a need to build capacity for managing a bidding system
- i. Support intentional communities – take risks and be kingdom-focused

*Three groups (C, F, G) favoured option three. They and other groups said about this option:*

- j. Use it all over a given timeframe in order to turn round something specific and targeted
- k. Support intentional communities
- l. Support fresh expressions/mission-shaped ministry by restoring the full-time coordinator's post
- m. Take risks, be bold, and do something new
- n. Give start-up funding for new initiatives in targeted areas
- o. Communication is vital to ensure that people access the funding
- p. Invest in one or two small Windermere-style properties to be community houses, for intentional community along the lines of the Mission House in Amsterdam.

### **3. Conclusions**

- i. There's a desire to do something new, but not yet consensus over what that should be, other than attraction to the idea of supporting intentional communities and local development of people for building up the kingdom.
- ii. *Walking the Way* as a guiding vision has not yet "landed" with people consistently.
- iii. The education and learning committee's work on the discipleship development strategy is going in the direction that people are asking for.
- iv. The "joining the dots" task of producing an accurate picture of the resources being set aside by synods, Assembly committees and RCLs is increasingly urgent. When the URC knows what and where it's currently investing in the whole people of God it will then be in a better position to identify the areas of need and growth.
- v. Option one would offer a positive way forward for the time being, and leave options two and three open for the future. Making the interest available as a discipleship development fund would assist interaction with synods, while further work is done on coming to a common vision for discipleship development.

*Secretary for Education and Learning  
Summarised 18.12.1*

# Paper D2

## Marks of ministry

### Education and learning committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Professor Neil Messer, Convenor <a href="mailto:neil.messer@winchester.ac.uk">neil.messer@winchester.ac.uk</a> The Revd Fiona Thomas, Secretary <a href="mailto:fiona.thomas@urc.org.uk">fiona.thomas@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Mission Council adopts this paper as the United Reformed Church's description of the marks of the Ministry of Word and Sacraments and in so doing replaces the 'Seven fundamental characteristics of ministry' adopted by General Assembly in 1982.</b></li><li><b>Mission Council encourages the ministries and education and learning committees, Resource Centres for Learning, and relevant committees in all the synods to use this paper as the basis for consistency in expectations and reporting in relation to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments.</b></li></ol>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	<p>The paper addresses what the Church expects of people exercising the Ministry of Word and Sacraments in contemporary times. The aim is to have a shared understanding which can be used across the Church, particularly in Education for Ministry Phases one, two and three as well as potentially in ministerial accompanied self-appraisal.</p> <p>Since 1982 much work has been done in relation to the parallel description of marks of ministry for Church Related Community Workers. Therefore this document refers only to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments.</p>
<b>Main points</b>	<p>The paper offers a concise and comprehensive description of what the Church can reasonably expect of people who are called to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments. What this looks like in each minister will vary depending on the context, the individual, and the specific ministry to which they are called.</p>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	<p>2016 General Assembly resolution 13 on 'Twenty first century expectations for ministry'; 2003 recommendations on CRCW core competencies accepted by the URC training committee;</p>



	1993 benchmarks for assessing the readiness for ministry of students by the URC training committee; 1982 General Assembly document 'Seven fundamental qualifications for ministry (manual section K2).'
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Ministries committee, Synod Moderators' meeting, Resource Centres for Learning.

### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	Not applicable.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Not directly applicable, although there are similarities between the way in which the URC and its closest ecumenical partners view the Ministry of Word and Sacraments.

## Marks of United Reformed Church Ministry of Word and Sacraments

**A Minister of Word and Sacraments in the United Reformed Church (URC) should be:**

- **A faithful disciple of Jesus Christ:** caught up in the joy and wonder of God's will and work; seeking always to live a holy life in public and in private; sustained by their own rhythm of prayer, Bible reading and worship so that they might model and encourage such life-long patterns in others with integrity; open to learning discipleship from others.
- **A person of integrity and resilience:** self-aware and committed to their own lifelong learning (especially through the URC's provision for ministers); aware of their own limitations and thus willing to seek support; ready to deal with situations of conflict; balancing ministry's joys and pains with the fostering of right relationships with family and friends.
- **A contextual theologian:** delighting in Scripture, rooted in the Reformed tradition, able to communicate their own faith and its implications within and beyond congregations; encouraging others to discover how these rich resources inspire and sustain faithfulness.
- **A worship leader and preacher:** able to craft and lead worship that shows appreciation for the Sacraments and the resources of many traditions and styles yet unafraid to create and advocate new forms as appropriate; passionate and effective in breaking open God's Word in preaching; ready and able to foster skills, techniques and experience in others so that they might lead worship and preach well.
- **A pastor:** sharing with others, especially Elders, in sustaining care; making time to walk in love alongside people; rejoicing and grieving with others through listening deeply and offering prayerful support; wise in knowing their limits and boundaries when more specialised help is needed; reliably dealing with issues of safeguarding and confidentiality.

- **A leader and collaborator:** identifying, developing, and enabling leadership in others, particularly Elders; capable of working in, and leading, teams through collaborative and shared leadership; aware of their own leadership style and open to learning with and from others, when necessary acknowledging their own mistakes and seeking restoration; committed and equipped to building up others in faith and witness so that the gifts and callings of all might flourish; demonstrating love for God's people.
- **A missionary and evangelist:** passionate about and active in sharing the love of God for the world; alive to the significance of contexts and cultures in shaping mission and creative in discovering missional opportunities; empowering and equipping God's people in mission to share the Gospel and live God's Kingdom of justice and peace to the full.
- **A public figure:** reliable and effective in representing the Church in ecumenical, community and wider settings; committed to and equipped in speaking truth to power and challenging injustice and marginalisation wherever they may be found.
- **A communicator:** who uses written, spoken and other modes with clarity and grace to share faith and build up relationships and communities; helping others to find their voice.
- **A committed participant in the councils of the Church:** responsive to God's call as gift and blessing to be lived out within the discipline and accountability of the denomination which trains, ordains and inducts them and the pastorates and ministries within which they serve.
- **A reformer:** wise in the dynamics and challenges of change; bold yet humble in helping individuals and congregations to discern and respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit as new chapters open in the life of the Church and others close.

# Paper G1

## Financial outcome 2018

### Finance committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Ian Hardie <a href="mailto:ianzhardie@googlemail.com">ianzhardie@googlemail.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	For information.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To report the financial outcome relative to budget for 2018.
<b>Main points</b>	
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Budget paper G1 at November 2017 Mission Council.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	Reserves at the start of 2019 are substantially greater than expected.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	

### Introduction

1. The draft formal 'Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for 2018' are to be considered at the United Reformed Church ('URC') Trust board meeting on 21 May 2019. Provided the trustees are content with the draft and agree to the documents being signed off, all of the material will be made available on the URC website shortly thereafter. Anyone who requires a hard copy should contact the finance department at Church House to request it.
2. As well as presenting information about the finances of Westminster College, the URC Ministers Pension Trust and the URC Retired Ministers' Housing Society, the audited Financial Statements report on all aspects of the finances of the URC Trust. These go wider than the ministry and mission ('M&M') Fund, although the income and expenditure on this fund represents (virtually) all the ordinary activities of the central URC.

3. Accordingly, the attached table summarises the outturn against budget for items covered by the M&M Fund budget approved by Mission Council in November 2017.

## Income

4. M&M giving was higher than budgeted, showing a welcome reduction in the rate of decline of such giving in recent years.
5. Although the summary results show no additional funding for pensions in the year, that is because the £389,407 actually given by synods was paid directly into the URC Ministers' Pension Fund as additional contributions. We warmly thank those synods which provided this additional pension funding support.
6. Overall, M&M Fund income was £90k above budget.

## Expenditure

7. Because the URC issued fewer Certificates of Eligibility than had been anticipated and also because the number of active URC ministers proved to be lower than expected (mainly due to retirements), the cost of local and special ministries and CRCWs was almost £0.5 million below budget (equivalent to around 17 ministers).
8. 2018 turned out to be a year of protracted vacancies and delayed appointments elsewhere, notably in the education and learning, children's and youth, mission and communications departments.
9. The level of depreciation of the costs of refurbishing Church House was more than originally anticipated – because of a different view taken by our new auditor. The level of irrecoverable VAT was around £30k below budget.
10. As a result, overall expenditure was £766k below budget.

## Overall position

11. A budgeted 'break even' position turned into a substantial financial surplus of almost £856k in the year. Much of this was attributable to the vacancies carried by a number of departments for considerable parts of the year and to the reduction in numbers of active ministers being much greater than expected. Finance committee simply observes that, although we often hear the URC cannot afford more ministers, the reality over the past few years is that we could have afforded more ministers if they had been available. The number of students accepted for ministerial training in the URC has never been constrained by financial considerations.

12. The boost to our reserves as a result of the 2018 outcome is timely, since we expect that the URC family will have to consider action to provide further substantial support to the pension funds for both lay staff and ministers in the relatively near future.

**THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH**  
**Ministry & Mission Fund<sup>1</sup>**  
**Income and Expenditure account to Dec 2018**

	2017	2018			2019
	Actual	Actual	Budget	Variance	Budget
	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Income</b>					
<b>Ministry and Mission contributions</b>	<b>(19,104,058)</b>	<b>(19,016,107)</b>	<b>(18,962,000)</b>	<b>54,107</b>	<b>(18,651,000)</b>
<b>Pensions - additional funding<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>(100,349)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(50,000)</b>	<b>(50,000)</b>	<b>(200,000)</b>
<b>Investment and other income</b>					
Dividends	(893,566)	(920,122)	(854,000)	66,122	(895,000)
Donations	(3,272)	(6,595)	0	6,595	0
Specific legacies	(3,929)	(431)	0	431	0
Grants/Income - Memorial Hall Trust/Fund	(268,622)	(286,945)	(260,000)	26,945	(260,000)
Net other interest & bank charges	(12,450)	(7,291)	(10,700)	(3,409)	(6,000)
Other income, including property rentals	(57,025)	(126,368)	(137,000)	(10,632)	(139,000)
	<b>(1,238,865)</b>	<b>(1,347,752)</b>	<b>(1,261,700)</b>	<b>86,052</b>	<b>(1,300,000)</b>
<b>Total income</b>	<b>(20,443,272)</b>	<b>(20,363,859)</b>	<b>(20,273,700)</b>	<b>90,159</b>	<b>(20,151,000)</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>					
<b>Discipleship Dept.</b>					
<b>Ministry</b>					
Local and special ministries and CRCWs	13,724,030	13,495,559	13,992,727	497,168	13,755,700
Synod Moderators - stipends and expenses	646,923	669,632	690,000	20,368	718,000
Ministries department	312,124	335,911	314,300	(21,611)	323,200
Pastoral & welfare	1,230	846	2,000	1,154	2,000
	<b>14,684,306</b>	<b>14,501,948</b>	<b>14,999,027</b>	<b>497,079</b>	<b>14,798,900</b>
<b>Education &amp; Learning</b>					
Initial training for ministry	755,702	599,467	673,000	73,533	710,500
Continuing training for ministry	62,505	75,474	107,500	32,026	106,000
Resource Centres support	593,718	614,948	611,000	(3,948)	619,000
	<b>1,411,926</b>	<b>1,289,889</b>	<b>1,391,500</b>	<b>101,611</b>	<b>1,435,500</b>
Windermere RCL - net support	99,279	0	0	0	0
TLS/Stepwise	89,460	107,189	159,350	52,161	113,000
Lay preachers support	4,574	4,650	7,000	2,350	7,000
On-line learning	1,005	52,859	57,600	4,741	61,000
Lay Development Fund	0	1,443	20,000	18,557	20,000
Education & Learning department	167,290	181,740	175,700	(6,040)	170,000
	<b>1,773,535</b>	<b>1,637,770</b>	<b>1,811,150</b>	<b>173,380</b>	<b>1,806,500</b>
<b>Children's and Youth Work</b>					
Staff costs	164,842	193,487	203,500	10,013	214,000
Management, resources and programmes	69,102	69,768	81,700	11,932	80,200
	<b>233,944</b>	<b>263,255</b>	<b>285,200</b>	<b>21,945</b>	<b>294,200</b>
<b>Safeguarding</b>					
Safeguarding policy and practice	90,500	148,525	95,700	(52,825)	104,000
<b>Discipleship Secretariat</b>					
Deputy General Secretary - Discipleship costs	53,182	67,052	51,000	(16,052)	80,000
<b>Mission Dept.</b>					
Mission dept staff and core costs	426,952	448,781	524,200	75,419	530,500
Mission programmes and memberships (net)	157,375	164,292	198,500	34,208	220,000
	<b>584,327</b>	<b>613,073</b>	<b>722,700</b>	<b>109,627</b>	<b>750,500</b>
National Ecumenical Officers	29,389	20,335	35,800	15,465	36,500
	<b>613,715</b>	<b>633,408</b>	<b>758,500</b>	<b>125,092</b>	<b>787,000</b>
<b>Administration &amp; Resources Dept.</b>					
Central Secretariat	232,996	241,695	237,200	(4,495)	283,000
Facilities	264,946	438,811	417,400	(21,411)	348,000
Human Resources	80,093	80,503	79,500	(1,003)	82,500
IT Services	193,917	201,949	217,000	15,051	226,200
Finance	409,455	425,741	408,500	(17,241)	395,862
Communications	385,257	374,641	414,260	39,619	431,000
	<b>1,566,663</b>	<b>1,763,340</b>	<b>1,773,860</b>	<b>10,520</b>	<b>1,766,562</b>
<b>Governance</b>					
General Assembly	115,000	120,537	115,000	(5,537)	100,000
Mission Council	56,071	70,020	46,000	(24,020)	55,500
Professional fees	158,237	72,342	90,000	17,658	94,000
Other	90,338	73,248	59,000	(14,248)	70,000
	<b>419,646</b>	<b>336,146</b>	<b>310,000</b>	<b>(26,146)</b>	<b>319,500</b>
Apprenticeship levy	44,337	46,095	50,000	3,905	54,000
Irrecoverable VAT	92,743	110,768	140,000	29,232	140,000
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>19,572,572</b>	<b>19,508,307</b>	<b>20,274,437</b>	<b>766,131</b>	<b>20,150,662</b>
<b>NET (SURPLUS)/DEFICIT</b>	<b>(870,700)</b>	<b>(855,552)</b>	<b>737</b>	<b>856,290</b>	<b>(338)</b>

<sup>1</sup>Includes the Ministerial training Fund and the Maintenance of Ministries Fund

<sup>2</sup> An amount of £389,407 was given by the synods to be paid directly into the URC Ministers' Pension Fund

# Paper H1

## Updates on current work

### Ministries committee

#### 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> The Revd Craig Bowman <a href="mailto:ministries@urc.org.uk">ministries@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	For information.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	This paper is an update on work the ministries committee has undertaken since the last Mission Council.
<b>Main points</b>	Progress on identifying active ministers as defined at General Assembly 2018; review of the guidelines on conduct and behaviour for lay preachers; implementation of Model 4 non-stipendiary service.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	General Assembly 2018, Book of Reports, resolution 27, p.133; Mission Council November 2018, paper H2; Ministries committee guidelines for the conduct and behaviour of lay preachers available on the website: <a href="https://urc.org.uk/images/images/Guidelines_-_Lay_Preachers_Sep_2012.pdf">https://urc.org.uk/images/images/Guidelines_-_Lay_Preachers_Sep_2012.pdf</a>
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Synod moderators; the secretary for education and learning, and through the secretary the RCLs.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	No new impact.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	No direct impact.

### Active ministers

1. Following General Assembly's acceptance of a definition of an active minister in 2018, we have been in communication with the synods to confirm the status of those ministers resident in each synod, particularly those who will now be covered by those categories in the definition which do not relate to a specific role. This is mainly, but not exclusively, retired ministers.

2. All ministers who are deemed to be active under the new definition will be subject to the same requirements as those in recognised posts. That is, to have a valid criminal record check (either DBS or PVG) and undertake mandatory training (e.g. safer sacred space).
3. We are grateful for the support of the synods, particularly the synod moderators, in completing this piece of work.

## **Guidelines on conduct and behaviour for accredited and recognised lay preachers**

4. After reviewing the guidelines at its meeting in February 2019 the ministries committee did not feel there was a need to alter or add to the general content of the document previously published in 2012. However it was noticed that the introduction erroneously refers to lay preachers not being mentioned in the Basis of Union. They are, so this sentence has been corrected.
5. It was agreed that the title should be changed to include the term 'recognised' as well as 'accredited' so that it might be relevant to all those who have a lay preaching role acknowledged by the United Reformed Church, both assembly accredited and locally recognised by synods. We invite synods to share the guidelines with lay preachers whom they have recognised and hope this will prove to be a useful tool in encouraging healthy habits in this vital ministry.
6. The revised document is found in the appendix.

## **Ministry of Word and Sacraments: non-stipendiary service model four**

7. The ministries committee and the education and learning committee have been working together to identify what more needs to be in place to assist in the assessment and formation of those candidating for the new model four of non-stipendiary service. Education for Ministry Phase one standards for model four will be agreed at a joint meeting of the committees in June, a minor change to the application form has been agreed, the necessity for an additional document within a candidate's papers has been recognised and the guidelines for those involved in the process are being updated, not least those for synod candidating officers. Additionally a consultation with candidating officers is planned for the early summer. This all means that it will be possible to consider candidates for model four at the November 2019 assessment conference, whilst recognising that the need to test that call using the normal process already makes deadlines tight.



# Appendix to paper H1

## Guidelines on conduct and behaviour for accredited and recognised lay preachers

### 1. Introduction

This paper sets down expectations of accredited lay preachers in relation to Ministers of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs) and elders within the United Reformed Church. Parallel papers about the expectations of ministers, CRCWs and elders are to be read alongside this document.

Lay preachers exercise an essential and valued role in leading worship in United Reformed Churches. Accredited lay preachers are trained, accredited and commissioned by the United Reformed Church, or recognised by synods. Lay preachers share with Ministers of Word and Sacraments in the leadership of worship in local churches. In their role of leading worship there may be times when a lay preacher is called upon to exercise a pastoral role when a Minister of Word and Sacraments is not available and they need to adopt similar standards of integrity in their lives and relationships. Lay preachers, in addition to their promises as members of a United Reformed Church, at their commissioning service reaffirm their faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and undertake to exercise their ministry in accordance with the Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church.

### 2. Standards of Christian Behaviour

#### 2a Personal integrity and health

- To live a Christian life as persons of prayer and integrity.
- To be committed to growing in faith and discipleship and developing the gifts each has been given.
- To be aware of the need of ministers, lay preachers, elders and members to have appropriate boundaries that safeguard personal and spiritual health and welfare, to promote healthy relationships with others and not to do anything to undermine the spiritual health of another.
- To recognise the need for ministers, lay preachers, elders and members to have a healthy lifestyle and to balance demands on ministers/CRCWs' availability and accessibility with respect for ministers'/CRCWs' time for family and friends, personal renewal and rest and spiritual growth.
- To maintain strict confidentiality of all matters shared in confidence, except when required by law to do otherwise, e.g. with regard to the safety of children, and to respect ministers' and elders' needs to maintain that same confidentiality.
- To exercise care and sensitivity when seeking counsel from others and in discussion about pastoral concerns, in order that the identity of any person shall not be revealed unless permission has been granted.
- To refrain from using privilege or power for personal advantage or gain, whether financial, emotional, sexual or material.

## **2b Relationships with ministers**

- To work collaboratively with ministers/CRCWs, elders, members and other lay preachers where appropriate.
- To regard all persons with equal respect and concern and not discriminate against anyone on the basis of gender, race, age, disability or sexual orientation, including ministers/CRCWs.
- To honour the ministers/CRCWs currently called to serve and not invite or encourage other ministers to be involved in the life of the church or to offer pastoral care without the ministers'/CRCWs' consent.
- To refrain from raising pastoral issues with a previous minister/CRCW.
- To respect the work of previous ministers/CRCWs and deal honourably with their record.
- To welcome retired ministers/CRCWs as members and worshippers in the pastorate.

## **2c Relationship with elders, members and others**

- To regard all persons with equal love and concern.
- To uphold values of faithfulness, trust and respect.
- To share leadership and pastoral care with others called to these purposes where appropriate.
- To seek advice from others if in doubt about one's competence to deal with any issue or situation.
- To consider very carefully taking any position of responsibility, particularly in any church where the lay preacher is not a member, and to support the direction of church life initiated through the ministers/CRCWs, elders and church meetings.
- Not to enter a sexual relationship with anyone in their care.
- Not to be alone with a child or children or young people in a place quite separate from others.

## **2d Relationship with councils of the Church**

- To recognise that local URC churches are part of the wider United Reformed Church and that the ministers/CRCWs are committed to play their part in the wider councils of the Church and in ecumenical relationships.
- To engage positively with all the councils of the church.
- To participate in synod's consultation and review of a pastorate if appropriate.

*Ministries committee, February 2019*

# Paper I1

## Update on current work

### Mission committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Bernie Collins, Convenor of Mission Committee <a href="mailto:bernie.collins@thecrocker.net">bernie.collins@thecrocker.net</a> Francis Brienen, Deputy General Secretary (Mission) <a href="mailto:francis.brienen@urc.org.uk">francis.brienen@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	For information.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Update on the work of the mission committee.
<b>Main points</b>	Update on Legacies of Slavery, the New International Financial and Economic Architecture, partnership with the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. Work on the environmental policy, the remit of the environmental task group and a carbon offsetting project. Discussions on Brexit and combatting Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. Endorsement of membership application to Churches Together in England. Information on a special celebration in the Church of the Palatinate. Update on the new structure of Fresh Expressions Ltd.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper I1 to Mission Council, November 2018.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Council for World Mission partners (Legacies of Slavery and NIFEA) Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (Taiwan Ecumenical Forum and new mission partner) Environmental task group Joint Public Issues Team (Brexit) Interfaith Enabling Group (Islamophobia and anti-Semitism) Churches Together in England Church of the Palatinate Fresh Expressions Ltd board.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	Costs to Assembly of the various items in the paper are covered by the mission committee budget.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	All of the items in this paper are about increasing awareness, understanding and partnership to help our members and partners to participate more effectively in Christ's mission in the world.

# Mission update

## 1. Legacies of slavery

Mission committee received a further report on how to respond to CWM's work on Legacies of Slavery, which focused on four areas: apology, reparation, conversations on whiteness, exceptionalism and privilege, and the economic motive. The committee agreed to establish a small working group to take this work forward, with a view to working with local churches and synods, and to bringing recommendations to the Assembly in 2020. The group was asked to bring a progress report to the mission committee meeting in June 2019.

## 2. New international financial and economic architecture (NIFEA)

Mission committee received a report on the NIFEA following a series of consultations on this topic organised by the Council for World Mission. It commended a proposed conference on debt being organised by the mission team at Church House to be held in December 2019. It also encouraged the team to oversee the production and collation of learning resources relating to a New Economy of Life to be used contextually across the URC.

## 3. Partnership with the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT)

John Proctor attended a meeting of the Taiwan Ecumenical Forum in November 2018. This Forum is a structured consultation with international partners to provide the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan with advice and support as it sustains its witness around a number of difficult public and justice issues. The forum highlighted four broad justice issues: indigenous land rights, the need for truth and reconciliation work, the need for women's perspectives and gender justice, and Taiwan's concern to exercise its own democratic choices in the face of increasing pressure from China. The committee received the report and also heard how much the PCT values its partnership with the URC.

Work to welcome a new CWM mission partner for the Taiwanese Fellowship in Lumen URC, London was held up because of a visa problem for the Revd Yufen Chen. However, we hear recently that this has been resolved, and we now expect to welcome Yufen very shortly. The St Peter's House Chaplaincy (University of Manchester) has appointed Ms Selena Tai as a Taiwanese Chaplain Assistant. This post is supported by the URC and the PCT.

## 4. Environmental work

It was agreed to recommend to Mission Council that the remit for the environmental task group which was established by General Assembly in 2016 be revised in the light of the

task group's work in the past two years. The committee also agreed to recommend to Mission Council that the 2016 Environmental Policy, as adopted by General Assembly, be updated to reflect the recognition that in light of the most recent science around climate change, our ambitions to reduce carbon emissions must be accelerated. A proposal to develop **a carbon offsetting project** for the URC's global partnership programme was also approved. This will include a feasibility study and trial implementation of a carbon offsetting programme.

## **5. Brexit**

The Mission committee discussed a report on responding to Brexit, following a consultation in December 2018, and highlighted various ways in which the Church can play a positive role. These include being welcoming communities, truth telling (speaking up and speaking out for those who will be hit the hardest by Brexit), looking beyond our borders and by reanimating a vision for the UK. Assembly 2016 resolution 50 is still very relevant to guide church members, local churches and synods as well as assembly committees and staff.

## **6. Combating Islamophobia and anti-Semitism**

A report on combating Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, prepared by Philip Brooks, was also discussed. The committee agreed to encourage the development of some educational work around this and to engage with the work proposed in this area by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland with the Council of Christians and Jews and the Christian Muslim Forum.

## **7. Applications to join Churches Together in England (CTE)**

The mission committee endorsed the application from the Wesleyan Reform Union to become a member of Churches Together in England and is in the process of supporting the Presbyterian Church of Ghana – UK in its application to join CTE. The PCG co-sponsor is the Church of Scotland.

## **8. Church of the Palatinate**

This year it will be 30 years since the Berlin Wall came down. To mark this fact there will be a major celebration in the Church of the Palatinate in November 2019, to which a party of up to 20 people from the URC has been invited. If you are interested in more details, please email [carole.sired@urc.org.uk](mailto:carole.sired@urc.org.uk).

## **9. New structure of Fresh Expressions**

The structure and future of Fresh Expressions were considered as the initiative enters its fourth quinquennium. From being a centralised and denominationally-led initiative, dedicated to teaching, training and communicating the vision for a mission-shaped Church, Fresh Expressions has evolved into a dispersed movement of interconnecting

networks, all committed to pioneering new worshipping communities. A new organisational structure will come into being from March 2019 onwards to reflect the changing nature of the initiative.

### **10. Presbyterian Church of Ghana**

Mission Council agreed two years ago a Memorandum of Understanding with the Europe Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. We have now made plans for signing the MoU, on Monday 24 June.

# Paper 12

## Environmental task group

### Mission committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Bernie Collins, Convenor of Mission Committee <a href="mailto:bernie.collins@thecrocker.net">bernie.collins@thecrocker.net</a> Simeon Mitchell, Secretary for Church and Society <a href="mailto:simeon.mitchell@urc.org.uk">simeon.mitchell@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p><b>Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. <b>thanks the environmental task group for the valuable work it has undertaken on the Church's behalf since 2016</b></li><li>b. <b>agrees that the purpose and remit of the environmental task group shall be restated as follows:</b> <b>The purpose of the environmental task group, established by General Assembly in 2016, shall be to encourage and assist the United Reformed Church in the implementation of its Environmental Policy and commitment to reduce its carbon footprint.</b></li></ol> <p><b>The group, appointed until 31 July 2022 in the first instance, shall be funded from the mission committee budget, and report to the mission committee.</b></p> <p><b>The task group's remit shall be to:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <b>Compile, produce or commission resources for worship and teaching related to themes contained in the environmental policy</b></li><li>2. <b>Champion and promote the Eco Church and Eco-Congregation Scotland programmes across the Church</b></li><li>3. <b>Consider the budgetary implications of implementing the environmental policy</b></li><li>4. <b>Collate and share data to enable the Church to track and reflect on progress towards reducing its carbon footprint</b></li><li>5. <b>Liase with the United Reformed Church investment committee, and to assist the relevant bodies within the United Reformed Church regarding decisions</b></li></ol>

	<p>relating to the investment of Church funds in fossil fuels</p> <p>6. Encourage and assist Assembly committees and others in developing new ways of meeting and working which have environmental benefits</p> <p>7. Keep the environmental policy under review in the light of progress, new evidence and an evolving context, and bring proposals and recommendations to and through the mission committee for further steps that the URC could take to fulfil the commitments set out in the policy.</p>
--	--

**Summary of content**

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	An update to the remit of the environmental task group appointed by General Assembly in 2016.
<b>Main points</b>	The remit has been reviewed in the light of experience and in conjunction with the mission committee.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Environmental policy, General Assembly 2016.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Members of the environmental task group Mission committee.

**Summary of impact**

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

**1. Background**

When the URC’s General Assembly of 2016 adopted a new Environmental Policy, it also appointed a task group to oversee and champion its implementation. The specific resolution was:

General Assembly resolves to appoint a task group until 31 July 2022 in the first instance, of four persons, to be appointed by the nominations committee and funded from the mission committee budget, to monitor the United Reformed Church’s progress toward meeting its commitment to reduce its carbon footprint, reporting to the mission committee.

The task group’s remit shall be to:

- a) compile, produce or commission resources for worship and teaching related to themes contained in the environmental policy
- b) consider the budgetary implications of implementing the environmental policy
- c) commission 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



- d) liaise with the United Reformed Church investment committee, and to assist the relevant bodies within the United Reformed Church regarding decisions relating to the investment of Church funds in fossil fuels.

## 2. Need for review

The environmental task group (ETG) reported on its work to the mission committee in June 2018. This showed the considerable and encouraging progress that had been made in implementing the Environmental Policy, especially in the numbers of local congregations engaged in the Eco Church and Eco-Congregation Scotland programmes.

It also highlighted some challenges that the group was facing in carrying out its task. Some of these related to the way that the Environmental Policy was framed and the ETG's remit was formulated. Therefore, the mission committee agreed that the group should be invited to review and reflect on its remit and resourcing. The Secretary for Church and Society worked with the group on this review through the autumn of 2018, and a report was considered by mission committee in February 2019. As a result, this proposal for an updated remit for the ETG is brought to Mission Council.

## 3. Review areas

### 3.1 Overall purpose of group

It is clear from parts a-d of its remit that the group was being asked to do far more than simply “monitor the United Reformed Church’s progress toward meeting its commitment to reduce its carbon footprint” – yet that was its stated purpose. The environmental policy has a wider concern than just the Church’s carbon footprint, although that is a key metric.

It is proposed that the group’s purpose be restated to recognise its important role in encouraging the implementation of the whole environmental policy, as well as keeping the policy under review in the light of a rapidly changing context.

#### Remit part c)

**commission 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**

Carbon footprinting can be a very worthwhile exercise. However, recent consultations with other denominations have confirmed that it is also notoriously complex and difficult to calculate in large dispersed organisations, especially where few central records are kept of relevant data. Previous attempts have been made within the URC, without much success. Often, too many assumptions have to be made for it to be meaningful.

One option would be to outsource this task, as this section of the remit envisages. However, when the group was established, it was allocated a budget through the mission committee, of £1500 a year. This would be wholly inadequate to commission a professional body to carry out this task, quite aside from the operational challenges of doing so.

Some measures of progress towards reducing the Church's carbon footprint that would be more straightforward to track would be:

- numbers of URC congregations registered on the Eco Church and Eco-Congregation programmes, and their level of awards (both these programmes include a carbon-footprinting exercise in their Gold Awards)
- the CO<sub>2</sub> impact of travel to General Assembly, Mission Council and Assembly Committees.

Every area of the Church's life needs to hear and respond to the challenge of climate change through examination of its own practices. However, it is proposed that the ETG should focus its limited resources and capacity on collating and tracking data on these two symbolic measures of the Church's carbon footprint, and share the results each year.

### **3.2 Additions to the group's remit**

This review provides an opportunity to encapsulate in the ETG's remit activities that have been a welcome part of the group's work since its outset, such as championing the Eco Church and Eco-Congregation programmes across the Church, and liaising with those organisations on behalf of the URC.

It is also an opportunity to give the ETG a formal mandate to look at additional areas where it could make a helpful contribution to implementing the environmental policy, such as encouraging and assisting Assembly committees and others in developing new ways of meeting and working which have environmental benefits, and bringing recommendations for further steps that the URC could make to fulfil the commitments set out in the environmental policy.

### **3.3 Group membership and resourcing**

Four members were initially appointed to the task group: the Revd Rob Weston (Convenor), Tom Veitch, the Revd Trevor Jamison, Charis Ollerenshaw. They are supported from Church House by the Secretary for Church and Society, currently Simeon Mitchell.

It was felt to be important to have a representative from Scotland on the group, so when Trevor Jamison moved on from his role as chaplain to Eco-Congregation Scotland to a position in Northern Synod, the group co-opted his successor, the Revd David Coleman, a URC SCM. The Revd Dr Kevin Snyman, Green Apostle for West Midlands Synod, was also involved in the group before moving to his new appointment. Ali Greaves from Northern Synod joined the group in the autumn of 2018 to act as a link into the Youth Executive.

The environmental task group is small, but focused and effective. It has co-opted people to the group who have particular expertise or who enable connections to significant constituencies of the church. As such, it feels its membership includes the representation and skills that are necessary to carry out its task. The group works closely with the Synod Green Apostles network to encourage and support action at local and synod levels, and is well supported by the Church and Society team in Church House.

With the proposed revisions to its remit, it does not feel it needs additional budget or other resources to fulfil its remit.

However, we need to recognise that the task of implementing the environmental policy cannot be left to a small working group, but requires the commitment of the whole Church, as set out in the policy. As a separate paper being considered by this Mission Council demonstrates, this task is more urgent than ever.

# Paper 13

## Carbon emissions target

### Mission committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Bernie Collins, Convenor of Mission Committee <a href="mailto:bernie.collins@thecrocker.net">bernie.collins@thecrocker.net</a> Simeon Mitchell, Secretary for Church and Society <a href="mailto:simeon.mitchell@urc.org.uk">simeon.mitchell@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly:</b> a. urges the UK government to set a target and establish policies to achieve net zero emissions in the UK by well before 2050, and updates section 5.3(h) and 5.5(b) of the URC Environmental Policy accordingly b. makes a corresponding commitment that as a Church we shall strive to act urgently to reduce carbon emissions across the whole of Church life in line with this target, and updates section 4.2 of the Environmental Policy to give effect to this c. calls on URC members, local churches and synods to support these commitments in word and in deed.

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	This paper argues that the URC should update its environmental policy to endorse a net zero carbon emissions target for the UK.
<b>Main points</b>	The peer-reviewed science around climate change suggests that the UK and other nations must accelerate our ambition to reduce carbon emissions.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Environmental policy, General Assembly 2016 Hope in God's Future, Mission Council 2009.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Mission committee Joint Public Issues Team.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	None, directly.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Adopting this position would align the URC's policy with that of the other churches in the Joint Public Issues Team and with Christian Aid, facilitating joint advocacy work.

## 1. Background

In 2009 the URC, the Baptist Union of GB and the Methodist Church jointly published and adopted *Hope in God's Future*, which set out a Christian understanding of the challenges facing our global ecology and their theological and ethical implications. The report provided an account of the peer reviewed science around climate change, and the implications for Christian discipleship.

*Hope in God's Future* endorsed the UK Government target for reductions in greenhouse gas as legislated in the 2008 Climate Change Act. The Climate Change Act requires UK-wide emissions reductions of 80% relative to 1990 levels by 2050 and requires five year carbon budgets that are currently agreed as far as 2032.

The URC's environmental policy, adopted by General Assembly in 2016, reaffirmed this target and committed the Church to strive to reduce its own carbon emissions in keeping with it, though this is not possible to measure with any precision.

## 2. New evidence of need for urgent action to tackle climate change

- 2.1 Since the national targets were identified, both the scientific evidence and the global ambition for action have developed further. In 2015 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published the Fifth Assessment Report to bring policy makers and the public up to date. The report concluded that changes to global climate already observed are unprecedented over decades to millennia. In Paris in December 2015, governments agreed to take the action necessary to constrain global average temperature rise to well below two degrees above pre-industrial levels.
- 2.2 In 2018 the IPCC published a report on the impacts of a greater than 1.5 degree global warming and provided an assessment of the actions required to avoid this scenario. Consequently the UK Government has asked the committee on climate change to provide advice in 2019 on a 'net zero' emissions ambition for the UK. In simple terms, net zero would mean our total emissions are equal to or less than the emissions we remove from the environment. This can be achieved by a combination of emission reduction and removal by offsetting.
- 2.3 The IPCC report on the impact of 1.5 degrees global warming states that for stabilisation of global temperatures at this level global net zero carbon emissions would most likely need to be achieved around 2050 (with an interquartile range of 2045 to 2055). However, this relies on the availability and affordability of substantial amounts of carbon capture and storage technology in the latter half of the 21st Century, a scenario that seems uncertain at best.
- 2.4 **It is clear that the commitments of both the United Reformed Church and the UK Government to advocate for concerted global action to avoid potential catastrophic effects of climate change now requires a reassessment of our UK carbon targets.**
- 2.5 If global net zero emissions are to be achieved at 2050 then developed nations (as these nations still have higher per capita emissions than most) must achieve

a zero carbon economy before 2050. On the basis of the scientific evidence available today, it is clear that the UK's resources, technology and ingenuity should be used to achieve net zero carbon emissions in the UK well before 2050.

Mission Council is therefore asked to support an update to the environmental policy to recognise that since its adoption, the peer-reviewed science around climate change suggests that the UK and other nations – and indeed, all of us – must accelerate our ambition to reduce emissions. This will enable the Church, through the Joint Public Issues Team and Commitment for Life, to continue its advocacy work on climate change, and, along with many others, push for net zero carbon emissions in the UK well before 2050. It will also serve as an encouragement for the URC to pursue the commitments made in the 2016 environmental policy with even greater urgency.

## 2.6 Proposed changes to URC environmental policy

In the paragraphs below ...

- ... plain text is existing wording we think should be kept.
- ... ~~text struck through~~ is existing wording we propose to drop
- ... ***text in bold italic*** is new wording we propose to add in.

4.2 We pledge to respond to the 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 also commit to intercede for those threatened by climate change, and to adopt practices and lifestyles consistent with levels of carbon emissions the earth can sustain. Specifically, ~~and in line with the report's recommendations,~~ we shall strive to act urgently to reduce carbon emissions across the whole of church life in line with the ~~minimum 80% reduction by 2050 relative to 1990 levels, the target set by the Westminster government. We shall also strive to reach an interim goal of reducing our carbon emissions by 42% in 2020 relative to 1990, the target set by the Scottish Parliament.~~ ***target we are calling on the UK government to achieve, of net zero emissions by well before 2050.***

5.3 Accordingly, our churches will be encouraged to:

h) engage their local political representatives, urging them to support policies that take effective steps towards ~~realising the commitment to a minimum 80% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050 and minimum 42% by 2020;~~ ***achieving net zero UK carbon emissions by well before 2050;***

5.5 Assembly encourages the Church:

b) to campaign ***for the UK government to set a target to achieve net zero emissions in the UK by well before 2050, and to campaign*** at local and national level for policies that ~~strengthen, and take steps towards realising, the Westminster government's commitment to a minimum 80% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050 and the interim goal of reducing carbon emissions by 42% as set by the Scottish Parliament~~ ***this goal;***

# Paper J1

## List of nominations

### Nominations committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Ray Adams <a href="mailto:ray.adams12@btinternet.com">ray.adams12@btinternet.com</a> Mr George Faris <a href="mailto:nominations.secretary@urc.org.uk">nominations.secretary@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) <b>Mission Council notes and approves the changes set out in section A of the report to the list of nominations agreed at the November 2018 meeting of Mission Council.</b></li><li>2) <b>Mission Council appoints according to the nominations in section B and C of the report.</b></li><li>3) <b>Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council extends the tenure of the Revd Ruth Whitehead as Moderator of South Western Synod by five years, to 30 June 2025.</b></li><li>4) <b>Should the interviews for a new Moderator for the North Western Synod identify a nominee who is able to take up the post before November 2019, Mission Council authorises the Officers of Assembly to confirm the nomination, effect the appointment and report the outcome to Mission Council in November.</b></li></ol>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) To clarify various details of the nominations list.</li><li>2) To appoint and re-appoint members of various committees and posts.</li><li>3) To report on the creation of six review and appointment groups, and the outcome of one of these.</li><li>4) To facilitate the appointment of a new Moderator of the North Western Synod.</li></ol>
<b>Main points</b>	See detail of report.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Nominations list in Record of Assembly 2018</li><li>2) Nominations list after the November 2018 meeting of Mission Council</li></ol>

	<a href="http://www.urch.org.uk/images/Yearbook/Nominations_List_-_3Dec18SF.pdf">www.urch.org.uk/images/Yearbook/Nominations_List_-_3Dec18SF.pdf</a>
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	All synods are represented on the committee.

**Summary of impact**

<b>Financial</b>	None.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Some of these roles involve ecumenical contact and collaboration.

## A. Amendments to published list of nominations

Mission Council is asked to note and approve the following additional amendments to the nominations list that was agreed at the November 2018 meeting of Mission Council.

### 2.2.1 Panel for General Assembly appointments

- i. The Officers of Assembly acting on behalf of General Assembly appointed those listed below to serve from 1 March 2019 to the end of General Assembly 2024. Mission Council Minute 18/50 refers.  
 The Revd Jan Adamson  
 Dr Paul Ashitey  
 Mr Matthew Barkley  
 The Revd Lucy Brierley  
 The Revd Tessa Henry-Robinson  
 Ms Victoria Paulding  
 Mr Reuben Watt

### 2.3 Ministerial incapacity and discipline advisory group

- i. Mr Hartley Oldham has retired from his co-opted position. The church has benefited greatly from his significant contribution over many years.

### 2.4 Disciplinary process – commission panel

- i. The Revd Naison Hove is now serving in synod 11.

### 5.6 The United Reformed Church Ministers Pension Trust Ltd

- i. The Revd James Breslin has relinquished his position as a member of the fund representing the members of the fund. He has been succeeded by the Revd Daniel Cheyne (13), who will serve to 2022.

### 8.4 Conversations between the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe and the Anglican Communion

- i. The Revd Julian Templeton has yet to complete his doctoral studies.



## 11.4 Congregational Memorial Hall Trust

- ii. Dr Brian Woodhall has resigned.

## B. New appointments and re-appointments

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council makes the following appointments:

Ref	Committee/group	Name	Role	From	Years
2.3	Ministerial incapacity and discipline advisory group	Ms Michelle Howard	Convenor-Elect	Jul-19	1
2.3	Ministerial incapacity and discipline advisory group	Ms Michelle Howard	Convenor	GA20	4
3.1.1	International exchange reference Group	The Revd Ana Gobledale	Convenor-Elect	Jul-19	1
3.1.1	International exchange reference Group	The Revd Ana Gobledale	Convenor	GA20	4
4.1	Ministries committee	The Revd Nicola Furley-Smith	Convenor-Elect	Jul-19	1
4.1	Ministries committee	The Revd Nicola Furley-Smith	Convenor	GA20	4
2.4	Disciplinary process commission panel	The Revd Debbie Brown	Member <sup>†</sup>	Jul-19	5
2.4	Disciplinary process commission panel	The Revd Peter Flint	Member <sup>†</sup>	Jul-19	5
2.4	Disciplinary process commission panel	The Revd Deborah McVey	Member <sup>†</sup>	Jul-19	5
2.4	Disciplinary process commission panel	The Revd Sue McCoan	Member <sup>†</sup>	Jul-19	5
2.4	Disciplinary process commission panel	The Revd Sarah Moore	Member <sup>†</sup>	Jul-19	5
2.4	Disciplinary process commission panel	The Revd Wendy Swan	Member <sup>†</sup>	Jul-19	5
2.4	Disciplinary process commission panel	The Revd Dr Janet Tollington	Convenor <sup>†</sup>	GA20	5
2.6	Pastoral reference and welfare committee	The Revd Bridget Powell	Member	Jul-19	4
3.1	Mission committee	Sarah Lane Cawte	Convenor-Elect	Jul-19	1
3.1	Mission committee	Sarah Lane Cawte	Convenor	GA20	4
3.1	Mission committee	The Revd Robert Bushby (5)	Member	Jul-19	4
3.1	Mission committee	Mr John Collings (13)	Member <sup>†</sup>	Jul-19	2
3.1.1	International exchange reference group	The Revd Ros Lyle	Member	Jul-19	4
4.1.5	Assessment board	The Revd Jan Adamson	Member	Jul-19	5
4.1.5	Assessment board	Mr Mark Tubby	Member	Jul-19	5
4.3	Children's and youth work committee	Mr Matthew Barkley	Member	Jul-19	4
4.3	Children's and youth work committee	Mr Reuben Watt	Member	Jul-19	4
4.4	<i>Walking the Way</i> steering group	Mrs Rita Griffiths	Member	Jul-19	4
5.2	Communications committee	The Revd Tim Lowe	Member	Jul-19	4
5.2	Communications committee	The Revd Heather Whyte	Member	Jul-19	4
5.2	Communications committee	Mr Dan Morrell	Member	Jul-19	4
5.3	Equalities committee	The Revd Naison Hove	Member	Jul-19	4
5.4	Finance committee	Mrs Jane Humphreys	Member	Jul-19	4
5.6	URC Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd	Mrs Bridget Micklem	Member <sup>†</sup>	Jul-19	4
5.8	Investment committee	Mrs Jean Hudson	Member <sup>†</sup>	Jul-19	4
9.1	Northern College Board of Governors	The Revd Raymond Singh	Governor <sup>†</sup>	Jul-19	4
10.4	Milton Mount Foundation	Mrs Daphne Bembridge	Governor	Jul-19	4
11.2	Churches legislation advisory service	Ms Memuna Levan-Harris	Representative	Jul-19	4
11.3	Congregational fund board	The Revd Janine Atkinson	Trustee	Jul-19	4
11.3	Congregational fund board	Mr Anthony Bayley	Trustee <sup>†</sup>	Jul-19	4
11.3	Congregational fund board	The Revd Geoffrey Roper	Trustee <sup>†</sup>	Jul-19	4
11.12	United Reformed Church History Society Council	The Revd Dr Michael Jagessar	Member <sup>†</sup>	Jul-19	4

Key: † = extension of term of service, the default is a new appointment.  
 Jul19 = from 1 July 2019  
 GA20 = from the end of General Assembly 2020  
 Years = term of service

## C. Church of England – United Reformed Church contact group

The Mission committee has agreed the terms of reference for a contact group to take forward the next stage of discussions between the Church of England and the URC. The Mission Committee has nominated a co-chair, co-secretary and three members. Mission Council is asked to approve the following resolution:

**Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council makes the following appointments to the Church of England – United Reformed Church contact group for the period 1 July 2019 to the end of General Assembly 2024:**

**Co-Chair: The Revd Ruth Whitehead**  
**Members: The Revd Dr Susan Durber**  
**Mr John Ellis**  
**The Revd Tim Meadows**

**and notes that the Co-Secretary will be the Secretary for ecumenical and interfaith relations.**

## **D. Review and appointment groups**

Six review and appointment groups have been formed for the following posts:

### **South Western Synod Moderator review group**

The group, convened by the Revd Paul Bedford, met in March. The outcome of the review has been positive, and Mission Council is invited to resolve as follows:

**Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council extends the tenure of the Revd Ruth Whitehead as Moderator of South Western Synod by five years, to 30 June 2025.**

### **North Western Synod Moderator appointment group**

The group, convened by Mrs Val Morrison, is scheduled to conduct interviews on 22 May. In the best interests of the North Western Synod, Mission Council is asked to approve the following resolution:

**Should the interviews for a new Moderator for the North Western Synod identify a nominee who is able to take up the post before November 2019, Mission Council authorises the Officers of Assembly to confirm the nomination, effect the appointment and report the outcome to Mission Council in November.**

For information, the Officers are six in number – the two Moderators, Clerk, Treasurer, Convenor of Assembly Arrangements and General Secretary.

### **Yorkshire Synod Moderator appointment group**

The group will be convened by the Revd Lucy Brierley.

### **Westminster College Principal appointment group**

The group will be chaired by Mr John Ellis.

### **General Secretary appointment group**

The nominations committee has added six members of the panel for General Assembly appointments to the group.

## **Deputy General Secretary (discipleship) appointment group**

The nominations committee has added two members of the panel for General Assembly appointments to the group.

# Paper L1

## Church House

### URC trust

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Convenor <a href="mailto:valmorrison7@btinternet.com">valmorrison7@btinternet.com</a> Jane Baird <a href="mailto:jane.baird@urc.org.uk">jane.baird@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	For information only.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Remedial works in lower ground floor.
<b>Main points</b>	These works have recently been completed.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Most recently, paper L1 to Mission Council, November 2018; also page nine, paragraphs 38-42, Assembly reports, July 2018.
<b>Consultation with...</b>	URC Trustees, project manager, Church House staff.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	See paragraph three below.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Our second-floor tenants were disrupted for a few weeks by noise, but that period is long past.

1. After the major refurbishment of Church House in 2017, remedial work turned out to be necessary on the Lower Ground Floor, because of intrusive damp. For technical reasons, and also because correspondence with our contractors moved slowly, it took many months to agree the right scheme for attending to this. However, work began in December 2018, and the floor was handed back to us on 9 April 2019.
2. At time of writing (12 April), we are moving back in. There is IT to reinstate, specialist shelving to install, archives and documents to bring out of storage, and staff to relocate. We plan to have the meeting rooms back in commission from the start of May, and expect to be using the floor to its full potential by the time Mission Council meets. Friends from the wider Church will be welcomed warmly.
3. The work has been done without charge to the Church. Our ancillary costs in these months – removals, outside meeting room hire, loss of rent – have also been invoiced to the builders.

4. Church House staff have been patient and forbearing with an extended period of inconvenience and noise, and the Trust has thanked them tangibly.
5. The Trust is grateful to its project managers, Third Sector Property, for attentive and knowledgeable support throughout this difficult period, and to its contractors, Peldon Rose, for undertaking a major piece of snagging in a thorough way.
6. Church House and its staff support the wider life of the URC in many ways. It will be very good indeed to deploy the building properly for the service of our Church.

# Paper L2

## The Church's risk assessment and management process

URC Trust

### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Jane Baird <a href="mailto:jane.baird@urc.org.uk">jane.baird@urc.org.uk</a> Alan Yates <a href="mailto:alan.yates@urc.org.uk">alan.yates@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Take note.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	For information – an update on progress since March 2018.
<b>Main points</b>	The risk process review panel has updated the risk review process in line with the principles agreed at Mission Council in May 2018.  Training sessions are planned during May, June and July 2019.  The updated process will be initiated in August 2019.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper L2 Mission Council March 2018.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The risk process review panel Human resources advisory group (HRAG) Investment committee.

### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	Limited to expenses for those attending meetings and training.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None.

1. The members of the risk process review panel are: Alan Yates (chair), Jane Baird, Michael Davies, Gordon Wanless, Sandi Hallam-Jones, John Samson, Neil Mackenzie and Bill Potter.
2. The panel has continued to meet and has updated the risk review process in line with the ten principles agreed at Mission Council in March 2018:

- a) Two risk registers
  - b) Single process
  - c) Risks not issues
  - d) More structured approach
  - e) Every risk has a single responsible role or unit
  - f) Biennial process
  - g) Assessment scales
  - h) Only medium and high risks to be reported
  - i) Risk registers to be signed off by the appropriate body
  - j) Regular reviews of actions and mitigations
3. Once the process was agreed, a training session was created and piloted with the human resources advisory group in October 2018 and the investment committee in November 2018.
  4. The training sessions were well received, but also gave an indication as to the areas that will be most challenging, particularly distinguishing between a 'risk' and an 'issue'.
  5. It has been decided to provide a schedule of risks that are common to most committees as a guide to assist committees.
  6. A programme of training sessions has been arranged during the period May to July 2019, the first session of which follows immediately after this Mission Council. It is anticipated that most committees will be represented in, at least, one of the sessions.
  7. The review group has been encouraged by interest from a number of synods, some representatives of which are also planning to attend the training sessions.
  8. The first biennial review will be initiated in August 2019 with committees being asked to report their risks by the end of December 2019.
  9. The Deputy General Secretary (administration and resources) will be responsible for initiating the process and coordinating the responses.
  10. The review group anticipates meeting on two more occasions:
    - a) In September 2019 to assess the effectiveness of the training and to discuss how and by whom the results will be monitored from 2020 onwards
    - b) In March 2020 to review the submissions. This will be the best guide to the effectiveness of the training and will identify possible process changes and/or any further training that may be required.

# Paper M1

## Constitutional review

### Clerk

#### Basic information

<b>Contact</b>	The Revd Michael Hopkins <a href="mailto:michael.hopkins@urc.org.uk">michael.hopkins@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	For information only.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	The operation of synods and synod trust companies in regard to transactions affecting local church property. This paper is to let Mission Council know that some questions have been raised and practices are being reviewed.
<b>Main points</b>	A recent constitutional review identified a general point that may affect practice in a number of synods. The review commission therefore directed the law and polity advisory group to review the requirements of the URC acts, in order to help synods and synod trust companies to maintain an appropriate pattern of working in regard to transactions affecting local church property.
<b>Previous documents</b>	Nothing recent.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Law and polity advisory group. The moderators' meeting. Synod Clerks and PLATO are also being consulted.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	Some advisory legal costs may be involved in the work of LPAG, as outlined above.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	We do need to check that we are following both charity law and the URC Acts appropriately.



## **Excerpt report of a constitutional review by the General Assembly of some processes of Thames North Synod called by the Church meeting of the City Temple**

1. The Church meeting of the City Temple called a constitutional review to consider some processes relating to finance and property decision-making within Thames North Synod.
2. The constitutional review followed the procedure laid down under the structure of the United Reformed Church paragraph five and the Rules of Procedure paragraph nine.
3. The Officers of the Assembly appointed the following to serve as members of the commission. Neither City Temple nor the Thames North Synod objected to any of the names:  
The Revd Nigel Uden, Moderator of General Assembly, to convene the commission  
The Revd Ruth Whitehead, Moderator of South Western Synod  
The Revd Dr John Bradbury, Eastern Synod  
The Revd Andy Braunston, Synod of Scotland  
Ms Catriona Wheeler, East Midlands Synod
4. The Clerk of the Assembly was present to advise both the commission and the two parties, to facilitate the process, record the decision, and prepare the report for Assembly.
5. The City Temple was represented by the minister, the Revd Dr Rodney Woods and Mr Olusina Anifowose. Thames North Synod was represented by Ms Memuna Levan-Harris and Mr Michael Gould.
6. Papers, submitted by both parties, were circulated in advance. Upon receipt of the papers, the Commission asked both parties for further information. These responses were circulated, along with a counsel's opinion issued by John Bradburn QC.
7. The hearing took place at The Wesley Hotel, London. The commission began its work at 9.30 am and completed its business at 3.40 pm. The Convener led those present in prayer.
8. Dr Woods presented the City Temple's case.
9. Mr Gould and Ms Levan-Harris presented the response of Thames North Synod.
10. Members of the commission questioned both parties. The Convener thanked the parties for their time and submissions. The parties were asked to leave the room while the panel considered the submissions of the parties.

11. After discussion, the parties were recalled, and the Convener gave the decision:

The commission:

- a) reaffirms the centrality of a carefully balanced partnership of local church, synod, and Synod Trust Company as the covenant which forms the United Reformed Church, and which the United Reformed Church Acts attempt to enshrine
- b) recognises that there are variations of practice of all synods and Synod Trust Companies caused by difficulties in interpreting the schedules of the United Reformed Church Acts, and therefore instructs the law and polity advisory group to consult widely, identify the key issues, and propose clear and accessible guidelines for the whole of the United Reformed Church in order to bring parity across the denomination in the application of the schedules to the United Reformed Acts. ....

# Paper M2

## Listening – follow up from November Mission Council

Derek Estill and Nigel Uden

### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Nigel Uden <a href="mailto:nigel.uden@urc.org.uk">nigel.uden@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Take note.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To reflect on the group discussions on listening at last November's Mission Council.
<b>Main points</b>	We do not need a formal listening project, but listening is vital. It is a practice to cultivate and pursue.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Presentation and discussion at last Mission Council.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	MCAG.

### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	None.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	No formal direct impact.

1. Listening seems to be on everyone's lips. Parliamentarians are being challenged about how much they are listening. People with the courage to speak of being abused plead to be heard. And on our travels around the United Reformed Church, we hear people wondering if their particular stories and fears are being heard.
2. At the November Mission Council we introduced a paper that suggested 'A conciliar church is a listening church. It takes account of the discernment reached by its constituent parts. It listens for the voice of God in its members' voices, in the voices of its ecumenical and interfaith partners, and in the world's voices.' The council then went into groups to discuss listening. The feedback suggests some considerable support for enabling listening, but also a real caution about having a specific *programme* of listening. Rather, both from the group feedback and in many subsequent conversations we sense a heightened commitment to listening as part

of the lifestyle of the United Reformed Church – our default position in our engagement with one another, with the community and ecumenically. It's how we will best discern what the Spirit is saying to the church.

3. We have heard an anxiety that any attempt to make listening a 'project', might run counter to *Walking the Way* (WTW). It was helpful to hear that concern. The aspiration of WTW is to enable a culture shift in the URC, and in advocating a more deliberate listening that is exactly what we have in mind – listening is less a programme than a part of our cultural identity.
4. Equally, we have heard how many synod personnel identify listening as a key skill that they bring. So it is that an emphasis upon listening would be to complement the listening that already characterises much of our life together.
5. People feeling unheard may not mean that they are, but if their perception is that their voice is ignored, then there is value in us exploring how we can ensure people are reassured that they are heard and prevent them feeling they are not.
6. Having listened to the variety in what the groups said at November's Mission Council, we do not bring a proposal for a specific listening project that is separate from and additional to the life and work of the URC. Rather, we suggest that whenever proposals and initiatives are being advanced there will be a conscious determination to listen. Formally, consensus decision making is designed to assist. Informally, there is a much to be gained from the thought that the five Chinese characters used for writing 'to listen' are ear, you, eyes, undivided attention and heart.
7. The paper that Alan Yates introduced in November, and the feedback upon which he reports to the May meeting, may spawn some specific ideas for 'acting with strategic intent'. In particular, it may lead to discussions around our Trust work, and to co-ordination of some services. These radical possibilities will require listening of a high order, if they, or something else, are to take us into a new tomorrow with unity.

# Paper M3

## Acting with strategic intent

Alan Yates

### Basic information

<b>Contact</b>	Alan Yates <a href="mailto:alan.yates@urc.org.uk">alan.yates@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision on whether and how to progress this.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>See foot of paper.</b>

### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Strategic planning for 'back-office' services for the URC in the decades ahead. Reflection on group discussions at last Mission Council meeting.
<b>Main points</b>	There was quite wide support at the last Mission Council for greater co-ordination of our services.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Alan Yates' presentations at the last two Mission Council meetings.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	MCAG; Convenor of law and polity advisory group.

### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	We are not at a stage of precise financial planning, but in general good organization of admin is economic.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	We might well be able to deliver some of our legal obligations more efficiently.

## 1. Introduction

Following Alan Yates's presentation to last November's Mission Council, group discussions were held. This note provides an overview of the feedback from these groups and provides a suggested way forward. Since Mission Council Alan has delivered similar presentations to synod meetings in Yorkshire and Thames North (Eastern heard it shortly before the November's Mission Council). All three presentations were well received.

## 2. Summary

Overall, the feedback is broadly positive. It appears there is an appetite for radical change, perhaps even more radical than I'm suggesting! It is clear that more detail is required, which warrants doing more work to address specific elements of the strategy.

### 3. Overview of the feedback

*Question one: Would such an approach be beneficial to the URC at the present moment?*

Yes, was the simple answer from most groups. Some specific guidance was given: the 80/20 rationale will identify the most valuable services to offer, assessing our wealth and investing in people is the key, northerly synods work indicates this could add value. But there were a few warnings given: not to do it in isolation from the wider mission of the church, and one group said that we've heard a lot about church but we also need to be talking about Kingdom.

*Question two: What elements of the approach do you feel are workable and which elements are not?*

There could be advantages to centralised procurement, safeguarding and employment. Uniting the Trusts would be good and would free resources. Some people were not convinced that structures are the only factor at the heart of our problems. Some thought that amalgamating trusts would be expensive. One group thought that rather than too many synods some synods were already too big, and there is a risk that further centralisation would give the perception of power being even more detached.

*Question three: What changes would you suggest to enhance the approach (either its functionality – making it work better – or its implementability – making it easier to achieve)?*

There needs to be greater thought given to mechanisms for strengthening redistribution of resources not only between synods, but also within synods – rich and poor churches near to each other. One group had a preference for having more field workers, more local training of elders and others (e.g. mentors in *Stepwise* programmes) rather than back office, centralised functions. Another group highlighted the concept of subsidiarity, ie taking decisions as close to those affected as possible, and they felt that synods have a key role in communicating with local churches.

*Question four: How should we start the process? Note this is not a decision to start, simply early planning on what we would do if approval is given.*

The following ideas were suggested:

- Exploring the possibility of one trust; it was felt a good cost benefit analysis was necessary. Prepare a proposal for each Trust to evaluate
- Appoint a vision action group
- Prepare the people for major change
- Start with one element e.g. HR advice and then add others one by one
- Talk to the five northerly synods to learn from their experience
- Build on the success of specific expertise in the synods. It doesn't all have to be provided from one central place
- Always ask how this works for the local church.

### 4. Next steps

There is an appetite for change, and mostly for radical change. We still have time to plan this and to prepare our churches and synods, if we can generate and keep some momentum. Of the many suggestions for next steps these are the three that seem to have support and provide a coherent platform for change:

1. Continue to communicate the message
2. Conduct a feasibility study for the amalgamation of Trust assets
3. Plan to launch one or more coordinated central services (perhaps starting in the northerly synods, if possible).

## **5. Synthesis and consultation**

- 5.1 Any work on trust matters would need careful liaison with the law and polity advisory group, who have already been asked by an assembly commission to clarify the interlocking responsibilities of synods and their associated trust companies (see paper M1, paragraph eleven). The Convenor of LPAG has given initial encouragement to proposal 4.2 above, as a potentially helpful complement to the group's work on these matters. But contact with LPAG would need to remain close, in order to keep lines of discussion and understanding as clear as possible.
- 5.2 Further, any work on trust matters – however preliminary and exploratory – would require careful and measured discussion from the very outset with trustees in the synods. The following draft resolution is worded with this in mind.

## **6. Possible draft resolution on 4.2, above:**

**Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, expresses its desire to consult widely, in order to allow discussion about the possible advantages and disadvantages of any move towards amalgamating Trust bodies. Therefore, Mission Council directs [person or group to be determined] to initiate consultation with synods, with provincial and National Trust companies, and with the URC Trust, with a view to promoting an appropriately careful discussion.**

## **7. Possible draft resolution on 4.3, above:**

**Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, expresses its desire to explore in more detail possible central provision of support services, and therefore directs [person or group to be determined] to initiate consultation with synods, and to bring forward any appropriate proposals that emerge.**

# Paper N1

## Moderators, clerks and councils

### General Assembly task group

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Mrs Val Morrison, Convenor <a href="mailto:valmorrison7@btinternet.com">valmorrison7@btinternet.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Discussion.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>See foot of report.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Exploring the number, tenure and duties of Moderators of Assembly. Considering the succession in the Clerk's post. Some issues around Mission Council.
<b>Main points</b>	All of these subjects present various possible ways forward, and the task group thinks some of these are better than others. Yet its resolutions are a way into the issues rather than in every case a strongly focused recommendation.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Report of task group to General Assembly, July 2018.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	All former Moderators of Assembly.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	Limited to expenses, as the Moderators and Clerk are presently voluntary posts.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	The Assembly Moderators have a representative ecumenical role, and this paper discusses it, among other issues.

## 1. The Moderator of the General Assembly

- 1.1 The General Assembly clearly expressed a desire for further work to be done on the role of Moderator of General Assembly, and the task group has endeavoured to do that.
- 1.2 In preparing this report, the task group undertook a survey of all former Moderators of General Assembly. This was not so that they could exercise any influence, but so that the task group had as clear an idea as possible of the nature and scope of the role.



## 1.3 What is the Moderator for?

- 1.3.1 The office of Moderator of the General Assembly is not at present clearly defined, but it is recognised that election is a call by the Church to give leadership, both inspirationally and in the chair of the General Assembly and the Mission Council.
- 1.3.2 Every discussion of the Assembly Moderatorship in the United Reformed Church reveals a variety of understandings of the nature and extent of the role. Probably the drafters of the Scheme of Union operated with an understanding more akin to that which operated in the Presbyterian Church of England before 1972, but most in the United Reformed Church have no familiarity with that, and have formed their own image of the office, influenced by experiences of presidential leadership in a variety of ecclesiastical and secular contexts, and indeed the pragmatic experience of the office since the URC was formed.
- 1.3.3 There seems to be two chief 'models' for the Moderatorship. One of these is based on the view that the link between individual and corporate leadership is strengthened by emphasising that a Moderator 'moderates' a council by regularly occupying its chair. While past holders of the office may preside on occasions, e.g. when the Moderator has some other role to perform, such as Committee Convenor, continuance in the chair is a recognition of the importance of all the business of the Assembly and enables a leadership akin to that of the orchestral conductor. This model applies also to the chairing of synod meetings, elders' meetings, and church meetings. Some of us believe it to be a creative opportunity, not lightly to be set aside, which holds together the inspirational and the administrative.
- 1.3.4 Others advocate another 'model'; this would see the chief role of the Moderator as inspirational, ceremonial, and representative, on occasion prophetic and visionary. Some could exercise the office in this way who would not be good at presiding over the business of the General Assembly; and those who combine both kinds of gifts are sometimes constrained in the use of some of them by occupying the chair, with the necessary restriction on individual intervention. This style of leadership could be explored and developed in a variety of ways, e.g. by releasing Synod Moderators and local ministers from the chair of meetings so that they could present items of business, and offer more leadership over the substance of the issues under discussion.
- 1.3.5 On reflection, we believe that the present system can do justice to both 'models' of Moderatorship, provided that more use is made of former Moderators. This would:
  - a) give the Moderator freedom not only to take a period of rest but also to leave the chair to participate in a discussion
  - b) free the Assembly to elect someone whose gifts are such that he or she would not wish to be continuously in the chair on the first 'model' above
  - c) provide for the availability of skilled and experienced chairing, since the list of former Moderators is acknowledged to contain those with that particular gift.

- 1.3.6 Bearing this in mind, those former Moderators elected to be members of the General Assembly are likely to be expected to chair sessions of General Assembly, and therefore the former Moderators might wish to bear this in mind when they elect their representatives.
- 1.3.7 It is the belief of the task group that within the present structures of the United Reformed Church there is ample room and opportunity for the kind of leadership that the Church needs. Whether it will in fact be offered depends on the insight, hard work, dedication, and prayerful seeking of every member and every Council.
- 1.3.8 The task group gladly acknowledges that much of section 1.3 is heavily indebted to a report from a previous task group on leadership, presented to the 1986 General Assembly, largely written by the late Revd Principal Martin Cressey.

## **1.4 What does the Moderator do?**

- 1.4.1 Moderate, also described as chairing, the General Assembly, the Mission Council, and some Commissions. The Moderator need not personally chair all business. However, it is essential for the Moderator to chair at least the formal and ceremonial parts of the Assembly, even if others chair the debate of routine business.
- 1.4.2 Represent – the Moderator needs occasionally to represent the United Reformed Church at public occasions such as the ceremony of Remembrance at the Cenotaph, visits of Popes, and such like. Likewise, the Moderator needs to represent the United Reformed Church by visiting local churches on behalf of the Assembly at least twelve times per year. Visiting need not include leading worship or preaching if that is not something the Moderator is able and willing to do. The task group regard these representations as essential.
- 1.4.3 Beyond these essentials, the task group regards it as desirable if the Moderator is able to offer more, according to gifts and availability, including leading worship and preaching when visiting churches, and representing the URC at various UK and international ecumenical events.
- 1.4.4 The task group note that in recent years Moderators of General Assembly have become drawn into attending many of the Assembly's committees. While this has happened with the best intentions of the Moderator being fully immersed in this aspect of the life of the United Reformed Church, the task group recommend that this is no longer a priority for the Moderator. While the Moderator remains an ex officio member of every committee, receives the agenda, papers, and minutes, and is entitled to attend, the task group recommends that the expectation that the Moderator, or Moderator-elect, or immediate past-Moderator, attend all the committees is discontinued. This would not prevent a Moderator who had the time and inclination from becoming involved, but it would remove a significant burden from many which we believe does not bring the greatest benefit to the church.

1.4.5 The task group presents this summary of the immediately preceding paragraphs:

<b>Essential tasks for all Moderators of General Assembly</b>	
Attending all & chairing some of General Assembly	3 weekdays, 2 weekend days per yr
Attending all & chairing some of Mission Council	1 weekday, 2 weekend days per yr
Attending the proposed Business Committee	4 weekdays per year
Representing the URC on Remembrance Sunday	1 weekend day per year
Visiting local churches	12 weekend days per year
<b>Total</b>	<b>8 weekdays and 17 weekend days</b>

<b>Desirable and/or beneficial tasks for all Moderators of General Assembly, but not strictly essential</b>	
International visits	Useful, but not strictly essential
Committees	Useful, but not strictly essential
URC Trust	May not require the Moderator, as represented by the Clerk and the General Secretary <sup>1</sup>
General Assemblies of partner churches	Useful, but not strictly essential
Visiting Resource Centres for Learning	Useful, but not strictly essential

<b>Sporadic representations at occasional events</b>
In recent years, these have included things like: a visit from the Pope, inductions of senior leaders in partner denominations, various 500 <sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the Reformation, the bicentenary of the arrival of LMS missionaries in Madagascar, the 100 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ordination of Constance Coltman, and many other similar things.
The task group propose that these invitations continue to be received by the General Secretary on behalf of the General Assembly. First refusal should normally be offered to a Moderator. Then the General Secretary shall use their discretion to find an appropriate representative of the Assembly from among the General Secretariat, the Assembly Officers, the college of former Moderators of Assembly and Synod Moderators.

---

<sup>1</sup>The task group is aware that this will require a change to the constitution of the United Reformed Church Trust, if it is agreed.

- 1.4.6 The task group was particularly struck by a personal comment from a former Moderator about their sense of responsibility to moderatorial commitments in their diary when a family crisis arose. The task group wish the General Assembly to say unequivocally that the General Assembly does not expect the Moderator always to do whatever they feel the Moderatorship requires, even at the expense of family emergencies.
- 1.4.7 The task group believe that within the essential parameters set out above, each and every Moderator must, upon their election, meet with the General Secretary and the Clerk for an opportunity to discern where their particular gifts do and do not lie; the General Secretary focussing upon the wider life of the church, and the Clerk focussing on the business of the councils of the church. The purpose of such a meeting would be to:
- a) free the Moderator to best exercise the strongest of their gifts
  - b) allow the church to make appropriate alternative arrangements to cover those matters which have not been discerned as the greatest strengths of the Moderator within the time that they have available.
- 1.4.8 The task group notes that there may need to be minor adjustments to the pool of current/former Moderators from whom the Line Manager of the General Secretary is drawn in order to enable a line manager to continue to serve for a worthwhile term.
- 1.4.9 The task group is aware that during any year a number of commissions of Assembly to hear appeals/constitutional reviews/references and disciplinary process appeals, could arise. The skills and availability of a Moderator to chair these should also be discussed in the initial meeting, so that the Assembly Officers know the extent to which a Moderator would be able and willing to chair these personally, or if a former Moderator should be asked.
- 1.4.10 It is clear that arrangements for covering the day-to-day duties of the Moderator were in times past more formalised than they are today. While the United Reformed Church cannot easily work with another employer, it can and should make the best arrangements possible for those who are employed by the United Reformed Church, or those who serve the United Reformed Church as stipendiary ministers, in the same way as it would, for instance, for those on parental leave or long term sick leave. These should be agreed between the pastorate (where relevant), synod (where relevant), and the General Secretariat on behalf of the Assembly, including appropriate financial arrangements.

## **Draft resolution one**

**Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly affirms the vision, nature, scope, and responsibilities of the Moderator of General Assembly, as set out in sections 1.1 to 1.4.10 of this report.<sup>2</sup>**

### **1.5 Possibilities for the number of Moderators and the length of time that they might serve**

---

<sup>2</sup> The reference will be to the pages in the eventual published format.

- 1.5.1 The task group has listened very carefully to all the discussion in the United Reformed Church on possibilities for the number of Moderators and the length of time they serve. We set them all out below, with our best efforts to assess them.
- 1.5.2 *Option A* – Two Moderators serving for three or more years. This option would give a huge amount of continuity to the United Reformed Church and its relationships with ecumenical partners. However, there have been difficulties in securing nominations of people to serve a two-year term, and the task group is unconvinced that increasing the term would make the securing of nominations easier. Furthermore, the task group concluded that such an option would really need to become an employed post, which would have huge implications legally, ecclesiological, financially, and practically. As with all options involving two Moderators, it prevents an elder serving alone. When the system changed to prevent elders serving alone as Moderator it took away one specific and very important thing in the United Reformed Church that an elder could do alone. The task group believe that this option precludes too many people who clearly possess the gifts and calling to serve as Moderator from doing so, and we believe that to be a restriction upon the action of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the task group does not recommend this option.
- 1.5.3 *Option B* – One Moderator to serve for three or more years. The task group does not recommend this option for the same reasons as it does not recommend option A, with the additional factor that this places even more power in the hands of one person.
- 1.5.4 *Option C* – Two Moderators to serve for two years. Initially the status quo has much to commend it, allowing ministers and elders to serve together, modelling collaboration, and providing two heads to think things through. However, the task group is continually drawn back to the fact that it is becoming very difficult indeed to secure nominations, especially of elders, of people willing to serve for a two-year term. As with all options involving two Moderators, it prevents an elder serving alone. The task group therefore does not recommend this option.
- 1.5.5 *Option D* – One Moderator to serve for two years. The advantage of this option is that it offers some of the continuity sought under options A and B, but it remains the case that it is still difficult to secure nominations, and that it could increase the power of one individual. The task group therefore also does not recommend this option.
- 1.5.6 *Option E* – Two Moderators to serve for two years on a staggered system, whereby each General Assembly elects a Moderator to serve for two years, alternately an elder and a Minister of Word and Sacraments/CRCW, so that the pairing changes every year. This has the advantage of one Moderator building experience, while the other Moderator is more experienced. However, this will destroy any sense of continuity, and the Moderatorial team will continually need to be rebuilt. As with all options involving two Moderators, it prevents an elder serving alone. The task group therefore does not recommend this option.

- 1.5.7 *Option F* – Two Moderators to serve for one year. This option has much the same reasons to commend it as option C. As with all options involving two Moderators, it prevents an elder serving alone. The task group therefore does not recommend this option.
- 1.5.8 *Option G* – a different option has been suggested that the Assembly elect a panel of three Chairs to share between them chairing of the meetings, leaving the Moderator free to undertake other aspects of the role. As this proposal separates the two aspects of the Moderatorship that the task group believes it right to hold together, as outlined in section 1.3, the task group therefore does not recommend this option.
- 1.5.9 *Option H* – one Moderator serving for one year. The task group recommend this option for these reasons:
- a) it is most appropriate for an annual Assembly to have a Moderator serving until the close of the next Assembly
  - b) it allows elders to serve alone, thus avoiding any possibility of the perception that they cannot serve without the accompaniment of a Minister
  - c) it is likely to secure the widest and most inclusive pool of nominees
  - d) when there are two Moderators they look on each other as close working partners and may develop a very strong collegueship. If this yoking were unavailable because the Moderator were working solo, it is at least possible in that situation that the Moderator would develop a closer working relationship with the General Secretary, and perhaps also with the Clerk, than is necessary currently. It is therefore possible that electing one Moderator would give the Church an even closer co-ordination between the ongoing service of Church House and the representative work of the Moderator than our present system promotes.
- 1.5.10 In order to make this system as helpful as possible, the task group propose that:
- i) each synod be permitted to nominate one minister and one elder each year, to allow elders the greatest chance of getting onto the ballot paper at General Assembly
  - ii) that every year the ballot be open to both elders and ministers for election. To restrict a particular year to either candidate may result in the Church telling a very good candidate, potentially in the absence of other candidates, that they are not able to stand this year, which seems to the task group to be an attempt to restrict the Holy Spirit
  - iii) that a “college” of former Moderators be developed, so that the gifts of former Moderators can be utilised to fulfil needs identified in paragraph 1.4.5 above in a more systematic way. Such a college may wish to meet together occasionally in order that the wisdom of former Moderators is not lost.
- 1.5.11 The balance between the option presented in 1.5.10 and a possible alternative 1.5.11 is finely balanced. There is a very genuine question of whether the complementarity and parity of ministers and elders is better represented by a ballot paper open to both each year or having the office restricted to alternate years for each ministry, i.e. alternating

one elder and one minister each year. If the General Assembly feels that the balance lies better with alternation that may be moved as an alternative motion.

## Draft resolution two

**Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly agrees that there shall be one Moderator of General Assembly serving for one year, as set out in paragraphs 1.5.9 and 1.5.10, and instructs the Clerk to prepare amendments to the Rules of Procedure to effect this, to be presented to a future meeting of Mission Council or General Assembly.**

The task group is not moving an alternative, but has set out a possible alternative resolution if members of Mission Council wish to so move:

## Draft resolution 2A

**Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly agrees that there shall be one Moderator of General Assembly serving for one year, as set out in paragraphs 1.5.9 and 1.5.11, and instructs the Clerk to prepare amendments to the Rules of Procedure to effect this, to be presented to a future meeting of Mission Council or General Assembly.**

## 2. Mission Council

- 2.1 Given that the General Assembly is now meeting more often, the tasks that fall to Mission Council will be smaller and more focused. Therefore, Mission Council can become a smaller and more focused group. The task group propose that each synod should have three representatives, with the option of their Moderator as one of them. This means that a synod whose Moderator is ill, on sabbatical, close to retirement, or serving in some other capacity that makes them a member of Mission Council need not lose out in its representation.
- 2.2 The United Reformed Church now has a well-established and highly effective General Secretariat, which undertakes a strategic overview of the work of the whole United Reformed Church. This means that there is less need for a Mission Council to 'check the homework' of committees. We also live in an age more digital than ever before, allowing considerable ease of electronic communications. We also remind readers that the General Assembly has already agreed to a future budget predicated upon one meeting of Mission Council.
- 2.3 It is concerning that members of Mission Council are not always members of General Assembly, making it unusual governance for someone to be a member of an executive body, but not a member of the wider body. Therefore, the task group proposes that each year the synods indicate which of their representatives to General Assembly will also represent them on the Mission Council, and any alternates be from their General Assembly representatives. So that there is continuity, synods are encouraged to send some people to General Assembly for more than one year in succession.

- 2.4 The task group reminds readers of its comments in section 17 of our report to the General Assembly 2018 (Reports to Assembly 2018, page 66).
- 2.5 In line with the decision already made by General Assembly, the task group propose that the Convenor of the pastoral reference and welfare committee should not be a member of Mission Council.
- 2.6 As a commitment to efficient use of time and money, the task group propose that Committee Convenors be given explicit permission to send their apologies to Mission Council if they feel the business does not merit their presence.
- 2.7 The United Reformed Church has no wish to demotivate staff in positions of significant responsibility by excluding them from Mission Council. However, the United Reformed Church also has no desire to make staff travel hundreds of miles and use several working days when there is little on the agenda of much obvious relevance to their work. Therefore, the task group proposes that the three Deputy General Secretaries, who are members of Mission Council, are expected to attend, and that they may direct other staff members to attend when the business so requires.
- 2.8 The task group considered recommending that Mission Council meets in the Lumen United Reformed Church, adjacent to Church House. However, this is a costly option because accommodation is expensive in central London. The task group would also wish to avoid the impression that the United Reformed Church is entirely London-centric.
- 2.9 The task group notes that the General Assembly will now meet routinely at The Hayes, Swanwick, Derbyshire, and that the alternation of Mission Council meetings between Swanwick and High Leigh was broadly acceptable. Therefore, the task group recommends that Mission Council meet routinely at High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire. This is less than an hour's travel from London, and is therefore much easier for Church House staff to attend for particular business (see paragraph 2.7).
- 2.10 Mission Council might meet for one 48 hour meeting, or for two shorter time periods. Assuming reduced numbers, our best estimates of the costs of one 48 hour meeting are £17,250, and two 24 hour meetings of a total of £24,500. We believe either figure is of the order of the revised budget. The task group believes that two 24 hour meetings, one in October and one in February, would be the most efficient way to expedite business.
- 2.11 The agenda of the Mission Council will need to encompass opportunities for smaller and more technical pieces of less contentious business, urgent business, and offer committees a chance to test their ideas on a smaller audience than General Assembly.
- 2.12 When Mission Council was first set up, there was a broad vision of coordinating various aspects of the work of the church. However, in recent years Mission Council has not managed to achieve these overarching aims, and the task group notes that the General Secretariat team now undertakes the work of coordination and strategy, and does so far more effectively than anything else in recent memory. Therefore, the task group recommends that Mission Council's remit be to undertake urgent work between meetings of General Assembly, to enable the business of General



Assembly to be undertaken efficiently, and to undertake detailed work on technical matters that is better done in a smaller group.

- 2.13 The task group has returned again to the question of the name of Mission Council. There is still considerable confusion with the mission committee, and the title of Mission Council does not obviously relate closely to the Assembly. Therefore, the task group recommends that the name be changed. We have considered some possibilities:
- a) Council of Assembly
  - b) Assembly Executive
  - c) Executive Council

The task group recommend that Mission Council consider selecting one of these.

### **Draft resolution three**

**Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly agrees that, from the close of General Assembly 2020:**

- a) **Mission Council shall normally meet for two 24 hour meetings, normally in October and February**
- b) **Mission Council shall normally meet at High Leigh Conference Centre**
- c) **the membership of Mission Council shall be as set out in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.7**
- d) **the name of Mission Council shall be changed to Council of Assembly/Assembly Executive/Executive Council.**

### **3. The future of the Mission Council advisory group and the Assembly arrangements committee**

- 3.1 The Assembly arrangements committee's meetings are largely focused upon logistics, often related to the venue, and less upon the order of business. When we are using one venue every time for General Assembly, these logistical concerns will not need the same work. The equivalent logistical work for Mission Council is largely handled within the General Secretariat.
- 3.2 The Mission Council advisory group's most important contribution is the filtering, preparation, and ordering of business and planning for Mission Council.
- 3.3 The task group notes that the Assembly Officers do not all belong to any meeting other than Mission Council or General Assembly. The Assembly Officers have significant responsibility, even if it seldom needs to be exercised. Therefore, it seems to be a curious and unhelpful disjunction that there is no opportunity for them to meet together without creating an extra meeting.

- 3.4 Taking all of this into account, the task group proposes that from the close of General Assembly 2020 both the Assembly arrangements committee and the Mission Council advisory group be abolished, and replaced with a new committee. This new committee shall be a standing committee of the General Assembly, to be known as the business committee.
- 3.5 The remit of the business committee shall be to:
- a) address such logistical questions as arise which the General Secretariat cannot resolve
  - b) supervise the practical and business arrangements for the General Assembly and the Mission Council
  - c) prepare an order of business embracing all the business known to be arising
  - d) to advise the Moderator(s) on their official duties where required.
- 3.6 The composition of the business committee shall be:
- a) an independent convenor (i.e. someone other than the Moderator or General Secretary) nominated by the nominations committee, to serve for a normal four-year term
  - b) The General Secretary
  - c) the Clerk of the General Assembly
  - d) the Moderator(s) of the General Assembly
  - e) the Treasurer
  - f) the Moderator(s)-elect
  - g) the immediate past Moderator(s)
  - h) Two other people nominated by the nominations committee to represent something of the breadth and diversity of the United Reformed Church. One for two years in first instance, the other for three years in first instance, then on normal four-year terms.

The Officers of Assembly shall retain their existing responsibilities, even though they happen to meet within the business committee.

The General Secretary shall be the Secretary of the business committee and may be assisted in this task by such officers and/or support staff as they deem fit.

The Convenor of the business committee shall be an officer of the General Assembly, as the Convenor of the Assembly arrangements committee is at present, because urgent work between meetings often relates to the General Assembly itself.

- 3.7 All committees shall be asked to bring a report on the previous twelve months' work to each Assembly as a retrospective matter of formal report. Each committee shall be encouraged to bring resolutions about new work as and when these are ready. Committees should be encouraged not to bring resolutions which simply reaffirm existing work, because these can take valuable time for little gain. Therefore, the task group proposes a change to the Standing Orders, namely that under Standing Order 5.6 an additional sentence be added:

'5.6.6 simply reaffirms existing work'

## Draft resolution four

Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly agrees that, from the close of General Assembly 2020:

- a) the Assembly arrangements committee and the Mission Council advisory group shall be discharged and abolished
- b) General Assembly offers its thanks to all who have served on these two bodies
- c) A new standing committee of General Assembly, to be known as the business committee, shall be established, with a membership and remit as set out in paragraphs 3.5 and 3.6.

## Draft resolution five

Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly agrees that, from the close of this meeting an additional sentence be added to the Standing Orders:

**'5.6.6 simply reaffirms existing work'**

## 4. Possible options for the future of the role of Clerk of General Assembly

### 4.1 Background

- 4.1.1 The role comes into the United Reformed Church from the Presbyterian Church of England tradition, where the Clerk (an honorary post) dealt with procedural matters, and the full-time General Secretary dealt with operational and managerial matters. In the discussions to form the United Reformed Church it was agreed, against the advice of then office-holders, that the two roles should be combined in the General Secretaryship. However, the United Reformed Church came to separate out the two once more, seeing the wisdom of separating the roles of offering procedural advice, and of making operational, managerial, and pastoral decisions; not least because the pastoral decisions may at times conflict with the procedural advice.
- 4.1.2 It is also important to be aware that each Clerk and each General Secretary will always shape the role to suit their particular gifts, skills, and calling. The Clerk and the General Secretary's terms of office normally overlap in such a way that they do not both change post holder at the same time. The General Secretary is also the permanent Deputy Clerk. We also note that when the present Clerk was appointed in 2014, there were not a large number of candidates keen to take on the role.
- 4.1.3 Michael Hopkins' term as Clerk is due to end at the end of General Assembly 2024, so while a search for a successor need not begin until 2022/3, the issues raised here indicate that the matter requires significant consideration before then.

## 4.2 Issues

4.2.1 The Clerk is routinely a member of or in attendance at:

United Reformed Church Trust  
Assembly arrangements committee  
Mission Council advisory group  
Law and polity advisory group  
MIND (disciplinary and incapacity processes advisory group)  
Mission Council  
General Assembly

4.2.2 Some of these meetings, especially Mission Council and General Assembly, carry a heavy workload in the preparation of material.

4.2.3 In addition, the Clerk may be involved in particular pieces of work, such as the task group on the future of General Assembly.

4.2.4 The Clerk also has a significant role in appeals, constitutional reviews, and references. These are sporadic in nature. Four have arisen within a six month period recently, while before that they arose at intervals of one every year or two. The time required can vary enormously, depending upon the nature of the case.

4.2.5 All of this means that the Clerk's role is necessarily one of the Church's most demanding roles upon a volunteer. It should also be noted that in a small and numerically shrinking Church, the number of people able and willing to undertake the role is rapidly diminishing, and hence the current pattern may not be sustainable *ad infinitum*.

## 4.3 Options for the future

### *Option one – A job-share between two people*

Pro: would lessen the workload on any individual, and therefore may be easier to recruit.

Con: having two people who offer advice may result in different advice being given on the same issue, or an excessive delay while there was always consultation, which could of itself become inefficient. Moving towards clerkship by committee would be a disaster for the Church; the role requires one person to be able to offer definitive advice quickly.

### *Option two – Making it a part-time scoped/employed role*

Pro: would be a realistic expectation of the current work involved.

Con: would involve expense. If it was a stipendiary minister, it would create difficulties for them being able to move to another pastorate, as they would be restricted to a certain percentage of time.

### *Option three – Making it a full-time role*

Pro: would also bring relief on a number of other administrative pinch points, not least administrative work falling to the General Secretary.

Con: would be very expensive, and would not be good use of another ordained minister, if it is a minister, given shortages thereof. It could become a loose cannon kind of job if it became full-time – and one would run into issues about the roles of the General Secretariat and the Clerk.

#### *Option four – Removing the limit to the number of terms a post-holder could serve*

Pro: would give greater flexibility, would increase possibilities for a very specialist role, and would bring into line with Assembly appointed ministerial posts. There can be much wisdom in termed posts, but that need not imply an arbitrary limit to the number of terms.

Con: would be unusual for a volunteer role, and could result in making it harder to replace someone by them holding office for a longer time.

#### *Option five – Merging the role with that of the General Secretary*

Pro: would remove the difficulty of finding an able and willing volunteer.

Con: would remove the separation of procedural and operational/pastoral, and would add considerably to the workload of the General Secretary. It would recreate an experience that turned out not to work. It could also put too much power in the hands of one individual. There is probably good discipline, as well as at its best very good support, in having the two separate roles to support one another and act as a check and balance against one another. A dictatorial General Secretary who was also the Clerk and got to determine procedural matters as they saw fit, could become quite a dangerous character.

#### *Option six – Creating the role of Assistant Clerk*

Pro: would be clearer demarcation than a job share, and may give people experience of the role to help create a pool of possible successors if done for a year or two at a time. It would need to be for particular events or meetings, and would need to provide demonstrable reduction in workload. It might also provide sickness/holiday cover.

Con: as in option one, there are some risks of conflicting advice, although this is lessened; it also adds an additional person to General Assembly and Mission Council. It would also need careful handling with the very good Minutes Secretary, who was recently recruited and to whom care should be taken not to give offence.

Believing that option six presents few difficulties, the task group commends this as a path that the Church could test, with the following resolution:

### **Draft resolution six**

**Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly asks the nominations committee to seek an Assistant Clerk, who would serve in the first instance for two years from January 2020.**

As another way forward, the task group proposes a resolution that embodies option four.

## **Draft resolution 6A**

**Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly resolves that the Clerk may serve for an initial term of up to six years, renewable for further terms of up to four years [without any ceiling on the number of such terms].**

## **Draft resolutions**

### **Draft resolution one**

**Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly affirms the vision, nature, scope, and responsibilities of the Moderator of General Assembly, as set out in sections 1.1 to 1.4.10 of this report.<sup>3</sup>**

### **Draft resolution two**

**Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly agrees that there shall be one Moderator of General Assembly serving for one year, as set out in paragraphs 1.5.9 and 1.5.10, and instructs the Clerk to prepare amendments to the Rules of Procedure to effect this, to be presented to a future meeting of Mission Council or General Assembly.**

### **Draft resolution 2A**

**Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly agrees that there shall be one Moderator of General Assembly serving for one year, as set out in paragraphs 1.5.9 and 1.5.11, and instructs the Clerk to prepare amendments to the Rules of Procedure to effect this, to be presented to a future meeting of Mission Council or General Assembly.**

### **Draft resolution three**

**Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly agrees that, from the close of General Assembly 2020:**

- a) Mission Council shall normally meet for two 24 hour meetings, normally in October and February**
- b) Mission Council shall normally meet at High Leigh Conference Centre**
- c) the membership of Mission Council shall be as set out in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.7**

---

<sup>3</sup> The reference will be to the pages in the eventual published format.

- d) the name of Mission Council shall be changed to Council of Assembly/Assembly Executive/Executive Council.

## **Draft resolution four**

**Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly agrees that, from the close of General Assembly 2020:**

- a) the Assembly arrangements committee and the Mission Council advisory group shall be discharged and abolished
- b) General Assembly offers its thanks to all who have served on these two bodies
- c) A new standing committee of General Assembly, to be known as the business committee, shall be established, with a membership and remit as set out in paragraphs 3.5 and 3.6.

## **Draft resolution five**

**Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly agrees that, from the close of this meeting an additional sentence be added to the Standing Orders:**

**'5.6.6 simply reaffirms existing work'**

## **Draft resolution six**

**Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly asks the nominations committee to seek an Assistant Clerk, who would serve in the first instance for two years from January 2020.**

## **Draft resolution 6A**

**Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly resolves that the Clerk may serve for an initial term of up to six years, renewable for further terms of up to four years [without any ceiling on the number of such terms].**

## **Guidance for group discussion**

Groups A and B to start with resolutions one, two (including 2A) and three in that order.

Groups C and D to start with resolutions three, one and two (including 2A) in that order.

Groups E and F to start with resolutions four, five and six (including 6A) in that order.

Groups G and H to start with resolutions six (including 6A), four and five in that order.

Any group that has addressed the questions assigned may go on to consider the rest of the list in any order they wish.

# Paper N2

## Matters referred to synods

### Task Group on General Assembly

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Convenor <a href="mailto:valmorrison7@btinternet.com">valmorrison7@btinternet.com</a> 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>	<b>Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, gives final approval to four matters referred from General Assembly to synods:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To make the number of synod representatives at General Assembly equal – to be, for the present, sixteen for each synod.</li><li>2. To introduce some flexibility to the 50 to 50 ministerial/lay divide – requiring at least a third of each synod’s representation to be ministerial (this term includes CRCWs) and at least a third to be elders or lay.</li><li>3. To include the synod moderators in the synod figures above, if their synods so wish, rather than giving them a place in Assembly in their own right.</li><li>4. To excuse the Convenor of pastoral reference and welfare from membership of Assembly.</li></ol>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Arrangements for General Assembly from 2020 onwards.
<b>Main points</b>	As resolution.
<b>Previous documents</b>	Task group report to General Assembly, Nottingham, 2018.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	All synods

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	Part of the reason for the task group’s work was to manage the General Assembly within budget.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	No direct impact from these changes.



1. General Assembly, meeting in Nottingham in July 2018, resolved to adopt the following amendments to the structure of the URC:

**1.1 To make the number of synod representatives at General Assembly equal – to be, for the present, 16 for each synod.**

**1.2 To introduce some flexibility to the 50 to 50 ministerial/lay divide – requiring at least a third of each synod’s representation to be ministerial (this term includes CRCWs) and at least a third to be elders or lay.**

**Current version of section two (6)(a) of the structure:**

The General Assembly ... shall consist of:

(a) Such number of representatives of synods (ministerial and lay in equal numbers) as the General Assembly shall from time to time determine. These numbers shall be calculated proportionately to the total membership of each synod, as recorded in the year book of the United Reformed Church (at present this calculation shall be such as to produce a total of synod representatives not exceeding 250).

**Proposed new version of section two (6)(a):**

The General Assembly ... shall consist of:

**(a) Such number of representatives of synods as the General Assembly shall from time to time determine. (At present this number shall be 16 per synod, to produce a total of 208 synod representatives). Within each synod’s representation, at least one third shall be ministerial and at least one third elders or lay;**

**1.3 To include the synod moderators in the synod figures above, if their synods so wish, rather than giving them a place in Assembly in their own right.**

**Current version of section two (6)(c and d):**

The General Assembly ... shall consist of:

(c) The Moderators of the General Assembly and of the synods, and such other officers of the General Assembly as the General Assembly shall from time to time determine (The Assembly has determined that the Clerk of Assembly and the General Secretary shall be members of Assembly);

(d) Where the Moderator of synod is an officer of the Assembly, the synod concerned shall appoint a substitute as its representative;

**Proposed new version of section two (6)(c and d):**

The General Assembly ... shall consist of:

**(c) As above, without the words ‘and of the synods’;**

**(d) To be dropped.**

Comment: Synod Moderators may be included in the synod representation, if their synods wish. If a Moderator were on sabbatical, for example, or unwell, a synod would be free to appoint someone else. Thus Moderators are no longer to be mentioned in (c). Then (d) becomes unnecessary, because a synod could simply appoint someone else, if its Moderator were coming to Assembly in another role.

N.B. There will need to be some relabelling of paragraphs if (d) disappears. This does not need a vote. It will be sorted out once the substance of any changes has been agreed.

**1.4 To excuse the Convenor of pastoral reference and welfare from membership of Assembly.**

**Current version of section two (6)(e):**

The General Assembly ... shall consist of:

(e) The convenor of each of the standing committees of the General Assembly;

**Proposed new version of section two (6)(e):**

**The General Assembly ... shall consist of:**

**(e) The convenor of each of the standing committees of the General Assembly, apart from the pastoral reference and welfare committee;**

2. These changes to the structure of the URC were referred to the synods, with a response date of 31 March 2019.
3. No synods have asked that any of these changes ‘be not proceeded with’.
4. One synod, Wessex, spent much time talking about the first of these four changes, and eventually decided not to resist it, as that might appear to indicate support for the status quo. They did, however, resolve in the following terms, and if requested, the Synod Clerk would be willing to explain their concern to Mission Council.
 

**“Wessex Synod recognises the imperfections of the current system of allocating numbers of representatives to General Assembly between the Synods, but is not convinced that the proposed solution is the best way of addressing the issue. Wessex Synod therefore requests General Assembly to consider alternative proposals to address this matter.”**
5. Since the above was the response of only one synod, the task group adheres to its original recommendation and presents the four changes for formal approval, so that clear arrangements for 2020 may be made.
6. The task group would be willing, if so directed by Mission Council, “to consider alternative proposals to address the matter”, and it would hope to report back in the autumn of this year. Any further changes to these clauses of the structure could not then take effect before the 2021 Assembly.

# Paper 01

## Recruitment to the General Secretariat for the next decade and beyond

### Human resources advisory group

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Geoff Shaw <a href="mailto:geoffshaw2810@sky.com">geoffshaw2810@sky.com</a>  Jane Baird <a href="mailto:jane.baird@urc.org.uk">jane.baird@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Mission Council approves the updated job descriptions and person specifications (appendix 1) for the recruitment of the next General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary (discipleship).</b></li><li><b>Mission Council supports the creation of a task group to formulate a strategy that will ensure that the URC is equipped to meet the challenges of being Church in the next decade and beyond.</b></li></ol> <p><b>(A proposal for the group is attached as appendix two).</b></p>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	<p>To ensure that the recruitment for the General Secretariat posts becoming vacant in 2020 is in line with the future needs of the church.</p> <p>To ensure that the URC has a means of creating a strategy to meet the challenges it faces today and in the future.</p>
<b>Main points</b>	<p>The General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary (discipleship) will retire in the summer of 2020.</p> <p>Before the recruitment process commences (June 2019) it is important to confirm that the General Secretariat is meeting the needs of the organisation and that the roles being recruited to are appropriate for the future needs of the United Reformed Church.</p> <p>There is a need to clarify how great a role the General Secretariat, particularly the General Secretary, should play in setting the future strategy and vision for the United Reformed Church.</p>

<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper B1 Mission Council May 2013 Paper O2 Mission Council November 2013.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Current General Assembly Moderators Past General Assembly Moderator Synod Moderators * Committee convenors * Synod Clerks * Officers of Assembly* Church House staff *  *Consultation carried out with these groups through a structured questionnaire with an opportunity for narrative comments.

## Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	Minimal – expenses associated with a strategy task group (which may lead to future long-term cost savings).
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	

1. In the autumn of 2018 the General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary (discipleship) made it known that they would retire in the summer of 2020.
2. The human resources advisory group (HRAG) reviews new and amended job descriptions and person specifications, particularly in a recruitment situation.
3. The current General Secretariat structure agreed at Mission Council in 2013 and implemented when the present incumbents were appointed in 2014/2015 had not been reviewed since its creation.
4. HRAG was asked to undertake a review to investigate:
  - a) whether the restructure had met its objectives; and
  - b) the extent to which the structure should be altered in the light of the impending recruitment.
5. HRAG met with the two current General Assembly Moderators and immediate past Moderator Mr. Alan Yates who acts as the General Secretary's line manager. The same group of people has been involved throughout the review process.
6. HRAG therefore proposed that the wider church be asked for its views on the current structure, its suitability for the challenges ahead and on the General Secretariat job descriptions. It was felt that the most effective way to obtain these views would be by means of a structured questionnaire.
7. HRAG developed two questionnaires:
  - a) one for Church House staff to explore whether the objectives about team structures and management had been met;

- b) one for a wider group of those who come into regular contact with the General Secretariat including Synod Moderators and Clerks, committee Convenors, General Assembly Moderators and Officers of Assembly.
8. A timetable was devised which fitted with the requirements of the recruitment process, and the questionnaires were distributed in January 2019. The questionnaires included sections with multiple choice 'tick box' responses and the opportunity to expand on the response in a narrative format.
  9. The two current General Assembly Moderators and the past Moderator, Alan Yates, were involved in the development process, the review of the results and the subsequent updating of job descriptions.
  10. The results for the Church House staff questionnaire, indicated that on the whole the objectives of the 2014 reorganisation are being met and that it had met the needs of the URC in the intervening period. It identified a motivated workforce with staff being given time by their managers; however, it did identify a few management issues which will need to be addressed.
  11. The Convenors, synods and Assembly Officers questionnaire (appendix three) also indicated that the overall objectives of the 2014 structure are being met, although not as strongly as the Church House staff. This group gave a spread of responses when asked about the 'delivery of agreed policies into the life of the church'. Whilst 74% felt it had been effective a significant number, 26%, felt it had been minimal. When asked about the structure meeting the needs of General Assembly and Mission Council there was a positive response 89%. When asked about support to synods this dropped to a much lower level 56%.
  12. In responding to the question as to whether the General Secretariat structure set up in 2014/15 had met the needs of the URC in the intervening period 93% of respondents agreed totally or to a large extent.
  13. However, when asked whether the structure was right for the future there was less certainty. Around 60% agreed totally or to a large extent that the structure is appropriate for the challenges the church faces (question 17). The responses to question 18 indicated little appetite for a reorganization of the three departments. In fact, some of the narrative responses cautioned against another reorganization.
  14. Narrative responses indicated there is clearly a need to face up to the challenges we meet. However, it is also clear that the challenges are widespread and for the whole church and that will not be achieved by reorganisation at General Secretariat level.
  15. Whilst the statistics provide a framework from which to explore the challenge posed in 10 above, it is in the narrative comments where we find some frequent themes and comments which can be summarised as follows:
    - a) There is a need, in the organisation, for an individual, or body, with a strategic vision of the needs of the denomination for the 2020s and beyond.
    - b) There is a need to facilitate, support and inspire the thinking of others in an environment which fosters and encourages change.
  16. Responses to the way the roles of the General Secretariat might change and the qualities required by the new General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary (discipleship) were so wide-ranging as to be inconclusive.
  17. HRAG listened to all that was being said and HRAG conclusions concerning the forthcoming recruitment are:

- a) The role of the General Secretary is that of someone who nurtures, supports and facilitates the work of others.
  - b) The General Secretary does not have responsibility for the strategic development of the church, but supports and contributes to it alongside others.
  - c) The General Secretary should be someone who can facilitate, support and inspire the thinking of others and who is able to foster an environment in which change is encouraged.
18. These conclusions have clear implications for the recruitment process. The job description and person specification have been revised for the General Secretary and this is attached as Appendix one.
19. Adjustments have also been made to the job description and person specification for the Deputy General Secretary (discipleship) role which, where appropriate, include a focus on change. This is also to be found in appendix 1.
20. HRAG and the review group (paragraph five above) acknowledge a strong and heartfelt need for the United Reformed Church to plan for the future and therefore recommend the creation of a task group to define and implement a strategy that will help the Church meet the challenges of the next decade and beyond. A proposal for such a group is shown at appendix two.

## Appendix one

Revised job descriptions/person specifications for:

### A General Secretary



#### Job description

<b>Job title</b>	<b>General Secretary</b>
<b>Area/department</b>	General Assembly/General Secretariat
<b>Reporting to</b>	The General Assembly (via an agreed, specified Moderator of General Assembly)
<b>Direct reports</b>	Deputy General Secretary (administration and resources), Deputy General Secretary (discipleship), Deputy General Secretary (mission), Company Secretary, PA to General Secretary, and oversight of the Synod Moderators and Assembly Clerk
<b>Location</b>	Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London, WC1H 9RT
<b>Travel</b>	Occasional travel in UK and overseas
<b>Working hours</b>	40 hours per week
<b>Salary band</b>	Ministers stipend
<p><b>Job summary:</b> To provide theological and pastoral leadership and operational oversight in service to synods and local churches of the URC by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implementing the policies and decisions of General Assembly/Mission Council</li> <li>• the management of Church House through the General Secretariat</li> <li>• ensuring links with the wider Church and the fostering and maintenance of positive external relations</li> <li>• demonstrating zeal for God.</li> </ul>	

**Background:** The General Secretariat was established to give delegated Christian leadership on behalf of the whole Church in establishing the Christian ethos throughout, and managing the work of, Church House. This Christian framework and ethos will be derived from the theology of the Church while also providing and developing effective and efficient ways of working.

The General Secretary and the three Deputy General Secretaries are the members of the General Secretariat; they work closely together as Christian leaders holding the confidence of the Church in order to ensure that the theology and ethos of the URC imbues all the work undertaken by the

various departments in Church House.

The particular work undertaken at Church House by each of the Departments facilitates the life and mission of the URC; and Church House itself is an integral part of the structure of the denomination. On occasion the members of the General Secretariat also have a representative function on behalf of the Church to secular bodies.

## **Principal responsibilities and duties**

### **Provide theological and pastoral leadership which meets the current needs of the denomination and fosters an environment in which future needs are identified and implemented**

1. Ensure that the life and mission of the URC are undergirded by its theological understanding, as expressed in the Basis of Union.
2. Advise on structures of the URC and their appropriateness for current and future needs.
3. Facilitate openness to new ways of organising and managing the life and work of the URC.
4. Facilitate, support and participate in a strategy task group.

### **Provide pastoral and operational oversight to the URC**

1. Provide pastoral oversight to the Synod Moderators.
2. Respond to Synod issues and opportunities as appropriate.
3. Be an ex-officio member of all Assembly standing committees and the URC Trust.

### **Service both General Assembly and Mission Council**

1. Agree the work of the agenda setting bodies.
2. Ensure the effective work and reporting of Assembly arrangements committee and Mission Council advisory groups.
3. Ensure the smooth and effective running of General Assembly and Mission Council.
4. Ensure decisions of General Assembly and Mission Council are reported and implemented. Act as required in relation to the disciplinary process and incapacity procedures.

### **Provide leadership to, and management of, the three Deputy General Secretaries who form the General Secretariat**

1. Agree the objectives and priorities for each of the Deputy General Secretaries in the light of Assembly and Mission Council decisions.
2. Ensure Church House work plans are coordinated and delivered.
3. Foster a climate that channels the energy from competent, motivated specialists.
4. Monitor and manage individual performance within the Secretariat agreeing appropriate personal development.

### **Oversee the coordination of the work of Church House**



1. Ensure the effective functioning of the General Secretariat team.
2. Ensure effective communications with Church House staff through team and Connective meetings and other mechanisms as required.
3. Encourage and ensure cross-department project and task groups to meet agreed objectives.
4. Manage the General Secretariat budget.
5. Ensure personal and staff compliance with all relevant legal requirements (e.g. health and safety, safeguarding, data protection).

### **Foster, and maintain, links with the wider Church**

1. Develop relationships with senior officers of other Churches and be alert to opportunities for closer ecumenical links or collaborative work.
2. Represent the URC on national and international ecumenical bodies.
3. Work closely with the Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries and the Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations on matters relating to partner Churches and UK ecumenical legal arrangements.

### **Ensure positive external relations**

1. Speak publicly on behalf of the Church, in consultation with the Moderators of General Assembly and with the Communications Officer, and with others as necessary.
2. Act, as and when necessary, to maintain and protect the reputation and image of the URC, in conjunction with communications.

### **Working with committees and volunteers**

*This section lists the type and level of interaction that this role has with committees and other groups. It will vary from time to time and as directed by a General Assembly Moderator.*

1. An ex-officio member of all standing committees that give direction to the work of the Church, attending when appropriate.

**Revised January 2019**

---

### **Expected Standards**

*This section refers to the way in which the job is done rather than the duties/responsibilities.*

1. Promote a culture of open and effective communication to enable constructive relationships with internal and external colleagues.
2. Actively foster an environment which nurtures equality and cherishes diversity.
3. Promote, monitor and maintain best practice in health, safety and security.
4. Work collaboratively to develop a service culture which fosters continuous improvement.

5. Take responsibility for own personal development and support the development of others to enhance their skills and knowledge.
6. Promote, monitor and maintain best practice in data protection principles and practice.
7. Actively promote, manage and maintain best practice in safeguarding.

*This job description reflects the overall scope and responsibilities of the role. However, it is not an exhaustive list and the job holder is expected to undertake any other reasonable duties that might be requested. All jobs change or evolve over time in order to meet organizational or departmental needs and this job description will therefore be subject to periodic review and change if required.*

## Person specification

**Job title: General Secretary**

Requirement	Essential	Desirable	Measurement
Education and qualifications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ordained to the Ministry of the United Reformed Church*</li> <li>2. Degree level or equivalent theological qualification</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• evidence of keeping abreast with theological thinking</li> </ul>	Application form, references and interview
Experience	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Change management</li> <li>4. Conflict resolution</li> <li>5. Crisis management</li> <li>6. Collaborative and ecumenical working within and beyond the Church</li> <li>7. Conciliar leadership</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• exposure with the media</li> </ul>	Application form and interview
Knowledge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. A wide awareness of contemporary political and social issues with an ability to reflect on them theologically.</li> <li>9. An appreciation of, and sensitivity to, the complex nature of the URC, recognising the theological diversity within the denomination</li> <li>10. An understanding of, and commitment to, a diverse church</li> <li>11. The wider Reformed and other Christian traditions</li> <li>12. Awareness of how organisations function and develop</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• other faiths</li> </ul>	Application form and interview
Skills and Abilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13. Able to inspire confidence</li> <li>14. Demonstrate effective public speaking skills</li> <li>15. Ability to think strategically and encourage others to do the same</li> <li>16. Skilful manager of people</li> <li>17. Sound leadership skills</li> <li>18. Ability to foster a supportive staff community</li> <li>19. Able to prioritise a demanding workload through effective time management and delegation</li> <li>20. Effective pastoral and listening skills</li> <li>21. Strong written skills</li> <li>22. Analytical skills</li> <li>23. Persuasiveness</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• able to interact comfortably in a wide variety of contexts</li> </ul>	Application form, references and interview

\*In accordance with the Equality Act 2010: Part 1, Schedule 9, there is an occupational requirement for the post holder to be an ordained Minister of the United Reformed Church.

## B Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship)



## Job description

<b>Job title</b>	<b>Deputy General Secretary (discipleship)</b>
<b>Area/department</b>	General Secretariat/discipleship
<b>Reporting to</b>	The General Secretary
<b>Direct reports</b>	CRCW Development Worker, Head of Children's and Youth Work, Safeguarding Adviser, Secretary for Education & Learning, Secretary for Ministries and a Personal Assistant
<b>Location</b>	Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London, WC1H 9RT
<b>Travel</b>	Occasional travel in UK and overseas
<b>Working hours</b>	35/40 hours per week
<b>Salary band</b>	Band 7 or Ministers Stipend
<p><b>Job Summary:</b> Manage and lead the Discipleship Department and integrate its work into the overall work of Church House, ensuring its priorities and ethos reflect the theology and principles of the wider Church and hence further God's purposes. As a full member of the General Secretariat, share in the exercise of theologically-informed Christian leadership of Church House, ensuring the implementation of decisions of General Assembly or Mission Council and the effective running of the whole staff team.</p>	

**Background:** The General Secretariat was established to give delegated Christian leadership on behalf of the whole Church in establishing the Christian ethos throughout, and managing the work of, Church House. This Christian framework and ethos will be derived from the theology of the Church while also providing and developing effective and efficient ways of working.

The General Secretary and the three Deputy General Secretaries are the members of the General Secretariat; they work closely together as Christian leaders holding the confidence of the Church in order to ensure that the theology and ethos of the URC imbues all the work undertaken by the various departments in Church House.

The particular work undertaken at Church House by each of the Departments facilitates the life and mission of the URC and Church House itself is an integral part of the structure of the denomination. On occasion the members of the General Secretariat also have a representative function on behalf of the Church to secular bodies.

## Principal responsibilities and duties

### A. Department management

1. Exercise leadership in explaining and demonstrating how theological principles shape the use of human and other resources in the life of the Church.
2. Develop and co-ordinate the work of the Department.
3. Foster effective working relationships with the Committees that relate to the Department's work.
4. Implement the decisions of General Assembly and Mission Council.
5. Manage direct reports.
6. As line manager:
  - Provide overall departmental representation within the Secretariat
  - Offer accessibility and presence for staff when needed
  - Share the 'big picture'/strategic issues and make connections between groups, providing staff with regular updates
  - Manage staff performance:
    - i. Ensure that staff are equipped to carry out the roles which they currently occupy, and where necessary identify suitable training to ensure that their skills are up-to-date and relevant
    - ii. Delegate work in an appropriate and supportive manner
    - iii. Provide decision-making support and, where appropriate, ensure decisions are taken in a timely manner
    - iv. Provide regular performance feedback to staff and conducting annual appraisal of direct reports with input from committee Conveners.
7. Manage the department budget.

### B. Specialist role

Resource and encourage those concerned with helping the growth in faith and service (discipleship) among people of all ages:

1. Maintain an overview of the whole ministries of the Church and oversee the way in which they are developed and supported.
2. Keep up to date with developments in the understanding of discipleship in light of trends in contemporary society so that our discipleship initiatives remain contextual and relational.
3. Encourage the spiritual and organisational vitality of local churches enabling support materials available to synods, ministers and elders.
4. Advocate worship and theological reflection across the Church.
5. Act as Secretary to the pastoral reference and welfare committee.
6. Serve as the General Assembly representative in respect of the ministerial disciplinary process.
7. Ensure the denomination has safeguarding practices in place and up to date policies are available.

## C. General Secretariat

1. Contribute fully to the Christian leadership expected of the General Secretariat both by sharing in its collective work and worship and by personal example.
2. As a member of the General Secretariat, support and implement the work of General Assembly and Mission Council.
3. Work with the Connective meeting of senior staff to share information and encourage collaboration.
4. Ensure good management of Church House.
5. Maintain a broad overview of the life and work of Church House and its interface with the wider URC.
6. Act as a member of General Assembly and Mission Council, share in the worship, theological reflection and decision-making of these Christian governance bodies.

### Working with committees and volunteers

*This section lists the type and level of interaction that this role has with committees and other groups. It will vary from time to time and as directed by the General Secretary.*

2. Pastoral welfare committee: *meets three times per year, act as Secretary.*
3. An ex-officio member of all standing committees that give direction to the work of the department, attending when appropriate.

Revised January 2019

---

### Expected standards

*This section refers to the way in which the job is done rather than the duties/responsibilities.*

1. Promote a culture of open and effective communication to enable constructive relationships with internal and external colleagues.
2. Actively foster an environment which nurtures equality and cherishes diversity.
3. Promote, monitor and maintain best practice in health, safety and security.
4. Work collaboratively to develop a service culture which fosters continuous improvement.
5. Take responsibility for own personal development and support the development of others to enhance their skills and knowledge.
6. Promote, monitor and maintain best practice in data protection principles and practice.
7. Actively promote, manage and maintain best practice in safeguarding.

*This job description reflects the overall scope and responsibilities of the role. However, it is not an exhaustive list and the job holder is expected to undertake any other reasonable duties that might be requested. All jobs change or evolve over time in order to meet organizational or departmental needs and this job description will therefore be subject to periodic review and change if required.*

## Person specification

**Job title: Deputy General Secretary (discipleship)**

Requirements	Essential	Desirable	Measurement
Education and qualifications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Degree level or equivalent</li> <li>Proven theological competence</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>theological training</li> </ul>	Application form/ interview
Experience	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A wide spectrum of ministries</li> <li>Communicating ideas and concepts to a wide range of people</li> <li>Leadership and management</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ecumenical working</li> <li>leading a small organisation</li> </ul>	Application form/ interview
Knowledge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A wide awareness of contemporary political and social issues with an ability to reflect on them theologically</li> <li>The United Reformed Church and its structures</li> <li>An appreciation of, and sensitivity to, the complex nature of the URC, recognising the theological diversity within the denomination</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>safeguarding</li> </ul>	Application form/ interview
Skills and Abilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proven organisational ability</li> <li>Ability to work as a member of a senior management team</li> <li>Creativity and imagination</li> <li>Able to inspire others</li> <li>Able to reflect on theology and context</li> <li>Able to think strategically and formulate short and long- term plans</li> <li>Able to develop a broad overview of the organisation</li> <li>Able to inspire, manage and motivate a team</li> <li>Able to facilitate cross functional team working</li> <li>Ability to make effective presentations to a variety of audiences</li> <li>Able to represent the work of a department to others</li> <li>MS Office suite, specifically Word, Excel, PowerPoint.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>negotiating and facilitation skills</li> <li>managing budget</li> </ul>	Application form/ interview
Other	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Member of the United Reformed Church or member of a church which belongs to one or more of World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council (DECC), the Council for World Mission (CWM)*</li> <li>A practising Christian*</li> <li>DBS</li> </ol>		

\*In accordance with the Equality Act 2010: Part 1, Schedule 9, there is an occupational requirement for the post holder to be a practising Christian.

## Appendix two

Proposal for a: **Strategy task group**

Purpose	To help the URC to become more fit for God's purpose for the next decade and beyond
Remit	To review the whole life of the United Reformed Church to determine ways in which it can better: Fulfil its mission in the world Release resources for mission Support its members and churches Be an efficient steward of resources in the widest sense
Membership	1 x General Assembly Moderator (past, present or elect) - <b>Convenor</b> 3 x Synod Moderators 3 x Assembly committee convenors 3 x local church members (lay) General Secretary 1 x Deputy General Secretary
Length of service	Initially four years with the possibility of serving an additional two years.  (The initial group should have 'staggered' end dates to avoid the group all ending their service at the same time)

### Notes:

- The General Secretary and a General Assembly Moderator (past, current or elect) would be ex-officio members of the group
- Each of the first three constituent groups would select their representatives against a given brief
- The local church members would be selected by the Synod Moderators but should not be from the same Synods as the appointed Synod Moderators
- Convenor of the group would be selected by the General Assembly Moderators.



## Appendix three

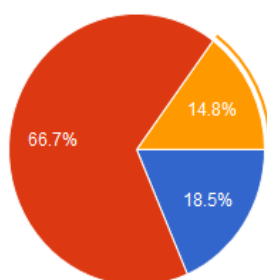
### Graphical analysis of committee Convenors and synods group survey January 2019 page 15

#### Survey area one – overall Church house structure

Objective of the 2012 review was: To implement an effective structure which delivers in the three key areas of (a) management (b) professional advice/support (c) implementation

##### Question one

To what extent do you think the OVERALL OBJECTIVE outlined above has been met?

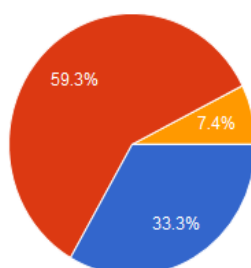


- Fully achieved
- Achieved to an acceptable level
- Achieved to a minimal extent
- Not achieved

Total responses		27
Fully achieved	5	
Achieved to an acceptable level	18	
Achieved to a minimal extent	4	
Not achieved	0	

##### Question two

Objective (a) management – ‘The oversight and leadership of Church House staff as they develop and implement the policies and activities as agreed by the governing bodies’. To what extent do you think the structure at Church House provides the framework for clear oversight and leadership at the General Secretariat Level (General Secretary and three Deputy General Secretaries)?

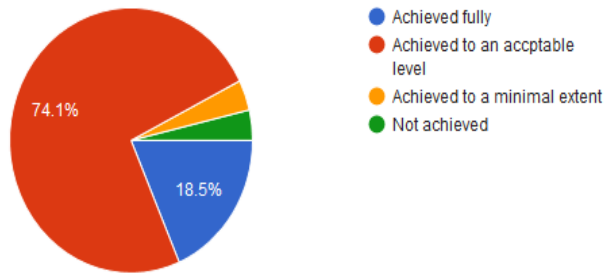


- Provides fully
- Provides to an acceptable level
- Provides to a minimal extent
- Does not provide

Total responses		27
Provides fully	9	
Provides to an acceptable level	16	
Provides to a minimal extent	2	
Does not provide	0	

## Question three

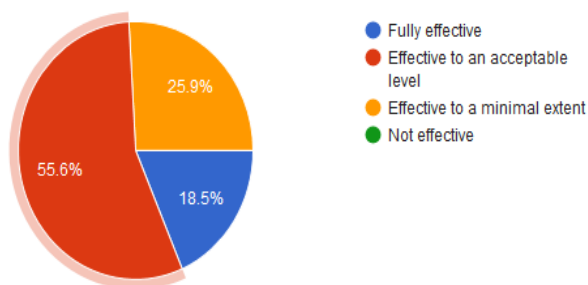
Objective (b) professional advice and support – ‘The provision of professional input, knowledge and expertise to enable decision making and implementation’. In your opinion the objective above has been:



Total responses	Count
Achieved fully	5
Achieved to an acceptable level	20
Achieved to a minimal extent	1
Not achieved	1

## Question four

Objective (c) implementation – ‘The delivery of agreed policies and programmes into the life of the church’. How effective has the structure at Church House been in enabling the above objective to be met?



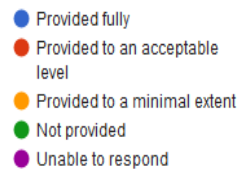
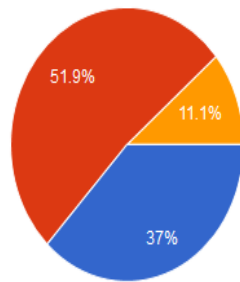
Total responses	Count
Fully effective	5
Effective to an acceptable level	15
Effective to a minimal extent	7
Not effective	0

## Survey area two – the role of Church House

**Objective of the 2012 review: To ensure that Church House understands itself as having three roles (a) providing a General Secretariat (b) providing service functions which meet the needs of the wider church (c) maintaining communications networks**

### Question five

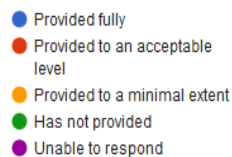
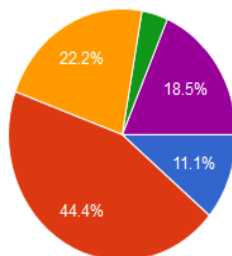
Objective (a) to what extent do you feel the structure at Church House has provided a General Secretariat that meets the needs of General Assembly and Mission Council?



Total responses	27
Provided fully	10
Provided to an acceptable level	14
Provided to a minimal extent	3
Not provided	0
Unable to respond	0

### Question six

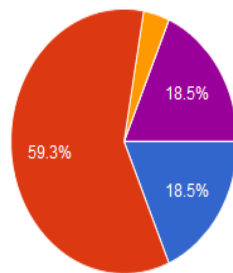
Objective (b) to what extent do you feel the structure at Church House has provided the service functions being sought by synods?



Total responses	27
Provided fully	3
Provided to an acceptable level	12
Provided to a minimal extent	6
Has not provided	1
Unable to respond	5

## Question seven

To what extent do you feel the structure at Church House has provided the service functions being sought by committees?

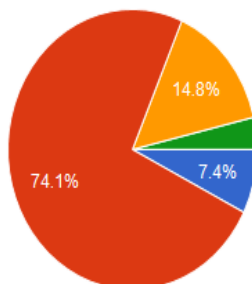


- Provided fully
- Provided to an acceptable level
- Provided to a minimal extent
- Has not provided
- Unable to respond

Total responses	Count
Provided fully	5
Provided to an acceptable level	16
Provided to a minimal extent	1
Has not provided	0
Unable to respond	5

## Question eight

Objective (c) to what extent do you feel the structure at Church House has facilitated communication networks WITHIN the URC?

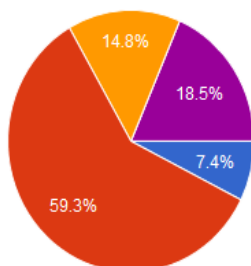


- Facilitated fully
- Facilitated to an acceptable level
- Facilitated to a minimal extent
- Has not facilitated
- Unable to respond

Total responses	Count
Facilitated fully	2
Facilitated to an acceptable level	20
Facilitated to a minimal extent	4
Has not facilitated	1
Unable to respond	0

## Question nine

To what extent do you feel the structure at Church House has facilitated communication networks BETWEEN the URC and wider society?



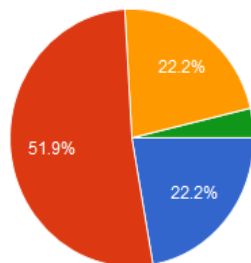
- Facilitated fully
- Facilitated to an acceptable level
- Facilitated to a minimal extent
- Has not facilitated
- Unable to respond

Total responses	Count
Facilitated fully	2
Facilitated to an acceptable level	16
Facilitated to a minimal extent	4
Has not facilitated	0
Unable to respond	5

## Survey area three – department structure

### Question ten

To what extent does the structure of the three departments still represent the most effective way of working?

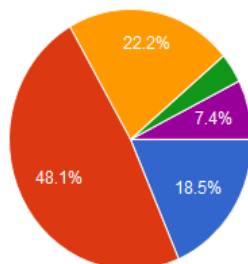


- It is the best structure
- It is effective to an acceptable level
- It is effective to some extent
- It is not effective
- Unable to respond

Total responses	27
It is the best structure	6
It is effective to an acceptable level	14
It is effective to some extent	6
It is not effective	1
Unable to respond	0

### Question eleven

The structure provides a clear separation of roles and responsibilities between the three departments:

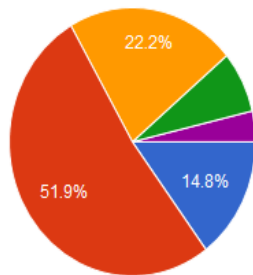


- I agree totally
- I agree to a large extent
- I agree to a limited extent
- I disagree
- Unable to respond

Total responses	27
I agree totally	5
I agree to a large extent	13
I agree to a limited extent	6
I disagree	1
Unable to respond	2

**Question twelve**

The structure creates clear accountability for the development of specific initiatives and programmes which the Church has requested:

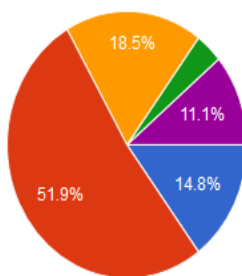


- I agree totally
- I agree to a large extent
- I agree to a limited extent
- I disagree
- Unable to respond

<b>Total responses</b>	<b>27</b>
I agree totally	4
I agree to a large extent	14
I agree to a limited extent	6
I disagree	2
Unable to respond	1

**Question 13**

The changes have resulted in better coordination of the work being carried out:

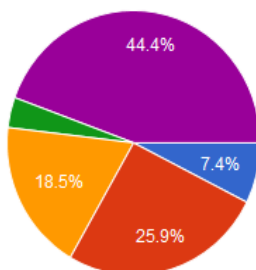


- I agree totally
- I agree to a large extent
- I agree to a limited extent
- I disagree
- Unable to respond

<b>Total responses</b>	<b>27</b>
I agree totally	4
I agree to a large extent	14
I agree to a limited extent	5
I disagree	1
Unable to respond	3

**Question 14**

The 2012 review acknowledged that there was confusion between the roles of committee Convenors and staff line managers. The changes have enabled the confusion between the roles of committee convenor and staff line managers to be clarified:

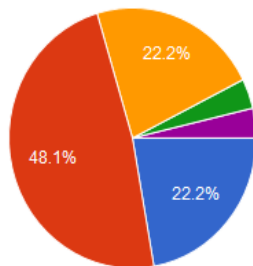


- I agree totally
- I agree to a large extent
- I agree to a limited extent
- I disagree
- Unable to respond

<b>Total responses</b>	<b>27</b>
I agree totally	2
I agree to a large extent	7
I agree to a limited extent	5
I disagree	1
Unable to respond	12

**Question 15**

The discipleship department's responsibilities include: ministerial recognition, ministries training and equipping of the whole people of God, effective coordination of youth and children's work, equal opportunities and safeguarding. The discipleship department meets its responsibilities for the areas defined above with regards to its activities at Church House:



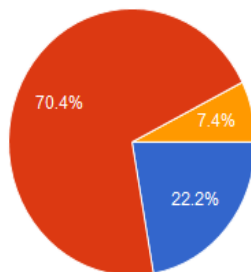
- I agree totally
- I agree to a large extent
- I agree to a limited extent
- I disagree
- Unable to respond

Total responses	Count
I agree totally	6
I agree to a large extent	13
I agree to a limited extent	6
I disagree	1
Unable to respond	1

**Survey area four – looking to the future**

**Question 16**

The current General Secretariat structure set up in 2014/15 has met the needs of the URC in the intervening period:

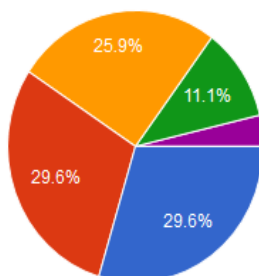


- I agree totally
- I agree to a large extent
- I agree to a limited extent
- I disagree
- Unable to respond

Total responses	Count
I agree totally	6
I agree to a large extent	19
I agree to a limited extent	2
I disagree	0
Unable to respond	0

**Question 17**

As we move into the 2020s the current General Secretariat structure is appropriate for the challenges we face:

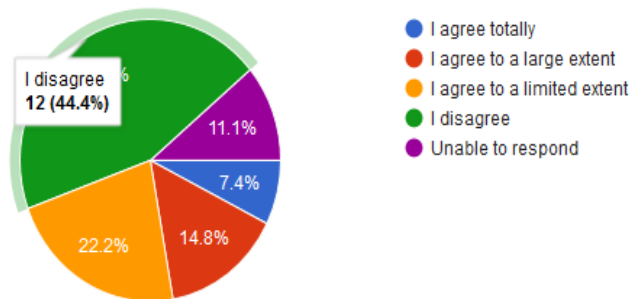


- I agree totally
- I agree to a large extent
- I agree to a limited extent
- I disagree
- Unable to respond

Total responses	Count
I agree totally	8
I agree to a large extent	8
I agree to a limited extent	7
I disagree	3
Unable to respond	1

## Question 18

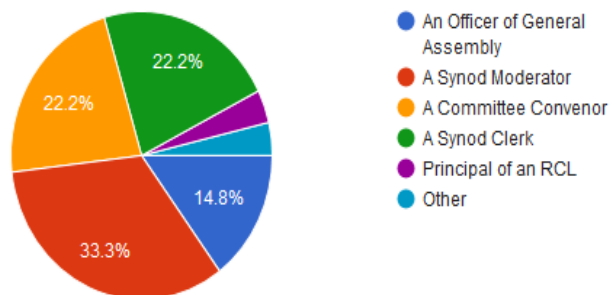
The URC would be more likely to meet the challenges ahead if the activities currently undertaken across the three departments were re-organised:



Total responses		27
I agree totally		2
I agree to a large extent		4
I agree to a limited extent		6
I disagree		12
Unable to respond		3

## About you

I am completing this questionnaire in my capacity as:



Total responses		27
An Officer of General Assembly		4
A Synod Moderator		9
A Committee Convenor		6
A Synod Clerk		6
Principal of an RCL		1
Other		1



# Paper 02

## Tenure of Assembly appointed stipendiary Ministers of Word and Sacraments

Human resources advisory group

### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Geoff Shaw <a href="mailto:geoffshaw2810@sky.com">geoffshaw2810@sky.com</a> Jane Baird <a href="mailto:jane.baird@urc.org.uk">jane.baird@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Stipendiary Ministers of Word and Sacraments serving in 'Assembly appointed' roles at Church House shall be appointed for a period not exceeding seven years renewable for successive terms of not more than five years each.</b>

### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To clarify the number of terms a stipendiary Minister of Word and Sacraments occupying an Assembly appointed role may serve.
<b>Main points</b>	The existing rules are unclear.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper U2 Mission Council November 2018.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The Clerk Deputy General Secretary (mission).

### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	Possible reduction in recruitment costs.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None.

1. The time is long past when all the 'Assembly appointed' roles at Church House were held by Ministers of Word and Sacraments. The majority are now occupied by lay staff in an employment relationship with the URC.
2. Employment legislation means that, in most cases, employment cannot be ended just because a 'term' has ended. This fact was acknowledged at Mission Council in September 2000.
3. This creates an anomaly whereby a lay person may continue indefinitely in a role but a stipendiary minister is subject to a 'termed' appointment which normally comes to an end not later than the end of the second term.
4. This can be problematic when that minister is deeply involved in a particular piece of work or programme and continuity is desired; when that minister is doing a particularly fine job in their role; and sometimes when a minister comes close to retirement and may be unlikely to secure a new role for a matter of a year or two.
5. However, the practice is subject to some variation and appointments have, on occasion, been extended beyond the end of the second term.
6. This paper seeks to clarify the position.
7. Paper U2 Mission Council November 2018 addressed the tenure of the General Secretary. This paper was drafted in good faith, but it is now clear that the terms for other Assembly appointed ministers are not as clear as its author understood at the time.
8. In November 2018 Mission Council (paper U2) passed the resolution:  
'Mission Council amends paragraph 5.1 of the Rules of Procedure to read as follows: The General Secretary, who shall be a minister of the United Reformed Church, shall be appointed for a period of seven years renewable for successive terms of not more than seven years each.'
9. Paper U2 (Mission Council November 2018) rehearses the reasons why it may be desirable to renew the General Secretary's appointment successively.
  - a) The pool of people available to be General Secretary is limited, and is diminishing as the number of ministers (and members) continues to decrease.
  - b) Given the increased retirement age, and the likelihood that this will further increase, it is more likely than it once was that someone would be appointed General Secretary at an age when they would be able to offer longer service than two seven year terms, if they and the church both wanted to.
  - c) Were someone to finish two terms less than five years before their retirement date, perhaps significantly less than five years before, it would put them in an awkward position for seeking a pastorate for only a very short time.
  - d) Some synods are now moving away from fixed terms for URC Ministers serving in LEPs, even where this causes difficulties with our ecumenical partners;
  - e) It is now regarded as bad employment practice to limit the length of time a post holder can serve when both the post and the funding are continuing, and all parties are happy with the performance of the post holder. The General Secretary is not an employee, but that should not be a reason not to follow best practice.

10. Those reasons are equally valid for all stipendiary ministers serving at Church House.
11. Synod Moderators are appointed for an initial term of up to seven years with the possibility of renewal for successive terms of not more than five years.
12. The resolution offered here seeks to clarify the position regarding the renewal of fixed term appointments for stipendiary Ministers of Word and Sacraments serving in Assembly appointed roles.

# Paper R1

## Good practice standards on child and adult protection

Safeguarding advisory group

Good practice standards on child and adult protection

### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Ioannis Athanasiou <a href="mailto:safeguarding@urc.org.uk">safeguarding@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	For information only.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Report on the work of the safeguarding advisory group (SAG).
<b>Main points</b>	The completion of the past case review instigated a range of developments and initiatives to standardise good practice in all aspects of child and adult protection procedures and safeguarding practices of the URC.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Papers R2 and R3 at Mission Council, November 2018.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Members of the SAG. Synod safeguarding officers. Church safeguarding coordinators.

### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	The costs related to good practice 5 are covered by the budget of the safeguarding office at Church House. Delivery of safeguarding training and on-going work with adult survivors of historical abuse will require financial support from the Church in the future.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None.

1. Following the completion of the past case review (PCR), the safeguarding advisory group has developed a joined-up approach, in order to implement systemic changes and set up standards on safeguarding throughout the United Reformed Church. The learning process evolved since the last Mission Council has already supported the Church on the next steps that need to be taken to effect cultural change in the safeguarding policies, practices and procedures across the denomination.
2. As instructed by Mission Council in November 2018, the safeguarding advisory group consulted with Synod Moderators and Synod Safeguarding Officers and produced a comprehensive strategic safeguarding plan to enable the Church to implement the recommendations of PCR learning group report (paper R2 at this Mission Council). The aim of the plan is to improve best practice standards in child and adult protection across the denomination and support the synods and local churches in this important area of work in the years to come.
3. The next edition of URC's safeguarding policy – *Good Practice 5 – Safeguarding for Children and Adults at Risk* - will be produced by the end of this year to reflect new laws and regulatory requirements. SAG is committed to consulting with internal groups and committees and using the expertise of current safeguarding practices of synods and local churches. A safeguarding policy review group of synod and local church safeguarding designated persons was established for this purpose. The Group recognised the need for a common safeguarding policy across the URC that will be compact, user-friendly and easily accessible to local churches, synods, institutions and bodies of the Church. The handbook will no longer be in use. *Good Practice 5 – Safeguarding for Children and Adults at Risk* will combine best practice guidance on all forms of abuse and practices of safeguarding with the advantages of downloadable appendices from the main website of the URC and an index within the document. SAG aims at publishing guidance of high standard and supporting everyone at the URC in dealing confidently with safeguarding concerns and incidents and protecting children, young people, and adults from abuse, harm or neglect.
4. Raising the standards of safer recruitment remains a priority for the SAG. In addition to fully updated sections about safer recruitment procedures and vetting, disclosure and barring checks in the next edition of good practice, Due Diligence Checking Ltd (DDC) is planned to be the only processor of criminal records checks for all paid and voluntary roles and positions within the URC. Checks for ministers, Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs), Assembly accredited lay preachers, and other relevant denominational staff in the URC in England, Wales and Scotland will shortly be transferred to and processed by DDC. The ministers, lay preachers and CRCWs will receive timely information about this change, whose purpose is to ensure fair and transparent processing of criminal offence data throughout the denomination.
5. As a result of the recommendations of the past case review to engage and work directly with survivors, a reference group of adult survivors of historical abuse was created in November 2018 (chaired by the URC's Safeguarding Adviser). Although there has been a slow process due to the lack of relevant structures and the sensitive nature of this work, the SAG will receive at its June meeting the group's recommendations on how to improve current safeguarding policies and

practices of the Church and to co-produce with them guidance on pastoral care and support work. SAG will be ready to update the Mission Council on the work with survivors of abuse in November 2019.

6. Safeguarding training – practice guidance for the URC has been developed with the support of the safeguarding training review group (consisted of URC's Safeguarding Adviser, Education and Learning Programme Officer, and Safeguarding Officers of four synods). Following the recommendations made by the Past Case Review (PCR) Learning report, safeguarding training in the URC must ensure that all individuals working in URC affiliated churches, groups, offices and institutions understand the safeguarding processes and policies of the URC. In alignment with good practice 4, synods lead the delivery and dissemination of suitable safeguarding training for relevant staff and volunteers. Each synod offers regular safeguarding training for church workers and those responsible for the care of children and/or adults at risk. All those working with children and adults at risk as well as those responsible for their care need to know how to work with them and promote the welfare of those in their care in ways that reduce the likelihood of harm. They also need to know how to respond effectively to concerns or allegations of abuse.
7. The new guidance introduces a three-level modular framework to assist the synods in resourcing and developing high quality safeguarding training for local churches and deliver it consistently. Basic and advanced level training modules on child and adult protection are recommended to be mandatory for all those at the URC who engage with children, young people and adults at risk. These two modules will enable all synods to lead a standardised approach to safeguarding training and develop the capacity of all relevant staff and volunteers in the matters of safety and protection. Further, there will be added specialism modules on specific policy areas indicated by the PCR learning group and other priority areas of public policy (responding to survivors of historical abuse, safer recruitment, domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation, spiritual abuse, mental health support and Care Act 2014, on-line safety, transgender inclusion, the Prevent Agenda and spotting the signs of radicalization, etc.).
8. The safeguarding training – practice guidance will be ready by the next Mission Council. Further work is required to have a fully-fledged guidance tailored to the internal culture of the URC. The need for developing the knowledge of serving elders and trustees in safeguarding, a full list of specialist courses and other important parts of this guidance (accreditation, monitoring quality, cost implications, etc.) are still being considered by the safeguarding training review group. However, SAG believes that this matter requires consultation and careful attention at this Mission Council.
9. Any feedback and comments on safeguarding training guidance or on the existing table of required training for specific roles and positions of the URC (attached below as an appendix on this paper) should be sent to [safeguarding@urc.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@urc.org.uk) not later than 10 May 2019, as it can be difficult to respond quickly and properly to detailed questions that are raised during a plenary session at Mission Council.

**Safeguarding training required by URC staff and volunteer roles**

	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Advanced</b>	<b>Specialist</b>
	Required for anyone who has safeguarding responsibilities or who have contact with children, young people and/or adults who may be at risk	Required for anyone who has safeguarding leadership responsibilities or responsibility for leading activities involving children, young people and/or adults who may be at risk	Recommended for anyone who needs awareness of specific areas of safeguarding
Synod Safeguarding Officers	✓	✓	✓
Church safeguarding coordinators /deputies	✓	✓	✓
CRCWs/active Ministers of Word of Sacrament	✓	✓	
Youth/children/adult/pastoral workers	✓		✓
Synod/other Moderators	✓	✓	✓
Synod Clerks	✓		
DBS/PVG verifiers			✓
Members of the joint panel and the Assembly Commission		✓	✓
Worship leaders	✓		
Lay preachers	✓		
Pastoral visitors	✓		✓
Recognised Synod Officers	✓		
Relevant Church House staff	✓		

# Paper R2

## URC's safeguarding strategic plan 2019 to 2023

### Safeguarding advisory group

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Ioannis Athanasiou <a href="mailto:safeguarding@urc.org.uk">safeguarding@urc.org.uk</a> Richard Church <a href="mailto:richard.church@urc.org.uk">richard.church@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <b>Having already welcomed the recommendations of the Past Case Review Learning Group, Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, recognises the URC's safeguarding strategic plan as a proper realization of these recommendations.</b></li><li>2. <b>Mission Council directs the Safeguarding Advisory Group:</b><ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>(a) <b>to oversee the implementation of the plan in the next five years, so far as is possible within present resources and capacity</b></li><li>(b) <b>to bring to the next meeting of Mission Council a budget for the full implementation of the plan and proposals for resourcing this work</b></li><li>(c) <b>to continue to oversee implementation beyond 2019.</b></li></ol></li></ol>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	The past case review indicated the need for the Church to undertake systemic changes. This strategy with its clear six objectives aims at effecting cultural change and improvements in the current safeguarding policies, practices and procedures of the Church in the next five years.
<b>Main points</b>	
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper R2 at Mission Council, November 2018.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Members of the SAG. URC General Secretary. Synod Moderators and Synod Safeguarding Officers.



Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	Proposed resolutions have financial implications that require effective planning and management of available resources. The costs of safeguarding training and work with adult survivors of abuse will be additional to existing budgets and structures of the Church in the five-year period of the plan.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	High potential of partnership working with ecumenical partners and looking at the best use of available resources.

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The past case review (May 2015 to June 2017) concluded its work with the publication of a major and independently authored report last year. The report captures the learning generated through the two phases of the past case review, provides a range of recommendations and identifies areas for improvement in safeguarding in the United Reformed Church. These include safer recruitment, direct work with adult survivors of abuse, the need to clarify the definition of safeguarding, a call to standardize safeguarding training and record keeping, changes to disciplinary processes, etc.
- 1.2 Undertaking the review was for many a painful and courageous journey, especially for survivors, shedding light on uncomfortable truths of the past and causing strong feelings and emotions. On November 2018, Mission Council expressed heartfelt apology to those who approached the Church to voice their stories and experiences and thanked all those who were involved for their time and contribution to completing the past case review.
- 1.3 Responding to the instruction given by Mission Council in November 2018, the safeguarding advisory group reviewed all the PCR learning report's recommendations and consulted with relevant groups and people, finally producing a comprehensive strategic safeguarding plan for the Church to take effect in the next five years (2019 to 2023). The plan proposes six strategic priorities and objectives for the safeguarding policy and practice of the United Reformed Church. According to the URC's mission, the aim of the Church is to proclaim the love of God in Jesus Christ in word and deed. A main strategy to achieve that overall aim is to ensure that anyone who engages with our congregations, synods, institutions, and offices across the three nations of England, Scotland and Wales is committed to protecting children and adults who are or might be experiencing abuse or neglect.

**2. Working and learning together**

- 2.1 Safeguarding people is a journey and part of the URC's mission. We journey alongside those who have been abused, we safeguard the integrity of creation, and we all go together as one body. The strategy for safeguarding at the URC places people and collaborative action at the forefront of delivering the tasks and

actions of this strategy in ways that align with the conciliar traditions and policies of the Church as well as with safeguarding statutory requirements and regulations. Central to this is the view of safeguarding as being everyone's responsibility, to support the welfare and wellbeing of people across the denomination, along with a commitment to a common policy – *Good Practice 4 - Safeguarding for Children and Adults at Risk* – as the only safeguarding policy of the Church. As our overarching safeguarding principles indicate in the main safeguarding policy of the Church, the people of the United Reformed Church have been committed to:

- a) the care and nurture of all children, young people and adults
- b) the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults at risk
- c) the nurturing of a loving church environment which is safe and caring for all people
- d) an informed vigilance about the dangers of all forms of abuse within all aspects of the Church
- e) ensuring that everyone who engages with the life of church is responsible for keeping people safe
- f) working together with voluntary, statutory and non-statutory agencies, and other denominations and faith-based organisations

2.2 The URC will work collectively to pursue all the principles above and create safer and more viable environments for all local congregations, synods, institutions and offices through the working out of the following strategic priorities and objectives. The different parts of the church: Assembly and its staff, synods and local churches are interrelated and co-dependent. The URC is a small denomination, where it is common to find people who are related to one another, and for individuals to hold more than one responsibility within the Church. Therefore, the risks and likelihood of conflicts of interest throughout the congregations, synods and offices of the Church are extremely high and the need for clarity of responsibilities is essential. Although the Church is characterised by limited resources and the growing demand for safeguarding arrangements might be restricted by our capacity to implement the tasks of this strategy, the relations and networks of people of the United Reformed Church working and learning together can be the catalyst for positive changes and improvements. The strategy instigates a learning process for all in our journey to safeguard people at the URC as well as to build trust and consistency.

### 3. Delivering a five-year strategy

3.1 Many factors have helped to shape and influence our six strategic priorities, including:

- a) *Good Practice 4 – Policy Guidance in Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk* for General Assembly and synods.

- b) The safeguarding strategic plan (2017 to 2018) which was agreed at the safeguarding advisory group (SAG) in October 2017 and reviewed by the same group in June 2018.
  - c) New policy and regulatory requirements that outlined the need to embed a whole church approach and make people aware of these changes throughout the URC. Recent guidance and a safeguarding alert raised by the Charity Commission (December 2017) indicated that safeguarding must be a key priority for all churches and synods, and protect all, not just those groups traditionally considered as being at risk.
  - d) A consultation survey of designated safeguarding professionals in the synods (SSOs and CYDO's) who shared anonymously their views about the existing plan and the key areas of safeguarding practice in the Church that require standardisation (January to February 2018).
  - e) The past case review (PCR), which allowed the Church to learn from its past. Conducted by a learning group of URC and external experts, the PCR report resulted in key lessons and recommendations on specific policies and practices requiring further development and change.
  - f) The annual safeguarding reports compiled by Synod Safeguarding Officers in March 2018. The purpose of the annual safeguarding report is to enable the URC as one Church with its various trustee bodies to review its commitment to safeguarding children and adults at risk and provide suitable support and guidance to synods and local churches. For the first time, all thirteen synods sent in their annual reports and provided an overview of current policies and practices within synods.
  - g) The launch of a reference group of adult survivors of abuse in November 2018. Creating a space for survivors at the URC contributed to identifying priorities and integrating their voice in the development of the safeguarding strategic plan.
- 3.2 In the next five years, people and committees of the United Reformed Church will work together on the following six strategic objectives in alignment with URC's safeguarding principles:
- 1. Instil a safeguarding ethos of care and service within all congregations, synods and bodies of the URC.
  - 2. Ensure initial and ongoing pastoral care and support to those who were impacted by safeguarding incidents and concerns.
  - 3. Set up secure and appropriate systems and processes of data and information handling and reporting safeguarding.
  - 4. Ensure that the safeguarding policies and procedures are updated, reviewed and implemented in practice throughout the URC.
  - 5. Provide appropriate and accessible safeguarding training for all those who are accountable for and working with children, young people and adults.
  - 6. Encourage and build constructive partnerships with statutory, non statutory bodies, other denominations and faith-based communities.

- 3.3 Delivery of the strategic plan will occur in two phases: years one, two, three and four, will focus on planning, delivery and evaluation, and finally in year five, the safeguarding advisory group (SAG) will review its progress against its published objectives and will undertake planning and consultation to develop a new strategic plan for 2024 onwards. The safeguarding advisory group will be responsible and accountable for maintaining oversight of the priorities and activities in the plan and reporting to Mission Council through its secretary (the safeguarding adviser of the Church). The synods will make their own strategic arrangements related to the whole-Church strategy depending on the available resources and existing safeguarding practices. The synods will also report progress annually through their safeguarding reports.

#### **4. Resourcing a five-year strategy**

- 4.1 To make our safeguarding more thorough and careful is bound to involve some fresh investment of resource. We seek a uniformly high standard among synods but may not simply impose this as a demand upon them, when they have varied starting points – in funds, in volunteer strength and in patterns of paid staffing.
- 4.2 It is important for SAG to consult carefully with each synod in the coming months, to discuss what resources would be needed to deliver the strategy effectively in the period to 2023, what level of resource the synod would wish to find itself, and what ought to be provided from the wider Church. It may also be necessary for SAG to consult with the finance committee, in order to bring informed budget proposals to Mission Council in November and in the future.
- 4.3 That budgeting process need not stop the plan unfolding immediately. Some of its recommendations are already actioned and others could be implemented from current resource. But full implementation will depend on resources beyond those currently deployed. Nonetheless, if Mission Council is able to recognise this plan as a right aspiration for the Church, and a proper response to the learning group report, then serious consideration about how to implement it can be put in hand.

Outline of six strategic objectives

URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key Staff	Wider implications
1. Instil a safeguarding ethos of care and service within all local congregations, synods and bodies of the URC.	1.1. Ensure that each local church and community has one safeguarding coordinator responsible for responding to child and adult protection concerns.	All URC churches have a single point of contact to protect places of worship and all those who are working for and affiliated with them.	All our churches have a single point of contact to report safeguarding	March 2021	SSOs CSC Data/Admin staff	Unbiased and transparent approach to local safeguarding arrangements  The added value and active role of deputies safeguarding coordinators, elders and volunteers be acknowledged  The need to review and update current advise on safeguarding designated persons in Good Practice 4  The different expertise required for children or adults at risk
	1.2. Contact details are added and updated on church posters, noticeboards, URC databases, <i>Yearbook</i> and synod directories and websites	Ensure that details of designated safeguarding professionals (Church/ Synod Safeguarding Officers) are public and easily accessible to raise safeguarding concerns or other general enquiries throughout the Church	Numbers of churches providing data on church returns	On time of annual returns (normally January)	Church Secretaries CSC Admin staff SSOs S/G Adviser Publications staff	The risk of low rate in church returns  Correlate data of synod safeguarding returns and church annual returns to inform and regularly update a centralised database  Annual <i>Yearbook</i>

URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key Staff	Wider implications
1. Instil a safeguarding ethos of care and service within all congregations, synods and bodies of the URC.	1.3 Raise awareness of safeguarding with guidance, resources and material within the worship, care and life of the URC	Keep every minister, elder, staff member and volunteer regularly updated and well supported to place safeguarding at the heart of church life, not to apply a secular tick box-add on	Materials downloaded from websites, distributed and used  More requests for training made by churches  Training for SSO and CSC	Ongoing	S/G Adviser  Comms team  Assembly and Synod staff and leaders  Church Ministers and Elders  SSOs  CSCs	Changes in public policy and legislation  Ask help from experts and academics in the field  Pay attention to understanding spiritual abuse at the URC  The use of the website, new technologies, social media and free resources packs
	1.4 Develop shared awareness of safeguarding and protection, and what counts as a safeguarding concern across the denomination	Build on common understanding of safeguarding and support for ministers, frontline staff, elders and other volunteers in assessing safeguarding incidents and concerns	Training material and resources	June 2023	SAG  S/G Adviser  SSOs	The opportunity of updating Good Practice 4 and recognise it as the main safeguarding policy for the whole church The vital role of synods and SSOs

URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key Staff	Wider implications
	1.5. Improve safeguarding communications between Church House, synods and URC safeguarding designated persons.	Enable better information cascade, sharing of expertise and good practice in handling safeguarding incidents and concerns internally and externally	Agreed flow chart for sharing information within the URC  Number of synods using the main database	January 2022	S/G Adviser  SSOs  CSCs	Three national meetings with all SSOs Periodic 121 conversations of SSO with SA Events and conferences
2. Ensure initial and ongoing pastoral care and support to those who were impacted by safeguarding incidents and concerns	2.1 Establish ways of support that contribute to a lasting healing process for survivors and those affected by abuse, harm or neglect	This allows individuals who disclose abuse or neglect to feel they are listened to and that the Church is ready to be involved in meeting their pastoral care and support needs from the time of disclosure	Positive feedback and evaluation by survivors Fewer complaints and reports about pastoral care and support	January 2020	S/G Adviser  SSO & CSC  Active Ministers  Synod Pastoral Committees	The ongoing impact of abuse on survivors  Avoiding re-traumatisation of processes, which compounds the original abuse
	2.2. Co-produce with synods an appropriate case management system that provides prompt and proportionate care and support to those children, young people and adults in greatest need	This helps assess and prevent safeguarding risks with pastoral care plans established as early as possible and followed up	Number of pastoral care plans in place for each case that come to URC's attention	January 2021	S/G Adviser  SSOs  Synod staff	Access for all synods to a centralised recording system controlled by CH Expectations and challenges of managing workload. Level of care varies as well as the stage of offering support

URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key Staff	Wider implications
2. Ensure initial and ongoing pastoral care and support to those who were impacted by safeguarding incidents and concerns	2.3. Consult and engage with survivors and relevant groups and organisations	This ensures that the URC co-produces with survivors and relevant groups and adopts appropriate approaches to supporting survivors and perpetrators of abuse	Number of consultations and reviews with survivors and relevant groups  New services of care and support	Ongoing	S/G Adviser  SSOs  SAG	Principles of confidentiality and integrity  Approach the right people and organisations  Voices should be heard in meaningful and non-tokenistic ways
	2.4 Provide support for local congregations and communities affected by serious incidents of abuse	A whole-congregation approach will support all people at the local church to recover from trauma and crisis	Lessons drawn and impacted on local safeguarding practice	Ongoing	CSCs  SSOs	The interrelated work and role of pastoral committees and ministers
3. Set up secure and appropriate systems and processes of data and information handling and reporting safeguarding	3.1 Develop and implement a centralised, standardised electronic system to record and follow up safeguarding cases and concerns from the beginning of the process	This protects the rights of individuals and relationships across the URC and ensures individual cases, and ministerial and personal files are integrated, monitored and securely stored in one unified system	Evidence of good practice  Evidence of using system effectively  User-friendly	June 2020	Ministries office  S/G Adviser  SSOs	The use of CH database by all synods if possible  Vital to have all synods accessing the main database  This presupposes a review of data sharing between other teams (such as ministry) and safeguarding  Access and permissions to appropriate staff



URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key Staff	Wider implications
3. Set up secure and appropriate systems and processes of data and information handling and reporting safeguarding	3.2 Ensure there are clear lines of accountability by use of consistent forms, protocols and reporting procedures	This helps everyone be aware of protocols and forms to responsibly raise concerns, seek unbiased advice and share information responsibly to protect individuals and the wider church	Evidence of good practice  Evidence of system use	June 2020	S/G Adviser  SSOs  CSCs	Production and use of GP5 as the main and one manual of safeguarding policy and practice across the URC  New policies (whistleblowing, bullying/harassment, lone working, across the URC (SAG, HRAG or CHMG)  Adoption of Church House's reporting concerns forms  Cross-over with HR and Comms / Reputation management
	3.3. Encourage and expect each URC synod to annually provide safeguarding data and information in a consistent format	This ensures consistency of what information is required as well as regular reports and reviews of internal safeguarding policy and practice	Evidence of review and changes on policy and practice  Use of standardised forms across synods and churches	Each May in all years	SSOs  CSCs	Collating information and producing the annual S/G report for SAG and the whole church
	3.4 Facilitate minimum standards through compliance with procedures and obtain benchmark progress for each synod	This will embed a culture of co-design on the journey of safeguarding in open and transparent ways	Synod positive feedback of co-production	Each May in all years	S/G Adviser  SSOs	Use of the review of GP4 and production of GP5 (what is compulsory?)  Avoid a hierarchical model  Working closely with synods

URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key Staff	Wider implications
	3.5. Establish tools to measure change and review adequacy and robustness of procedures and policies	Support a culture of continuous learning and improvement in the church and identify systemic barriers	Standardised and consistent use of audit tools  Number of independent reviews and audits	April 2021	S/G Adviser  SSOs  CSCs  Elders	Fear of an independent oversight at the denomination, synods and local churches  Co-produce audits with survivors of abuse in the design and delivery  Avoid long-lasting reviews and excessive paperwork
4. Ensure the safeguarding policies and procedures are updated, reviewed and implemented in practice throughout the URC	4.1 Update URC's safeguarding policy every two years following the publication of Good Practice 5	This ensures good practice guidance is regularly reviewed and updated in line with new legislation and policy changes	Up-to-date publications and e-resources intake	October 2019	S/G Adviser  SSOs	Whole review or update or rewrite identified policy areas that require improvements  Resources (writing group, publications, etc)
	4.2 Review current safer recruitment practice of the URC and develop a Good Practice Guidance	Provide specific and clear advice that (i) ensures appropriate recruitment, induction and retention of trustees, and of paid and voluntary workers (ii) arranges lawful criminal record checks (DBS/PVG) for all who need this.	Reduced number of complaints to CH, Synods and DDC  DDC Satisfaction survey	October 2019	S/G Adviser  SSOs  Ministries Office  DBS Verifiers	Avoid over-checking criminal records  Clarify when it is not appropriate to check  Understanding checks as part of a wider recruitment process Scotland's different policy
	4.3 Develop clear guidance on conducting thorough safeguarding risk assessments and supporting offenders and alleged offenders across the URC	This ensures prevention of abuse and better support for those who are accountable to manage risk and monitor any who may pose a risk	Number of safeguarding contracts/agreements  Publications and resources	March 2020	S/G Adviser  SSOs  CSCs	Review existing sections of GP4  Risk assessment and covenants of care forms and templates  DBS/PVG referrals

URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key Staff	Wider implications
			intake			
	4.4 Embed safeguarding knowledge and skills in the disciplinary processes and procedures for ministers/CRCWs	This helps establish good practice and expertise among all mandated group members to support those involved in safeguarding cases	Evidence of good practice	June 2020	S/G Adviser MIND SSOs	Clear and transparent processes and investigations
	4.5 Ensure people in positions of leadership and accountability are aware of any changes to safeguarding policy and practice	New policy changes are discussed within supervision and training development and shared within teams or working groups	Evidence of good practice	January 2020 and Ongoing	S/G Adviser SSOs	The central role of elders, ministers, synod moderators and General secretaries in understanding safeguarding and being aware of URC's policies
5. Provide appropriate and accessible safeguarding training for all those who are accountable for and working with children, young people and adults	5.1. Co-produce with synods URC's standardised safeguarding training package for all roles and positions throughout the URC expected to undertake regular and mandatory safeguarding training	Benchmark and develop URC's appropriate safeguarding training guidance and programme aligned with synod practices and public policy requirements (including material and tools, bespoke, free-access and on-line courses)	Training used consistently in each synod	October 2019	S/G Adviser Education and Learning SSOs Synod Training officers Individual safeguarding trainers CSCs	Recording attendance and renewal of URC or other denominations' training On-line access limits interaction and collaboration Accrediting URC safeguarding training Defining training packages tailored to specific roles and positions (e.g. Elders<->SSO) Accessibility

URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key Staff	Wider implications
5. Provide appropriate and accessible safeguarding training for all those who are accountable for and working with children, young people and adults						
	5.2. Ensure robust guidance on mandatory training in both areas of safeguarding (children and adults at risk) for all identified groups involved in regulated activities	Mandatory training will ensure monitoring the delivery of standardised and refreshing safeguarding training for identified roles of accountability and leadership	Numerical evidence of training attendance  Number of certificates per role	June 2020	S/G Adviser  SAG  SSOs	Database of recording attendance  Mandatory safeguarding training for active ministers
	5.3. Develop and maintain quality standards of regular safeguarding training and professional development across the URC	This ensures that consistency and quality at different levels of development and delivery of safeguarding training are reviewed regularly	Positive reviews of training provision	June 2021	SAG  SSOs  Ministries	Connection with accreditation  Working with learning resource centres
	5.4. Develop and update a comprehensive guidance and package of support resources to equip serving elders and trustees (URC and synod) and make them aware of their safeguarding responsibilities	The aim is that elders/trustees feel confident in safeguarding and preventing abuse, as well as protecting the assets of churches and trusts and the reputation of the church	Training booked and attended	June 2020 and ongoing	S/G Adviser  SSOs	Raise awareness using traditional and visual methodologies (induction material, Reform, video, etc)  Keep elders up to date regarding changes to regulations and policies  Training can be an option as

URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key Staff	Wider implications
						well as regular briefings and attendance of safeguarding designated persons in Elders or Trustees Meetings
	5.5 Value the expertise and skills of Synod Safeguarding Officers to effectively oversee the safeguarding practice across the denomination	Ensure professionals and/or volunteers who take up the role of synod designated person are equipped and remain resourceful to lead the safeguarding practice of their local churches local in all aspects	Numbers of co-working groups and surveys with SSOs  Feedback from SSOs	Ongoing	SSOs  S/G Adviser  Line managers of SSOs	Common understanding of safeguarding between SSOs  Joint posts with CYDO roles  National context (Wales/Scotland)
	5.6 Ensure safeguarding is part of the induction of any newly appointed persons to URC roles (particularly trustees, children workers and those in regulated activities) alongside the specific role induction	This allows each new role holder to understand the personal and corporate liability should a safeguarding incident happen, while building a culture of prevention at every church setting, committee, venue.	Number of job and role descriptions where safeguarding is listed as duty	June 2022	HR  Ministries  Synods	Need to communicate with HR team at CH in order to update existing recruitment and induction policies  Safer recruitment guidance is paramount to support those who recruit, induct and line-manage workers and volunteers
6. Encourage and build constructive partnerships with statutory,	6.1 Produce guidance about when churches and synods should call the statutory authorities	This allows the setting up of information sharing protocols and the referral of cases crossing statutory thresholds to statutory agencies without delay	Download of on-line resource  Increased number of referrals	March 2020	S/G Adviser  SSOs	GP5  CoE recent guidance on reporting and sharing information

URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key Staff	Wider implications
non-statutory bodies, other denomination and faith-based communities	6.2 Improve public awareness of URC's good practice in safeguarding across denominational, cross-denominational and ecumenical settings	Encourage personal drive and actions of URC people (particularly volunteers) to improve the safeguarding ethos at the local church and public acknowledgement of personal commitment and collective efforts	Increased number of local initiatives and campaigns  Opportunities to share expertise externally	March 2022	Synods S/G Adviser SSOs CSCs SAG	Initiatives and events  Links with other developments 'Walking the way safely'  Links with the Methodists
6. Encourage and build constructive partnerships with statutory, non-statutory bodies, other denomination and faith-based communities	6.3 Develop guidance on safeguarding and eldership with clear steps and legal responsibilities of serving elders/trustees to work with others to help deter and prevent safeguarding issues from occurring	This will help elders and synod trustees to protect the assets and reputation of the church and to share information and report serious incidents promptly and properly to Charity Commission or other regulatory bodies	Increased use of the guidance  Feedback from elders meeting	October 2020	S/G Adviser SSOs	Number of elders  Referrals to CC
	6.4 Endorse close partnership and knowledge exchange of best practice with other denominations to support LEP's and church communities	Promote ecumenical dialogue and co-produce partnerships for the benefit of public worship, protection of the vulnerable and pastoral care of communities	Publication of material and resources  Number of joint events and seminars	Ongoing	S/G Adviser SSOs CSCs CFS	Shared resources and common events  Ecumenical and international settings

## Glossary

**CC** Charity Commission

**CFS** Churches Forum for Safeguarding

**CH** Church House

**CRCW** Church-related Community Workers

**CSC** Church Safeguarding Coordinator

**DBS** Disclosure and Barring Service

**DDC** Due Diligence Check Ltd

**GP4** Good Practice 4

**GP5** Good Practice 5

**LEP** Local Ecumenical Partnership

**LADO** Local Authority Designated Officer

**MC** Mission Council

**MIND** Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline Advisory Group

**PVG** Protecting Vulnerable Groups (Scotland Scheme)

**SAG** Safeguarding Advisory Group

**S/G** Safeguarding

**SSO** Synod Safeguarding Officer

**GA** General Assembly

**GP** Good Practice

**URC** The United Reformed Church

# Paper T1

## Proposal for work on a redrawn ministerial disciplinary process

### Ministerial incapacity advisory group (MIND)

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd John Durell <a href="mailto:johncdurell@gmail.com">johncdurell@gmail.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Mission Council approves the preparation of a new process for dealing with cases of discipline involving ministers and church related community workers, incorporating the changes from the current process enumerated in paper T1 of November 2018. It directs MIND (the ministerial incapacity and discipline advisory group) to proceed with redrafting and to report further to Mission Council in March 2020.</b></li><li><b>Mission Council approves the proposal that scrutiny groups set up by MIND for specific responsibilities in the drafting task should contain members of Mission Council as well as members of MIND and others, as set out in MIND's report. The Officers of Assembly are directed to invite interest from members of Mission Council, make appointments from those volunteering and communicate their names to the Secretary of MIND.</b></li></ol>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Redrawing of the ministerial disciplinary process.
<b>Main points</b>	To illustrate (by means of the annexed framework) the advisory group's thinking on a redrawn process; to seek authority to proceed with the drafting task; to seek the inclusion of Mission Council members on scrutiny groups contributing to this task; and to explain the group's thoughts on how the new process can best complement new safeguarding measures being adopted by the Church.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper T1 for Mission Council November 2018.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	A copy of the draft framework was shared with the denominational Safeguarding Adviser whose initial comments



	were communicated to the group, but so far the proposals, draft framework and appendices are the unaided work of this group.
--	--

## Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	Reduction in volunteers' expenses at one level but possibly increased travel at another; hopefully no major net increase.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None at this stage, though detailed proposals will concern ministers of other denominations serving in LEPs with the URC.

## Proposal for work on a redrawn ministerial disciplinary process

1. MIND reported to Mission Council in November 2018 (paper T1) that it was aware of the concerns raised by those involved in regular operation of the ministerial disciplinary process: concerns which others shared. It indicated a number of changes it proposed to initiate, and asked Mission Council to make its views known if it were not content with that 'direction of travel'. The minutes record no feedback on points of detail, but Mission Council informally indicated support for the redrawing of the process, rather than continuing to amend the existing version.
2. As reported in November, MIND commissioned one of its number to draft a possible replacement process, and the new draft was initially considered at the MIND meeting in January. The Church's Legal Adviser, as a member of the group, has already had some input into the text, as have certain other members. The text has been shared with the Church's Safeguarding Adviser, but until now responsibility for its wording has remained within the group. MIND appreciates, of course, that if the redraft proceeds further, a number of interests outside the Group will need to contribute to refining it to the point where Mission Council and the General Assembly can be invited to adopt it. Input from the safeguarding advisory group will be important in this respect.
3. The redrawn Process consists of a framework and a number of appendices. The Framework in its current version is set out at the end of this paper – not at this stage for approval of the actual text, but because reading it is the best way to appreciate the stages of the process now proposed, and in particular how this text embodies the changes sketched at paragraph two of our November paper. A simple flow chart is also included for illustration of the main stages, though it should be noted this does not give a comprehensive view of every possibility in the suggested process. The framework, it will be seen at once, is considerably shorter than the current process; which the group hopes will render the process easier to follow for those who have to engage with it. The entire process, as drafted, is also shorter than its predecessor, but not radically so since there are 21 appendices at present, and would ultimately be 23. However, both in the drafting task and in later administration of the process, it will only be necessary when considering one topic to refer to the appendix governing that topic.
4. Mission Council is invited to pass the first resolution set out at the head of this paper. Should it do so, MIND proposes to divide its members into 'scrutiny groups'

and allocate appendices, and relevant passages of the framework itself, to each scrutiny group for detailed consideration. Rather than scrutiny groups only consisting of MIND members, it is suggested Mission Council might itself appoint some of its number to strengthen each group (as proposed in the second resolution above), and that certain people might be invited (by MIND's Convenor) to participate from outside. One of these might be a representative of one of the trade unions to which many ministers and clergy now belong, which often offer support to ministers facing disciplinary proceedings as they do to those in other walks of life. The table below lists the three scrutiny groups' proposed remit and membership. The groups' work would be conducted by electronic communication so far as possible, but round table meetings may become necessary.

5. Scrutiny groups would be asked to focus, as such, only on their own appendices and parts of the framework. Individuals could however make written suggestions to scrutiny groups on which they did not serve. The author of the present draft would not serve on any scrutiny group, but be available to all for explanations or assistance with wording. On completion of the scrutiny groups' work, he would collate the amended sections and produce a complete text which would return to a plenary session of MIND. He will also prepare, for consideration first by the full MIND Group, consequential amendments to the URC's structure and a draft transition timetable, should the Assembly (and, as regards changes to the structure, synods) approve the redrawn process. At worst the aim would be for an encouraging progress report to Mission Council in March 2020; at best it may be possible to submit resolutions then covering adoption of the process, changes to the Structure and transitional arrangements.
6. As indicated in November, one of the key aspects of these proposals is to transfer the personal role of the Moderator of a Synod to a three-person synod standing panel for discipline, whose other members would be chosen by the synod itself. The role of this body would not be investigative but judicial. In the synod's name it would take important initial decisions such as whether a charge was frivolous, whether a minister should be suspended, and finally whether the investigating team had shown a *prima facie* case for the minister to answer. Another key proposal is that the investigating teams should be groups of three drawn from a denominational pool, not therefore requiring volunteers to be found in each nation or province but enabling the appointors to look across the whole Church for people with time, willingness to serve and necessary skills. Assembly and appeals commissions would operate in most respects as they do now, but none would have more than three members. The increase in the number of volunteers attributable to the additional members of synod standing panels would thus be counterbalanced by the smaller pool of Investigators (compared to the present Mandated Groups) and a slightly smaller number of potential commission members. Some members of Investigating Teams would have to travel further in the course of their work, but apart from this MIND does not anticipate the redrawn process causing the Church extra expense.
7. The past cases review learning group, whose report was also received by Mission Council in November (resolution R2), called for steps to ensure that the Church's measures for safeguarding and protecting individuals and for ministerial discipline interact effectively. Resolution R3 approved principles for shaping a new code of practice around vetting, disclosure and barring checks and safer recruitment procedures. MIND welcomes these decisions and is keen for the redrawn process

to be part of a wider exercise, in which policies, binding rules or a code of practice ensure the Church is as sure as it can be of the suitability of candidates before ordination, and that the continuing conduct of ministers under caution or written warning is suitably monitored. The fact, therefore, that the redrawn process refers to safeguarding only in terms of the ‘advice’ necessary at various key stages should not be read as meaning this advisory group is downplaying safeguarding’s importance.

8. It is true, though, that safeguarding and discipline have different goals. Safeguarding is not just about discipline, and discipline is not just about safeguarding. Proof and absolute fairness (so far as this can be achieved) are very important to the administration of discipline, as they are in secular justice; whereas safeguarding sometimes has to take mere suspicion seriously and err on the side of caution. This may mean the Church needs safeguarding rules under which a person’s public ministry can be halted even where no disciplinary basis for doing so exists. To make such rules would raise large questions and be outside the current remit of MIND. Consequently we do not ourselves propose the idea, though we commend it to the safeguarding advisory group for consideration and should be happy for some liaison between them and us. We believe, though, that that would be preferable to weakening the goal of fairness and the need for proof in the disciplinary process.

### Proposed scrutiny groups

	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>	<b>Group 3</b>
<b>Topics</b>	Introductory material Investigation Miscellaneous matters	Agreed cautions The Hearing stage	Allegations Pastoral care Appeals
<b>Framework</b>	Paras. 1-2, 5.1 to 5.3, 8	Paras. 5.4, 6	Paras. 3, 4, 7
<b>Appendices</b>	A E F G Q T V	H J K L M N S U	B C D O P R
<b>Membership</b>	3-4 members of MIND 2-3 Mission Council members 2 members of the Safeguarding Advisory Group appointed by that Group	3-4 members of MIND 2-3 Mission Council members + 1 trade union representative appointed by the Convener of MIND + 1 person combining a legal background with Assembly Commission experience	3-4 members of MIND 3-4 Mission Council members + 1 retired Synod Moderator

Appendices W (interplay with other Procedures) and X (transitional provisions) would be drafted and allocated to Scrutiny Groups at a later date.

<p><b>1.</b></p>	<p><b>The expectations of ministers</b></p> <p>At their ordination or commissioning, Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church-Related Community Workers make affirmations about their Christian belief, about the motives leading them to enter their ministry, and about their future conduct.</p> <p>It is expected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that they will make these affirmations honestly</li> <li>• that they will serve in the ministry of the URC only so long as they can still with integrity teach and claim to hold the understanding of the Christian faith expressed in the Basis of Union</li> <li>• that their conduct after ordination or commissioning will accord with the promises then made.</li> </ul> <p>It is also expected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that, during the process of candidature for the ministry in question, they will not have misled the Church or those who, on its behalf, assessed their readiness for that ministry</li> <li>• that if they are arrested on a criminal charge, convicted of any criminal offence by a court or accept a police caution in respect of such an offence, they will report that fact to the Moderator of the Synod exercising oversight of them.</li> </ul> <p>If any of these expectations is not met, there is a possible case for discipline.</p>	<p>The affirmations are set out at appendix A.</p> <p>Throughout this statement of the Process, Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church-Related Community Workers are both referred to as 'ministers'. The expressions 'ministry' and 'Roll of Ministers' should be construed accordingly.</p> <p>Appendix Q relates to ministers under other denominational jurisdictions.</p> <p>Arrest, conviction or formal police caution has the same consequences whether within or outside the United Kingdom.</p> <p>The synod with oversight is defined in paragraph three. As indicated in that paragraph, the Assembly Representative for Discipline may in certain cases take the place of a Synod Moderator.</p>
<p><b>2.</b></p>	<p><b>The place of the disciplinary process</b></p> <p>In many cases a pastoral approach can be taken and a matter resolved by informal advice or an apology. But there are cases in which a breach of expectations undermines the credibility of a person's ministry or the Church's corporate witness so seriously that allegations of such a breach call for formal investigation, following the requirements of natural justice, and for possible sanctions if the breach is proved. It is with such more serious cases that this disciplinary process is concerned.</p>	<p>Separate processes concern ministerial capability and Incapacity. Church meetings possess a disciplinary competence over their members, but this will not be exercised over a church member whose name remains on the Roll of Ministers.</p>
<p><b>3.</b></p>	<p><b>Allegations</b></p> <p>Any allegation suggesting a failure to meet the expectations in paragraph 1 which is serious within the meaning of paragraph two must be referred to the Moderator of the Synod exercising oversight of the minister concerned. Concerns coming to the notice of the Moderator without a report from any complainant may be treated as allegations. A report of a criminal conviction,</p>	<p>A Synod exercises oversight of all ministers serving in its province or nation, and of all ministers resident in that province or nation who are retired or otherwise not serving the Church in a</p>

	<p>arrest or police caution is to be treated as though it were an allegation.</p> <p>The Moderator must call together the synod standing panel for Ministerial Disciplinary Matters ('SSP'). The SSP may dismiss allegations that are, in its view, patently frivolous, malicious or unrelated to the expectations, stating why it considers that to be the case. Otherwise it must pass the allegations and any supporting evidence on for further consideration in the investigation stage.</p> <p>Allegations respecting the General Secretary or the Moderator of a Synod, or a minister who for any other reason falls under the direct oversight of the General Assembly, are to be referred to the Assembly representative for discipline ('ARD') who is to call together the Assembly standing panel for ministerial disciplinary matters ('ASP').</p> <p>As soon as it is aware of the allegations the SSP may suspend the minister, with the consequences set out in the Basis of Union. If satisfied that no reasonable grounds exist for immediate suspension, the SSP may elect not to suspend; but before so electing it must take safeguarding advice. The Moderator may suspend, acting alone, on first receiving the allegations if there is delay in calling together the SSP and the Moderator considers immediate suspension necessary. Decisions to suspend or not to suspend must be accompanied by reasons, and reviewed by the SSP on first convening and regularly thereafter: they may be revised at any time.</p>	<p>stipendiary capacity.</p> <p>Rules on double jeopardy appear at appendix R.</p> <p>The composition of the SSP is set out at appendix B. 'Calling together' does not necessarily imply a physical meeting.</p> <p>The identity of the ARD and the composition of the ASP are set out at appendix C. References to a Synod Moderator and to the SSM apply equally to the ARD and ASP.</p> <p>Rules concerning suspension and extracts from schedules E and F to the Basis of Union, listing its consequences, are set out at appendix D.</p> <p>'Safeguarding advice' is explained at appendix E.</p>
<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>Pastoral care</b></p> <p>When a minister is suspended (or, if there is no suspension, when allegations are passed on to the investigation stage) the Moderator must arrange as soon as possible for another experienced minister to offer ongoing pastoral care to the accused minister. The pastor so appointed is to operate independently of the Moderator and to have no involvement in any aspect of the process. The Moderator's own pastoral responsibility for the minister is suspended so long as the case remains under the authority of the SSP. The Moderator must also consider what pastoral care is available to the accused minister's dependants, the complainant and others directly affected by the case.</p>	
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>The investigation stage and its outcomes</b></p>	
<p><b>5.1</b></p>	<p>The purpose of the investigation stage is for the original allegations (and any further allegations which this stage may bring to light) to be fairly and expeditiously investigated by an investigation team, whose findings are to be reported to the SSP. At this stage the team is concerned with three issues: (i) the facts of the case, and in particular whether there is a <i>prima facie</i> case for full</p>	<p>The composition of an investigation team, and of the disciplinary investigation panel from which it is drawn, are set out at appendix F.</p>

	<p>investigation; (ii) the seriousness of the allegations if proven, and (iii) (only if the allegations are admitted by the minister), whether the case can be appropriately disposed of by a caution. It may also, at any time, recommend the suspension of the accused minister or the lifting of a current suspension.</p> <p>Based on the team’s report and the accused minister’s response, the SSP (acting in the name of the synod) decides, giving reasons, whether to end the process, initiate proposals for an agreed caution, or send the case to the hearing stage.</p> <p>The role of the SSP during this stage is judicial. As such it takes no part in the investigation but weighs impartially the facts and arguments presented by the investigation team and by the accused minister.</p>	<p>The work of the investigation team is explained at appendix G.</p>
<p><b>5.2</b></p>	<p>If the investigation team concludes that the allegations against a minister do not amount to a <i>prima facie</i> case, or that even if proven they would not merit formal disciplinary sanctions, the team may report accordingly to the SSP. On receiving such a report the SSP must take safeguarding advice, and must then declare the process and any suspension terminated from that point, save that it may refer the report back to the team on one occasion for reconsideration.</p>	<p>‘Safeguarding advice’ is explained at appendix E. There is one exception, set out in appendix E, to the obligation to take safeguarding advice at this and later stages of the process.</p>
<p><b>5.3</b></p>	<p>If the investigation team believes its investigation into allegations against a minister reveals a <i>prima facie</i> case, which if proven would be sufficiently serious for formal disciplinary sanctions to be considered, the team may report accordingly to the SSP. The accused minister is to receive a copy of the team’s report and to be advised of the time allowed for for a written answer.</p> <p>On considering the report and any answer the SSP must either (i) refer the report back to the team on one occasion for reconsideration and further investigation, (ii) declare the process and any suspension terminated from that point, if (after receiving safeguarding advice) it does not agree that the report supports the team’s conclusions, (iii) (after receiving safeguarding advice) propose an agreed caution in accordance with paragraph 5.4, or (iv) pass the report, any answer and all supporting evidence on for consideration at the hearing stage.</p>	<p>The time allowed for the minister’s answer is to be 14 days unless another period is set by the SSP when the copy report is delivered.</p>
<p><b>5.4</b></p>	<p>An agreed caution may be an appropriate outcome in disciplinary cases where ministers accept the allegations against them, display convincing remorse and are willing to undertake appropriate precautions against recurrence. A caution may be considered at the close of the investigation stage if the investigation team recommends this in its report, or if the SSP, on receiving that report and the minister’s answer, proposes a caution of its own motion. Safeguarding advice must be taken on the terms of a caution as finally negotiated.</p>	<p>Appendix H sets out how a caution is to be drafted, negotiated and finalized</p>

	<p>A caution is not appropriate where a minister denies all allegations; nor, normally, in the case of a second offence similar to a former offence dealt with under this process.</p> <p>If a caution is agreed by both parties and the SSP, delivered formally by the SSP and acknowledged by the minister, the process and any suspension are terminated from that point.</p> <p>If a caution is recommended by the investigation team or proposed of the SSP's own motion, but the SSP is satisfied it will not be possible to reach agreement on a caution in appropriate terms and within a reasonable time, then the SSP must pass the team's report, any answer and all supporting evidence on for consideration at the hearing stage. Correspondence entered into (subsequent to the team's report) in connection with the proposal and attempted negotiation of a caution is not to be passed on, and will not be admissible at the hearing stage.</p>	
<b>6.</b>	<b>The hearing stage</b>	
<b>6.1</b>	<p>As soon as the SSP passes a case on to the Hearing Stage, an Assembly commission is constituted to oversee and hear the case. Once a commission is in being for a particular case, authority over that case passes from the synod to the General Assembly, in whose name the commission acts. Any procedural directions, or decisions regarding suspension of the accused minister, are thereafter to be given by the commission (after receiving safeguarding advice in respect of any lifting of suspension).</p>	<p>The composition of an Assembly commission, and of the commission panel from which it is drawn, are set out at appendix J.</p>
<b>6.2</b>	<p>Having satisfied the SSP of a <i>prima facie</i> case against the accused minister at the close of the investigation stage, the task of the investigation team in the hearing stage will be to present the evidence in such a way as to satisfy the Assembly commission of the truth of the allegations on a balance of probabilities, and to make submissions regarding the seriousness of the case and an appropriate sanction. Unless the team abandons the allegations, its investigation will continue for this purpose until either it notifies the Secretary of Assembly Commissions (SAC) that it is ready for the hearing, or the commission sets a hearing date of its own motion.</p>	<p>Rules for the timetable of the hearing stage are set out at appendix K.</p> <p>Abandonment of allegations during the hearing stage is governed by appendix U.</p>
<b>6.3</b>	<p>If, at any time after the appointment of an Assembly commission, the accused minister notifies the SAC of a desire to admit some or all of the allegations under investigation and to submit to the imposition of a sanction, the commission may accede to the request after considering a response from the investigation team.</p>	<p>Rules for the admission of allegations are set out at appendix S.</p>
<b>6.4</b>	<p>The Assembly commission is to hear the case presented by a single member of the investigation team or by another person appointed by the team for that purpose. The accused minister has the right to be present and to reply.</p>	<p>Rules concerning procedure at hearings, reception of evidence given other than verbally,</p>

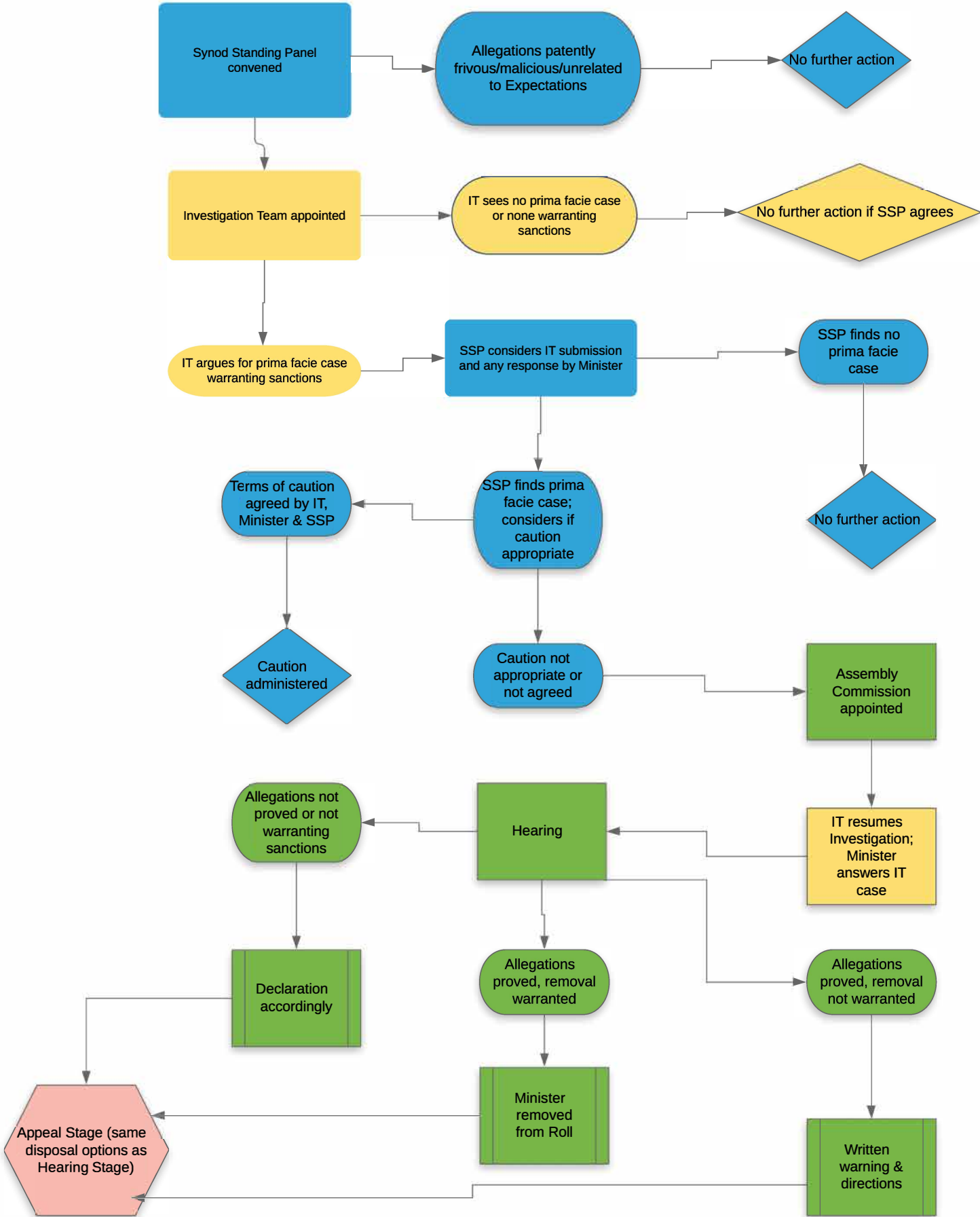
	Witnesses may be called on behalf of the team and by the minister, and cross-examined by them or by any member of the commission. The commission may sit with Assessors to advise on theological questions, issues of disability or cultural sensitivity, safeguarding issues or other matters on which it considers impartial specialist advice to be essential, but assessors are to have no vote in commission decisions.	representation, persons permitted to accompany the accused minister or witnesses and the role of Assessors are set out in appendix L.
<b>6.5</b>	At the conclusion of the hearing the Assembly commission is to determine, on the balance of probabilities, whether any or all of the allegations made against the minister have been proved. In respect of any proven allegation, it must decide either to impose no sanction, or that the accused minister should receive a written warning, or that his or her name should be deleted from the Roll of Ministers. If the accused minister is the subject of an earlier written warning which remains current, the Assembly commission must take that into account. A written warning may be accompanied by directions regarding the minister's future conduct.	Rules for written warnings and directions, and concerning deletion from the Roll are set out in appendix M.
<b>6.6</b>	If the Assembly commission determines that none of the allegations made against the minister has been proved on the balance of probabilities, it must so declare. If there is no appeal, the process and any suspension will terminate from the end of the last day for lodging an appeal under paragraph 7.1.	
<b>6.7</b>	The Assembly commission is to prepare a written statement of reasons for reaching its decision. The decision and reasons are to be circulated subsequently. In this statement it may make recommendations concerning the future activity of any accused person whose name is deleted from the Roll, or (if allegations are not proved) for precautions which might reduce the risk of future allegations of a similar nature. Such recommendations are of an advisory nature and not subject to appeal.	Appendix N also sets out rules for the circulation of written reasons.
<b>7.</b>	<b>The appeal stage</b>	
<b>7.1</b>	Notice of any appeal must be lodged, with a summary of the appeal grounds, within twenty-one days of the handing down or circulation of the Assembly commission's written statement of reasons.	
<b>7.2</b>	Either the accused minister or the investigation team or both may appeal, but only on the ground of (i) a material failure to comply with rules of the disciplinary process, (ii) a breach of the rules of natural justice, (iii) a serious misunderstanding by the Assembly commission of the facts before it, or (iv) new evidence which could not reasonably have been presented to the Assembly commission and could credibly be expected to affect the outcome.  In addition, where some or all of the allegations against a	Rules concerning the timetable for, and procedure and evidence at appeal hearings, are set out in appendix O.



	<p>minister are found proven, an appeal may be lodged against the decision on sanction without reopening any issue of fact. In such an appeal the investigation team may present the case for a sanction or for additional or varied directions to accompany a written warning; the accused minister may present the case against a sanction or for variation or cancellation of directions accompanying a written warning.</p> <p>No appeal may be lodged in respect of allegations abandoned by the investigation team under paragraph 6.2 or admitted by the accused minister under paragraph 6.3.</p>	
7.3	<p>As soon as an appeal is lodged, an appeal commission is constituted to oversee and hear the case. Once a commission is in being for a particular case, authority over that case remains with the General Assembly, but the appeal commission now acts in the Assembly's name and gives any procedural directions, or decisions regarding suspension of the accused minister.</p>	<p>The composition of an appeal commission is set out at appendix P.</p>
7.4	<p>An appeal is heard in the presence of both parties, the cases for the appellant and respondent being heard in that order. There is to be no rehearing of the case, nor any reception of fresh evidence unless the appeal commission is satisfied (i) that there is new evidence which could not reasonably have been presented to the Assembly commission and could credibly be expected to affect the outcome, and (ii) that it can hear such evidence fairly, and that this would be more convenient than for a fresh Assembly commission to hear it.</p>	
7.5	<p>At the conclusion of the appeal hearing, the appeal commission may dismiss the appeal, may substitute its own decision for any decision which the Assembly commission could have made (including varying directions or recommendations), or may quash the previous decision and remit the case for full re-hearing by a fresh Assembly commission. Unless it remits a case for re-hearing, the decision of the Appeal commission is final, the process and any suspension terminating when it is announced.</p>	<p>The rules in appendix K set out the procedure if a case is remitted for rehearing; in which case the rules in appendices L-N also apply.</p>
<b>8</b>	<p><b>Miscellaneous provisions</b></p>	
8.1	<p>The disciplinary process may continue notwithstanding the fact that an accused minister declines to co-operate, fails to appear at a Hearing or declares (or implies by conduct) his or her resignation from the ministry or from the United Reformed Church, and also notwithstanding the non-appearance of any potential witness.</p>	<p>Appendix T sets out the consequences of non-co-operation and similar conduct, and of a potential witness declining to appear.</p>
8.2	<p>The process may be halted by a reference into the ministerial incapacity or capability procedure, and rules governing those procedures may provide for a case commenced under one of them to be referred into this process. A notice of reference into this process from either procedure will have the status of a disciplinary allegation</p>	<p>Appendix W provides in detail for the transfer of cases from this process to the incapacity or capability procedure</p>

	and be acted upon as provided in paragraph three.	
<b>8.3</b>	Directions may be given by the panel or commission under whose authority a case currently falls covering matters of evidence, timing or procedure not otherwise provided for, if it considers this conducive to the fair, effective and expeditious operation of the process. But the time allowed for lodging an appeal may only be extended if an extension is sought before the current time limit expires.	
<b>8.4</b>	Information about a case heard or investigated under the disciplinary process is confidential, save as the process itself provides.	Appendix V sets out rules regarding sharing of information and retention of records.
<b>8.5</b>	The costs incurred in the work of a SSP shall be charged against funds of the Church controlled by the synod. The costs incurred by an ASP, an Investigation Team, the SAC, the General Secretary or any Commission in operating the Process and the reasonable expenses of any witness attending a hearing shall be charged against funds of the Church under the control of the General Assembly. The costs of an investigation team for this purpose shall not include costs of preparing the case, nor costs of representation.	
<b>8.6</b>	The 'commencement date' on which this process will replace the disciplinary process formerly in operation ('the Old Process') is to be determined by resolution of the General Assembly or Mission Council.	Appendix X sets out transitional provisions relating disciplinary cases still pending under the old process at the commencement date

# Ministerial disciplinary process redraft, May 2019



# Paper X1

## Creating a climate of change: A new approach to ethical investment

### Resolution from the National Synod of Scotland

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	David Pickering. Moderator of the National Synod of Scotland: <a href="mailto:moderator@urcscotland.org.uk">moderator@urcscotland.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>See end of paper.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To amend the United Reformed Church's ethical investment policy in relation to fossil fuels, aiming to fully divest from investments in fossil fuel production companies.
<b>Main points</b>	See executive summary.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Environmental policy for the United Reformed Church, General Assembly 2016. Ethical investment guidelines on climate change issues Mission Council paper G2 November 2015.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The joint public issues team.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	No necessary impact on investment income long term.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Making a significant public statement of intent</li> <li>2. Enable the URC input to the ecumenical Church Investors Group to take and demonstrate a prophetic lead.</li> </ol>

# Creating a climate of change: a new approach to ethical investment

## Executive summary

- S1. In November 2015 Mission Council agreed an updated policy in relation to investment in fossil fuel: ethical investment guidelines on climate change issues. Since then, there have been considerable developments in the science, politics and response by other Churches in this area.
- S2. This paper applauds the URC's acknowledgement of the imperative to act on climate change and recognises that there is a spectrum of sincerely held views within the denomination on:
- a) the most effective way that the URC can use its investment decisions to influence fossil fuel companies, and
  - b) the morally and theologically appropriate way of using investment policy, mindful of the potentially catastrophic consequences of fossil fuel use for energy production.
- S3. This paper welcomes the 2015 decision to divest from coal and tar sands, two of the most polluting forms of fossil fuel production, and proposes that the time is now right for the URC to take the next step by moving to fully divest from fossil fuel production companies.
- S4. It further proposes that the URC continues to use its influence to pressure these companies, both through engagement and speaking into the public square, to end exploration for new oil and gas reserves and pursue a strategy of managed decline of fossil fuel production, and a just transition to sustainable energy use and production.
- S5. It nonetheless asserts that previous insights, language and arguments have already been overtaken by circumstance, including the suffering of partner Churches and their nations, and the ongoing toll of the extinction of species. The 'Integrity of Creation' is already breached, and on current trajectories, without unprecedented intervention, our way of life on Earth is not sustainable. The damage already done reminds us of the inadequacy of previous approaches.

## Section one – the URC and environmental issues: a history of proactive engagement

### 1.1.1 A summary of actions

1980s – 1990s: Engagement with and advocacy of the justice, peace and integrity of creation approach fostered by the World Council of Churches.

1990s – 2000s: Embracing the Five Marks of Mission, the fifth of which is: ‘to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth’.

2004: The URC played a role in the development of the Accra confession of the then World Alliance of Reformed Churches, which includes the statement: ‘We believe that God calls us to hear the cries of the poor and the groaning of creation and to follow the public mission of Jesus Christ who came so that all may have life and have it in fullness (John 10.10).’

2010s – present: adopting Vision 2020 as a ten-year mission plan, of which Statement 10 is: ‘We will be a church that has taken significant steps to safeguard the integrity of creation, to sustain and renew the life of the earth.’

This has been underpinned by considered debate and decision-making at URC General Assembly, including:

2004: Adopting an environmental policy,

2007: Adopting a statement on climate change,

2009: Adopting (with the Methodist and Baptist Churches) the report *Hope in God’s Future*,

2016: Agreeing a new and updated environmental policy,

2017: Mission Council receives and agrees a set of environmental resolutions from URC Youth.

- 1.2. The case for the imperative of caring for God’s creation is widely accepted across the Christian Churches, and is an area in which the URC has traditionally taken an active and leading role.
- 1.3 The URC advocates a range of Christian environmental initiatives, including Eco-Congregation (now Eco Church in England and Wales), which supports and encourages local churches to green their life and mission. The priority of care of God’s creation among our churches is reflected in the high level of engagement of local URC churches with Eco Church/Eco-Congregation. The URC has supplied ministry to foster environmental stewardship, and currently the National Synod of Scotland has a special category ministry as an Environmental Chaplain, working ecumenically across the nation.
- 1.4 In 2009 as a part of the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT), the URC played a significant role in the publication of *Hope in God’s Future*, which was both a report and study guide to explore the relationship between Christian faith and climate change.
- 1.5 In March 2015 the National Synod of Scotland became the first synod to pass a resolution to divest investments from fossil fuel producing companies. This has been widely acknowledged as a prophetic action, not least because it was primarily a moral rather than a financial decision.

1.6 As the urgency of significant action on climate change becomes ever more apparent, the November 2015 decision to continue to 'engage' with oil and gas companies whilst holding significant fossil fuel investments now aligns the URC more closely with those who benefit from the status quo, and behind the curve in relation to other UK Churches and significant institutions. This debate has been fostered in *Reform* magazine, and now seems an opportune time to reconsider the URC's ethical investment policy with regard to fossil fuel investments.

The following sections 2 – 8 outline factors that warrant a new approach to the URC's ethical investment criteria.

## **Section two: climate change, some implications of recent science**

- 2.1 Given the urgency of action needed to accelerate a just transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy, it is important to consider the greatest possible impact that the URC could have, in order to influence government policy and drive action on climate change among its members and in wider society.
- 2.2 A 2016 report by Oil Change International, *The Sky's Limit* (written in partnership with Christian Aid and others), showed that potential carbon emissions from the oil, gas, and coal in the world's currently operating fields and mines would take us beyond 2°C of warming; the reserves in currently operating oil and gas fields alone, even with no coal, would take the world beyond 1.5°C.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.3 An October 2018 report from the intergovernmental panel on climate change (IPCC) found that average global temperature rises could reach 1.5°C as soon as 2030, based on the current rate of greenhouse gas emissions.
- 2.4 A January 2019 scientific study published by researchers at the Universities of Leeds and Oxford in the journal *Nature Communications* found that 'if we built no more fossil fuel infrastructure and instead replaced existing infrastructure at the end of its productive life with a zero carbon alternative we could limit peak temperature rise to 1.5°C – as long as we start now.'<sup>2</sup>
- 2.5 The UK's summer heatwave in 2018 – which broke all-time temperature records in Belfast (29.5°C), Glasgow (31.9°C) and Porthmadog, Wales (33°C) – was made up to 30 times more likely by climate change, according to a preliminary study by scientists at the Met Office Hadley Centre.<sup>3</sup> Seventeen of the last 18 years were the warmest ever recorded. Global warming causing climate disruption has driven hurricanes in the Caribbean, wildfires in the US and Europe, heatwaves in Australia and devastating floods and typhoons in Asia.
- 2.6 The UN estimates that 26 million people, or one person each second, are already being pushed into poverty by extreme weather and climate disasters every year.<sup>4</sup> According to the World Health Organisation, an estimated 250,000 additional people will die each year from 2030 due to malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress caused by climate change.<sup>5</sup>

## Section three: climate change and the Paris Agreement

- 3.1 The signing of the Paris Agreement at the UN Climate Change Conference meeting from 30 November to 12 December 2015 was a historic moment. After years of negotiation, 195 countries came together to agree united action on climate change. They committed to keep the global average temperature rise 'well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels' and 'pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C' to protect humanity from the worst impacts of climate change. The URC's Environment Policy, adopted at General Assembly in 2016, recognised the significance of the 1.5°C target.<sup>6</sup>
- 3.2 Yet, so far, governments around the world have not made the commitments required to meet the Paris Agreement targets. It is estimated that the Paris pledges made by national governments, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), would lead to between 2.7°C and 3.5°C of human induced warming, and dangerous climate instability. This is a long way from the commitment in the Paris Agreement, as is the current use of fossil fuels globally.
- 3.3 Where governments are not doing enough, it is vital that other institutions, including the URC, speak out, take action and stand up for the Paris Agreement.

## Section 4: Climate Change and the Imperative for Urgent Action

- 4.1 According to the UN Environment Programme, global carbon emissions must peak by 2020 at the latest, and rapidly decrease thereafter, if there is any chance of meeting the Paris Agreement targets.<sup>7</sup> However, we are heading in the wrong direction: global carbon emissions rose by 1.6% in 2017 and are set to rise by 2.7% in 2018,<sup>8</sup> with the UK falling short of meeting its 'nationally determined contributions'.<sup>9</sup>
- 4.2 At a speech to the UN General Assembly in September 2018, UN Secretary General António Guterres said: 'Climate change is the defining issue of our time – and we are at a defining moment. We face a direct existential threat. If we do not change course by 2020, we risk missing the point where we can avoid runaway climate change, with disastrous consequences for people and all the natural systems that sustain us.'<sup>10</sup>
- 4.3 Chris Stark, Chair of the committee on climate change, which advises the UK government on climate policy, emphasised the urgency of action required in 2019: 'The lesson from last year's IPCC report is not – as some have said – that we have 12 years to respond to climate change, it's that we must act immediately.'<sup>11</sup> This has significant implications for the need to shift finance out of fossil fuels and into clean alternatives.

## Section five: climate change and the risk to investors

- 5.1 While fossil fuel companies have historically been considered a safe investment, they are now seen as increasingly risky. The vast majority of



fossil fuels will need to remain in the ground if we are to meet the Paris Agreement targets, so fossil fuel companies run the risk of being left with 'stranded assets', worthless fuel reserves that regulations will prevent from being burned or that can only be consumed at unimaginable cost to us all.

- 5.2 Climate change poses risks to the entire global economy. As a result, it threatens the majority of assets in the Churches' portfolios, particularly in climate vulnerable sectors such as property and food. The insurance industry is also at risk: the CEO of insurance giant AXA has stated that global warming could lead to an 'uninsurable' world.<sup>12</sup> In April 2018, the Governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney, compared the risks posed by climate change to the financial instability which caused the 2008 financial crisis.
- 5.3 A Cambridge University study found that 'Factors, including climate change policy, technological change, asset stranding, weather events and longer-term physical impacts may lead to financial tipping points for which investors are not presently prepared, leading to economic shocks and losses of up to 45% in an equity investment portfolio.'<sup>13</sup>
- 5.4 In June 2017, a carbon tracker report found that 69 fossil fuel companies were risking \$2.3 trillion (£1.6 trillion) of potential future investments on projects that will never be pursued if global temperature rises are limited to 2°C.<sup>14</sup> Five out of six major oil and gas companies, including Shell and Chevron, were risking between 30% and 40% of capital expenditure on uneconomic projects.
- 5.5 Recent studies by Newton Asset Management (February 2016) and the University of St Andrews (April 2018) suggest that excluding fossil fuel investments from share portfolios would not appear to have had a long term impact on financial performance.  
  
Some investors have made financial losses as a result of continued fossil fuel investments: for instance, The New York State Common Retirement Fund would be an estimated \$22.2 billion (£17 billion) wealthier if it had divested 10 years ago, according to research from Corporate Knights.<sup>15</sup>
- 5.6 A report coauthored by former New York State Deputy Comptroller Tom Sanzillo in July 2018 states that 'the financial case for fossil fuel divestment is strong... over the past three and five years, respectively, global stock indexes without fossil fuel holdings have outperformed otherwise identical indexes that include fossil fuel companies'.<sup>16</sup>
- 5.7 Perhaps more important than past performance is the likely future performance and financial risk of investments in fossil fuel companies. In March 2018, the UK Sustainable Investment and Finance Association (UKSIF) and Climate Change Collaboration conducted a survey of 30 leading fund managers with over £13 trillion of assets under management. It found that 90% of fund managers expect at least one climate related risk to significantly impact the valuation of international oil companies within two

- years<sup>17</sup>, citing risks such as reputational damage, litigation for losses from climate change and regulation to curtail pollution.
- 5.8 An increasing number of fund managers are developing investment options that exclude fossil fuels from their portfolios. One example is BMO Global Asset Management, which announced in May 2017 that its range of responsible funds will no longer invest in fossil fuels from January 2020.<sup>18</sup>
- 5.9 The Archbishop of Canterbury is President of BMO's Responsible Investment Advisory Council. He welcomed the change in policy as follows: 'This policy is a most impressive piece of work, and puts BMO Global Asset Management in the front line as a leader on the issue of climate change.'<sup>19</sup>
- 5.10 Some investors have argued in the past that divestment from fossil fuels was not possible due to 'fiduciary duty', which is the legal obligation that formerly required trustees to act only in the best interests of their members. However, by adopting ethical investment policies, the Church has already recognised that its fiduciary duties do not oblige it to make investments which may be at odds with its moral standpoint. For example, it already excludes investments in companies whose income is generated by gambling, pornography and weapons of mass destruction. But it is appropriate for the trustees to assess the financial risks of exposure to fossil fuels, mindful that a growing number of institutions are making decisions to divest from fossil fuels for financial reasons.
- 5.11 A legal opinion from Christopher McCall QC<sup>20</sup>, a leading expert on fiduciary duty, states that carbon intensive investments may be 'irreconcilable' for charities with a wide range of missions. According to McCall, where a clear conflict exists, trustees must divest from such investments, including fossil fuels, 'regardless of the financial consequences'.
- 5.12 Gunnela Hahn, Head of Responsible Investment at the Church of Sweden, summarised well the financial case for divestment: 'As a responsible investor we ... do not want to own, and thereby fund, the extraction of fossil fuels. Instead we want to own and fund companies that stand for solutions.'
- 5.13 An article was published on page 2 of the Financial Times on 4/5 August 2018, entitled 'Christians cross the Rubicon on fossil fuel divestment'. A clear case is made, and the article cites the URC Synod of Scotland as having acted on divestment, along with other Christian denominations including the Quakers in Britain and the Church of Ireland.

## **Section six: climate change: shareholder engagement and divestment**

- 6.1 Several Churches have opted to pursue a policy of engagement with oil and gas companies, including putting forward resolutions at shareholder meetings. But with companies such as BP and Shell pursuing business strategies which will lead to a global average temperature rise of 3-5°C+ (ShareAction, 2017),

there is every sign that, while notice is being taken, the resultant action appears more concerned with addressing reputational damage rather than the climate crisis.

- 6.2 The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, questioned the effectiveness of engagement in a July 2018 *Telegraph* article: 'So far, like many large institutions, the Church of England has argued for a strategy of engagement and influence from within. But the question has to be asked: how effective has this proved to date? Is engagement working? It is a good moment to sharpen up the response.'<sup>21</sup>
- 6.3 The National Synod of Scotland believes that engagement with fossil fuel production companies is not working with the speed necessary to bring about the change required, and that it is now time for the URC to divest. A Transition Pathway Initiative report published in November 2018 showed that **none** of the 10 major oil and gas companies have plans to align with Paris Agreement targets. Only two out of 10 companies have long term carbon reduction targets, although these still fall well short of alignment with the Paris Agreement, while half of the companies, including Chevron, in which the URC Trust invests, do not have any emission reduction targets at all.<sup>22</sup>
- 6.4 While the major oil and gas companies publicly claim to support the Paris Agreement and some policies that could have a positive impact on climate change, such as a carbon price, they also belong to trade associations that proactively lobby against climate action. For instance, major oil companies including BP, Shell, and Chevron spent \$31.2 million (£24.8 million) to oppose a carbon pricing measure in Washington State in November 2018, which could have generated billions of dollars for clean energy and air programmes.<sup>23</sup>
- 6.5 At Shell's AGM in May 2018, only 5.5% of shareholders voted in favour of a climate change resolution calling on the company to set emission reduction targets in line with the Paris Agreement. Shell urged shareholders to vote against the resolution, arguing that it was 'not in the best interests of the company'.<sup>24</sup>
- 6.6 When Shell made an announcement in December 2018 that was welcomed by some investors, Jeremy Martin of the Union of Concerned Scientists wrote that 'the most striking thing...about Shell's decarbonization plan is that it is so utterly disconnected from the huge sources of emissions under Shell's control'.<sup>25</sup> It is important to note that the company has only pledged *ambitions* (rather than targets) to reduce the carbon *intensity* of its products, i.e. carbon per unit of energy produced – rather than a commitment to reduce absolute emissions tied to a baseline year or carbon budget.<sup>26</sup> This means that Shell can continue to grow its gas business for decades, given the lower carbon intensity of gas compared to oil.

- 6.7 Given that the Paris Agreement requires carbon emissions to reach net zero by 2050, Shell's ambition to halve the carbon *intensity* of its products by 2050 falls well short of what is required and relies on the massive deployment of 'negative emissions technologies', which either do not exist or are yet to prove themselves economically viable.<sup>27</sup>
- 6.8 BP outlined plans in February 2017 to increase oil production by an average of 5% per year up to 2021.<sup>28</sup> BP's 2018 Energy Outlook forecasts that global carbon emissions will increase by more than 10% between 2016 and 2040,<sup>29</sup> which stands in complete opposition to the need for greenhouse gas emissions to peak by 2020<sup>30</sup> to meet the Paris Agreement's goal of reducing emissions to net zero in the second half of the century.
- 6.9 In February 2019, BP made a pledge to make its business strategy consistent with the Paris Agreement. However, as reported by the *Guardian*, 'the company will not be setting targets any time soon for 'Scope 3 emissions' produced by consumers using their products'<sup>31</sup>, which account for 80-90% of overall emissions. Meanwhile, BP continues to explore for new oil reserves in areas of considerable ecological significance, such as the mouth of the Amazon river.<sup>32</sup>
- 6.10 Chevron allocated \$15.8 billion (£12.5 billion) of planned spending on oil and gas exploration and infrastructure in 2018.<sup>33</sup> It has regularly insisted on the critical role for fossil fuels and dismissed the case for stranded assets in its 2017 report, 'Managing Climate Change Risks: A Perspective for Investors.'<sup>34</sup>
- 6.11 The URC could instruct CCLA Investment Management Ltd, to continue to pursue engagement by divesting from oil and gas companies, whilst maintaining the minimum possible number of shares to attend company AGMs. The University of Edinburgh, for instance, intends to continue such engagement with oil and gas companies following its commitment to divest from fossil fuels. However, the Church has a powerful moral voice in society, which provides opportunities for engagement without being investors: for instance, through public statements and/or events with the oil and gas sector.
- 6.12 While engagement can be effective with some issues, for example in governance practices, moderating directors' pay or committing to paying employees a Living Wage, it may be reasonably judged that shareholder engagement is unlikely to change the core business of fossil fuel companies. The capital intensive nature of fossil fuel infrastructure and the time lag between investment and returns in oil and gas production mean that it is very challenging for fossil fuel companies to successfully diversify from their core business.<sup>35</sup> Engagement efforts could be more effectively directed to companies in sectors such as the electricity and automotive industries, in order to reduce the demand for fossil fuels.
- 6.13 The November 2015 guidelines agreed by Mission Council are as follows:  
Those responsible for investment decisions on behalf of the URC and its Trust bodies should:

- a) engage intensively with those companies in which they are invested that make a significant contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions (such as fossil fuel producers, electricity generation utilities, large energy users, and producers of energy intensive products) to encourage them to assist in the transition to a low carbon economy
- b) conduct corporate and public policy engagement wherever possible in collaboration with other investors, including through the Church Investors Group (CIG), the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change (IIGCC) and the Carbon Disclosure project (CDP)
- c) not invest in any company where more than 10% of its revenues are derived from the extraction of thermal coal or the production of oil from oil sands
- d) disinvest, after appropriate engagement, from companies that make a significant contribution to emissions of greenhouse gasses and that are considered not to be taking seriously their responsibilities to assist with the transition to a low carbon economy
- e) where practicable increase their investments in climate change adaptation, and in sectors and activities such as sustainable energy, energy efficiency, carbon capture and storage that may make a significant contribution to reducing global greenhouse gas emissions or facilitating the transition to low carbon economy, to the extent that such investments meet their investment risk/return criteria
- f) continue to encourage those organisations that invest money on their behalf to build climate change into their investment practices and processes, in line with the goals and objectives set out in this climate change policy, including through integrating climate change into relevant requests for proposals and due diligence processes, making climate change an explicit part of their asset management appointment processes, integrating climate change into their investment principles, and monitoring their asset managers' approach to climate change
- g) monitor and report periodically on their implementation of this policy.

6.14 Since November 2015, Mission Council has not received any reports on the impact of engagement or future prospects for the URC Guidelines achieving change.

6.15 As a denomination, the URC may ask whether it is likely that our active engagement, even with other ethical investment partners, is likely to shift companies whose core business is fossil fuel production to companies whose core business is providing environmentally sustainable energy, ensuring that the temperature limits enshrined in the Paris Agreement are not breached and in a timeframe that prevents catastrophic climate change.

6.16 The good news is that if the URC wishes to see the development of alternatives to fossil fuels, it does not need to wait for fossil fuel companies to provide them. It can increase its current investment in those companies already building and operating wind and solar power. The choice is between 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century technologies; between environmental degradation and a sustainable future.

## Section seven: fossil fuel divestment and the wider Christian community

- 7.1 According to a 2017 ComRes poll commissioned by Christian Aid, 78% of respondents (2,000 adults) agreed that investing in companies that cause dangerous climate change is morally wrong, no matter how profitable it is.<sup>36</sup>
- 7.2 Christian Aid published a statement in July 2018 urging Churches to divest from fossil fuels: 'As leading advocates for action on climate change, it is now time that the Churches divest from the fossil fuel industry. Continuing to profit from fossil fuel production is financially unnecessary and morally wrong; investing in the alternatives is the Churches' prophetic responsibility.'<sup>37</sup>
- 7.3 The global divestment movement has grown exponentially in recent years, with more than 1,000 institutions with nearly \$8 trillion of assets under management making commitments to divest from fossil fuels. During 2018, New York City Pension Fund, the Church of Ireland and the Royal College of GPs are among those to join the World Council of Churches, the Anglican Church of Southern Africa and the Church of Sweden in committing to full divestment from fossil fuels.
- 7.4 UK Churches have also moved forward in divesting from fossil fuels and investing in clean technologies in recent years. Quakers in Britain and the United Reformed Church Synod of Scotland have committed to full divestment. In 2017, Methodist Conference voted in favour of divestment by 2020 from oil and gas companies that have not aligned their business investment plans with the Paris Agreement targets. In July 2018, the Church of England General Synod voted to complete divestment by 2023 from oil and gas companies that are not on track to meet the Paris Agreement targets.
- 7.5 The World Council of Churches published a statement ahead of the UN climate talks in Poland in December 2018, urging its member Churches to 'urgently intensify their advocacy and action for climate justice... by divesting from fossil fuels and undertaking faith-consistent impact investments in renewable energies'.<sup>38</sup>

## Section eight: climate change: sustainable technologies and positive investment

*'It is incumbent on those who have generated the most greenhouse gas emissions and derived the greatest benefit from relatively cheap and accessible fossil fuels to pioneer the path towards alternative energy futures'*  
– *Hope in God's Future*<sup>39</sup>

- 8.1 With each passing month, we are witnessing rapid developments in renewable energy and clean technologies, from solar and wind energy to electric vehicles to battery storage. These technological developments both threaten the future of fossil fuels and provide opportunities for investors.

- 8.2 A combination of climate related regulation, developments in clean technologies and falling costs, and socio political pressures such as the divestment movement and changing consumer attitudes, threaten a perfect storm for the fossil fuel industry. The pace of change could surprise us all, not least because of the rapid development and application of new and sustainable technologies, and because of the imperative to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.
- 8.3 Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England, said in 2015: ‘Financing the decarbonisation of our economy is a major opportunity... It implies a sweeping reallocation of resources and a technological revolution, with investment in long-term infrastructure assets at roughly quadruple the present rate.’<sup>40</sup>
- 8.4 Morgan Stanley estimates that energy from renewable sources will be the cheapest form of power in ‘nearly every country’ by 2020.<sup>41</sup> Electric vehicle (EV) sales are expected to grow from 3 million in 2017 to 125 million by 2030, according to the International Energy Agency,<sup>42</sup> as governments implement policies such as bans on new sales of petrol and diesel cars. Volvo has announced plans to make only fully electric or hybrid cars from 2019 onwards<sup>43</sup> and several other major car manufacturers also plan to expand their production of electric cars.<sup>44</sup>

### **Section nine: climate change: the defining moral case for action**

- 9.1 Beyond recent developments in terms of scientific understanding, politics and the response by other Churches, there is a separate moral case not to invest fossil fuel companies.
- 9.2 As a Church, the moral and theological case should be considered first and foremost. For those directly involved in the worship and commitment of local congregations, the previous encouragements merely to ‘celebrate’ creation, or act as good *stewards*, are superseded by a compelling call to solidarity and partnership with people and planet, as the effects of the crisis take hold.
- 9.3 Churches and their investment boards have a duty to ensure that their investments do not compromise the ethical position of their institutions. Given the impact of climate change around the world, caused by the emissions of fossil fuels, can the URC continue to invest in fossil fuel companies? It is deeply uncomfortable for the Church, called as it is to embody the love of God, to continue to invest in something which causes the very harm it seeks to alleviate.
- 9.4 Through divesting from fossil fuels and investing in clean alternatives, the URC can play a vital role in bringing about the change it wants to see in the world. The Revd Rachel Mash, Environmental Coordinator of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, has said: ‘The burning of fossil fuels is leading to climate change, which will increase poverty and hunger. We are on the cusp

of a transition to green energy and divestment is a practical action that Churches can take to encourage this transition to take place more quickly.’

- 9.5 A key objective of divestment is, by ceasing to profit from organisations that are causing climate change and by doing so in as public a manner as possible, to make a statement that it is unacceptable to profit from such organisations. The Church has made similar statements through its decision not to invest in other areas, such as companies involved in the production of weapons, tobacco and coal and tar sands. According to researchers at the University of Oxford, divestment is succeeding in this aim and the reputation of the fossil fuel industry has been hit, posing a far reaching threat to the sector.<sup>45</sup>
- 9.6 There is mounting evidence that divestment is having a financial effect on fossil fuel companies. Shell's 2017 annual report acknowledged divestment and climate litigation as material risks to the company's bottom line.<sup>46</sup>

## **Section ten: climate change and the URC – time to choose**

- 10.1 In the past, Christian investors have played an important part in the fight against apartheid and in the rise of Fairtrade certification, their discipleship being reflected in their investment decisions. We call on the Church to now act in a similarly prophetic way with respect to fossil fuel corporations.
- 10.2 The National Synod of Scotland considers that the URChurch should, in the words of Desmond Tutu, ‘move money out of the problem and into solutions’ by divesting from fossil fuels and increasing investment in renewable energy and clean technologies. Furthermore, the Church should ‘shout it from the rooftops,’ encouraging other investors to do the same and bearing witness to our congregations and the whole of society about the future we want to see.

## **Resolution**

Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, agrees that the ethical investment guidelines on climate change issues be updated as follows:

It is the wish of the United Reformed Church that those responsible for investment decisions on behalf of the Church and its Trust bodies should:

- a) not invest in fossil fuel companies whose total turnover is more than 10% derived from the extraction and/or supply of fossil fuels, including thermal coal, natural gas and oil
- b) complete the divestment required to fulfil this decision by the time the URC General Assembly meets in 2020
- c) widen their proactive role as investors, by engaging further with companies whose activities foster significant carbon emissions, for example the electricity and automotive industries, and producers of energy intensive products (e.g. cement)



- d) refocus the Church's investment portfolio by scaling up investment in renewable energy and clean technologies.

Mission Council further resolves to:

- e) encourage publicity of these actions and the rationale behind them, so that the URC can use its influence to advocate an end to the exploration for new oil and gas reserves, and the managed decline of fossil fuel production
- f) advocate to the UK government and others for action to foster the transition to a net zero carbon economy.
- g) encourage other URC synods and local URC churches with investments to divest from fossil fuels, and reinvest in clean alternatives
- h) support and encourage churches and church members to reduce their consumption of fossil fuels, and so participate in a just transition to a zero-carbon future
- i) request the Resources Centres for Learning to ensure that those being prepared for service and leadership are cognisant of the global and spiritual context of the climate crisis.

## References

---

<sup>1</sup> Oil Change International, 'The Sky's Limit: Why the Paris Climate Deals Require a Managed Decline of Fossil Fuel Production', 2016, [http://priceofoil.org/content/uploads/2016/09/OCI\\_the\\_skys\\_limit\\_2016\\_FINAL\\_2.pdf](http://priceofoil.org/content/uploads/2016/09/OCI_the_skys_limit_2016_FINAL_2.pdf), p.5

<sup>2</sup> University of Leeds, 'Immediate phase out of fossil fuels could keep warming below 1.5C', 21 January 2019, <http://climate.leeds.ac.uk/immediate-phase-out-of-fossil-fuels-could-keep-warming-below-1-5c/>

<sup>3</sup> Carbon Brief, 'Met Office: Climate change made 2018 UK summer heatwave '30 times more likely'', 6 December 2018, <https://www.carbonbrief.org/met-office-climate-change-made-2018-uk-summer-heatwave-30-times-more-likely>

<sup>4</sup> UNFCCC, 'UN collects data on losses from climate change', 2 March 2018, <https://unfccc.int/news/un-collects-data-on-losses-from-climate-change>

<sup>5</sup> WHO, World Health Organisation fact sheet: 'Climate change and health', February 2018, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health>

<sup>6</sup> United Reformed Church, 'Environmental Policy for the United Reformed Church', 2016, [https://urc.org.uk/images/mission/church\\_and\\_society/Resources/Environmental\\_Policy\\_2016\\_with\\_Resolution.pdf](https://urc.org.uk/images/mission/church_and_society/Resources/Environmental_Policy_2016_with_Resolution.pdf), p.2

<sup>7</sup> Carbon Brief, 'Only three years to save 1.5C climate target, says UNEP', 3 November 2016, <https://www.carbonbrief.org/only-three-years-save-1-5c-climate-target-says-unep>

<sup>8</sup> Carbon Brief, 'Analysis: Fossil-fuel emissions in 2018 increasing at fastest rate for seven years', 5 December 2018, <https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-fossil-fuel-emissions-in-2018-increasing-at-fastest-rate-for-seven-years>

<sup>9</sup> BBC News, 'Climate change: CO2 emissions rising for first time in four years', 27 November 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-46347453>

<sup>10</sup> UN, 'Secretary-General's remarks on Climate Change', 10 September 2018, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2018-09-10/secretary-generals-remarks-climate-change-delivered>

- <sup>11</sup> Committee on Climate Change, 'Chris Stark: 2019 promises some of the most important work we've ever produced', 11 January 2019: <https://www.theccc.org.uk/2019/01/11/chris-stark-2019-promises-some-of-the-most-important-work-weve-ever-produced/>
- <sup>12</sup> AXA, 'AXA accelerates its commitment to fight climate change', 12 December 2017, <https://www.axa.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/axa-accelerates-its-commitment-to-fight-climate-change>
- <sup>13</sup> University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership, 'Unhedgeable risk: How climate change sentiment impacts investment', 2015, <https://www.cisl.cam.ac.uk/publications/sustainable-finance-publications/unhedgeable-risk>
- <sup>14</sup> Carbon Tracker, 'Five oil majors risking 30% of potential investments on projects 'unneeded' in a 2°C world', 20 June 2017, <https://www.carbontracker.org/five-oil-majors-risking-30-of-potential-investments-on-projects-unneeded-in-a-2c-world>
- <sup>15</sup> Corporate Knights, 'Divestment would have made NY pension fund \$22B richer', 4 October 2018, <https://www.corporateknights.com/channels/climate-and-carbon/divestment-made-ny-pension-fund-22b-richer-15386364/>
- <sup>16</sup> Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA), 'The Financial Case for Fossil Fuel Divestment', 2018, [http://ieefa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Divestment-from-Fossil-Fuels\\_The-Financial-Case\\_July-2018.pdf](http://ieefa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Divestment-from-Fossil-Fuels_The-Financial-Case_July-2018.pdf), p.2
- <sup>17</sup> UKSIF/Climate Change Collaboration, 'Not Long Now: Survey of fund managers' responses to climate-related risks facing fossil fuel companies', 2018, <http://uksif.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/UPDATED-UKSIF-Not-Long-Now-Survey-report-2018-ilovepdf-compressed.pdf>, p.3
- <sup>18</sup> *Guardian*, 'Top UK fund manager divests from fossil fuels', 15 May 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/may/15/top-uk-fund-manager-divests-from-fossil-fuels>
- <sup>19</sup> BMO Global Asset Management, 'BMO Responsible Funds- transition to a low-carbon global economy', 15 May 2017, <http://www2.bmogam.com/l/123372/2017-05-12/7fb6yn>
- <sup>20</sup> Christopher McCall QC, 'Opinion of Christopher McCall QC on Ethically Questionable Investments: A Summary for Trustees', 2015, <https://www.bwblip.com/file/summary-and-opinion-pdf>
- <sup>21</sup> *Telegraph*, 'Moral Christians must press the Church of England to pull its money out of fossil fuels', 7 July 2018, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/07/07/moral-christians-must-press-church-england-pull-money-fossil/>
- <sup>22</sup> Transition Pathway Initiative, 'Carbon Performance Assessment in Oil and Gas: Discussion paper', November 2018, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/GranthamInstitute/tpi/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Oil-and-gas-discussion-paper.pdf>, p.5
- <sup>23</sup> Union of Concerned Scientists, 'Fossil Fuel Giants Are Pumping Out Greenwashing – Their Tricks Won't Work', 13 November 2018, <https://blog.ucsusa.org/kathy-mulvey/fossil-fuel-giants-are-pumping-out-greenwashing-their-tricks-wont-work>
- <sup>24</sup> Shell, 'Notice of Annual General Meeting: Royal Dutch Shell plc', 2018, [https://www.shell.com/investors/retail-shareholder-information/annual-general-meeting/\\_jcr\\_content/par/textimage\\_d70a.stream/1523547663423/591160a18417d3a0a345be40193229f56c7f7f8b8e521f1153890af7158d7820/notice-of-general-meeting-22-may-2018.pdf](https://www.shell.com/investors/retail-shareholder-information/annual-general-meeting/_jcr_content/par/textimage_d70a.stream/1523547663423/591160a18417d3a0a345be40193229f56c7f7f8b8e521f1153890af7158d7820/notice-of-general-meeting-22-may-2018.pdf), p.5
- <sup>25</sup> Union of Concerned Scientists, 'Do Shell's New Climate Commitments Make the Grade?', 13 December 2018, <https://blog.ucsusa.org/jeremy-martin/do-shells-new-climate-commitments-make-the-grade>
- <sup>26</sup> *Financial Times*, 'The detail in Shell's pledge is Paris-defiant', 11 December 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/2b69084a-fc91-11e8-aebf-99e208d3e521>
- <sup>27</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>28</sup> BP, 'In a word: BP's major projects for 2018', 9 February 2018, <https://www.bp.com/en/global/corporate/news-and-insights/bp-magazine/major-upstream-projects-2018-in-a-word.html>
- <sup>29</sup> BP, 'BP Energy Outlook: 2018 Edition', <https://www.bp.com/content/dam/bp/en/corporate/pdf/energy-economics/energy-outlook/bp-energy-outlook-2018.pdf>, p.105
- <sup>30</sup> *Bloomberg*, 'Paris Climate Deal Seen Taking Effect Two Years Ahead of Plan', 11 April 2016, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-04-11/paris-climate-deal-seen-taking-effect-two-years-ahead-of-plan>
- <sup>31</sup> *Guardian*, 'BP to explain how business chimes with Paris climate deal', 1 February 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/feb/01/bp-to-explain-how-business-chimes-with-paris-climate-agreement>

- 
- <sup>32</sup> *Business Green*, 'Is it Beyond Petroleum for real this time?', 1 February 2019, <https://www.businessgreen.com/bg/blog-post/3070343/is-it-beyond-petroleum-for-real-this-time>
- <sup>33</sup> Union of Concerned Scientists, 'Fossil Fuel Giants Are Pumping Out Greenwashing – Their Tricks Won't Work', 13 November 2018, <https://blog.ucsusa.org/kathy-mulvey/fossil-fuel-giants-are-pumping-out-greenwashing-their-tricks-wont-work>
- <sup>34</sup> As You Sow, '2020: A clear vision for Paris compliant shareholder engagement', 2018, <https://www.asyousow.org/reports/2020-a-clear-vision-for-paris-compliant-shareholder-engagement>, p.11
- <sup>35</sup> Church of Scotland, 'Church of Scotland General Assembly 2018 Volume I reports/Blue Book', 20 April 2018, [http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0012/50223/Blue\\_Book.pdf](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/50223/Blue_Book.pdf), p.269
- <sup>36</sup> ComRes, 'Christian Aid – Public Attitudes to Banks and Fossil Fuels', 2017: <http://www.comresglobal.com/polls/christian-aid-publicattitudes-to-banks-and-fossil-fuels/>
- <sup>37</sup> Christian Aid, 'Church investment in fossil fuels: A position statement from Christian Aid', July 2018: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/campaigns/time-divest-fossil-fuels>
- <sup>38</sup> World Council of Churches, 'Statement on COP 24 and Just Transition to Sustainable Economy', 7 November 2018, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/executive-committee/upsala-november-2018/statement-on-cop-24-and-just-transition-to-sustainable-economy/view>
- <sup>39</sup> *Hope in God's Future*, Methodist Publishing, 2009, p.30
- <sup>40</sup> Bank of England, Mark Carney speech at Lloyd's of London, 'Breaking the Tragedy of the Horizon – climate change and financial stability', September 2015: <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/-/media/boe/files/speech/2015/breaking-the-tragedy-of-the-horizon-climate-change-and-financial-stability.pdf>, p.11
- <sup>41</sup> *Business Insider*, 'Inflection point: Renewables will be the 'cheapest form of new power generation' by 2020', 8 July 2017, <http://uk.businessinsider.com/solar-power-energy-renewables-cheapest-power-says-morgan-stanley-2017-7>
- <sup>42</sup> *CNBC*, 'Electric vehicles will grow from 3 million to 125 million by 2030, International Energy Agency forecasts', 30 May 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/30/electric-vehicles-will-grow-from-3-million-to-125-million-by-2030-iea.html>
- <sup>43</sup> Barclays, 'How to Invest in the Rise of the Electric Car', 24 November 2017, <https://www.smartinvestor.barclays.co.uk/invest/investment-insight/investment-ideas-and-strategies/how-to-invest-in-the-rise-of-the-electric-car.html>
- <sup>44</sup> IEA, 'Global EV Outlook 2017: Two million and counting', 2017, <https://www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/GlobalEVO Outlook2017.pdf>, p.24
- <sup>45</sup> B. Caldecott et al, University of Oxford Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment, 'Stranded assets and the fossil fuel divestment campaign: what does divestment mean for the valuation of fossil fuel assets?', 2013, [www.smithschool.ox.ac.uk/publications/reports/SAP-divestment-report-final.pdf](http://www.smithschool.ox.ac.uk/publications/reports/SAP-divestment-report-final.pdf), p.13
- <sup>46</sup> Shell, 'Shell Annual Report 2017 – Strategic Report', March 2017, [https://reports.shell.com/annual-report/2017/servicepages/downloads/files/strategic\\_report\\_shell\\_ar17.pdf](https://reports.shell.com/annual-report/2017/servicepages/downloads/files/strategic_report_shell_ar17.pdf), p.13

# Paper Z1

## URC investment policy

### Investment committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Revd Dick Gray <a href="mailto:dickgray643@gmail.com">dickgray643@gmail.com</a> Ian Hardie <a href="mailto:ianzhardie@googlemail.com">ianzhardie@googlemail.com</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Discussion and possible resolution.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p>Recognising that</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The URC Ministers' Pension Fund has had no direct or indirect investments in fossil fuel extraction companies since the inception of its current investment management arrangements in 2018</li><li>2. The URC Trust's equity investments are held in the form of units in CCLA's Ethical Investment Fund which already holds a significantly lower proportion of investment in fossil fuel extraction companies than any funds tracking major stock indices</li><li>3. CCLA's Ethical Investment Fund already has a larger percentage of investments in companies focused on providing environmental and social benefits (e.g., renewables etc) than it has in fossil fuel companies</li><li>4. CCLA's Ethical Investment Fund managers in practice already disinvest from fossil fuel extraction companies which they judge to be showing minimal interest in or progress towards a lower carbon emissions world; but that nonetheless</li><li>5. The pace of climate change necessitates a significant intensification of efforts by fossil fuel companies to align their business plans with a well-below-two-degree world, in accordance with the Paris climate agreement,</li></ol> <p><b>Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, commends the ongoing discussions between the URC Trust, its investment committee and its Investment Manager CCLA to ensure that engagement with all fossil fuel development and extraction companies is intensified with a view to achieving clear progress toward developing their business within the context of the below two degrees criteria set by the Paris Climate Change Agreement.</b></p> <p><b>For any companies that cannot meet the commitment by 31 December 2020, Mission Council requests the URC</b></p>

	<b>Trust and its investment committee to disinvest as soon as is feasible thereafter.</b>
--	---

**Summary of content**

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To propose possible changes to the Investment Principles of the United Reformed Church in relation to climate change and investments in companies engaged in fossil fuel extraction or its development.
<b>Main points</b>	To determine our investment policy regarding meeting the climate change obligations of the Paris agreement.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Mission committee representatives URC Trust Investment committee.

**Summary of impact**

<b>Financial</b>	Probably minimal unless a change in policy means we need to disinvest from CCLA’s Ethical Investment Fund, in which case some alternative options could be very costly.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Church Investors Group, CCLA.

**Introduction**

- 1.1 Our current policy towards investment in companies that develop and extract fossil fuels is coming under pressure because of the impact on climate change.
- 1.2 To many members of the United Reformed Church (URC) it seems that profiting from the development and extraction of fossil fuels is at odds with our theological beliefs. We already exclude the extraction of coal and coal tar from companies with whom we invest. To other members it seems that continued strong engagement with such companies can in the medium term achieve more than simple disinvestment.
- 1.3 This paper attempts to present the arguments from both sides to enable Mission Council to engage in a meaningful discussion about whether we need to change our policy.

**The current situation of our investments**

- 2.1 The URC’s trusts invest in order to provide additional income to support the M&M fund and to provide growth of assets to fund the needs of our Ministers Pension Fund.
- 2.2 The URC centrally does not invest directly in any companies. The investment committee believes that investing through investment managers who are

committed to our investment principles provides the best return on the funds that we invest and greater leverage in influencing companies' behaviour.

- 2.3 The URC centrally has two main investments in equities:
- Our Ministers Pension Fund is invested with Newton Investment Management in its Sustainable Global Equity Fund
  - Our URC Trust investment is invested with CCLA in its COIF Ethical Investment Fund.

Each investment is valued at around £50 million.

- 2.4 The Newton fund has no investments in fossil fuel extraction companies and sets out its aims as investing only in companies that meet the United Nations Global Sustainability Goals and which manage their environmental, social or governance (ESG) issues actively. It has no specific exceptions apart from tobacco, but is unlikely to ever consider investments in pornography, armaments, gambling, fossil fuel extraction or alcohol where these form significant parts of a business.
- 2.5 Our CCLA investment includes three fossil fuel extraction companies totalling around 4% of their total fund. It does not invest in coal or coal tar extraction. It also has some 5% of its investments in companies focused on environmental and social benefits, including those seeking alternative methods of generating energy.
- 2.6 Both our investment managers are fully committed to engage with the companies in which they invest and actively vote their shares at company meetings. They both believe that meaningful engagement can and does change the behaviour of companies.
- 2.7 Many synod trusts and local churches also have investments, probably exceeding those held centrally. Many of these investments are also held with CCLA. The Methodist Church's Epworth Funds operate with similar policies.

## The theological background

- 3.1 Our basis of union sets out our beliefs.
- 3.2 We are a part of the one Church catholic and reformed, mandated by the Basis of Union "to live out, in joyful and sacrificial service to all". That involves us in both being a part of the whole Church of God and having a care for the world in which we live.
- 3.3 Therefore, the URC Trust, the URC Ministers Pension Trust and several synods are members of the Church Investors Group (CIG) where we join with colleagues from other denominations to work together to use the weight of our combined investments to encourage companies to be more responsible in their decisions particularly as these impact their workforce, their contractors, their investors, and the communities and environments in which they operate. The CIG members have around £21 billion of investments under management.
- 3.4 Because of our beliefs we have investment principles to set out how we can invest both ethically and responsibly. These policy statements are attached as an Annex

to this report. As regards the current issue, the paragraph on sustainability seems to be critical:

sustainability – investment decisions will be guided by the principle of financial and environmental sustainability, with a view to the long-term maintenance of well-being for the economic, social and natural environments;

- 3.5 Appendix two of that annex also outlines our current approach to climate change investment issues. Both our investment companies have agreed to follow these guidelines.
- 3.6 Clearly climate change is a critically important issue for the church as it seeks to be a good steward of the resources of the world.

## Climate change

- 4.1 The Paris agreement on climate change proposed limiting climate change rises to less than two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, but many scientists believe this is insufficient and that a target of 1.5 degrees is more likely to have the desired effect of reducing the impact of our use of fossil fuels on greenhouse gases and global warming.
- 4.2 Both our investment managers are committed to minimizing the impact of climate change. Both portfolios comprise investments with lower carbon emission, and significantly below those found in the wider investment universe.
- 4.3 CCLA believes that through concerted engagement some fossil fuel companies can over time be persuaded to change direction to be compatible with the Paris agreement. Over the past few years CCLA has disinvested from others where they have identified a lack of commitment to the necessary level of change.
- 4.4 Because of such engagement, Shell has invited the Church of England to assist them in formulating a policy for remuneration of senior managers and executives which better reflects the expectations of the investment community.
- 4.5 CCLA's Ethical fund has investment in 3 fossil fuel companies. Shell and Total have committed to bring their companies into alignment with the Paris agreement through investing in new ways of generating energy, but on present plans they are unlikely to achieve this before the mid-2030s at the earliest. CCLA currently expects Chevron to follow a managed decline, because of the composition of their business.
- 4.6 There are serious questions about whether CCLA will continue with such an investment based upon such vague statements.

## Engage or disinvest

- 5.1 At the heart of the argument is whether it is more effective to disinvest or engage.
- 5.2 There is no disagreement about the need to meet at the very least the level of the Paris agreement on climate change.

- 5.3 CCLA now believe that the fossil fuel development and extraction companies that are held within their Ethical Fund are unlikely to meet our expectations in respect of climate change in a timeframe that is acceptable to many of their investors. That does not imply that engagement is ineffective.
- 5.4 Following pressure from the Aiming for A coalition developed by CCLA, academic bodies and the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change (IIGCC), Royal Dutch Shell announced that it will seek to reduce the net carbon footprint of its energy products by around 20% by 2035, and to deliver cuts consistent with societal ambition (currently embodied in the Paris Agreement) by 2050. Although Shell's statement of intent is welcome, CCLA are continuing to engage with them, asking for greater clarity on how the company envisages achieving its aim over the short and medium term. While the 2020s will still see demand for fossil fuels, by the 2030s these companies must either have diversified or be in managed decline. Failure to map out a realistic path to this outcome will result in shareholder value being put at risk.
- 5.5 The reality is that at present there are no viable mainstream alternatives to the use of fossil fuels for transport, and limited options regarding heating. There are many ways to generate alternative sources of energy, but few that offer the level of supply that the world wants now.
- 5.6 Operation Noah, an Ecumenical Christian Charity working to inspire action on climate change is among those who argue in favour of divestment. They state that it is inequitable to gain advantage using materials that are destroying our world. However, we all use these materials in carrying out our daily lives. The mission of the URC would be impossible without using fossil fuels today.
- 5.7 A few smaller organisations, including some URC investment bodies, have removed their investments from fossil fuel companies, but the impact of such decisions has not been significant.
- 5.8 Divesting is something of a one-time hit, and by divesting from a company we potentially leave the leadership in the hands of those who have less interest in the issue of climate change.
- 5.9 The proponents of engagement claim that through engagement with appropriate companies we can change them. If we divest, they will simply revert to their former ways, and change to more environmentally friendly alternatives will be delayed. So far the evidence is mixed, with both successes and failures. It seems that engagement can produce instant results, but it is more likely to take time as the various parties develop an understanding of mutual objectives. Changing direction of a company can be like attempting to turn around a super tanker: it takes a long time, and time is in short supply.
- 5.10 If we have a history of engagement with a company, even if we divest from that company, it may still be possible to engage with a view that if it changes its ways, we could then reinvest.
- 5.11 Our partners in CIG have a similar direction to our current position. Both the Church of England and the Methodist Church have chosen to engage, but with a time limit for action. Methodists set a time limit of 2020. The Church of England currently has a target of 2023.



## Potential options

- 6.1 There seem to be several potential options:
- a) Commend our investment committee to work with our investment managers to remove fossil fuel companies from their portfolios as soon as reasonably practical
  - b) Continue to invest in fossil fuel companies but to ensure a complete removal from the portfolio of any company which is unable to meet the target of the Paris accord by a date to be agreed
  - c) Make no change to our current policy.
- 6.2 The first option will cause us immediate difficulty as either we would need to persuade CCLA to change their stance with their Ethical Fund (the URC and its synods own around 1/6 of the total Ethical fund) or we would then have to find an alternate investment manager.
- 6.3 If we fail to find another investment manager prepared to observe our revised ethical guidelines within a pooled fund, we might have to manage our investments ourselves. It is highly questionable if we have the capacity to do this properly and some options for managing that would be prohibitively costly. Using a discretionary investment manager is likely to cost more, offer a much smaller range of investments and lack the diversity which our current pooled fund offers.
- 6.4 The second option would be likely to enable us to retain our current investment management arrangements. Putting a time limit on the engagement process would put us in line with our main denominational colleagues in CIG, and 2020/2021 is a sensible date by which it should be clear whether engagement is achieving the desired results.

## Next steps

Whatever steps we choose, then we should be open with our churches and synods to recommend that they take similar actions.

## Ethical investment policy statements 2010-7

Mission Council, meeting in March 2010, received a report on ethical investment principles for the use by the United Reformed Church. These principles are based on theological reflection on how to express mission responsibility through investment and developments in ethical investment policy and practice to reflect both positive and negative screening criteria based on social, environmental, governance and ethical concerns. General Assembly 2010 adopted these principles in the following terms: *General Assembly welcomes the statement 'Ethical investment principles for the use of the United Reformed Church' for the guidance of those responsible for making investment decisions and commends the summary statement 'Recommended Mandate for Investors'.*

Additional material was added in 2013 and 2015 as described in appendices one and two and an amendment made in 2017. A revised recommended mandate for Investors taking account of these is attached as Appendix three.

The oversight and monitoring of these guidelines, given to the ethical investment advisory group in 2010, is now the responsibility of the investment committee under the general oversight of the mission and finance committees.

### **Ethical investment principles for use by the United Reformed Church:**

1. The General Assembly of the United Reformed Church considers investment decisions to be an integral part of the Church's mission and witness and is committed, as far as it is legal and practical, to expressing Christian responsibility through investment decisions. Towards this end, Assembly requests that those responsible for investment decisions on behalf of the URC and its Trust bodies are guided by the principles set out below.
2. Assembly wishes the basic, aspirational ethical principles outlined below to inform all investment decisions:
  - mission integrity – the URC will, in all investment related activities, aim to avoid undermining the credibility, effectiveness and unity of its mission and witness;
  - stewardship – those entrusted with responsibility for investment decisions on behalf of the URC, its Trust bodies and their agents will exercise due diligence and care in the exercise of their duty to ensure that mission and fiduciary responsibilities are creatively and effectively balanced;
  - legality – all investment decisions will comply with the legal requirements for trustees as outlined in the Charity Acts and other legislation;
  - sustainability – investment decisions will be guided by the principle of financial and environmental sustainability, with a view to the long-term maintenance of well-being for the economic, social and natural environments

- solidarity – investment decisions will be guided by the biblical principle of solidarity with those who are poor and marginalised and seek social justice as expressed in Statement nine of the URC’s Mission Framework<sup>1</sup>;
  - accountability – URC trustees, working in liaison with fund managers, will aspire to the highest level of compliance with this policy which can be achieved;
  - transparency – reputational risk will be minimised by ensuring openness and transparency in reporting on URC investment portfolios and compliance with this policy;
  - partnership – the URC recognises the value of collaborative action in terms of effecting change in companies’ policies and practices and commits to working with the other members of the Church investors group (CIG), the ecumenical council for corporate responsibility (ECCR) and other ecumenical agencies to engage with companies and, where relevant, to act in support of their initiatives.
3. Expression will be given to these principles through both negative and positive screening of companies as well as through selective direct engagement with companies. Each of these investment strategies is outlined below, and should be considered as part of an integral approach to ethical investment by the URC.
4. The existing URC ethical investment policy will be developed to guide our investments in terms of negative screening. This policy states:

General Assembly recommends that trustees and all those with investment responsibilities connected with the United Reformed Church should avoid any investment in:

- a) companies directly engaged in the manufacture or supply of weapons of destruction
- b) companies a significant part of whose business is in the supply of alcoholic drinks or tobacco products or military equipment (other than weapons of destruction); or the provision of gambling facilities; or the publication or distribution of pornography.

General Assembly notes that the definition of these activities, or of what constitutes a significant part of a company’s business, requires judgement and the ethical investment advisory group (EIAG) of Mission Council [now the investment committee] is available to offer advice. In general, EIAG will deem ‘significant’ to mean where the share of turnover derived from the activity concerned is more than around 10-20% of the company’s total turnover.

General Assembly recognises that this policy can only be advisory as the responsibility of specific investment decisions remains with each body of trustees. However, in addition to the criteria listed above, the URC’s investment bodies are encouraged to avoid investment in companies whose management practices are deemed to be unacceptable or whose operations are deemed to:

- contribute to the oppressive nature of regimes which are guilty of gross human rights violations

---

<sup>1</sup> See p.22 of the Vision 2020 – planning for growth in the URC booklet for details - [http://www.urch.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/mission/images/vision2020\\_booklet\\_colour.pdf](http://www.urch.org.uk/what_we_do/mission/images/vision2020_booklet_colour.pdf)

- contribute to a harmful impact on the social or natural environment
- harm the society in which they operate more than they benefit it
- promote injustice.

5. **Positive screening and ‘best in class/sector’ strategy** – URC trustees are encouraged to support companies that seek to develop their businesses successfully and sustainably in the long term interests of shareholders and other stakeholders. The URC will seek to invest in companies which have an active commitment to the following:
- responsible employment practices
  - equal opportunities policy and practice
  - good practice in terms of corporate governance
  - environmental sustainability expressed by comprehensive environmental and climate change policies and audits
  - positive attitudes to customers and active monitoring of employment practices across the supply chain
  - openness in reporting to stakeholders
  - Sensitivity towards communities in which they operate
  - integrity in all their dealings
  - the promotion of human rights, especially in countries with oppressive regimes.
6. **Engagement and dialogue with companies** – the URC endorses the strategy of direct engagement with companies through correspondence, face-to-face meetings and shareholders’ attendance at AGMs as a means of influencing the practices of these companies. This is based on an understanding of the theological and moral duty to monitor the policies and practices of companies in which a URC body is a direct shareholder and to raise concerns with a company if we are not fully satisfied with its business.
7. **Project or socially-directed investment** – in addition to the positive screening, the URC will continue to set aside a proportion of its capital for investment where the return is principally social rather than financial. This echoes the Church’s mission strategy.<sup>2</sup> The following social investments have considerable overlap with ethical investment portfolios and may sometimes offer market rate investments:
- community land and reinvestment trusts
  - ecological building projects
  - organic food and fair trade initiatives
  - micro-credit based social development programmes.

In supporting any such initiative, URC Trust bodies should be satisfied that effective governance monitoring is in place.<sup>3</sup>

8. **Disinvestment** – as a last resort, the URC will consider selling its shares in a company on ethical grounds in cases where a company fails to amend its operating policies and practices after engagement and dialogue over an extended period of

---

<sup>2</sup> See Vision 2020 – planning for growth in the URC at [http://www.urc.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/mission/images/vision2020\\_booklet\\_colour.pdf](http://www.urc.org.uk/what_we_do/mission/images/vision2020_booklet_colour.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Cited in EIRIS/UKSIF Charity Project, Responsible Investment Approaches to Non-Equity Investments: An Introduction for Charity Trustees, 2006, [www.charityysri.org](http://www.charityysri.org)

time. Such action will generally be taken in conjunction with ecumenical partners through the CIG (or similar body) based on advice from the EIAG [now the Investment Committee]. However, such decisions will be subject to periodic review in the light of these principles to maintain the integrity and credibility of the policy.

9. **Monitoring of policy** – The monitoring of these principles on behalf of the URC is principally the task of Mission Council's ethical investment advisory group. EIAG [now the investment committee] is required to report on issues of concern and develop policy statements on various issues related to ethical investment as necessary. However, every investment body and officer within the URC family (whether at assembly, synod or local church level) needs to share in this responsibility to ensure the Church retains its mission integrity.

## Appendix one

### *Ethical investment: Usury*

#### **Background**

1. The 2010 General Assembly agreed a substantial statement of ethical investment principles for the use of the United Reformed Church (see the first section of this paper).
2. The mandate was always intended to be kept under review and this Appendix gives the background to the 2013 addition relating to usury.

#### **The Usury debate**

3. In the law of Moses, the charging of interest on loans between Israelites is forbidden (e.g. Deuteronomy 23.19-20) with a suggestion that this principle is especially important when lending to the poor (e.g. Exodus 22.25). How far such teachings should apply to Christians, and to communities where Christians have influence, has been a perennial debate over the centuries. Some contemporary Christian economists argue that when Jesus said “Lend, expecting nothing in return” (Luke 6.35) he was endorsing exactly the same principle; others find it harder to hear any clear guidance in the New Testament.
4. While Christians disagree about the basic concept of charging interest, even those who accept the legitimacy of interest in principle often agree that the charging of very high rates of interest is exploitative and immoral. The recent economic difficulties have heightened widespread concern about the charging of such rates to the poorest members of society. These rates are only possible because such borrowers do not have access to the forms of borrowing available to their richer contemporaries who may, for example, have property to offer as collateral. Many who do not regard interest as wrong in principle have nevertheless argued for some limits on the rates charged.

#### **Proposed revision**

5. Against this background, the Mission Council agreed to amend the 2010 guidance to make explicit reference to usury – defined as charging excessive rates of interest. This brought the Church into line with a growing number of other ethical investors. As with other elements of the guidance, it would need assessment on a case by case basis.
6. The investment committee, in line with the policies of other members of the ecumenical Church investors group, suggested that URC investors should seek to avoid any company one of whose main business activities (defined as exceeding 25% of group turnover) is the usurious provision of home-collected credit ('doorstep lending'), unsecured short-term loans ('payday loans') or pawnbroker loans, directly or through subsidiaries, or hire purchase. In May 2017 the threshold was reduced to 10% of turnover, also in line with ecumenical partners. Investment should be avoided

in specialist consumer finance businesses that may exploit, or over-burden with debt, lower income borrowers.

7. Typical indicators of potentially exploitative lending will be:
  - a) triple-digit, or close to triple-digit, Annual Percentage Rates (APRs)
  - b) short loan term durations (less than 18 months); and no requirement for security.

The products may have associated charges and loan rollover facilities that will compound the debt burden. Lenders sometimes provide funds without undertaking credit checks (or sufficient checks) on the borrower. In extreme cases where companies do not operate responsible collection practices there may be undue pressure on the borrower associated with repayment.

8. This advice was accepted in May 2013 in the following terms:

**In accordance with the principles for ethical investment agreed by the General Assembly, Mission Council agrees to add to the recommended mandate for investors a new clause 1(c) as follows:**

**“(c) Companies who benefit by offering credit at usurious rates of interest to those who do not have access to funds through normal lending channels.”**

## Appendix two

### *Ethical investment: Application of the Guidelines in relation to Climate Change*

The following resolution was agreed by Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, at its meeting in November 2015:

**“Mission Council agrees to add the following text as an appendix to the 2010 statement of principles for the use of the United Reformed Church in making investment decisions:**

Those responsible for investment decisions on behalf of the URC and its Trust bodies should:

- a) engage intensively with those companies in which they are invested that make a significant contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions (such as fossil fuel producers, electricity generation utilities, large energy users, and producers of energy intensive products) to encourage them to assist in the transition to a low carbon economy
- b) conduct corporate and public policy engagement wherever possible in collaboration with other investors, including through the Church Investors Group (CIG), the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change (IIGCC) and the Carbon Disclosure project (CDP)
- c) not invest in any company where more than 10% of its revenues are derived from the extraction of thermal coal or the production of oil from oil sands
- d) disinvest, after appropriate engagement, from companies that make a significant contribution to emissions of greenhouse gasses and that are considered not to be taking seriously their responsibilities to assist with the transition to a low carbon economy
- e) where practicable increase their investments in climate change adaptation, and in sectors and activities such as sustainable energy, energy efficiency, carbon capture and storage that may make a significant contribution to reducing global greenhouse gas emissions or facilitating the transition to low carbon economy, to the extent that such investments meet their investment risk/return criteria
- f) continue to encourage those organisations that invest money on their behalf to build climate change into their investment practices and processes, in line with the goals and objectives set out in this climate change policy, including through integrating climate change into relevant requests for proposals and due diligence processes, making climate change an explicit part of their asset management appointment processes, integrating climate change into their investment principles, and monitoring their asset managers’ approach to climate change
- g) monitor and report periodically on their implementation of this policy.”



## Appendix three

### Summary statement – recommended mandate for investors

1. General Assembly recommends that trustees and all those with investment responsibilities connected with the United Reformed Church should avoid any investment in:
  - a) companies directly engaged in the manufacture or supply of weapons
  - b) companies a significant part of whose business is in the manufacture or supply of: alcoholic drinks, or tobacco products, or military equipment (other than weapons); or the provision of gambling facilities; or the publication or distribution of pornography; or in the extraction of thermal coal or the production of oil from oil sands
  - c) companies who benefit by offering credit at usurious rates of interest to those who do not have access to funds through normal lending channels.

General Assembly is of the view that in the definition of the activities outlined in b) and c) above, 'significant' means that the share of turnover derived from the activity concerned is more than 10% of the company's total turnover.

2. In addition to the exclusions listed above, the URC's investment bodies should reserve the right to avoid investment in companies whose operations are deemed to:
  - contribute directly to human rights violations or support the maintenance of oppressive regimes who are guilty of gross human rights violations
  - contribute to a systematic, harmful impact on the social or natural environment
  - harm the society in which they operate more than they benefit it;
  - promote injustice.
3. Further, it is expected that governance standards of our advisers, our fund managers, their agents, and the companies in which we invest, both directly and indirectly, should meet internationally accepted norms. By focusing on these standards, investors will favour companies which will be seeking to develop their businesses sustainably in the long term interests of their shareholders and other stakeholders.
4. Nestle Clarification: for investment purposes all companies should be treated in accordance with this ethical investment policy. There is no further requirement to exclude holdings in this company.
5. General Assembly recognises that this policy cannot be binding upon those with responsibility for specific investment decisions but when these bodies seek advice on investment matters they should apply due diligence to ensure that the integrity and reputation of the United Reformed Church is, as far as is practical, protected.

*May 2017*